

Guidelines for Administrators

The proper selection, adoption and evaluation of instructional materials is a key responsibility of public school administrators, many of whom face time constraints and limited resources.

NCAC encourages school districts to adopt and scrupulously follow clear written policies on instructional materials to ensure that students have access to materials of literary, artistic and educational merit. The following is a step-by-step guide for drafting instructional materials policies, including best practices for how complaints should be filed, considered and adjudicated.

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[Sample Request for Reconsideration of Material](#)

[Sample Review Policies](#)

SELECTION AND ADOPTION

Instructional materials policies should begin by outlining a process and criteria for the selection and adoption of instructional materials. Criteria can include the material's relevance to the subject matter, recommended grade level and format. These criteria should form the basis for reviewing challenged materials later. They ensure decisions about instruction advance fundamental pedagogical goals and not subjective interests.

HANDLING CHALLENGES TO INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Step 1: Invite complainant(s) to an informal meeting

Most concerns about instructional materials can be redressed through informal conversations with teachers.

Listen courteously and refer complainants to the teacher involved who can address any concerns about sensitive material. Teachers can best explain the educational purpose of the contested material and its appropriateness to students' intellectual maturity.

If the complainant is not satisfied, invite them to initiate the formal reconsideration process by submitting a written request.

Step 2: Record all complaints in writing

A written form helps reviewers identify the controversial elements of the work and increases transparency.

Complaint forms should ask petitioners to:

1. Identify themselves and their relation to the school district (e.g. parent, teacher, local resident).
2. Describe their objections and cite the pages where they occur.
3. Establish their familiarity with the work as a whole. Complainants should have read the entire book and examined objectionable portions in their proper context.
4. Explain why they consider the work inappropriate, taking into consideration the teacher's justification for using it.
5. Offer a suggestion for an alternative assignment of comparable educational quality. This helps reviewers assess the complainants' judgment and motives.

Step 3: Convene a diverse committee of educators and other stakeholders to review the material and recommend a decision to the administration.

Administrators may lack both the time and expertise necessary to review library and classroom materials carefully (e.g. a principal who was formerly a math teacher may have trouble assessing the value and accuracy of a controversial history textbook or lack training in library management). As the public faces of the school or district, administrators may also be more susceptible than teachers to public pressures.

To ensure that educational considerations are valued above subjective opinion or political pressure, committees should include a majority of teachers and library media specialists. A diverse body of qualified educational professionals is less likely to succumb to the external pressure than a single administrator or even a group of administrators.

For these reasons, a sound policy will create a diverse review committee that includes:

1. **At least one librarian.** Librarians are best suited to assess the educational value of non-curricular materials and to appreciate their role in creating a diverse library catalog.

2. **Several teachers**, ideally including at least one teacher in the relevant subject. This ensures that committee members will be informed about the importance of the book to instruction in the specific subject and to curriculum as a whole.
3. **At least one school or district-level administrator**. Administrators are knowledgeable about a school's history and community context and their presence can bolster a committee's credibility.
4. **Trained students**. We strongly encourage districts to include high school students on committees. This ensures that student voices are being heard and can help prevent censorship of popular materials.
5. **Community members** who are not employed by the school district. These members are free from job-related pressures and will not be subject to professional retribution in the event that administrators disagree with the committee's decision. They can therefore be less susceptible to internal pressures and biases. Still, it is vital that community voices not outnumber those of trained educators.

Note: We encourage districts to make all committee meetings open to the public and to allow members of the public, including students, to submit statements conveying their opinion of the challenged materials.

Step 4: Establish clear and objective review criteria for the committee to follow.

Challenges to instructional materials should rarely (if ever) succeed in cases where the materials were selected to fulfill clear educational goals. Policies can instruct the committee to examine whether materials meet the objectives of the selection process and should seek to remove subjectivity by instructing the committee to consider only educationally relevant criteria, including:

1. Accuracy and completeness (for textbooks).
2. Importance to the curriculum.
3. Reviews, awards and recommendations by educational experts.
4. Age appropriateness. This refers to whether or not students of the relevant age levels have the maturity and literacy skills to comprehend a book's message. The policy should mention that the presence of a specific content (for example, sexuality or violence) does not in itself render a book inappropriate for a given age.
5. The popularity of the work among students (for library books).
6. The length of time that the school has been using the book in classrooms or libraries.
7. The presence of salient themes and discussion of timely sociopolitical issues.

Policy should also ideally discourage the committee from considering subjective criteria such as:

1. Whether or not committee members personally consider the book to be offensive.
2. Whether or not the work's message contradicts "community values."

3. Personal characteristics of the author.

Step 5: Final decision and appeal process

Specify who makes the final decision regarding keeping or removing educational materials: the school principal, the school board, or the board president.

Explain if and after what interval of time the school would consider an appeal of this final decision.

Specify what will be done with a challenged book while it is under review. Our strong recommendation is to keep the book in the classroom or library pending a final decision by a review committee.

