

POLICY

The Board of Education authorizes the administration to establish guidelines, procedures, and safeguards for an unbiased, impartial handling of controversial issues in the classroom. These guidelines shall be approved by the Board.

PROCEDURES

I. Preparation for Teaching Controversial Issues

It is important that prior to its presentation in the classroom any issue or materials considered to be controversial by the teacher should be examined in order to ascertain its appropriateness. Occasionally, classroom discussion may lead to a controversial item for which prior consideration was not given. This type of situation must be handled carefully. Although teachers should not necessarily avoid discussing such issues, they must consider the guidelines outlined below.

II. Guidelines:

Guidelines for determining whether a controversial issue or material should be presented in the context of an educational experience for a class or an individual student are as follows:

- A. Is the issue or material within the maturity level of the students and within the area of possibilities for intellectual response or serious interest?
- B. Can the learning outcomes of the lesson be presented differently or with different materials of equal quality, but with less controversy?
- C. Is the issue being presented of social or educational significance? Is it related to the essential outcomes of the course? Is it timely for this course and grade level? Will the information students acquire about this issue be of continuing usefulness?
- D. Is the issue one for which adequate study materials can be readily obtained or developed in order to present the subject from all aspects?
- E. Can adequate time be allocated to the study of the issue to justify its presentation and assure its effectiveness?
- F. Have community customs and attitudes been considered?
- G. Is the issue one which the teacher feels he/she is capable of handling successfully from an objective standpoint?

Weighing the answers to these questions will enable a teacher to make rational judgments as to the propriety of presenting controversial materials or issues to a class of students. Obviously, the decision is subjective, and the teacher must decide whether the concepts to be presented are important enough to the educational experiences of the students to outweigh the expense of possible criticism from some segments of the public. Careful consideration of these guidelines will provide the rationale for the teacher's decision to teach the issue and will provide him/her with solid information in response to any complaints that may be filed.

III. Teaching Controversial Issues

- A. When a teacher has planned the use of potentially controversial instructional materials, the teacher must: a) have prior approval from his/her immediate supervisor, and b) provide an

opportunity for the parent(s)/guardian(s) to grant or refuse permission for their son or daughter to participate in the class in question (see sample permission letters in the Appendix). Examples include - publicly rated "R" media, print, non-print and electronically transmitted information.

- B. A description of the cultural, historical, and/or educational value of the presentation or public performance of a controversial musical work must be provided in writing and/or in a public statement prior to its presentation or performance.
- C. Films rated "NC-17" and "X" by the Motion Picture Industry of America are considered unsuitable for presentation in the classroom, on field trips, and in any school-related activities.

IV. Review of Complaints Concerning Controversial Issues, Materials, and Curricula

Upon receipt of a complaint regarding controversial issues or materials, the following steps should be taken in an attempt to resolve the issue consistent with the rights and responsibilities of all involved.

- A. The appropriate building administrator should contact the complainant and try to satisfy his/her objections to the issue.
- B. A copy of "Citizen's Request for Reconsideration of Instructional Materials" should be sent to the complainant with the request that the complainant complete the information on the form prior to the scheduling of a meeting with the appropriate building administrators and the teachers concerned. This meeting should be at a time mutually agreeable to all parties.
- C. A copy of the course outcomes with specific attention to those outcomes in which the controversial issue is presented should be sent to the complainant.
- D. If the complainant is still not satisfied, a report will be prepared by the building administrators and sent to the associate superintendent for educational services. The associate superintendent for educational services will review the issue and select a district committee, chaired by the district divisional coordinator, with members selected according to the type of issue involved. This committee should report its deliberations and recommendations to the associate superintendent for educational services for appropriate action or decision. If the complainant is not satisfied with the recommendation, he/she may appeal the decision to the Board of Education.

Other Instructional Materials

Dear parent/guardian:

The instructional materials listed below are planned for use in _____
at _____ (class/activity)
(school). The materials contain images, content, or language that
might be objectionable to some people. I am prepared to treat the materials in a mature,
controlled and purposeful manner consistent with the course outcomes planned for this
activity. I feel that these instructional materials are appropriate for the intended learning
experience.

However, permission for your child to view these materials is required. If you wish
to deny permission, an alternative learning experience will be assigned to your child.

Please return the lower portion of this sheet to me no later than _____
(date).
If no response is received by this date, it will be assumed that permission is granted for your
child to view these materials. I appreciate your attention to this matter. If you wish to contact
me for further explanation, I'd be happy to talk with you.

Sincerely yours,

Teacher Signature

Instructional Materials Description:

TO: _____
Teacher's Name

I refuse permission for my child to view the content of this material.

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Motion Pictures

Dear parent/guardian:

The motion picture listed below is planned for use in _____
at _____^(school). It has been given an "R" rating by the Motion Picture
Industry of America and has images, content, or language that might be objectionable to some
people. I am prepared to treat the use of the motion picture in a mature, controlled, and
purposeful manner consistent with the course outcomes planned for this activity. I feel that the
motion picture is appropriate for the intended learning experience.

However, permission for your child to view this motion picture is required. If you wish
to deny permission, an alternative learning experience will be assigned to your child.

Please return the lower portion of this sheet to me no later than _____
If no response is received by this date, it will be assumed that permission is granted for your
child to view this motion picture. I appreciate your attention to this matter. If you wish to
contact me for further explanation, I'd be happy to talk to you.

Sincerely yours,

Teacher Signature

Instructional Materials Description:

TO: _____
Teacher's Name

I refuse permission for my child to view the content of this motion picture.

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

**Citizen's Request for
Reconsideration of Instructional Materials**

Description of Instructional Materials _____

Request initiated by _____ Telephone _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____

Complainant represents:

- Himself/Herself
- Organization (Name) _____
- Other Group (Identify) _____

1. Have you been able to discuss the instructional materials in question with the school representative who ordered it or who used it? Yes No
2. What do you understand to be the general purpose for using these materials?
 - a. Provide support for students' achievement of the learning outcomes for the course? Yes No
 - b. Provide support for a unit in the curriculum? Yes No
 - c. Provide a learning experience for the reader in one kind of literature? Yes No
 - d. Other _____
3. Did the general purpose for the use of the materials, as described by the school representative seem a suitable one to you?
 Yes No
If not, please explain. _____
4. What seems, to you, to be the general purpose of these instructional materials? _____
5. In what ways do you think instructional materials of this nature are not suitable for the use identified by the school representative? _____
6. Have you been able to learn what the students' response is to the materials? Yes No
If so, what response the students make? _____
7. Have you been able to learn what critics, reviewers, or scholars have written about these materials? Yes No
8. Would you like the school representative to give you a written summary of what critics, reviewers, and scholars have written about these materials? Yes No
9. Do you have information about negative reviews about these materials?
If "yes," please provide the source of this information and where it can be obtained. Yes No
10. What would you like your school to do about these materials?
 - Do not assign/lend it to my child.
 - Return it to the staff selection committee/department for reevaluation.
 - Other - Please explain. _____
11. In its place, what instructional materials would you recommend that would convey as valuable a picture and perspective of the subject treated? _____

Signature _____

Date _____