

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

Personnel and Employee Relations

Political Neutrality and
Controversial Issues

PER# 37

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, conscience, and the capacity to seek truth. Catholic education is committed to the formation of the whole person and to helping students develop the knowledge, wisdom, critical thinking, and moral discernment necessary to engage thoughtfully with complex questions and differing perspectives.

The study of controversial issues can contribute to this formation when it is undertaken with intellectual integrity, respect, and a genuine desire to understand. Students should be supported in examining evidence, considering differing perspectives, asking meaningful questions, and developing informed judgments without coercion, ridicule, or inappropriate ideological influence. The dignity of each person must be respected even when significant disagreement exists.

As Catholic schools, CTR Catholic is not neutral regarding its Catholic faith, identity, and mission. Catholic teaching and worldview provide the foundation through which our educational mission is understood.

The division recognizes that, in delivering the curriculum prescribed by the province, students may study topics and issues that are controversial in nature. The thoughtful examination of such issues can help prepare students to participate responsibly and respectfully. Such study is to provide opportunities to develop student capacities to think clearly, reason logically, and open-mindedly and respectfully examine the different points of view related to curricular outcomes and reach sound judgements.

Definitions

A controversial issue is a topic that is publicly sensitive and on which there is no broadly accepted consensus regarding values, beliefs, ideas or perspectives. Such issues may give rise to diverse opinions, differing interpretations, and sincerely held disagreements among individuals and groups.

The 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.

Procedures

1. 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. Teachers should ensure diverse student viewpoints and impartial education programming and that courses, programs of study, and instructional materials encourage a range of perspectives.
2. Teachers should represent political and/or controversial issues neutrally, avoid expressing personal opinions or taking positions on political, social, or ideological matters, and present competing perspectives and the values and beliefs upon which those perspectives are based.
3. To inspire critical thinking when discussing political and/or controversial issues, the information presented should:
 - represent alternative points of view;
 - reflect the requirements of the course as stated in the program of studies;
 - reflect the community in which the school is located, but not to the exclusion of provincial, national, and international contexts; and
 - consider the age, maturity, abilities, and educational needs of the students.
4. When students express strong opinions on political and/or controversial issues, teachers may endeavour to provide reasonable information that effectively represents differing positions while adhering to this Administrative Procedure.
5. The Catholic perspective is to be accurately, respectfully, and sensitively represented whenever applicable.
6. Sensitivity on the part of teachers, students, and other participants in controversial issues shall be exercised to ensure that students and others are not intentionally ridiculed, embarrassed, intimidated, or degraded for positions that they hold. Teachers are encouraged to communicate with parents regarding content the teacher believes a parent may find offensive or inappropriate for their student.

7. Controversial issues, whether pre-planned by the teacher or arising incidentally in class, are to be used to promote critical inquiry and the development of thinking skills rather than advocacy.
8. School staff are to be supportive of parents in the areas of values and moral development and shall handle parental decisions regarding controversial issues with respect and sensitivity. Such morals and values shall be aligned with the teachings and practices of the Catholic Church. The Principal shall establish and implement methods that facilitate the meaningful involvement of parents in student learning and decisions respecting non-instructional school activities.
9. School staff are to be supportive of parents in the areas of values and moral development and shall handle parental decisions regarding controversial issues with respect and sensitivity. Such morals and values shall be aligned with the teachings and practices of the Catholic Church.
10. The Principal shall establish and implement methods that facilitate the meaningful involvement of parents in student learning and in decisions respecting non-instructional school activities. This may include appropriate communication and opportunities for parental input regarding learning experiences involving controversial issues.
11. Teachers are encouraged to communicate with parents regarding content the teacher reasonably believes a parent may consider sensitive, controversial, offensive, or inappropriate for their student, and shall comply with all legislated parental notification and consent requirements.
12. Courses, programs of study, and instructional materials used in a school must:
 - encourage a wide range of perspectives and ideas;
 - foster critical thinking;
 - foster the acquisition of knowledge and skills;
 - reflect the diverse nature and heritage of society in Alberta;
 - promote understanding and respect for others,
 - honour and respect the common values and beliefs of Albertans; and
 - Reflect the teachings of the Catholic Church,
13. No course, program of study, or instructional materials may promote or foster doctrines of racial or ethnic superiority or persecution, social change through violent action, or disobedience of laws.
14. The division shall implement and continuously monitor the delivery of prescribed, approved, or authorized courses and programs of study to ensure that students receive high-quality and academically challenging instruction focused on academic rigor, intellectual integrity, and essential knowledge.
15. Education programming that is not prescribed, approved, or authorized under the *Education Act* shall be impartial, fair, neutral, and free of personal bias. Statements or positions, including political, social, or ideological positions, that are not relevant to fulfilling the division's obligations under the *Education Act* shall not form part of such programming.
16. Teachers and teacher leaders shall not teach or lead in a manner that exploits their relationship with students for ideological advantage, material advantage, or other advantage, as provided for in the *Code of Conduct for Teachers and Teacher Leaders*. "Ideological advantage" means perspectives taught to students in a biased manner with the intent to take advantage of a student's uninformed or under-informed opinions and does not include programs of study established under the *Education Act*.

17. Each student shall be free to express any perspective or idea at school in a manner that complies with the student code of conduct, applicable legislation, and the expectations of a Catholic school setting.