Sample Request for Reconsideration of a Work

Author _____
Title _____
Publisher (if known) _____
Request initiated by _____
Telephone _____
Address _____
City / State / Zip _____
Complainant:
Name: _____
Organization (if any) _____
Relationship to School (parent/administrator/etc):

1. Have you been able to discuss this work with the teacher or librarian who ordered it or who used it? Yes No

2. What do you understand to be the general purpose for using this work?
 - Provide support for a unit in the curriculum?
 Yes No

 - Provide a learning experience for the reader in one kind of literature?
 Yes No

 - Other _____

3. Did the general purpose for the use of the work, as described by the teacher or librarian, seem a suitable one to you?
 Yes No
 If not, please explain.

4. What do you think is the general purpose of the author in this book?

5. In what ways do you think a work of this nature is not suitable for the use the teacher or librarian wishes to carry out?

6. Have you been able to learn the students' response to this work?
 Yes No

7. What response did the students give?

8. Have you been able to learn from your school library what book reviewers or other students of literature have written about this work?

Yes No

9. Would you like the teacher or librarian to give you a written summary of what book reviewers and other students have written about this book or film?

Yes No

10. Do you have negative reviews of the book?

Yes No

11. Where were they published?

12. Would you be willing to provide summaries of the critical reviews you have collected?

Yes No

13. What would you like your library/school to do about this work?

Do not assign/lend it to my child.

Return it to the staff selection committee/department for reevaluation.

Other—Please explain

14. Are there particular works you would recommend in place of the challenged material that would convey as valuable a picture and perspective of the subject treated?

Signature _____

Date _____

Sample Review Policies

The following is a selection of exemplary existing challenge policies from school districts throughout the country. These model policies are not all perfect, but they meet most of our criteria. The model policies generally agree that the process of resolving a complaint begins with an attempt to respond to a challenge informally; that formal challenges must be in writing; and that challenges are to be adjudicated by a committee, rather than by a single administrator.

Jump to policy:

[Dubuque Community Schools \(Dubuque, Iowa\)](#)

[Round Rock Independent School District \(Austin, TX\)](#)

[Additional Policies](#)

DUBUQUE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS, IOWA

Highlights:

- The procedure is very transparent: Review committee meetings are public, and the public is given notice of the hearing times and locations
- The procedure ensures that all stakeholders are represented on the review committee, including students, and specifies the exact number of representatives of each group of shareholders must serve on the committee.
- Challenge criteria: The policy also prevents frivolous challenges, as the committee is not required to hear complaints to works that have previously been challenged.
- Safeguards: it helps prevent self-censorship by teachers and librarians who fear reprisal for selecting works that are later challenged and removed: “A decision to sustain a challenge shall not be interpreted as a judgment of irresponsibility on the part of the professionals involved in the original selection or use of the material.”

Dubuque Policy:

Reconsideration of materials

- A. Informal review. Any resident or employee of the school district may raise objection to instructional materials used in the district’s educational program despite the fact that the individuals selecting such materials were duly qualified to make the selection and observed the criteria for selecting such material. All instructional materials and any materials used with any survey, analysis, or evaluation as part of any federally funded program must be available for inspection by citizens. All such materials must be

viewed on school district premises; copies may be obtained in accordance with policy.

1. The school official or staff member receiving a complaint regarding instructional materials shall try to resolve the issue informally. The materials shall remain in use until the reconsideration committee makes its recommendation (Part III, 6, K).
 - a. The school staff member initially receiving a complaint shall explain to the complainant the school's selection criteria and qualifications of those persons selecting the materials.
 - b. The staff member initially receiving a complaint shall explain the intended educational usefulness of the material and additional information regarding its use, or refer the complaining party to someone who can explain and identify the use of the material.
2. In the event that the person making the objection to material is not satisfied with the initial explanation, that person should be referred to someone designated by the principal to handle such complaints. If, after private consultation, the complainant desires to file a formal complaint, the person to whom the complainant has been referred will provide the Reconsideration Request Form and answer any questions regarding its completion.
3. The individual receiving the initial complaint shall advise the appropriate building principal of the initial contact no later than the end of the following day, whether or not the complainant has apparently been satisfied by the initial contact. A written record of the contact shall be made and maintained by the principal.
4. Each principal shall review the selection and objection policy and guidelines with the staff at least annually, stressing that the right to object to materials is one granted by policies enacted by the Board of Directors and firmly entrenched in law.

B. Formal Review

1. Any resident or employee of the school district may formally challenge instructional materials used in the district's educational program on the basis of appropriateness of its intended educational use.
2. Each building principal and the superintendent or a designee will have and make available Reconsideration Request Forms. All formal objections to instructional materials must be made on these forms.
3. The Reconsideration Request Form shall be signed by the complainant and filed with the superintendent or a designee.
4. Within fifteen (15) business days of the filing of the form, the superintendent or a designee shall convene and file the material in question with a Reconsideration Committee. The purpose of the Reconsideration Committee is to provide an open forum for

discussion of challenged materials and to make an informed recommendation to the superintendent on the challenge.

5. Access to challenged material shall not be restricted during the reconsideration process.
6. The Reconsideration Committee
 - a. A committee of eleven members shall be formed and it shall include, in so far as is possible, both women and men, persons of various racial and ethnic backgrounds, the disabled, and older people as well as younger people.
 - i. Two teachers (one elementary and one secondary) designated by the superintendent or a designee.
 - ii. One teacher-librarian designated by the superintendent or a designee.
 - iii. One member of the central administration staff designated by the superintendent or a designee.
 - iv. Four members from the community selected by site councils from the three instructional levels.
 - v. Three high school students selected from and by the schools' student governing bodies.
 - b. The chairperson of the committee shall not be an employee or officer of the district. The secretary shall be an employee or officer of the district.
 - c. The committee shall meet as required at a time and place designated by the superintendent and made known to the members of the committee at least three days in advance. Meetings of the committee shall be posted as open meetings.
 - d. A calendar of subsequent meetings shall be established and a chairperson and a secretary shall be selected at the first meeting.
 - e. The calendar of meetings and notice of meetings shall be made public through appropriate communication methods.
 - f. The committee shall receive all Reconsideration Request Forms from the superintendent or designee.
 - g. The procedure for the first meeting following receipt of a Reconsideration Request Form is as follows:
 - i. Distribute copies of the completed Request Form
 - ii. Give complainant or group spokesperson an opportunity to talk about and expand on the Request Form.
 - iii. Distribute reputable, professionally prepared reviews of the material when available.
 - h. At a subsequent meeting, interested persons, including the complainant, may have the opportunity to share their views. The committee may request that individuals with special knowledge be present to give information to the committee.

- i. The complainant shall be kept informed by the secretary concerning the status of the complaint through the committee reconsideration process. The complainant and known interested parties shall be given appropriate notice of Reconsideration Committee meetings.
 - j. At the second or subsequent meeting the committee shall make its decision in open session. The committee's final decision will be, (1) to take no removal action, (2) to remove all or part of the challenged material from the total school environment, (3) to allow students to use alternate titles, approved by school personnel involved, or (4) to limit the educational use of the challenged material. The sole criterion for the final decision is the appropriateness of the materials for its intended educational use. The written decision and its justification shall be forwarded to the superintendent for appropriate action, to the complainant and to the appropriate attendance centers.
 - k. A decision to sustain a challenge shall not be interpreted as a judgment of irresponsibility on the part of the professionals involved in the original selection or use of the material.
 - l. Requests to reconsider materials which have previously been before the committee must receive approval of a majority of the committee members before the materials will again be reconsidered. Every reconsideration request form shall be acted upon by the committee.
 - m. In the event of a severe overload of challenges, the committee may appoint a subcommittee of members or nonmembers to consolidate challenges and to make recommendations to the full committee. The composition of this subcommittee shall approximate the representation on the full committee.
7. Appeal
- a. A complainant who is dissatisfied with the committee's recommendation or decision may file an appeal with the Board of Education by writing a letter to the Board Secretary. The Board will review the appeal and render a decision.
 - b. A complainant who is dissatisfied with the decision of the Board of Education may appeal to the Iowa Board of Education pursuant to state law.

Highlights:

- [Exemplary list of Guiding Principles](#) which “shall guide the Board and staff in responding to challenges of instructional resources.” Those principles are:
 1. A complainant may raise an objection to a learning resource used in a school's educational program despite the fact that the individuals selecting such resources were duly qualified to make the selection, followed the proper procedure, and observed the criteria for selecting learning resources.
 2. The principal or designee shall review the selection and objection rules with the teaching staff at least annually. The staff shall be reminded that the right to object to learning resources is one granted by policies enacted by the Board.
 3. No parent has the right to determine reading, viewing, or listening matter for students other than his or her own children.
 4. When a learning resource is challenged, the principles of the freedom to read/listen/view must be defended.
 5. Access to a challenged resource shall not be restricted during the reconsideration process.
 6. The major criterion for the final decision is the appropriateness of the challenged resource for its intended educational use. No challenged instructional resource shall be removed solely because of the ideas expressed therein.
 7. A decision to sustain a challenge shall not necessarily be interpreted as a judgment of irresponsibility on the part of the professional involved in the original selection and/or use of the resource.

Round Rock Policy:

Request for Informal Reconsideration

1. Step One: The school receiving a complaint regarding a learning resource shall try to resolve the issue informally:

Within five working days of the receipt of a complaint, the teacher or librarian whose students are using the learning resource shall meet with the complainant; listen to his or her concerns; explain the learning resource selection procedures; the particular place the questioned resource occupies in the educational program; its intended educational usefulness; and work with the complainant to resolve his or her concerns, including but not limited to, offering the student, if a student is involved, another comparable and acceptable learning resource.

2. Step Two: If the complainant is not satisfied with the results of the Step One conference and wishes to continue the challenge, the complainant shall meet with the principal regarding the learning resource. The Step Two conference shall occur within five working days after the completion of the Step One conference. The principal shall meet with the complainant, listen to his or her concerns, and work with the complainant

to resolve his or her concerns. The principal may also refer the complainant to someone else who could provide additional information as needed.

