

Student Intellectual Freedom - Draft 1.1

DRAFT 1.1 | September 2026 | Audience: students, parents, educators, school boards, policymakers

Schools may teach difficult and contested ideas. They should not decide for students which contested ideas they must personally believe.

Teaching about vs. teaching through

Students should learn to describe, compare, analyze, criticize, defend, and evaluate political, economic, religious, social, moral, and philosophical ideas. Academic credit should depend on knowledge and reasoning, not ideological allegiance.

Schools may require

- Accurate description and comparison of contested ideas.
- Analysis of primary and secondary sources and evidence-based conclusions.
- Neutral simulations such as mock elections, hearings, debates, or budget exercises.
- Study of activism, organizing, litigation, lobbying, protest, reform, and political movements as objects of analysis.

Schools should not require for academic credit

- Affirming or renouncing a contested political, ideological, religious, moral, or identity proposition as a personal belief.
- Organizing for, advocating for, donating to, campaigning for, or publicly supporting a political or social cause.
- Adopting a prescribed ideological self-description or political conclusion.
- Disclosing sensitive beliefs or identity information when a neutral educational task can measure the competency without that disclosure.

Viewpoint-neutral rule

The protection applies equally across communist, socialist, capitalist, nationalist, progressive, conservative, religious, secular, identity-based, and other contested frameworks. No viewpoint receives a special exemption.

High school comparative study

Older students should compare major political and economic systems using primary texts, institutional design, incentives, historical examples, civil-liberty consequences, stated ideals, and observed outcomes.