

The Division believes that education, as a foundation for Christian living in a democracy, must develop not only awareness but the capacity for free and open discussion on issues where opinions and emotions enter to produce controversy.

The Catholic school is an environment that is committed to educating according to our Catholic values and beliefs. It is the purpose of the Catholic School to ensure that the Catholic point of view is thoroughly made known on moral and social issues that are controversial.

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 establishes, promotes, and sustains 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 involving individuals' values and personal beliefs that may become topics of discussion online, in schools, and 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. It is important they are politically neutral and respond to controversial issues as per this procedure.

Procedures

1. The Catholic perspective is to be accurately, respectfully, and sensitively represented and will:
 - 1.1 Positively represent the position of the Catholic Church on the issue.
 - 1.2 Use every opportunity to permeate our Catholic faith throughout the issue.
2. Teachers should develop students' critical thinking skills by sensitively presenting accurate and balanced information on political and/or controversial issues while demonstrating respect for multiple perspectives.
 - 2.1 Teachers are required to utilize approved and appropriate learning resources.
3. Teachers should neutrally represent political issues and/or controversial issues, avoid expressing personal opinions, and present competing perspectives and the values and beliefs upon which those perspectives are based.
4. To inspire critical thinking when discussing political issues and/or controversial issues, the information presented should
 - 3.1 represent alternative points of view.
 - 3.2 reflects the requirements of the course as stated in the program of studies.
 - 3.3 reflects the community in which the school is located but not to the exclusion of provincial, national, and international contexts.
 - 3.4 consider the age and maturity of the students.

5. When students express strong opinions on political and/or controversial issues, teachers may endeavor to provide reasonable information that effectively represents both positions while adhering to this administrative procedure.
6. In dealing with controversial issues and topics, Principals are expected to consult with parents regarding the issues to be covered, the materials to be used and the approach to instruction in the classroom.
7. Parents may request, in writing, the inclusion of their child(ren) from formal instruction or activities dealing with a particular controversial issue.
8. Parents have the right to formally challenge the use of a particular instructional resource on the grounds of sex, racial, ethnic or cultural stereotyping or offensiveness to community standards.
9. When offering programs that are controversial in nature the Principal is responsible for:
 - 9.1 Reviewing program content and materials to ensure conformity to Board policies and Division administrative procedures.
 - 9.2 Communicating to parents the nature of the program and holding a parent meeting to review program content and materials, respond to parental concerns and inform parents of their right exclude their children from certain program elements;
 - 9.3 Ensuring that staff are adequately in-serviced to ensure effective program delivery; and
 - 9.4 Ensuring that alternative learning activities are provided for excluded students.
- 10 In the event of a parental challenge to the use of a particular learning resource:
 - 10.1 A meeting will be arranged between the parent and the teacher with the Principal to discuss the nature of the concern.
 - 10.2 If the issue cannot be resolved at this level, the Principal will advise the parent of the 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.
 - 10.3 The Superintendent will meet the person challenging the resource and the Principal to review the appeal.
 - 10.4 The Superintendent will conduct a hearing at which the challenger and the instructors may present their respective cases.
 - 10.5 If the matter is not resolved by the Superintendent's decision, the matter may be appealed to the Board.

Reviewed/Revised: March 2014 November 2016 August 2025

Reference:

Sections 11, 18, 32, 33, 41, 52, 58, 58.1, 58.2, 196, 197, 222, Education Act
 Alberta Bill of Rights
 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
 Guide to Education ECS to Grade 12