The informal process may not be used to remove resources from the District instructional curriculum or from campus libraries. Resources may only be removed if that is the result of completing the formal challenge process detailed below.

Request for Formal Reconsideration of a Learning Resource

If the complainant wishes to file a formal challenge, all steps in the Request for Informal Reconsideration of this policy must have been completed. The complainant shall then notify the campus principal who, in turn, shall provide the complainant with a copy of this policy and copies of forms entitled Request for Reconsideration of Instructional Resources—Level I and Request for Reconsideration of Instructional Resources—Level II, found in EF(EXHIBIT). Not later than ten working days after the Step Two conference, the complainant shall file a completed Request for Reconsideration of Instructional Resources—Level I form with the principal.

In addition, the principal shall immediately notify the director of legal services regarding the challenge. The director of legal services shall facilitate the formal challenge to its completion.

Level I

Upon receipt of a completed Request for Reconsideration of Instructional Resources—Level I form, the principal shall form a Reconsideration Committee consisting of:

1. Two teachers from the area of concern and/or grade level chosen by the area or grade-level coordinator.
2. A Parent-Teacher Association representative chosen by the executive committee of the PTA.
3. A parent recommended to the principal by the campus site-based decision-making committee.
4. A nonschool District employee member of the campus site-based decision-making committee.
5. The school library media specialist.
6. The principal, who shall facilitate the committee and in case of a tie, shall break the tie.

All members of the committee shall review the challenged resource in its entirety. Within ten working days of the receipt of a completed Request for Reconsideration of Instructional Resources—Level I form, the appointed reconsideration committee shall meet and review the challenged resource and judge whether it conforms to the Criteria for Selection as outlined in this policy. The reconsideration committee shall meet in closed meeting with the complainant and other school staff as needed. The reconsideration committee shall complete and sign the Checklist for Reconsideration of Instructional Resources found in EF(EXHIBIT).

No later than ten working days after the reconsideration committee meeting, the complainant, teachers who served on the committee, the campus library media specialist, the director of library/media services, and the Superintendent shall receive signed copies of the completed and signed Checklist for Reconsideration of Instructional Resources form.

The decision of this reconsideration committee is binding for the individual school where the challenge was filed. Notwithstanding any procedure outlined in this policy, the complainant shall have the right to appeal any decision of the reconsideration committee to the Superintendent.

Level II

Within ten working days of the receipt of the completed and signed campus-level Checklist for Reconsideration of Instructional Resources—Level I form, the complainant may appeal the decision of the campus-level reconsideration committee to the Superintendent. To appeal, the complainant shall submit to the Superintendent a completed and signed copy of the Request for Reconsideration of Instructional Resources—Level II form found in EF(EXHIBIT). Only those specific complaints presented in the Request for Reconsideration of Resources—Level I form may be presented at Level II.

Upon receipt of a completed Request for Reconsideration of Instructional Resources—Level II form, the Superintendent shall appoint a District-level reconsideration committee consisting of:

1. A school library media specialist, teacher, counselor, and principal from the appropriate instructional level.
2. A representative from the District council of Parent-Teacher Associations.
3. A parent member at large.
4. Two community members at large.
5. A coordinator or director in the area of concern.
6. A high school student council representative.
7. A member of the administrative staff who shall convene the committee, facilitate the operations of the committee, and vote only in the event of a tie vote.

Within ten working days of receipt of the completed and signed Request for Reconsideration of Instructional Resources—Level II form, the appointed District-level reconsideration committee shall meet, evaluate the challenged resource, and judge whether it conforms to the Criteria for Selection as outlined in this policy. The District-level reconsideration committee shall meet in closed session with the complainant, the school library/media specialist, teachers, and the principal from the campus where the challenge was originally filed. The District-level reconsideration committee shall complete and sign the Checklist for Reconsideration of Instructional Resources form

found in EF(EXHIBIT). This form and a written recommendation shall be submitted to the Superintendent for review, consideration, and decision. The decision of the Superintendent is binding for all campuses in the District.

Notwithstanding any procedure outlined in this policy, the complainant shall have the right to appeal any Level II decision to the Board.

Level III

The decision of the Level II Reconsideration Committee may be appealed to the Board at Level III by completing and filing a Level III Reconsideration form within ten working days of receipt of the Level II Reconsideration checklist. The appeal must be presented in writing at the time on a form provided by the District. It shall include a written description of the decision or action causing the appeal, specific facts supporting the appeal, the date it occurred, the remedy sought, the name, address, and telephone number of the person appealing, and/or the person's representative, if any. Only those specific complaints and supporting facts presented at Level II may be presented at Level III.

During the Board meeting following the Level III filing, when decisions are made regarding future agenda items, it shall be determined whether to place the matter on the agenda of a future Board meeting. The administrative decision at Level II shall be upheld if the Board does not request that the matter be put on the agenda for possible Board action. The lack of official action by the Board upholds the administrative decision at Level II.

