

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

Instruction Programs and Material

Controversial Materials

INS #03

Revised: August 2026

Background

Christ The Redeemer (CTR) Catholic Schools recognizes that every person is created in the image and likeness of God and possesses inherent dignity, intellect, and conscience. Catholic education is committed to forming students who think critically, discern faithfully, and engage respectfully with the ideas, experiences, and perspectives they encounter in an increasingly complex world.

The study of controversial issues can contribute meaningfully to this formation when it is undertaken with intellectual integrity, sensitivity, and respect for the dignity of every person. Students should be supported in examining evidence, considering differing perspectives, asking meaningful questions, and developing informed judgments without ridicule, coercion, or inappropriate ideological influence. Catholic education seeks not simply to tell students what to think, but to form their capacity to think critically and responsibly in light of faith, reason, and the collective truth of the Church.

As Catholic schools, CTR Catholic is not neutral regarding its Catholic faith, identity, and mission. Catholic teaching and worldview provide the foundation through which the educational mission of the school is understood. At the same time, educators are called to distinguish faithful formation from personal advocacy and to approach controversial political, social, and moral issues fairly and thoughtfully. In partnership with parents and guardians as the primary educators of their children, CTR Catholic seeks to ensure that sensitive and controversial issues are addressed with appropriate communication, respect for parental rights and responsibilities, and a shared commitment to the formation and flourishing of every student. All instructional materials and resources used in CTR Catholic schools must be appropriate for a Catholic learning environment, support the educational purpose of the course or program, and be consistent with the Board's vision, mission, fundamental beliefs, and the requirements of the *Education Act*.

The Alberta Guide to Education (2025) offers the following commentary on controversial issues:

Controversial issues are those topics that are publicly sensitive and upon which there is no consensus of values or beliefs. They include topics on which reasonable people may sincerely disagree. Opportunities to deal with these issues are an integral part of student learning in Alberta.

Studying controversial issues is important in preparing students to participate responsibly in a democratic and pluralistic society. Such study provides opportunities to develop the ability to think clearly, to reason logically, to open mindedly and respectfully examine different points of view and to make sound judgements.

Teachers, students and others participating in studies or discussions of controversial issues need to exercise sensitivity to ensure that students and others are not ridiculed, embarrassed or intimidated for positions that they hold on controversial issues.

Discussing or studying controversial issues provides opportunities to

- *present alternative points of view, subject to the condition that information presented is not restricted by any federal or provincial law*
- *reflect the maturity, capabilities and educational needs of the students*
- *meet the requirements of provincially prescribed and approved courses and programs of study/curriculum and education programs*
- *reflect the neighbourhood and community in which the school is located, as well as provincial, national and international contexts*

Controversial issues that have been anticipated by the teacher, and those that may arise incidentally during instruction, should be used by the teacher to promote critical inquiry and/or to teach thinking skills.

The school plays a supportive role to parents in the areas of values and moral development and shall handle parental decisions in regard to controversial issues with respect and sensitivity.

Further to the Guide to Education's guidance, it is important to note that section 58.1 of the *Education Act* requires boards of schools to provide parents with notice where courses of study, educational programs or instructional materials, or instruction or exercises, including subject matter that deals primarily and explicitly with religion or human sexuality.

The following procedures outline proactive processes to ensure controversial issues are dealt with in adherence to the provisions of both the Guide to Education and the *Education Act*. They also outline a process for parents to request the review of a resource.

Procedures

1. Instructional materials and resources selected for use in CTR Catholic schools shall:
 - 1.1. support the outcomes and educational purpose of the applicable course or program of study;
 - 1.2. be appropriate to the age, maturity, capabilities, and educational needs of students;
 - 1.3. be appropriate for use within a Catholic learning environment and consistent with the Catholic identity, mission, vision, and fundamental beliefs of Christ The Redeemer Catholic Schools;
 - 1.4. encourage a wide range of perspectives and ideas, foster critical thinking, and support the acquisition of knowledge and skills;
 - 1.5. promote understanding and respect for others and reflect, where appropriate, the diverse nature and heritage of Alberta society;
 - 1.6. support academic rigor, intellectual integrity, and essential knowledge; and
 - 1.7. be selected and used for a legitimate educational purpose rather than for political, social, or ideological advocacy.
2. No instructional material or resource used in a CTR Catholic school shall promote or foster doctrines of racial or ethnic superiority or persecution, social change through violent action, or disobedience of laws.
3. School administrators should request teachers review required reading lists (and other potentially controversial materials such as videos, movies, and case studies, etc.) on an annual basis and identify new literature and/or materials that may contain content or themes of a sensitive nature. Examples include, but

are not limited to, content involving violence, racism, or human sexuality. It is not appropriate to use literature that is gratuitously focused on any of the aforementioned issues or any other sensitive issue. However, there is often a place for using literature or other resources with sensitive content under some general guidelines that teachers should adhere to under the principal's supervision and direction:

- 3.1. Before electing a new instructional resource containing potentially sensitive or controversial content, the teacher shall review the resource in its entirety and consider its curricular relevance, educational value, age and developmental appropriateness, lived experience of students, treatment of differing perspectives, consistency with Catholic teaching and worldview, and suitability within the context of the course and school community.
 - 3.2. If a potentially controversial material is used after sufficient consideration, communication (parent letter, course outline) must be sent to parents or guardians explaining the reason for using the resource and outlining the sensitive issues in advance.
 - 3.3. Parents are given the right to request their student opt out of lessons related to the resource, and have the teacher replicate the learning with another resource/activity for the student who is exempted.
 - 3.4. It should be noted that while a focus on sensitive issues can engage, raise awareness, and enlighten our students, there are many choices of literature and resources that nurture and expand the mind without controversy or risk.
4. The use of an individual instructional resource shall not result in a controversial political, social, or ideological perspective being presented as the only reasonable or acceptable perspective where legitimate differing perspectives exist. Where necessary, additional materials or instruction shall be used to provide appropriate context and support critical examination of differing perspectives.
 5. Members of the school community have the right to formally challenge the use of instructional materials by demonstrating that the manner in which the resource is being used does not reflect the vision, mission and fundamental beliefs of the division. Instructional materials in our schools must support the Board's vision, mission, and fundamental beliefs.
 6. Schools play a supportive role to parents in the areas of values and moral development and shall handle parental decisions regarding controversial issues with respect and sensitivity. Recognizing parents and guardians as the primary educators of their children, schools shall support meaningful parental involvement in student learning. Teachers are encouraged to communicate proactively with parents or guardians regarding sensitive or controversial content they reasonably believe may be of concern to families and shall comply with all legislated requirements for parental notification and consent.