



## **Position Paper: GUIDELINES FOR SELECTION OF TEXTBOOKS AND EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS**

Whether selecting or evaluating textbooks, library materials, instructional materials, or classroom resources, a well-written, well-communicated board policy based on input from all constituents is the key. Parents and PTA members may be asked to participate in committees creating or reviewing board policies for the selection of instructional materials. Parents who participate in review of the policy and/or materials according to these board policies must take special care to represent all parents and families, not just their personal point of view.

### **Developing a Materials Selection Policy**

Every school system should have a comprehensive written policy on the selection and review of instructional materials. This policy should include textbooks, library books, periodicals, reading materials, records, and media. The policy should be well communicated and available to staff, parents, and community members.

Suggestions for developing a selection and review of instructional materials policy have been compiled using recommendations from state education departments, American Library Association, American Association of School Administrators, and the American Association of Publishers. Their recommendations include:

The process to develop a materials selection policy:

1. The Board of Education or its designee appoints an ad-hoc committee with representation from the school community, administrators, teachers, school librarians, parents and students to develop the policy;
2. Once the committee makes a report, comment should be sought from key implementers such as department chairmen, established curriculum committees, teachers' association, principals, school librarians, and the PTA;
3. Upon adoption of the policy, the superintendent and/or representative should disseminate and communicate the policy to all appropriate staff and community members. The school administration will implement and evaluate the policy, and if necessary, recommend future revisions in collaboration with staff, parents, and community members. The Board of Education should periodically call for input and review the policy as needed.

The components of a materials selection policy should include:

1. A statement that indicates that the Board of Education as the governing body has a legal responsibility for the selection process of all material for the school. A statement delegating the selection responsibility to appropriate personnel or committees for textbooks, library materials, and supplementary materials.
2. A statement of philosophy or goals and the objectives of the selection policy, inclusive of the definitions of the rights and responsibilities of various affected constituencies such as students, parents, teachers, and other educators.
3. Statements that define the materials covered by the policy, the criteria for the evaluation and selection, the criteria for potentially controversial areas and the procedure for handling challenged materials should be defined in the policy.

The criteria for evaluating and selecting materials may include:

1. the excellence of the material (artistic, library, etc);
2. the appropriateness to the academic, social, and age level of the user;
3. the superiority in treatment of controversial issues;
4. the ability to stimulate intellectual and social development.

The criteria should consider the authenticity, appropriateness, interest, content, cost, relationship to the curriculum, and circumstance of use when evaluating and selecting materials.

The process or procedure for challenging or questioning materials, a parent's right, should clearly outline:

1. the review committee membership;
2. the process for handling challenged materials;
3. the procedure for recommendation to the superintendent or Board for the removal of materials;
4. the appeal process to the Board of Education which makes the final determination of the issue.

The Board of Education may seek assistance from outside organizations, both professional and community-based, when deciding an appeal.

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