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Contact Person: Assistant Superintendent or Designee

POLICY 606.1 PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING QUESTIONED MATERIALS AND
CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

I. PURPOSE:

To provide direction in handling questioned materials and controversial issues in schools.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

The District believes in the principles of intellectual freedom, as stated in its Instructional Materials Selection Policy 606, promoting a safe and supportive school system. It is the responsibility of public education in a pluralistic, democratic society to provide for the treatment of controversial issues in a setting that allows free expression of opinion, promotes rational thought, and provides adequate learning resources.

This policy presumes a planned inquiry and not impromptu, student-initiated, or incidental classroom discussion. This policy assumes the following values:

1. Free discussion is the heart of the democratic process.
2. Controversial issues, duly selected for their educational value, age appropriateness, and congruence with adopted curricula are intrinsically relevant to an educational program that seeks to provide students with the means to become participating citizens.
3. Critical thinking and decision-making concerning both controversial and noncontroversial topics are basic processes which must be developed for effective citizenship.
4. The study of controversial issues promotes student involvement in the commitment to learning, and thus makes for effective learning.

Any resident, employee, student or parent in the District may express concerns about materials used and controversial issues explored in the District's educational program. Whenever a concern is expressed, the District will respond with a defined procedure.

III. DEFINITIONS

Controversial Issue - Any contemporary problem, subject, or question of a political or social nature where there exists significant opposing viewpoints and/or multiple perspectives. Controversial issues are not created simply by people disagreeing, nor are they associated with personality conflicts, disciplinary problems, or professional grievances.

IV. PROCEDURE

The defined procedures for responding to concerns expressed should, if possible, provide for resolution at the building level, second at the District level, and third at the School Board level. The standing District committee is provided in the event that resolution to the concern is not met at the building level.

V. RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOOL BOARD

- A. The School Board is responsible for the general operation of the District.
- B. Through Policy 606, the School Board delegates authority for the selection of resources to the professional staff employed by the District.
- C. Delegate management of controversial issues to the assistant superintendent or designee in accordance with the following principles:
 - 1. Schools are neutral places for rational discourse and objective study rooted in the principles of intellectual freedom inherent in the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States.
 - 2. Viewpoints as expressed with the aid of district property may be used for educational purposes consistent with the curriculum, school programs and activities only, and in an impartial and objective manner. Such viewpoints shall be removed upon completion of the unit of study.
 - 3. Discussion of controversial issues shall allow students to explore a range of relevant and credible information and viewpoints pertaining to the issue under study and shall be presented in an intellectually safe environment free from bias, prejudice and indoctrination. Students shall form and express their own opinions based upon dispassionate, objective, unbiased study and discussion of the facts related to the controversy without fear of jeopardizing their relationship with teachers, peers or the school.
- D. The inclusion of materials does not imply endorsement by the District.
- E. Policy and Regulation for Procedures for Handling Questioned Materials and Controversial Issues will be used when concerns or questions are raised about District selected instructional materials or when controversial issues (as defined above) are used for educational purposes consistent with the curriculum, school programs and activities.

VI. RESPONSIBILITIES OF DISTRICT STAFF

- A. Staff can express their own positions and opinions consistent with the First Amendment of the United States Constitution so long as the expression is characterized as personal opinion and does not attempt to advocate or persuade students to the educational professional's point of view and pedagogical neutrality and respect for others are maintained. Instructors should consider the impact such expressions will have on the discussion or education setting. (i.e. Will sharing a perspective usefully model the way one can take a stance on a complex topic, or will it more likely shut down students who may disagree?).
- B. In addressing controversial issues in instruction, staff must be knowledgeable about the issue and serve as a facilitator to ensure that points of view are presented in a civil manner. In the capacity as a facilitator, it is the educator's responsibility to identify various points of view on an issue, and to make certain that differing opinions are treated with respect. In so doing, educational professionals should make controversial topics into objects of academic investigation that promotes respect for and curiosity about all cultures, affirms the equal humanity of all members of the community, and rejects all forms of bullying and discrimination.

VII. RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENTS

- A. Demonstrate a willingness to examine objectively one's own point of view and to make a concerted effort to understand the reasons for differing points of view. Such willingness is basic to working effectively with others on issues of common concern but with divergent possible solutions.
- B. Recognize that people may differ without malice, without the disruption of emotional outburst, and without impugning the character or integrity of those who have differing opinions.

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REGULATION 606.1 PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING QUESTIONED MATERIALS AND CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

I. PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING QUESTIONED MATERIALS AND CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

The District believes in the principles of intellectual freedom, as stated in its Instructional Materials Selection Policy 606, promoting a safe and supportive school system.

Any resident, employee, student or parent/guardian in the District may express concerns about materials used and controversial issues explored in the District’s educational program. Whenever a concern is expressed, the District will respond with a defined procedure.

The following procedure will be used when any resident, employee, student or parent/guardian in the District expresses concerns about materials used and controversial issues explored in the District’s educational program. Resolution may be accomplished at any of these identified four levels of review.

- A. Each concern shall be directed to the building principal who will:
- treat each concerned person(s) request with confidentiality.
 - provide and explain the District Selection Policy 606.
 - inform concerned person(s) that their child is not required to be exposed to the questioned material. See Alternative Instruction Request Form, 606.1b.
 - try to resolve the questions of the concerned person(s) during the initial contact.
 - provide and explain use of the form, “Statement of Concern About Educational Materials and Controversial Issues”, 606.1a.
 - inform Assistant Superintendent or designee and appropriate staff member(s) when the above form is given to a concerned person.
 - retain identified materials for use or place them in the reserve section in the school collection until review process is completed.
- B. Upon receipt of the signed “Statement of Concern About Educational Materials and Controversial Issues” form, the principal will:

Step 1: Meet with the concerned person(s) and appropriate staff to discuss the information on the completed form.

Step 2: Appoint a building committee to investigate the questioned materials or controversial issues. (The committee will have representation from the administration, media center, teaching staff and citizens.)

Step 3: Review the findings of the building committee.

Step 4: Inform the concerned person(s) and Assistant Superintendent or designee of their committee's findings in writing.

C. If the concerned person(s) is not satisfied with the findings of the building committee, the principal will forward the concern to the Assistant Superintendent or designee who will:

Step 1: Convene a Questioned Materials Committee. The QMC shall consist of at least six (6) persons including:

- a. staff from grade and/or subject area
- b. media director
- c. building principal
- d. Learning and Teaching department director or designee
- e. citizen(s)
- f. Office of Educational Equity department director or designee

Step 2: Review the findings of the Questioned Materials Committee.

Step 3: Inform the concerned person(s) of the Questioned Materials Committee's findings.

D. If the concerned person(s) is not satisfied with the Questioned Materials Committee's findings and the Assistant Superintendent or designee decision, they may appeal to the School Board.

ALTERNATIVE INSTRUCTION REQUEST FORM

Date: _____

Person initiating request: _____

Student name: _____

School student is attending: _____

Course/subject being requested: _____

Specific content or curriculum in question

Basis of concern

Suggested alternative instructional activity to take place.

Person who will provide instruction _____
Evaluation and assessment of the quality of the student's work. (To be completed by school personnel.)

The instructor and principal of the school have reviewed this plan.

Date: _____

Signed: Instructor _____

Principal _____

Student or Parent _____