Administrative Procedure 205

CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

Background

Studying controversial issues helps prepare students to participate responsibly in a democratic and pluralistic society.

Procedures

1. Discussion of controversial issues shall
   - 1.1 Represent alternative points of view, subject to the condition that resources used are not restricted by federal or provincial law.
   - 1.2 Promote critical inquiry rather than advocacy (i.e., teach students how to think rather than what to think).
   - 1.3 Ensure that participants are not ridiculed or intimidated for their views.
   - 1.4 Reflect the maturity, capabilities, and educational needs of students.
   - 1.5 Meet the requirements of provincially prescribed and approved courses.
   - 1.6 Reflect the neighbourhood and community in which the school is located as well as the provincial, national, and international context.
2. Complaints about controversial issues shall first be directed to the teacher.
3. If the issue is not satisfactorily resolved, the complainant shall be referred to the principal.
4. A principal receiving a complaint about the presentation of a controversial issue will try to resolve the complaint informally, by explaining to the complainant the Division's procedure on controversial issues, and the manner in which the issue in question relates to the curriculum.
5. Where the complainant is dissatisfied with the explanation, the principal shall
   - 5.1 Indicate in cases where the issue is a part of the curriculum set by Alberta Education, that further protests must be directed to the Minister.
   - 5.2 Endeavour, in cases where the issue is supplementary to the curriculum, to comply with a written request from the parent that discussion of the issue be restricted for that parent's children.

6. Where the complainant wishes to file a formal challenge to the presentation of a controversial issue within the school, the principal shall provide a "Public Complaint about Controversial Issues" form (Form 205-1).

7. The principal shall send a copy of the completed form to the Superintendent, who will, within seven days of receipt, reply to the complainant and the principal, either making a decision, or indicating that a committee is being established to consider the issue.

8. If the Superintendent elects to establish a committee to consider the issue, the Superintendent shall define the membership of the committee, and the time limit within which it must work.

9. The committee shall evaluate the presentation of the controversial issue and shall prepare a confidential, written report to the Superintendent.

10. On receipt of the report, the Superintendent shall consider the recommendations, make a decision, and inform the complainant and the principal of the decision.

11. The major criterion for the final decision is the appropriateness of the presentation of the issue for its intended educational use.

Reference: Section 20, 39, 60, 61, 113, School Act
Section 7, 16, 18, 19, 31, 40, 41, 42, 43, 58 Education Act
Alberta Bill of Rights
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom, Constitution Act, 1982
Guide to Education ECS to Grade 12