If the matter is placed on the agenda of a subsequent Board meeting, the Board President may set reasonable time limits on reconsideration presentations and the Board shall listen to the reconsideration request.

Once the Board has responded to the appeal as stated above, the matter is concluded.

HAMILTON SOUTHEASTERN SCHOOLS, FISHERS, INDIANA

View online: <https://go.boarddocs.com/in/hses/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=86X5PB6D719F>

Highlights:

- The process begins with an attempt to resolve the complaint informally
- The challenge form is comprehensive
- Challenges are adjudicated by a committee
- The policy sets forth clear and objective criteria for evaluation of challenged material

What could be improved:

- The policy allows challenged materials to be removed temporarily, pending the outcome of the challenge. This is problematic because it encourages challenges, and it creates a chilling effect, because teachers will be reluctant to assign challenging or controversial material if they are afraid that the material might suddenly be removed.

Hamilton Southeastern Schools Policy¹

Occasionally a member of the school community may have a complaint or concern regarding instructional materials such as textbooks, library books, reference works, and other instructional aides in the corporation. To resolve the complaint the following corporation procedure will be applied:

1. All complaints to staff members will be reported to the building principal whether received by telephone, letter, or in personal conversation.

¹ A representative of the Hamilton Southeastern Schools shared her experience with challenges in the district:

- Challenges are most often related to one chapter or unit of study or a particular area of study in a course (maybe climate change impact). The principal handles the conversation with the family and the teacher, the parents review lesson plans and are invited to preview any material. They may be offered alternative location like the library to work in during that class period, but it usually doesn't come to that.
- Library book challenges occur once in a while. Again, most are handled at the building level with a conversation with the family, principal, teacher and librarian. It is usually settled around a conversation that their child doesn't have to select a particular book. If a family wants it removed from the library then a committee is established that reads the book and discusses the merits related to the policy. The representative could not recall any removals during her tenure.
- Upper grade course required reading lists have choices on them...this allows students/families to make choices about the novels they read in the course. This is helpful and contributes to choice and a broader conversation about topics and content.

2. The principal, teacher, and/or librarian will contact the complainant to discuss the complaint and attempt to resolve it informally by explaining the philosophy and goals of the school district and/or the school media center.
3. If the complaint is not resolved informally, the principal will give the complainant a copy of the Selection of Instructional Material Procedures. This will include a Request for Review of Instructional Material which must be completed and returned before further consideration will be given to the complaint.
4. In accordance with the complaint procedures, questioned materials will not be permanently removed from use pending a final decision. However, access to questioned materials may be restricted temporarily.
5. Upon receipt of a completed Request for Review of Instructional Materials form, a committee to consider the complaint will be named by the superintendent. This review committee chaired by the principal involved will consist of a librarian who is not directly involved in the situation (only if media center is involved), two teachers and two parents who are not directly involved in the situation, and the Director of Special Programs.
6. The above committee will meet to discuss the challenged material following the guidelines set forth in the Selection Policy, and will prepare, within twenty days, a report on the material. That report will contain their recommendations on disposition of the matter.
7. A formal report will be hand delivered to the Superintendent within two days following completion of Section F, above.
8. Within five days after receipt of the completed form and the committee recommendation, the superintendent will render a decision to the review committee.
9. The principal will notify the complainant of the decision.
10. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision, an appeal may be made to the Board.

LOWER MERION SCHOOL DISTRICT, ARDMORE, PENNSYLVANIA

View online: <https://www.lmsd.org/board/policies/100>

Highlights:

- Challenged material is kept in circulation, pending the outcome of the challenge
- The challenge form is comprehensive
- Only the Board, not the Principal, can override the recommendation of the committee

What could be improved:

- The policy does not set forth clear and objective criteria for evaluation of challenged material

Lower Merion School District Policy:

Board Policy

No professionally selected materials shall be removed from the school except upon the recommendation of a review committee with the concurrence of the Superintendent and the Board, or upon formal action of the Board when a recommendation of a review committee is appealed.

The Superintendent shall develop administrative regulations to be observed if objections are made to instructional materials. Parents/guardians who wish to object to instructional materials or to their child participating in any part of the curriculum should follow the procedures set forth in these regulations.

Administrative Regulations

Both principals and department chairs shall be responsible for informing all staff members of the policy on coverage of controversial issues in the curriculum. In doing so they shall emphasize the basic assumption that the ideas that may transcend traditional curricular topics and raise questions about current social, political, technical, philosophical, religious and other problems are appropriate for incorporation to the curriculum regardless of the controversial nature of the topic as long as, on divided issues, differing views are carefully presented.

A teacher who is in doubt concerning the advisability of discussing certain issues and materials in the classroom shall confer with the principal as to the appropriateness of doing so. The principal should involve the department chair or establish a special review procedure.

If the teacher and principal are unable to agree, the issue should be referred to the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee.

An individual student may be excused from class activities involving the controversial issue in question. The teacher will then assign the student alternate activities of equal merit.

