



## Controversial Issues in Education

### BACKGROUND

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.

*Guide to Education: ECS to Grade 12*

### *“VISION*

To promote the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that support 21st century citizenry and life-long learning within a holistic, personalized, integrated, flexible learning environment.

CAPE defines excellence as:

- (a) the achievement of the student’s personal best in academic pursuits;
- (b) the development of social and interpersonal skills (such as anger management, problem solving, democratic decision making, tolerance, and/or acceptance of different beliefs), self-esteem, self-motivation, and self-direction (independent learning), and the development of ‘citizenry’ skills.”

CAPE charter

**CAPE-Centre for Academic and Personal Excellence  
Policy Manual**

**Policy 7.05**

**Category: Curriculum and Instruction**

**POLICY STATEMENT**

1. The CAPE Charter Board supports the involvement of students in studies involving controversial issues as an important means of preparing students to participate responsibly in a democratic and pluralistic society.

**DEFINITIONS**

2. **Controversial issue** - topic that are publicly sensitive and upon which there is no consensus of values or beliefs.
3. **Pluralistic society** - a diverse society, where the people in it believe all kinds of different things and tolerate each other's beliefs even when they don't match their own.
4. **Democratic society** - a form of society which favours equal rights, freedom of speech and a fair trial and tolerates the views of minorities.

**GUIDELINES**

5. It is the responsibility of teachers to exercise sound professional judgement in their approach to controversial issues, discussions, and activities within the delivery of programs.
6. Teachers may consult others, including parents and other professional colleagues where deemed appropriate.
7. It is the responsibility of teachers to exercise sound professional judgment in the use of supplementary learning resources and to enhance prescribed curricula to meet the educational needs of students.
8. Teachers may consult others, including parents and other professional colleagues where deemed appropriate.
9. The content of supplementary learning resources will be consistent with the Vision, Mission and Philosophy of CAPE.
10. Parents may object to teacher selection of resources and, therefore, the CAPE Charter Board authorizes an appeal process through practices and procedures developed by the Superintendent.
11. Any parent wanting to appeal the teacher selection of resources must:
  - 11.1 address these concerns directly with the teacher in writing.
  - 11.2 The teacher must respond to the parental concerns in writing within 5 working days of receiving the written parental communication.

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- 11.3 If the teacher's reply is not satisfactory, a meeting involving the parent, the teacher and the Principal is structured to discuss the concerns and find a common satisfactory resolution.
- 11.4 In the event that this proves unsatisfactory for any of the participants, the matter must be referred to the Superintendent for final resolution.
- 11.5 The decision of the Superintendent is final and must be communicated to all parties involved.

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**References:**

*CAPE charter*

*Guide to Education*

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Motion: #2007-10-22-11

Motion: #2008-09-30-24

Motion: #2013-8-27-25