

**CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN THE CLASSROOM**

Alberta society is being increasingly affected by its membership in the "global village." Technology has provided us with instant access to vast quantities of information from universal sources. Also, human mobility within the world has produced an ever-growing multicultural aspect to our society. These forces have converged to create a situation in which there are more and more conflicting values and viewpoints held among Albertans.

Controversial issues need to be treated with sensitivity and fairness in the Division. This treatment will result in more open-minded, sensitive, questioning and empathetic attitudes among our students thus contributing to their development as well-rounded citizens.

**Procedures**

1. In the treatment of controversial material, teachers shall acknowledge alternative points of view on an informational basis.
2. Material being presented shall appropriately reflect the maturity, capabilities and educational needs of students as stated in the Program of Studies.
3. Presentations by teachers shall be sensitive to the community in which the school is located, but not to the exclusion of provincially, nationally and internationally accepted principles.
4. A teacher's personal opinion shall be stated as such and care shall be taken to guard against over-emphasizing personal opinions.
5. Teachers shall ensure that students have access to factual materials with an opportunity to find, collect and assemble such materials.
6. Teachers shall preview films and materials in advance of presentations to students.
7. Teachers shall adequately prepare for the use of such films and materials, including appropriate culminating activities.
8. If a film, pamphlet or other materials contain information or opinions that are thought to diverge from those held by a number of people in the local community, parents shall have the opportunity to view such materials in advance of their use, and shall have the right to withhold a student from participation.
9. If guest speakers are invited to discuss a controversial issue, the qualifications of the speakers shall reflect expertise in the area under study. Also, an effort shall be made to seek speakers to discuss alternative points of view on an issue.
10. If teachers are in doubt concerning any potentially controversial issue, or instructional material, they shall consult with their Principal.

Reference: Section 39, 60, 61, School Act  
Alberta Bill of Rights  
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms  
Guide to Education ECS to Grade 12