

Freedom of Speech / Expression

Academic freedom is the freedom to teach and to learn. With freedom comes responsibility; with rights come obligations. Accordingly, academic freedom in our schools is subject to certain limitations. Therefore, the Board of Education affirms that academic freedom in the Madison Public Schools shall be properly defined within the context of law and the constraints of mutual respect among individuals. Therefore, access to ideas and opportunities to consider the broad range of questions and experiences which constitute the proper preparation for a life of responsible citizenship must not be defined by the interests of any single viewpoint. Educators must be free to select instructional and research materials appropriate to the maturity level of their students.

An inevitable consequence of academic freedom is that it leads to consideration of issues which may be considered controversial. Controversial issues are those problems, subjects, or questions about which there are significant differences of opinion. Learning to deal with such controversial issues is one of the basic competencies that all students should acquire. In order for students to learn these competencies, teachers must be free to help students to identify and evaluate relevant information, to learn the techniques of critical analysis, and to make independent judgments. Although teachers have the right to express their own viewpoints and opinions, they do not have the right to indoctrinate students with their personal views.

Finally, the Board of Education affirms that the purpose of public education is the pursuit of knowledge and the preparation of our children for responsible citizenship in a society that respects differences and shared freedom.

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