



AP 7.03

Category: Curriculum and Instruction

## Controversial Issues in an Educational Environment

### BACKGROUND & RATIONALE

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. The CAPE Charter Board also recognizes that at times sensitive issues may arise in the classroom and in discussions.

The CAPE certificated staff delivers integrated Humanities and Sciences programs, projects, and any other integrated learning initiatives that foster the development of skills and attitudes such as entrepreneurial skills, citizenry, altruism and volunteerism, environmental stewardship, global awareness, awareness of and respect for other cultures, physical and mental health, art appreciation, and more. These are often locally developed and tied to community. Our I.S.E.E. Program encourages student exploration of local, provincial, national and global issues. It is reasonable to assume or expect that from time to time controversial issues become part of the conversations within the classroom.

### DEFINITIONS

1. **Controversial issue** - something or someone that is the subject of intense public argument, disagreement, or disapproval.
2. **Democratic society** - society that works towards the ideals of democracy, respect for individuals, and their right to make their own choices, tolerance of differences and opposing ideas, equity, valuing all people, and supporting them to reach their full potential.
3. **Pluralistic society** - people of different social classes, religions, races, etc. together in a society but continue to have their different traditions and interests.
4. **Entrepreneurial skills** - those skills normally associated with being an entrepreneur, although anyone can develop them.
5. **Citizenry skills** - feelings of being linked to their communities and to the well-being of other citizens.
6. **Altruism** - the belief in or practice of disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others, actions to promote someone else's welfare, even at a risk or cost to ourselves..
7. **Volunteerism** - the principle of donating time and energy for the benefit of other people in the community as a social responsibility rather than for any financial reward.

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8. **Environmental stewardship** - The responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices to enhance ecosystem resilience and human well-being.
9. **Global awareness** - capacity that incorporates the attitudes, knowledge, and skills necessary for a person to competently and perceptively navigate the challenges and opportunities of a globalized world in a way that promotes the greater good.
10. **Global issue** - a matter of public concern worldwide, that presents problems or phenomena affecting people around the world, including but not limited to widespread social issues, economic issues, and environmental issues.

**PROCEDURE**

11. The teacher is responsible for ensuring that issues that may affect a student's comfort level in the classroom and the school, their sense of belonging and acceptance, of security, of being treated fairly and with respect be addressed tactfully, respectfully, with sensitivity and in a very timely manner.
12. The teacher will exercise sound professional judgement in the selection of print, visual or electronic resources that respect cultural, political, religious and any other perspective of the students and their families.
13. The teacher will exercise sound professional judgement in their choice of words, examples, anecdotes and .
14. It is responsibility of the teacher to guide all conversations within the classroom so that respect is clearly and overtly part of the classroom environment.
15. In the event that as student display disrespectful, bullying or offensive behaviour, it is responsibility of the teacher to adhere to the school's discipline procedures.
16. Planned class conversation and/or activities:
  - 16.1 It is responsibility of the teacher to advise parents/guardians of upcoming topics of discussions that may be controversial and provide parents with the opportunity to excuse their student from that part of the class or program, in writing.
  - 16.2 The teacher will provide alternative activities (with supervision) for any excused student.
  - 16.3 The teacher will maintain records of all parent communications regarding any controversial issues discussed.
17. Unplanned class conversation and/or activities:
  - 17.1 The teacher will monitor the comfort level of students and excuse a student if the student is visibly uncomfortable.

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- 17.2 The teacher will exercise sound professional judgement in choice of words, examples, and anecdotes.
18. Any parent wanting to appeal the teacher selection of resources must:
- 18.1 address these concerns directly with the teacher, in writing.
- 18.2 The teacher must respond to the parental concerns in writing within 5 working days of receiving the written parental communication.
- 18.3 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.
- 18.4 In the event that this proves unsatisfactory for any of the participants, the matter must be referred to the Superintendent for final resolution.
- 18.5 The decision of the Superintendent is final and must be communicated to all parties involved.

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**References:**

*Education Act*

*Guide to Education*

*CAPE charter*

*CAPE Policy 7.02, 7.03, 7.04, 7.05, 9.01, 9.04, 9.05, 9.06 and 9.08*

*CAPE Student Code of Conduct*

*The Inclusive Education Policy Framework*

*Inspiring Education: A Dialogue with Albertans*

*Setting the Direction for Special Education in Alberta*

*Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP)*

*Digital Citizenship Policy Development Guide*

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