

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

	200 – INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS &	CODE:	AP 208
SECTION:	MATERIALS		
PROCEDURE:	CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES & MATERIALS		

BACKGROUND

Controversial issues are those topics which are publicly sensitive and upon which there is no consensus of values or beliefs. By their nature they generate diverse opinions and debate on the distinctions between right and wrong, justice and injustice, and on interpretations of fairness and tolerance. They include topics on which reasonable people may genuinely disagree.

Students are to receive classroom experiences which cover a wide range of issues and areas of study. Such study provides 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. In addition, the issues and materials used within the school must be consistent with the standards and values of the Catholic faith.

The following procedures shall govern the discussion of such issues in schools.

PROCEDURES

1. When programs that are controversial in nature are offered in the school, the Principal is responsible for the following:
 - 1.1 To ensure that the information dealing with controversial issues:
 - 1.1.1 Represents alternative points of view consistent with the teachings of the Catholic Faith;
 - 1.1.2 Provides a background to motivate students and staff to examine their own attitudes and behaviour; to comprehend their duties, responsibilities, rights and privileges as Catholics; and to make informed judgments in their daily lives. Especially at the secondary level, the selection of library materials on controversial issues will be directed towards maintaining a diverse collection representing various views;
 - 1.1.3 Attempts to provide factual unbiased materials representative of all major religions;
 - 1.1.4 Reflects the maturity, capabilities and educational needs of the students;
 - 1.1.5 Maintains a balanced collection of materials representing various views on political theories or ideologies or on public issues;
 - 1.1.6 Reflects the requirements of the provincial Program of Studies;

- 1.1.7 Includes obscenity and sexual incidents in materials of literary value. The use of profanity or sexual incidents does not in itself disqualify materials from selection. The decision to include such materials is based on literary merit: whether the material represents life in its true proportions, in an artistic way, and in a manner which would allow the individual to form sound, ethical judgments. The materials are to be age appropriate, and library and teaching staff are to be able to discuss the issues with students; and reflect the neighborhood and community in which the school is located.
- 1.2 If necessary, to communicate to the parents the nature of the program and hold a parent meeting to review program content and materials, respond to parental concerns and inform parents of their right to exclude their children from certain program elements;
- 1.3 To ensure that staff are prepared to provide effective program delivery; and
- 1.4 To ensure that alternative learning activities are provided for excluded students.
2. Students in classrooms shall not be ridiculed or embarrassed for positions which they hold on a particular issue, a requirement which calls for sensitivity on the part of teachers, students and other participants in dealing with such issues.
3. In order for students to make sound judgments and draw intelligent conclusions, information regarding controversial issues shall:
 - 3.1 Be of an informative nature;
 - 3.2 Represent alternative points of view;
 - 3.3 Ensure that teachers guard against expressing their personal opinions as fact;
 - 3.4 Appropriately reflect the maturity, capabilities and educational needs of the students and the Program of Studies for a course;
 - 3.5 Reflect the requirements of the course, if applicable, as stated in the Program of Studies; and
 - 3.6 Reflect the teachings of the Catholic Church, and community in which the school is located, but not to the exclusion of provincial, national and international contexts.
4. Teachers, administrative staff, students and parents shall have a voice in determining:
 - 4.1 The controversial issues to be studied;
 - 4.2 The texts and other materials to be used; and
 - 4.3 The manner in which such issues are dealt with in the classroom.
5. Under normal circumstances, the professional staff will resolve the issues should they arise.
6. Unless the matter under discussion is of an emergent nature arising within the context of a particular class, students and/or their parents/guardians are to be advised ahead of time that a particular issue which may be sensitive to some individuals is to be dealt with in the course. Under such circumstances, a student or his/her parent/guardian presenting a reasoned argument for absenting himself/herself from discussing that topic shall be allowed to do so.

7. No student shall be allowed to absent themselves under this administrative procedure from any section of a course defined as core by Saskatchewan Learning or the Division.
8. Where a student is permitted to withdraw because of parental discretion or because of personal belief, such withdrawal shall not adversely affect any mark or grade he/she receives for the course.
9. Students who are absented from certain programs or from certain parts of a course are expected to remain in school and will undertake other tasks assigned by the teacher during that period.

Reference: Sections 85, 87, 108, 109, 175, 176, 182, 184 Education Act
Saskatchewan Human Rights Code
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

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