

## Q&A on Race and Curriculum

During the First Special Session of 2021, the legislature passed HR 901 requesting that the Utah State Board of Education examine educational equity especially as it relates to critical race theory. In response, the Utah State Board of Education drafted a rule regarding [Educational Equity in Schools](#). This rule went into effect on August 9, 2021.

This document intends to address any questions you have about how this rule impacts your day-to-day teaching.

### **Q: What types of ideas should NOT be promoted or endorsed when providing instruction?**

Please keep in mind that “classroom instruction” includes “any course materials, unit, class lesson, activity or presentation that, as the focus of the discussion, provides instruction or information to a student” (R277-328-2(1)).

According to R277-328-4(3):

- A student’s sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or membership in any other protected class should not be promoted as inherently superior or inferior to another.
- A student’s sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or membership in any other protected class does not determine a student’s worth.
- A student should not be made to feel that they personally bear responsibility for the past actions of individuals from the same sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or membership in any other protected class.
- A student should not be discriminated against or receive adverse treatment because of the student’s sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or membership in any other protected class.

### **Q: Can I, as a teacher, still engage in discussions of controversial topics?**

Yes. This rule does not “prohibit or ban discussions of events, ideas, attitudes, beliefs, or concepts, including those described in this rule, from the general sharing and participation in the marketplace of ideas fostered in the learning environment” (R227-328-5(1a)). However, the rule does ask that teachers refrain from promoting one idea over another (R227-328-5(1b)). Controversial topics need to be approached in a balanced and unbiased manner where students are allowed to weigh the evidence and draw their own informed conclusions.

### **Q: How can I safely go about teaching controversial topics?**

Controversial topics can include questions, subjects, or problems that generate extremely opposing opinions and are being debated in the community at large. When dealing with controversial topics, lesson plans should be reviewed by an administrator. Best practices for exploring controversial topics include:

1. Build and maintain a safe classroom environment that is welcoming to all students regardless of sex, race, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

**2. Ensure that your instructional objectives are directly tied to a core standard (see district curriculum maps and proficiency scales.)**

3. Use district approved materials when developing lesson plans.
4. Make sure resources maintain a balanced perspective of the topic.
5. Vet controversial lesson plans with a colleague before administrator review.

6. Communicate (e.g., email, announcement on Canvas, etc.) with parents when controversial topics will be discussed in an effort to maintain transparency.

For more specific directions on how to engage in civic dialogue, especially when it comes to controversial topics, review the following resources:

- [Four Keys for Successful Implementation](#) developed by the Teaching and Learning Team at the Utah State Office of Education.
- [Orchestrating Productive Classroom Discussions](#) developed by the Teaching and Learning Team at the Utah State Office of Education.
- [They Say, You Say, I Say, We Say](#) strategy created by Jeffery Nokes, PhD, assistant professor of History at Brigham Young University.

### **Q: How is Granite School District meeting the USBE's Educational Equity in Schools Rule?**

Below are the following district policy statements regarding issues related to the Educational Equity in School Rule which demonstrate that the district is in compliance with the new rule.

- [Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation](#)
- [Prohibition of Bullying, Cyberbullying, Hazing, and Retaliation](#)

### **Additional Support**

If you have further questions regarding this topic or need assistance implementing best practices when teaching controversial topics, please reach out to the following:

Tracy Langlie, Secondary ELA Curriculum Specialist  
Stasha Wheeler, Social Studies Curriculum Specialist  
Dave Gomez, Director of Educational Equity  
Rebecca Ibarra, Associate Director of Educational Equity

### **Additional Sources**

[H.R. 901 House Resolution on Critical Race Theory in Public Education](#)  
[News Release: Board Leadership Statement on Educational Equity in Schools Rule R277-328. Educational Equity in Schools](#)