

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES/MATERIALS

Background

The Division believes that students should have classroom experience in selecting and organizing information that facilitates drawing intelligent, rational conclusions.

Alberta Education, in response to representations made regarding the treatment in school programs of such matters as Canadian content, family life education, sex-stereotyping and special creation, established provincial policy to deal with controversial issues. Included in its policy guidelines was a recommendation that school systems establish local procedures regarding the identification and treatment of controversial issues and materials in the classroom.

Guidelines

1. For sound judgments to be made, information regarding controversial issues should:
 - 1.1 Represent alternative points of view.
 - 1.2 Appropriately reflect the maturity, capabilities and educational needs of the students.
 - 1.3 Reflect the requirements of the course as stated in the program of studies.
 - 1.4 Reflect the neighbourhood and community in which the school is located but not to the exclusion of provincial, national and international contexts.
2. When teachers are aware that they are dealing with a potentially controversial issue, they will advise the Principal.
3. Parents may request, in writing, the exclusion of their child(ren) from formal instruction or activities dealing with a particular controversial issue.
4. Parents have the right to formally challenge the use of a particular instructional resource by demonstrating that the manner in which the resource is being used contributes to sexual, racial, ethnic, or cultural stereotyping of offensiveness to community standards.

Procedures

1. When offering programs that are known to be controversial in nature, the school Principal is responsible for:
 - 1.1 Reviewing program content and materials to ensure conformity to Alberta Education Board policy.

- 1.2 Communicating, when necessary to parents, the nature of the program. (Consider holding a parent meeting or sending an explanation of the program home in a newsletter or some other medium.)
 - 1.3 Ensuring that staff are adequately inserviced to ensure effective program delivery.
 - 1.4 Ensuring that alternative learning activities are provided for excluded students.
2. Notwithstanding 1.4, the provision of alternative learning activities would be for a specific and limited portion of a program and that the alternative learning activities would be assigned under the supervision of a teacher.
 3. In the event of a challenge to the use of a particular learning resource, the following procedures will be followed:
 - 3.1 A meeting will be arranged between the challenger and the teacher with the Principal to discuss the nature of the concern.
 - 3.2 If the issue cannot be resolved at this level, the Principal will advise the challenger of his/her right to formally challenge the use of the resource. Such challenge is to be directed in writing to the Superintendent outlining the specific content of the resource that is found objectionable and the specific reasons for the objection.
 - 3.3 The Superintendent will meet with the person challenging the resource and the school Principal to review the appeal.
 - 3.4 The Superintendent will conduct a hearing at which the challenger and the Principal and teacher may present their respective cases.
 - 3.5 If the matter is not satisfactorily resolved by the Superintendent's decision, the matter may be appealed to the Board.

Reference: Guide to Education ECS to Grade 12
Policy 13 – Appeals Regarding Student Matters