



WHAT CAN I TEACH? WHAT CAN I SAY?

Best Practices

Educators are experts in making sure our students learn honesty about who we are, integrity in how we treat others and courage to do what's right. Recent broad-ranging attacks on how we teach and what we teach have created confusion about how we can safely continue teaching accurate and updated curricula to help our students understand our past and present to create a better future. The Utah State Board of Education has "general control and supervision" over K-12 public education. The Board sets standards that local school districts use to establish curriculum.

You are protected in teaching the adopted district curriculum

We are instructed by our school districts to teach prescribed curricula and cannot be disciplined for teaching these. We know that by presenting factual information, we allow our students to draw their own conclusions and engage deeply with the material. The best practice is to use the state standards as your guide and use the district-approved curriculum.

Note that the First Amendment does not extend into the classroom

When instructing students, legally speaking, we are speaking on behalf of the district. That means, unless otherwise stated in your contract, we must refrain from taking political positions or espousing personal beliefs. That includes our speech, classroom decorations, and displays.

Know your school district parental complaint policy

Your school district policy should outline the procedures for parents to submit complaints. Make sure you read and understand the complaint policy. If policies have been violated, your local UniServ can assist you in seeking the appropriate remedies.

Some contracts and school board policies go further to ensure academic freedom

Read your local contract or board policy to determine whether you have additional protections for speech in the classroom. If you're not sure, talk with your building rep or UniServ Director.

Safety comes first

For our students and ourselves, the first consideration is safety. We must create an environment where all students feel safe, and we must demand that our employers protect our personal safety.

Both Utah State code and Utah State Board of Education rule prohibit "abusive conduct" by parents or students against any school employee. If you feel that you or your students may be threatened by activists, report this to your administration immediately and to the police, if necessary. Document that you made the report and notify your building rep or UniServ director.

Disclaimer: This publication is for informational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for specific legal or other professional advice. If you have specific questions about your legal or contractual rights, contact your local UniServ director. This guidance will be updated periodically based on new information and guidance, so please refer to myUEA.org/equity or the most current information.