

STUDENT INSTRUCTIONFreedom to Teach, to Learn and to Express Ideas

The freedom to teach, to learn and to express ideas is essential to the fulfillment of the educational goals of the Helena schools. The Board of Trustees believes that exposure to a broad range of ideas and experiences are necessary to prepare students for a life of responsible citizenship.

The District will offer courses of study that will afford learning experiences appropriate to levels of student understanding. The instructional program respects 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.

Teachers will guide discussions and procedures with thoroughness and objectivity to acquaint students with the need to recognize various points of view, importance of fact, value of good judgment, and the virtue of respect for conflicting opinions. This policy further assures that teachers and students have the right to participate fully in the affairs of the community.

Teachers must be actively involved in decisions regarding the organization, presentation and evaluation of instruction to insure a balanced curriculum providing for a free exchange of ideas. 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 to the free exchange of ideas and information. In a study or discussion of controversial issues or materials, however, the Board directs teaching staff to take into account the following criteria:

1. The issue should be appropriate for the maturity level of the students;
2. The issue should be related to the adopted course content and course objectives;
3. Teachers shall have the right to express their personal opinions provided they state them as such without indoctrinating students;
4. The issue should balance various and/or conflicting points of view in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice;
5. Students should have an opportunity to study controversial issues about which they will begin to have an opinion;
6. Opportunity should be provided for the development of critical thinking skills; and
7. Emphasis should be placed on the right and necessity of forming independent judgments based on reasoning and the full use of all available information.

It is essential that democratic values be transmitted in an atmosphere which supports free inquiry and learning, and in which the freedom to teach, to learn and to express ideas for teachers and students is encouraged.

Legal References: 20-3-324, MCA Powers and duties
 10.55.701, ARM Board of Trustees
 10.55.603, ARM Curriculum and Assessment

Cross References:

Policy History:

Adopted on: 2.28.2012

Revised on: