PEACE WAPITI
PUBLIC SCHOOL DIVISION
Educating Today for Success Tomorrow

POLICY HNB – Teaching About Controversial Issues

Studying controversial issues helps students to balance competing views in our society.

PURPOSE:

To provide guidelines for management of teaching controversial issues.

DEFINITIONS:

Controversial issues are those topics that are publicly sensitive and upon which there is no consensus of values or beliefs.

GUIDELINES & PROCEDURES:

1. Staff are encouraged to reference the Curriculum Information Hub regularly and ensure all appropriate steps are taken before selecting a teaching resource. Teachers need to consider contextual variables such as the values of the community.
2. Teachers, students, and participants will respect different viewpoints.
3. Information regarding controversial issues should:
   a) represent alternative points of view and respect legal requirements;
   b) be developmentally appropriate;
   c) be sensitive to community expectations.
4. Parents or special interest groups wishing to remove resource materials shall submit a written request to the School Administrator detailing the reason for the request and submitting copies of the proposed materials to be removed (Exhibit 1).
   a) In the event that a parent or special interest group wishes to appeal the School Administrator's decision, the group shall submit copies of the proposed material to be removed to the Superintendent.
   b) In the event that a parent or special interest group wishes to appeal the Superintendent's decision, the group shall submit a request for appeal and copies of the proposed material to be removed to the Board of Trustees.
5. Schools will consider the concerns of parents about their child's participation in discussions involving controversial issues.
6. External parties and any resources must be approved by the Minister.
7. With the exception of incidental or indirect references to human sexuality or sexual orientation, PWPSD schools must obtain parental consent where "courses of study, educational programs or instructional materials, or instruction or exercises include subject matter that deals primarily and explicitly with human sexuality or sexual orientation." This consent must:
   a) Be provided at least 30 days prior to the instruction or classroom content;
   b) Provide parents with sufficient information to make an informed decision;

c) Provide parents with the opportunity to opt their child in for all or part of the instruction.

8. Where a parent does not provide consent under section 58.11(1) of the *Education Act*, teachers shall exempt the student, without academic penalty, from such instruction, course of study, educational program, or use of instructional material. The student will be provided alternate instruction or supervision in another location within the school.

REFERENCES

Cross References:

Exhibit 1 – Parent's Request for Reconsideration of a Resource
Exhibit 2 - Notice Form Under Section 58.11(1) of the *Education Act*
Policy CB – Superintendent
Policy HIAD – Resources for Schools
Policy HGAC – Religious Education
Curriculum Information Hub

Legal Reference:

Education Act – Sections 18.1, 18.1(1), 53, 58, 58.11(1), 58.12(1)

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