

Public Complaints About Instructional Resources

The Board, though it is ultimately responsible for all curriculum and instructional materials including library books, recognizes the need and right of students to free access to many different types of books and materials. It also recognizes the right of the professional staff to select books and other materials supportive of the district's educational philosophy and goals.

The Board has approved principles governing the selection of all instructional materials including library books and has established policies pertaining to the selection process. However, the Board wishes to amplify its principles on the selection of books and other materials which present controversial topics or which for other reasons might be challenged.

Material that is challenged usually belongs to one of the three basic categories: religion, ideology or profanity/obscenity. Board policies regarding these areas shall be as follows:

1. Religion — Factual, unbiased material on all major religions has a place in school libraries.
2. Ideologies — Libraries should, with no thought toward swaying reader judgment, make available a balanced collection of primary and factual material on the level of their students on various ideologies or philosophies which exert or have exerted a strong force, either favorably or unfavorably, in government, current events, politics, education and other phases of life.
3. Profanity/obscenity — Materials shall be subjected to a test of literary merit and reality by media specialists and teachers who will take into consideration the maturity of the students and the standards of the community.

Criticism of a book or other materials used in the schools may be expected from time to time. In such instances:

1. The Board recognizes the right of an individual parent to request that his own child not read a given book. When such a request is presented, the teacher and/or school administrator should resolve the situation, perhaps by arranging for use of alternative materials meeting essentially the same instructional purpose. This does not apply, however, to basic program texts and materials that the Board has adopted.

2. The Board shall not permit any individual or group to exercise censorship over instructional materials and library collections but recognizes that at times a reevaluation of certain materials may be desirable. When instructional materials are challenged, the following shall apply:
 - a. The person who objects to the book or other material shall be asked to sign a complaint on a standard form on which the complainant will document his or her criticism.
 - b. Following receipt of the formal complaint, the superintendent shall provide for a reevaluation of the material in question.
 - c. The reevaluation shall be based on the points offered above as well as the principles governing the selection of all instructional materials. Additionally, the Board wishes to emphasize that:
 - (1) A book shall not be excluded because of the writer's race or nationality or his or her political or religious views.
 - (2) The value of any book or other material shall be judged as a whole, taking into account the purpose of the material rather than individual, isolated expressions or incidents in the work.
 - d. The superintendent or designee shall review the complaint and reevaluation and shall render a decision in the matter. Should the solution be unsatisfactory to the complainant, the complainant may appeal the decision to the Board. The Board's decision shall be final.

If the same instructional material is challenged at a future date, the superintendent or designee will examine the previous decision in the light of additional points of view. If the superintendent finds any significant difference in the new challenge, the superintendent again may review the material. Otherwise, the original decision will stand and a copy of the final written recommendation of the superintendent and any Board action will be sent to the complainant with an explanation that the instructional material has been evaluated previously. If the complainant believes his or her challenge is different from the previous one or that significant new evidence exists, the complainant may appeal the decision to the Board. The Board's decision shall be final.

In summary, the Board assumes final responsibility for all books and instructional materials it makes available to students. It holds its professional staff accountable for their proper selection. It recognizes rights of individual parents with respect to controversial materials used by their own children. It will provide for the reevaluation of materials in library collections upon request. On the other hand, students' rights to learn and the freedom of teachers to teach shall be respected.

Adopted: January 21, 1992
Revised: January 2001

CROSS REFS.: IJ, Instructional Materials
IJJ, Textbook Selection and Adoption
IJL, Library Materials Selection and Adoption

5. Is there anything good about this material? _____

6. Did you read the entire book/view the entire film/listen to the entire cassette? _____

What parts do you object to? _____

7. Are you aware of the judgment of this material by literary/film/music critics? _____

8. What would you like the school to do about this material?

_____ do not assign it to students

_____ withdraw it from use in the district

_____ refer it to an official committee for reevaluation

9. Would you care to recommend other material of the same subject and format? _____

Signature of complainant

Date

Please return completed form to the school principal.