

STEM SCHOOL HIGHLANDS RANCH POLICY  
Selection of Controversial Learning Resources

I. PURPOSE

Controversial Learning Resources include any material or information which a reasonable person in the STEM community (including students, parents of students, and STEM staff) might find (a) controversial and (b) offensive or lacking educational purpose. The effective presentation of Controversial Learning Resources is primarily dependent on classroom teachers. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that such presentation is consistent with the Mission of STEM School.

II. POLICY

Prior to presenting or using any Controversial Learning Resource which has not been specifically approved by the Executive Director, their designee, or the STEM Board; a teacher must preview the resource in its entirety before seeking approval from the Executive Director or their designee. If the Executive Director determines that the material is a Controversial Learning Resource, the Executive Director may deny approval of use based on the, non-exclusive, list of factors set forth below (page 2). Alternatively, the Executive Director may approve use of the resource only if the teacher timely notifies students' parents/caregivers of the nature, the specific controversial content (including reference by page number where available), and educational purpose of the resource, so that parents/caregivers may exercise informed judgment in deciding whether their student will participate in classes or activities using the reference.

Any decision by the Executive Director approving or denying use of a Controversial Learning Resource may be appealed to the STEM Board by a staff member, student, or parent/caregiver of a student.

After a teacher has provided the required notice, a student shall not be allowed to participate in any class or activity using the resource unless the student's parent/caregiver provides prior written permission.

Teachers shall provide suitable alternative activities for students whose parents/caregivers have requested exclusion from the class or activity. Implementation of alternative activities shall be handled in a manner that does not draw attention to the student. Further, any student who does not opt in shall not be penalized for such a decision.

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In selecting any Controversial Learning Resource, a teacher shall evaluate the proposed resource to consider the following, non-exclusive, factors:

- Whether the resource will enrich and support the attainment of educational objectives of curriculum and content standards and the STEM Mission, taking into consideration:
  - The varied interests, abilities, age, intellectual development, and maturity levels of the students
  - The standards of the STEM community
  - The availability of other, less controversial, resources adequate to attain the educational objective
  - Whether a reasonable teacher using sound professional judgment would anticipate that use of the resource might engender complaints from students, parents/caregivers, or staff within the STEM community
- Whether the resource is representative of the religious, ethnic, and cultural groups represented in the STEM community
- Whether the resource stimulates growth in factual knowledge, literary appreciation, aesthetic values, and ethical standards
- Whether the resource provides a background of information which will enable students to make intelligent judgements in their daily lives
- Whether the resource contributes to the presentation of opposing sides of controversial issues within the overall curriculum so that young citizens may develop, under guidance, the practice of critical analysis
- Whether the resource promotes the goal of providing a comprehensive education appropriate for the interests and needs of the students, recognizing their right to access a wide range of materials and activities
- Whether the resource presents timely educational and community issues for the school, staff, and community
- Whether adequate time is available to properly prepare, present, and follow up the resource in a reasonably thorough manner

Teachers shall communicate in advance with guest speakers scheduled to appear at STEM. Teachers shall inform such speakers that they will be addressing a diverse, yet captive, audience, and therefore, guest speakers must respect alternative viewpoints, consider the emotional and intellectual level of the students, and design their presentations appropriately. If a teacher determines that any aspect of the presentation might include a Controversial Learning Resource, the teacher shall notify the Executive Director. If the Executive Director deems appropriate, they shall confer with the guest speaker, prior to such presentation, in an attempt to resolve any concerns as to the content of the presentation. If the guest speaker is unwilling to abide by the direction of the Executive Director, the invitation to speak may be withdrawn.

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Approved by the STEM School Board on 01/08/2023.  
(dd/mm/yyyy)

STEM School Highlands Ranch

By: Michelle Horne (*signature on file*)  
(Signature, Board secretary)

Michelle Horne  
(Printed name, Board secretary)

Adopted: 2019  
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