

## **CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM**

The Bonneville Joint School District No. 93 shall offer courses of study which will afford learning experiences appropriate to the 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 not necessarily be limited to:

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

The Board 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 the school's mission statement.

### **Guidelines**

1. Teachers shall guide discussions and procedures with thoroughness and objectivity to acquaint students with the need to recognize opposing viewpoints, importance of fact, value of good judgment, and the virtue of respect for conflicting opinions.
2. In the study or discussion of controversial issues or materials, however, the Board directs the teaching staff to take into account the following criteria:
  - a. relative maturity of students;
  - b. District philosophy of education;
  - c. community standards, morals and values;
  - d. the necessity for a balanced presentation; and
  - e. the necessity to seek prior administrative counsel and guidance in such matters.
3. As a consequence of its responsibility to guarantee academic freedom to both students and teachers, the Board expects that:
  - a. all classroom studies will be objective, and impartial and based on Idaho Content Standards and learning objectives approved by the Board of Trustees;

- b. teachers will create and maintain an atmosphere of open-mindedness and tolerance, and that no one idea or viewpoint should necessarily prevail;
- c. 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
- d. 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. Teachers shall be free to choose supplemental materials to support and enhance the regular classroom curriculum except in sex education instruction as outlined in item six of this section.
  - a. When purchasing supplemental curricular materials, teachers shall submit a request for approval as outlined in Board Policy 2540 Selection and Adoption of Curricular materials.
  - b. Teachers may select and use open-source supplemental curricular materials that facilitate and support student learning of approved content standards and learning objectives without prior approval provided the use does not violate the copyright protections of those materials.
  - c. The source of all supplemental curricular materials will be made available for parents / guardians to review upon request as provided in Idaho Code §33-6001 and Board Policy 2428 Parental Rights.
2. To encourage the free flow of information and enhance student creativity, unplanned issues may be brought up in the classroom and briefly discussed.
3. 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 by following the process established in Board Policy 2428 Parental Rights, Section 4 Objections to Learning Materials or Activities.
4. The teacher shall notify parents at least five (5) school days prior to teaching controversial issues that may reasonably be anticipated to conflict with parents' firmly held beliefs, values or principles. This will provide sufficient time for the parents/guardians to request to withdraw their child from the planned activity.
  - a. Requests to withdraw students from learning activities are considered academic accommodations as defined in Board Policy 2428 Parental Rights. The school principal and teacher will follow the process specified in Policy 2428 when considering requests to withdraw students from learning activities

and/or providing alternative learning activities or curricular materials.

5. The teacher should have the principal view questionable materials, etc.
6. The School Board directs that a philosophy of abstinence shall be a part of and the underlying principle in all sex education instruction. However, it is recognized that this alone may not prevent pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases and therefore the School Board allows for instruction in sex education including AIDS awareness, sexually transmitted diseases, birth control, and general human sexuality.
  - a. In all cases the known facts will be taught, not the opinions or moral judgment of the instructor.
  - b. 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.
7. When speakers are to be used, the principal must give approval as outlined in policy 2341 Speakers in the Classroom and at School Functions.

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05-13-2020

Cross Reference: Speakers in the Classroom and at School Functions #2341  
Parental Rights #2428

Legal Reference: Idaho Code § 33-512 Governance of schools  
Idaho Code § 33-1611 Excusing Children from Instruction in Sex Education  
Idaho Code § 33-6001 Parental Rights