

Case 10

You have been hired as a primary teacher in a large elementary school in Richmond. Many of the school's families are deeply committed to their diverse religious backgrounds. A couple of weeks ago, the principal advised you to attend an upcoming PAC meeting, as the committee was planning to discuss the Social Studies and the Health and Career Education curriculum that is taught in the primary grades. The meeting was well attended and the discussion regarding the explicit discussion of non-traditional family structures was heated. Many of the parents thought that the primary grades were too early to introduce diverse family compositions. The appropriateness of introducing sexual health education at the primary level was also hotly contested. The members of the School Planning Council (SPC) who were in attendance were watching the debate closely.

The discussion at the PAC meeting made you think back to some of the experiences in your practicum school:

- There was a group of grade 7 boys who sometimes taunted one of their peers by calling him a “fag,” a “queer” and a “homo.” You remember one of your co-workers mentioning something about Jubran vs. the North Vancouver School Board, but at the time you were too busy to find out more.
- In the staff room, the teachers were concerned about a grade 2 boy named Elliot. He preferred to play with dolls during centre time and wore his mother's earrings to school for show and tell.
- Your school advisor asked you to skip the page in “All Families Are Special” that showed a family with same-sex parents. You didn't question your school advisor's request at the time, because you didn't want to jeopardize your relationship with him. Still, you weren't sure how to reconcile his request with what you know about the BC government's commitment to diversity in the School Act, as well as in its other educational policies and documents. And what about BC's and Canada's Human Rights Legislation that explicitly forbids discrimination on the basis of gender and sexuality. Still, you know that a court case about banning books in Surrey went as far as the Canadian Supreme Court, so the answer is likely not clear cut.

While you aren't sure exactly how all of these experiences are important to the PAC's discussion of the primary curriculum, you sense that they are somehow related. All you know for certain is that you need a better understanding of these experiences, as well as the structures of school governance. You'll be expected to explain and justify your position on the Social Studies and the Health and Career Education curriculum both at the September staff meeting and to the parents of your future students.