



RISE CHARTER SCHOOL

- **Policy 2340: Controversial Issues and Academic Freedom**

Status: ADOPTED

Original Adopted Date: June 14, 2021

Last Reviewed Date:

Controversial Issues and Academic Freedom

RISE Charter School shall offer courses ~~that provide of study which will afford~~ learning experiences appropriate to the ~~students'~~ level of ~~student~~ understanding. The instructional program shall respect the right of students to face issues; to have free access to information; to study under teachers in situations free from prejudice; and to form, hold, and express their own opinions without personal prejudice or discrimination.

The Board recognizes the need for the teacher to have the freedom to discuss and teach subjects and issues which may be controversial. Such subjects and issues may include but are not necessarily limited to:

1. Politics;
2. Science;
3. Health and sex education; and
4. Values and ethics.

Teachers shall guide discussions and ~~instruction in a thorough and objective way to help students understand procedures with thoroughness and objectivity to acquaint students with~~ the need to recognize opposing viewpoints, the importance of fact, the value of good judgment, and the virtue of respect for conflicting opinions.

The Board of Directors encourages and supports the concept of academic freedom, recognizing it as a necessary condition to aid in maintaining an environment conducive to learning and the free exchange of ideas and information.

~~The Board also believes that academic freedom carries with it a responsibility that is shaped by the basic ideals, goals, and institutions of the local community. These standards are expressed via the goals and objectives of the adopted curriculum, by the adopted textbooks, by Board policy, and by RISE Charter School's mission statement.~~

In the study or discussion of controversial issues or materials, however, the Board directs the teaching staff to take into account the following criteria:

1. Relative maturity of students;
2. Charter School philosophy of education;
3. Community standards, morals, and values;
4. The necessity for a balanced presentation; and
5. The necessity to seek prior administrative counsel and guidance in such matters.

As a consequence of its responsibility to guarantee academic freedom to both students and teachers, the Board expects that:

1. All classroom studies will be curriculum-related, objective, and impartial;
2. Teachers will create and maintain an atmosphere of open-mindedness and tolerance, and ~~that~~ no one idea or viewpoint should necessarily prevail;
3. Teachers will not attempt, directly or indirectly, to limit or control students' judgment concerning any issue, but will make certain that full and fair consideration is given to the subject and that facts are carefully examined as to their accuracy and interpretation; and
4. No distinction or classification of students shall be made on account of race or color, other than as required for collection or reporting of demographic data required by public schools. ~~Teachers will exercise professional judgment in determining the appropriateness of the issue to the curriculum and to the age and grade level of the students.~~

To this end:

1. The teacher shall be free to choose supplemental materials to support and enhance the regular classroom curriculum except in sex education instruction as outlined in item 4 of this section. To encourage the free flow of information and enhance student creativity, unplanned issues may be brought up in the classroom and briefly discussed.
2. The school shall provide for parents/guardians to have their child excused from a topic which may be contrary to their religious or moral values. This shall be done in writing by the parent/guardian and include an explanation of the conflict. The student may also request to be excused if the student personally finds the topic to be contrary to their religious or moral values. The student must explain in writing as to the nature of the conflict. The teacher will provide an alternative assignment if the request is approved by the teacher and Executive Director or designee.
3. The teacher shall notify parents/guardians when especially controversial issues may be discussed and that they may have their child excused if family religious or moral values so dictate. The teacher should have the principal view questionable materials, etc.

4. The Board directs that a philosophy of abstinence shall be a part of and the underlying principal in all sex education instruction. However, it is recognized that this alone may not prevent pregnancies and sexually transmitted disease and therefore the Board allows for instruction in sex education including AIDS awareness, sexually transmitted diseases, birth control, and general human sexuality. In all cases the known facts will be taught, not the opinions or moral judgment of the instructor. This does not preclude giving impartial view points on both sides of issues such as the right to an abortion or on the use of birth control methods.

5. Any parent/legal guardian may have his or her child excused from any planned sex education instruction upon filing a written request to the Board. The Board shall make a form available for such requests. Alternative educational activities shall be provided for those excused.

6. When speakers are to be used, the Executive Director or designee must always give approval as outlined in Policy 2345P Controversial Speaker Procedure. ~~the Board policy on "Controversial Speakers"~~

Legal References

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| IC § 33-138 | Description Dignity and Nondiscrimination in Public Education |
| IC § 33-139 | Description Prohibition on the Expenditure of Moneys for Certain Purposes |

Cross References

| Code | Description |
|------|---------------------------------------------------|
| 2320 | Health, Sex Education, and Human Sexuality |
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| 2345 | Speakers in the Classroom and at School Functions |
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| 2425 | Parental Rights |
| 2425 | Parental Rights |
| 2425 | Parental Rights |
| 2580 | Use of Animals in Educational Programs |
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Cross Reference:

2345P

Controversial Speakers Procedure

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