

## PUBLIC CONCERN ABOUT INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

Occasional objections of materials selected will be made by the public. The board recognizes and respects the right of citizens to make suggestions for the improvement of public schools, but maintains that no special interest group shall deny to educators academic freedom, defined as the right and obligation of teachers to select materials and to teach in the manner which is in the best interest of their students. Nor shall any special interest group dictate to professional educators the type and/or quality of texts and instructional materials to be used in classrooms of the Watertown School District.

In recognition of the right of citizens to make suggestions for improvement, the district will establish procedures to review challenged materials at the building or district level. Upon the official written request of an individual or special interest group, a building committee consisting of the principal, two (2) teachers and two (2) parent representatives shall be appointed to take the matter under consideration.

If the official written request for reconsideration of material affects the district beyond a building level, the administration shall appoint an ad hoc instructional review committee to respond to the request. The committee shall be composed of the curriculum coordinator, a building principal, two (2) teachers and three (3) members of the community.

Virtually all material that is challenged belongs to one of five basic categories which include: religion, racism, sexism, ideology, and language. Guidelines regarding these areas are given below.

- (1) Factual, unbiased material which represents all major religions may be included in instructional materials.
- (2) Materials should present diversity of race, custom, culture, and belief as a positive aspect of our nation's heritage and give candid treatment to unresolved intercultural problems in the United States, including those which involve prejudice, discrimination, and the undesirable consequences of withholding rights, freedom, or respect from any individual.
- (3) Materials should reflect a sensitivity to the needs and rights of men and women without preference or bias.
- (4) Unbiased basic primary and factual material and information on any ideology or philosophy of government which exerts or has exerted a strong force, either favorably or unfavorably, in government, current events, politics, education or any other phase of life may be included in instructional material.
- (5) Materials containing sexual terminology and profanity shall be subjected to a test of literary merit by delegated personnel, who will take into consideration their reading public and community standards of morality.

### Complaint Procedures

- (1) The complainant shall discuss the complaint with the teacher and/or principal.

- (2) The complainant shall be invited to file objection in writing with the principal by completing the questionnaire, "Citizen's Request for Reconsideration of Educational Materials," so that a formal complaint may be submitted to the instructional review committee.
- (3) Challenged materials will continue to be used during the reconsideration process unless the superintendent or school board suspends their use during the review process.
- (4) If a written complaint is filed, the building principal shall inform the superintendent.
- (5) An instructional review committee will be appointed. This committee will consist of school personnel, patrons and students, when appropriate.
- (6) The principal or curriculum coordinator shall serve as the chairperson of the committee. A recorder shall be selected to maintain accurate records of the proceedings of the committee. Proceedings of committee deliberations shall be held confidential.
- (7) The committee shall:
  - (a) read, view, listen, and/or examine the material referred to it;
  - (b) read reviews and consult recommended lists
  - (c) determine the extent to which the material supports the curriculum;
  - (d) weigh values and faults and form opinions based on the material as a whole and not on passages pulled out of context.
  - (e) hold a hearing with the complainant if a hearing is requested;
  - (f) discuss the material, and prepare a report including recommendations on the continued use or withdrawal of the material in question;
  - (g) file a copy of the report with the school principal, superintendent's office and the complainant.
- (8) The committee will be convened within 15 school days after a complaint has been filed with the school principal.
- (9) If the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision of the committee, appeal may be made in writing to the school board.

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