

POLICY HNB – Teaching About Controversial Issues

Studying controversial issues helps students to balance competing views in our society.

PURPOSE:

To provide guidelines for management of teaching controversial issues.

DEFINITIONS:

Controversial issues are those topics that are publicly sensitive and upon which there is no consensus of values or beliefs.

GUIDELINES & PROCEDURES:

1. Even in the use of approved resources, reference to Alberta Education's [*Considerations for Program Delivery and School Operations*](#) should be given in determining the appropriate resources to be used. Teachers need to consider contextual variables such as the values of the community.
2. Teachers, students and participants will respect different viewpoints.
3. Information regarding controversial issues should:
 - a) represent alternative points of view and respect legal requirements;
 - b) be developmentally appropriate;
 - c) be sensitive to community expectations.
4. Parents or special interest groups wishing to remove resource materials shall submit a written request to the School Administrator detailing the reason for the request and submitting copies of the proposed materials to be removed (Exhibit 1).
 - a) In the event that a parent or special interest group wishes to appeal the School Administrator's decision, the group shall submit copies of the proposed material to be removed to the Superintendent.
 - b) In the event that a parent or special interest group wishes to appeal the Superintendent's decision, the group shall submit a request for appeal and copies of the proposed material to be removed to the Board of Trustees.
5. Only resources approved by Alberta Education, Alberta Health Services or the Board shall be used for teaching human sexuality component of the Health curriculum. The Board delegates this responsibility to the Superintendent as per *Policy CB – Superintendent*.
6. Schools will consider the concerns of parents about their child's participation in discussions involving controversial issues.
7. With the exception of incidental or indirect references to human sexuality or sexual orientation, PWPSD schools are required to provide parents with notice where "courses of study, educational programs or instructional materials, or instruction or exercises include subject matter that deals primarily and explicitly with human sexuality or sexual orientation."
8. Where a parent makes a written request under section 58.1(1) of the *Education*

Act, teachers shall exempt the student, without academic penalty, from such instruction, course of study, educational program, or use of instructional material. The student may either leave the place of instruction or remain in the classroom without taking part.

REFERENCES

Cross References:

[Exhibit 1](#) – Parent’s Request for Reconsideration of a Resource

[Policy HIAD](#) – Resources for Schools

[Policy HGAC](#) – Religious Education

Legal Reference:

[Education Act](#) – Section 53, 58

BM#: 370-96; 206-05; 20120517.1014; 20150129.1001; 20170525.1008;
20190926.1008; 20231026.1008; 20231123.1011

Next Review: 2026/2027