Although individuals may be excused from the activity, the continuation of the activity by class, school or District shall not be restricted until final disposition has been pursuant to the following process:

1. Staff members shall attempt to resolve objections to instructional materials informally. If unable to do so, the objection shall be reported to the building principal.

2. The principal shall contact the person who has objected to the instructional material to discuss the objection and attempt to resolve it by explaining the philosophy and goals of the course of study or library/information center.
 3. If the objection is not resolved, the person who objects shall be supplied with information including Policy 119, the administrative regulations, and a standard formal objection form (Attachment A). This form must be completed and returned to the Office of Elementary Education or Office of Secondary Education, whichever is applicable, within ten school days of receipt.
 4. If the formal objection has not been received by the Office of Elementary Education or Office of Secondary Education, whichever is applicable, within ten school days, the objection shall be considered closed.
 5. In accordance with Policy 119, no materials shall be removed from the school until a final determination is made. However, access to objectionable materials can be denied to the child(ren) of the parents making the challenge, if they so desire. If access is denied, an appropriate alternative assignment will be made.
 6. Within ten school days of the receipt of a completed formal objection, the appropriate central office administrator as designated by the Superintendent shall convene and chair a committee to consider the objection. This committee shall consist of a teacher(s), a librarian, a representative from the Home and School Association where the objection originated, and a department chairperson (secondary).
 7. After the committee meets to discuss the objection, a written report containing the recommendations and disposition of the matter shall be prepared and forwarded to the Superintendent.
 8. The Superintendent shall respond to the person who has raised the objection after reviewing the committee's report. The Superintendent may also seek the advice of authorities outside of the District before responding. If a decision is made to maintain the materials that cause the objection, a written explanation shall be provided to the person who made the objection. If the objection is valid, the Superintendent shall acknowledge it and direct the appropriate adjustments.
 9. If the person who objects is still not satisfied, he/she may ask the Superintendent to present an appeal to the Curriculum Committee of the Board of School Directors.
 10. If the Curriculum Committee is unable to resolve the objection, a review of the appeal will be presented to the Board. In making its final determination, the Board may seek assistance from outside educational organizations and/or legal counsel.
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COLUSA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT, COLUSA, CALIFORNIA

View online: <http://www.gamutonline.net/district/colusausd/PolicyCategoryList/2477/1>

Highlights:

- The challenge form is comprehensive
- The policy sets forth clear and objective criteria for evaluation of challenged material

What could be improved:

- The policy does not require that a review committee be convened in all cases.
- The review committee fails to include some key stakeholders
- The policy allows challenged materials to be removed temporarily, pending outcome of the challenge.

Colusa Unified School District Policy:

Board Policy

Parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss any concerns regarding instructional materials with their child's teacher and/or the school principal. If the situation remains unresolved, a complaint may be filed using the process specified in the administrative regulation.

The district shall accept complaints concerning instructional materials only from staff, district residents, or the parents/guardians of children enrolled in a district school.

When deliberating upon challenged materials, the Superintendent and/or review committee shall consider the educational philosophy of the district, the professional opinions of teachers of the subject and of other competent authorities, reviews of the materials by reputable bodies, the teacher's stated objectives in using the materials, community standards, and the objections of the complainant.

Complainants are encouraged to accept the Superintendent's or review committee's decision. However, if the complainant finds that decision unsatisfactory, he/she may appeal the decision to the Board.

Administrative Regulations

Step 1: Informal Complaint.

If a staff member, district resident, or parent/guardian of a student enrolled in a district school has a complaint regarding the content or use of any specific instructional material, he/she shall informally discuss the material in question with the principal.

Step 2: Formal Complaint.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the principal's initial response, he/she shall present a written complaint to the principal. Complaints regarding printed material shall name the author, title, and publisher and shall identify the objection by page and item numbers. In the case of nonprinted material, written information specifying the precise nature of the objection shall be given. Complainants shall sign all complaints and provide identifying information so that the district is able to make a proper reply. Anonymous complaints will not be accepted.

Upon receiving a complaint, the principal shall acknowledge its receipt and answer any questions regarding procedure. The principal then shall notify the Superintendent or designee and the teacher(s) involved of the complaint.

During the investigation of the complaint, the challenged material may remain in use until a final decision has been reached. However, upon request of the parent/guardian who has filed the complaint, his/her child may be excused from using challenged materials until a resolution has been reached. The teacher shall assign the student an alternate material of equal merit.

Step 3: Superintendent Determination

The Superintendent or designee shall determine whether a review committee should be convened to review the complaint.

If the Superintendent or designee determines that a review committee is not necessary, he/she shall issue a decision regarding the complaint.

Step 4: Review Committee

If the Superintendent or designee determines that a review committee is necessary, he/she shall appoint a committee composed of administrators and staff members selected from relevant instructional and administrative areas. The Superintendent or designee may also appoint community members to serve on the committee.

The review committee shall review the criteria specified in Board policy and shall determine the extent to which the challenged material supports the curriculum, the educational appropriateness of the material, and its suitability for the age level of the student.

