

Administrative Procedure 205

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN EDUCATION

Background

Studying controversial issues is important in preparing students to participate responsibly as citizens in matters that affect our society.

Alberta Education's Teacher Quality Standard (2018) applies to a teacher's stance with respect to political neutrality and/or controversial issues in the classroom. Competency three stipulates that a teacher should build students' capacities for critical thinking and accessing, interpreting, and evaluating information from diverse sources. Competency four stipulates that a teacher does so by establishing, promoting, and sustaining an inclusive learning environment by fostering equality and respect. To enact these competencies, Alberta Education's Guide to Education (2019) indicates that when facing controversial issues that involve individuals' values and personal beliefs that may become topics of discussion online, in schools, and in classrooms, teachers must respond sensitively and with respect for multiple perspectives. Teachers, administrators, and school division staff are in positions of both authority and trust with students, and it is important they are politically neutral and respond to controversial issues.

Procedures

1. Efforts will be made to ensure that students and others are not ridiculed, embarrassed, intimidated, or degraded for positions which they hold on controversial issues.
2. Information regarding controversial issues is to:
 - 2.1 Represent alternative points of view using resources that do not violate provincial or federal law;
 - 2.2 Reflect the maturity, capabilities and educational needs of the students;
 - 2.3 Meet the requirements of provincially approved courses of study and education programs; and
 - 2.4 Reflect the neighbourhood and community in which the school is located, as well as provincial, national and international contexts.
3. The primary focus in studying controversial issues is to be on teaching students how to think rather than on what to think.

Reference: Section 11, 18, 32, 33, 41, 52, 53, 58, 58.1, 58.2, 196, 197, 222 Education Act
Alberta Bill of Rights
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom, Constitution Act, 1982
Guide to Education ECS to Grade 12
Teacher Quality Standard (2018)