

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES AND MATERIALS

Background

Instructional programs authorized and approved by the Division are to develop students' capacities to think clearly, reason logically, examine all issues and reach sound judgments. Some areas where controversial issues may arise within the instructional programs are related to: religion, politics, commercialism, family life, sex or forms of stereotyping. The foregoing is not an all-inclusive list.

Teachers must give consideration to notifying parents of potentially controversial materials.

The Division is prepared to receive written representations, accompanied by oral explanations if desired, from any individual regarding controversial issues to be studied, materials to be used, or the manner in which controversial issues are studied in the classroom. Thereafter, the Division reserves the right to render those decisions which are delegated to the Division by legislation.

Procedures

1. The Principal, under the general supervision of the Director and/or the area superintendent, shall be responsible for ensuring that controversial issues addressed within the instructional program are in fact part of the course of studies as authorized by the Ministry of Education and approved by the Division.
2. No student or students are to be ridiculed or embarrassed for positions which they hold on any issue. Teachers and students must be sensitive to the views and rights of others.
3. The Principal, upon receiving a written request from a parent or guardian, may excuse a student from participation in instruction dealing with a matter that is contrary to the conscientiously held beliefs of the family. Whenever possible, students excused from regular classes or content will be provided by the teacher with equivalent alternate material which is consistent with the conscientiously held beliefs of his/her family. Student evaluation on such alternate material will be educationally appropriate.
4. Except in areas in which specific direction has been provided by the Board, discussion of any controversial issues must fairly represent alternative points of view.
5. Controversial issues being discussed must reflect the requirements of the authorized program of studies and be appropriate to the maturity, capability and educational needs of the student.

6. Learning resources such as texts, audio-visual materials, models or other printed material are to be recommended, authorized or permissively authorized by the Ministry of Education and/or the Division.

Reference: Sections 85, 87, 175, 176, 182, 184 Education Act
The School Division Administration Regulations 45
Saskatchewan Human Rights Code
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

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