Within 30 days of being convened, the review committee shall summarize its findings in a written report. The Superintendent or designee shall notify the complainant of the committee's decision within 15 days of receiving the committee's report.

Step 5: Appeal to the Governing Board

If the complainant remains unsatisfied, he/she may appeal the Superintendent's or the review committee's decision to the Board. The Board's decision shall be final.

PINELLAS COUNTY SCHOOLS, LARGO, FLORIDA

View online:

<https://go.boarddocs.com/fl/pcsf/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=BE6K2C4FBC75>

Highlights:

- Challenged material remains in circulation pending the final outcome of the challenge
- The policy sets forth clear and objective criteria for evaluation of challenged material
- Final decisions are made by a district-level committee of professional educators.

What could be improved:

- The policy does not require an attempt to resolve the challenge informally

Pinellas County Schools Policy:

If a parent objects to the use of the material with other children besides his/her own child, the complainant must file the objections in writing on the District-approved Complaint Regarding Library Instructional Materials (Form A) and submit the form to the principal who will give it to the School-Based Instructional Materials Review Committee (same committee membership as the School-Based Library Information Review Committee). This review committee appointed by the principal is composed of three (3) faculty members, two (2) parents chosen by the school advisory council, two (2) members representing the community, and the library information specialist, who shall serve as the non-voting chairman/facilitator. The review committee will contact the respective subject area content specialist (s) for input. The principal will inform the Superintendent of the complaint.

The material in question will remain in use until the School-Based Instructional Materials Review Committee recommends a final decision.

The School-Based Instructional Materials Review Committee will read or view the challenged materials referred to it. The committee should check the general acceptance of the materials by reading professional reviews provided by the Superintendent or designee. These professional reviews should present a balanced view if possible. The committee should weigh values and faults against each other and form opinions based on the material as a whole and not on passages pulled out of context. The review committee will meet to discuss the material and the complainant and teacher will be invited to speak. The principal and appropriate District personnel should attend the meeting. The committee will prepare a report of its findings. Copies of the report will be given to the complainant by the principal. Additional copies will be

provided to the Area Superintendent, Associate Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, and the Superintendent.

The subject area content specialist may convene a committee of representative stakeholders to review the acceptability and continuance of the challenged materials for District wide use. Content Specialists will follow procedures developed by the Division of Teaching and Learning. The committee will review the challenged material and make additional recommendations to the Superintendent. The Superintendent will review the committee's recommendation and decide the issue. The Superintendent's decision shall be final.

The complainant may appeal the decision of the School-Based Instructional Materials Review Committee to the District Committee for Challenged Materials (same committee membership as the District First Amendment Review Committee) appointed by the Associate Superintendent for Teaching and Learning and composed of two (2) representatives from the County Council of PTAs, two (2) members representing the community, three (3) teachers, and a non-voting chairman/facilitator. The content specialist will assist the chairman/facilitator. The Superintendent or the content specialists will provide input to the District Committee for Challenged Materials. The decision of the District Committee for Challenged Materials shall be final.

LARAMIE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1, CHEYENNE, WYOMING

View online:

<https://go.boarddocs.com/wy/laramie1/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=9XRKQU508FF2#>

Highlights:

- The policy requires an attempt to resolve the challenge informally
- Challenged material remains in use, pending the final outcome of the challenge
- Formal challenges must be in writing
- The committee includes most stakeholders, and explicitly calls for input by students
- Committee members must read the challenged work in its entirety.

What could be improved:

- The policy fails to set forth clear and objective criteria for evaluation of challenged material

Laramie County School District No. 1 Policy:

Board Policies

Complaints concerning the curriculum, instructional books, or materials shall be presented to the administrator of the building where the matter in question originates. In the event that informal conferences with the parties concerned fail to resolve the complaint satisfactorily, the complaint shall be submitted in written form, as shown in Exhibit 84, Request for a Review of Curriculum Subjects or Materials, to the respective Curriculum Coordinator who then notifies the Assistant Superintendent of Instruction who will provide a resolution to the complaint.

A written copy of the investigation findings and recommendations for resolution shall be made available to the parties involved.

Administrative Regulations

Complaints concerning library/media materials shall be presented via Exhibit 85 to the administrator, certified library media specialist(s), or library staff for the building where the concern originates. In the event that an informal conference with the concerned party fails to resolve the complaint satisfactorily, the Building Reconsideration Committee will meet to discuss the material within fourteen (14) school days after the concern is presented. If the concern is still unresolved, it will be forwarded to the Assistant Superintendent of Instruction and the District Reconsideration Committee. The Assistant Superintendent of Instruction or designee shall be responsible to investigate the concern. Within fourteen (14) school days of being informed of the concern, a meeting of the committee for the purpose of discussing the concern shall take place. Recommendations for resolution shall be presented to the parties involved.

Any resident or employee of the school District may present a concern regarding the appropriateness of any library/media materials available in any District library media center. This procedure is for the purpose of considering the opinions of those persons in the schools and community who are not directly involved in the selection process. Use of the resource being reconsidered shall not be restricted during any part of the reconsideration process.

I. ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

- A. Concerns shall be referred to the school administrator of the building where the concern originates.
- B. Upon receipt of Exhibit 85, the school administrator shall contact the respective Curriculum Coordinator who then notifies the Assistant Superintendent of Instruction.
- C. An informal conference with the school administrator and the concerned individual or group spokesperson shall take place with the intent that a resolution is found.
 1. The school administrator may bring in the content area district Coordinator, district certified library media specialist, or school library staff with the concerned individual or group spokesperson to try to solve the issue informally.

2. If the concern is resolved in the Administrative Review, then the resolution Exhibit (85a) will be completed and signed by all involved parties.
3. If after the Administrative Review, there has not been a resolution then a Building Reconsideration Committee will be assembled.

II. BUILDING RECONSIDERATION COMMITTEE

- A. The Building Reconsideration Committee will be composed of the following members of the building where the concern originated: One administrator, a district certified library media specialist, a parent, and a teacher from the level – primary, intermediate, or secondary – relevant to the materials under consideration. The Committee will be chaired by an appropriate Curriculum Coordinator or designee.
- B. The committee Chair will present the concern to the Building Reconsideration Committee including copies of Exhibit 85 and copies of the book or material under consideration.

The book or material under consideration shall be read in its entirety by each member of the committee. The book or material under consideration will not be restricted at any time during the reconsideration process.

- C. The Building Reconsideration Committee will meet within fourteen (14) school days to discuss the material and make a recommendation as to whether the material should be retained or removed from the school's library media center collection.

A written report of the committee's minutes, findings and recommendations (Exhibit 85a and Exhibit 85b) will be completed by the Committee Chair.

At the end of the meeting, this report will be signed and have a notation beside each committee member's signature as agreement or disagreement in relation to the committee's findings and recommendations.

The Committee Chair will send a copy of the minutes and the signed Exhibit 85b with a formal letter delineating the resolution by certified mail to the concerned individual or group spokesperson.

The concerned individual or group spokesperson shall sign Exhibit 85b in either agreement or disagreement and return to the Curriculum Coordinator within five (5) school days of receipt. Failure to return the signed agreement within five (5) school days signals agreement to the committee's findings.

If the concerned individual or group spokesperson disagrees with the decision of the Building Reconsideration Committee then a District Reconsideration Committee will be assembled.

III. DISTRICT RECONSIDERATION COMMITTEE

- A. The District Reconsideration Committee shall be made up of nine (9) members:
 - 1. Two (2) teachers designated annually by the Cheyenne Teachers Education Association.
 - 2. One (1) certified school library media specialist
 - 3. The Assistant Superintendent of Instruction
 - 4. One (1) member of the school District staff
 - 5. Two (2) members from the community recommended by Trustees
 - 6. Two (2) parents selected by the Parent Advisory Committee
 - 7. Students' perspectives will be collected by the chairperson at an alternate time and submitted to the committee.

- B. The Assistant Superintendent of Instruction shall be or designate the chairperson of the committee.
 - 1. Within fourteen (14) school days of the receipt of disagreement from the concerned individual or group spokesperson, the Chairperson shall convene the District Reconsideration Committee and schedule a public meeting.
 - 2. No fewer than seven (7) school days prior to the meeting, distribute copies of the following to the committee: book or material being reconsidered, reconsideration request exhibit, and no fewer than three (3) professional reviews of the book or material being considered.
 - 3. The book or material shall be read or viewed in its entirety by each member of the committee.
 - 4. [The chair will] Notify the public of the hearing through common District publications and other communication methods.
 - 5. [The chair will] Preside over the District Reconsideration Committee public meeting. The concerned individual or group spokesperson will have an opportunity to talk about and expand upon the request exhibit. The committee will have an opportunity to ask clarifying questions appropriate to the book or material being considered.
 - 6. Within two (2) school days of the public meeting, [the chair will] file the written recommendation and its justification with the Superintendent.
 - 7. [The chair will] Send copies to the school administrator and librarian where the concern originated.

C. The public meeting format is as follows:

1. The committee chair shall preside over the meeting.
2. The committee shall hear statements from the concerned individual or group spokesperson as well as the public who is qualified to speak about the use of the resource and the specific objections raised by the concerned individual or group spokesperson.
3. The committee shall make their recommendation based solely on the appropriateness of the material for its intended educational use.
4. As an ad-hoc committee, they will move into closed discussion immediately following the public meeting to discuss and dialogue before making a recommendation.
5. The committee's recommendation will be to: a) take no removal action; b) remove the book or material; c) limit access to the book or material.
6. The committee's recommendation shall be reached by a private, individual vote the results of which will be shared publicly.
7. Within two (2) school days of the public meeting, file the written recommendation and its justification with the Superintendent. Copies will be sent to the concerned individual or group spokesperson.
8. The Superintendent shall review the recommendation (accept, reject, or modify) and will report the resolution to the Board of the Trustees.

Requests to reconsider materials that have been reviewed following this process will not be reviewed again for two (2) years.