

## Administrative Procedure 205

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# CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES AND MATERIALS

## Background

Controversial issues will be fairly presented in a spirit of honest academic freedom so that students may recognize the validity of other points of view, but can also learn to formulate their own opinions based upon dispassionate, objective, unbiased study and discussion of the opinions related to the controversy.

Full discussions of controversial issues are encouraged in a spirit of academic freedom that shows students that they have the right to disagree with the opinions of others, but that they also have the responsibility to base the disagreement on facts and to respect the right of others to hold conflicting opinions.

Although students are to have classroom experiences that cover a wide range of issues and areas of study, it is important that the issues and materials used within the school are consistent with the standards and values of the Catholic faith and the community.

The provincial Guide to Education provides guidance to school staff in dealing with this important area.

## Procedures

1. The Principal is responsible for ensuring that information regarding controversial issues and materials:
  - 1.1 Represent alternative points of view including those respecting church teaching.
  - 1.2 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 neighborhood and community in which the school is located, but not to the exclusion of provincial, national and international contexts.
2. The Principal shall:
  - 2.1 Consult with the Superintendent, and with parents, regarding the issues to be covered, the materials to be used and the approach to instruction in the classroom.
  - 2.2 Ensure that staff members are prepared to provide effective program delivery.
  - 2.3 Ensure that students are encouraged to view all issues in the light of the Gospel and the teachings of the Catholic Church.
  - 2.4 Ensure that alternative learning activities are provided for excluded students.
3. The teacher shall:

- 3.1 Present full and fair opportunity and means for students to study, consider, organize, discuss and evaluate all sides of controversial issues including, but not limited to, political philosophies.
  - 3.2 Protect the right of students to study pertinent controversial issues within the limits of good taste and to allow students to express personal opinions without jeopardizing their relationship with the teacher, other students, or the school administration.
  - 3.3 Refrain from advocating partisan causes, sectarian religious views, extreme or unethical positions, or selfish propaganda of any kind through any classroom or school device.
  - 3.4 Use caution when expressing his/her personal opinions and shall identify them as such while still encouraging students to reach their own decisions independently.
  - 3.5 Be sensitive to the values and beliefs of individuals and groups within the community, and ensure that students are encouraged to view all issues in the light of the Gospel and the teachings of the Catholic Church.
4. Parents may request, in writing, the exclusion of their child from formal instruction or activities dealing with a particular controversial issue.
  5. Parents, community members and students have the right to formally challenge the use of a particular instructional resource on the grounds of sexual, racial, ethnical, cultural, or religious stereotyping or offensiveness to community standards. The Principal shall refer the parent to Administrative Procedure 251 – Challenge to Learning Resources.

Reference: Section 11, 18, 32, 33, 41, 52, 53, 58, 196, 197, 222 Education Act  
Alberta Bill of Rights  
Alberta Human Rights Act  
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Constitution Act, 1982  
Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Amendment Act  
Guide to Education ECS to Grade 12