

Administrative Procedure 205

SENSITIVE/CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES AND RESOURCES

Background

The Division recognizes that studying controversial issues is an integral part of student learning and is important in preparing students to participate responsibly in a democratic and pluralistic society. The study of controversial issues provides students with opportunities to develop the ability to think clearly, to reason logically, to open-mindedly and respectfully examine different points of view, and to make sound judgments. The Division respects the rights of parents and students to request to be exempt from such instruction without judgment.

Definitions

Controversial Issues: are those topics that are publicly sensitive and upon which there is no consensus of values or beliefs. They include topics on which reasonable people may sincerely disagree (e.g. religion and human sexuality).

Controversial Resources: are those resources used in the classroom or available in the library that may be sensitive to certain individuals based on their values and beliefs.

Procedures

1. Information regarding controversial issues must:
 - 1.1 Be of an informative nature; represent alternative points of view;
 - 1.2 Appropriately reflect the maturity, capabilities, and educational needs of the students;
 - 1.3 Effectively meet the requirements of provincially prescribed and approved courses of study and educational programs;
 - 1.4 Uses carefully reviewed resources; and
 - 1.5 Reflect local as well as provincial, national, and international contexts.
2. Teachers shall discuss potentially controversial issues with the Principal prior to presenting the issue to students and, where appropriate, give notification to parents.

3. Teachers, students, and others participating in studies or discussions of controversial issues shall exercise sensitivity to ensure each individual is treated with respect and feels comfortable voicing his/her position on controversial issues. Teachers shall guard against expressing their personal opinions as fact.
4. As per Section 58.1(1) of the Education Act, notification to parents/guardians is required where the instructional materials, exercises, outcomes, or course contain subject matter that deals primarily and explicitly with religion or human sexuality:
 - 4.1 The Principal shall post a notice regarding Section 58.1(1) on the school website.
 - 4.2 Parents/guardians shall be advised of the controversial content in specific classes in advance, using the Parent Notification letter ([Form 205-1 Notice Form to Parents](#)). This letter shall advise parents/guardians of their right to exempt their child.
 - 4.3 Parents/guardians may exempt their child by informing the Principal in writing using the student exemption Notice Form ([Form 205-2 Notice Form to School](#)), which will be sent home attached to the Parent Notification letter).
 - 4.4 Teachers shall, in accordance with parent/guardian request, permit the student to:
 - 4.4.1 Leave the classroom to an alternative work environment; or
 - 4.4.2 Remain in the classroom without taking part.
 - 4.5 Exempted students shall not receive an academic penalty.
 - 4.6 Teachers shall provide a meaningful alternative activity.
5. Notification to parents/guardians is not required for incidental or indirect references to religion, religious themes, or human sexuality in an outcome, course, exercise, or instructional material.
6. In the event that an employee, student, or parent/guardian expresses concerns regarding controversial issues or resources:
 - 6.1 The Principal shall arrange a meeting with the individual(s) bringing forth the challenge, the Principal, and the teacher/Learning Commons Facilitator to discuss the nature of the concern.
 - 6.2 If the issue cannot be resolved at the school level, the Principal shall advise the individual(s) bringing forth their concerns of their right to take their concerns forward to the Superintendent, who may assign this to a review committee and/or arrange meetings as required.
 - 6.3 The Superintendent shall render a decision and communicate this, in writing, to the individual(s) involved.



7. As per **Board Policy 13 Appeals and Hearings Regarding Student Matters**, parents/guardians may further appeal the decision of the Superintendent to the Board.

Reference: Education Act 16, 18, 58.1(1), 196, 197, 222 Alberta Human Rights Act Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom, Constitution Act, 1982 Guide to Education ECS to Grade 12		
	Date Approved:	April 1, 2021
	Reviewed or Revised:	Executive: April, 2021

References shall be updated as required and do not require additional approval.

