

## Administrative Procedure 205

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### 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.

#### 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 approved by the Minister of Education through the approved process when dealing primarily and explicitly with gender identity, sexual orientation or human sexuality.
  - 1.2 Be of an informative nature, represent alternative points of view and, 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 of the Education Act, notification and consent of 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 Consent will be obtained at least 30 days prior to the content being introduced. Consent may be obtained for an entire school year.
  - 4.2 Parents/guardians must provide consent for controversial content in specific classes in advance, using the Parent Notification letter ([Form 205-1 Notice and Consent Form to Parents](#)).
  - 4.4 When parental consent is not given, Teachers shall arrange a meaningful alternative activity.
  - 4.5 Exempted students shall not receive an academic penalty.
5. Notification and consent 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.
  - 6.4 External parties presenting learning and teaching resources dealing primarily and explicitly with gender identity, sexual orientation, or human sexuality must be approved by the Minister of Education
  - 6.5 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  
Freedoms  
Constitution Act, 1982  
Guide to Education ECS to  
Grade 12  
Education Amendment Act 2024

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