

Instruction

Instructional Resources

Instructional Material Selection Guidelines

The Board of Education is legally responsible for all matters relating to the operation of the Watertown Unified School District. The duty of selecting instructional materials is delegated to the professionally trained and certificated staff employed by the school system.

Criteria for Selection of Materials

The following criteria will be used as they apply:

1. Materials shall support and be consistent with the general education goals of the district and the objectives of specific courses.
2. Materials shall be appropriate for the subject area and for the age, emotional development, ability level, and social development of the students for whom the materials are selected.
3. Materials shall be chosen to foster respect for all persons and shall realistically represent our pluralistic society, along with the roles and life styles open to both men and women in today's world. Materials shall be designed to help students gain an awareness and understanding of the many important contributions made to our civilization by minority groups, ethnic groups and women.
4. Each item should be approached from a broad perspective, looking at the work as whole and judging controversial elements in context rather than as isolated parts. Periodicals, for example, should be selected and purchased for their overall reputation, and should not be rejected because of an occasional article which may be offensive.
5. Commonly used instructional materials shall be presented to the Education Services Committee for its review and recommendation to the Board of Education. Updated editions of previously approved materials will not require further approval.

Textbooks and Workbooks

The Board of Education shall furnish such textbooks, supplementary texts and workbooks as are necessary to the best implementation of the curriculum in all grades, from kindergarten through twelfth grade. The Board reserves the right to assess fees and special charges in accordance with the statutes.

Final adoption of textbooks or workbooks shall be made in accordance with the recommendation of department chair/team leader/representatives, curriculum coordinator, and administrator. Adoptions will go through the Education Services Committee and on to the full Board of Education for approval.

Teachers shall keep the appropriate inventory of all books issued to students. Students may be charged for any all losses.

Objection:

1. Any resident of the school district may raise objections to instructional materials used in the District's educational program on the grounds that they are inappropriate and/or fail to meet stated instructional objectives.
2. The school official or staff member receiving a complaint regarding instructional materials shall try to resolve the issue informally.

- a. The school official or staff member initially receiving a complaint shall explain to the complainant the school's selection procedure, criteria, and qualifications of those persons selecting the material.
- b. The school official or staff member initially receiving a complaint shall explain to the best of his or her ability the particular place the objected to material occupies in the educational program, its intended educational usefulness, and additional information regarding its use, or refer the complaining party to someone who can identify and explain the use of the material.
3. In the event that the person making an objection to material is not satisfied with the initial explanation, the person raising the question should be referred to principal or designee. If, after consulting with the principal or designee, the complainant desires to file a formal complaint, the person to whom the complainant has been referred will assist in filling out a Reconsideration Request Form in full.
4. The individual receiving the initial complaint shall advise the principal or designee where the challenged material is being used, of the initial contact no later than the end of the following school day, whether or not the complainant has apparently been satisfied by the initial contact. A written record of the contact shall be maintained by the principal or designee.

Request for Reconsideration:

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. This procedure is for the purpose of considering the opinions of those persons in the schools and the community who are not directly involved in the selection process. The process of reconsideration will culminate with the Board approval.
2. Each school and the Educational Service Center will keep on hand and make available Reconsideration Request Forms. All formal objections to instructional materials must be made on this form.
3. The Reconsideration Request Form shall be signed by the complainant and filed with the Superintendent or designee.
4. Within five business days of the filing of the form, the Superintendent or designee shall file the material in question with the Reconsideration Committee for reevaluation. The committee shall recommend disposition to the office of the Superintendent.
5. Generally, access to challenged material shall not be restricted during the reconsideration process. However, in unusual circumstances, the material may be removed temporarily by following the provision of Section IV .B.6.e. of this rule.
6. The Reconsideration Committee
 - A. The Reconsideration Committee shall be made up of eleven members.
 - One teacher designated by the Superintendent
 - One school media specialist designated by the Superintendent
 - Assistant Superintendent
 - Five members from the community appointed by the Superintendent.
 - Three high school students, selected by the high school Principal.
 - B. The chair 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. A chairman and a secretary shall be selected at the first meeting.

- D. Special meetings may be called by the Superintendent to consider temporary removal of materials in unusual circumstances. Temporary removal shall require a three-fourths vote of the committee.
- E. The committee shall receive all Reconsideration Request Forms from the Superintendent or designee.
- F. The procedure for the first meeting following receipt of a Reconsideration Request Form is as follows:
- Distribute copies of written request form.
 - Give complainant or a group person an opportunity to talk about and expand on the request form.
 - Distribute reputable professionally prepared reviews of the material when available.
 - Distribute copies of challenged material as available.
- G. 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.
- H. The complainant shall be kept informed by the secretary concerning the status of his or her complaint throughout the committee reconsideration process. The complainant and known interested parties shall be given appropriate notice of such meetings.
- I. At the second or a subsequent meeting as desired 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 or (3) to limit the educational use of the challenged material. The written decision and its justification shall be forwarded to the Superintendent and the Educational Services Committee for appropriate action. The complainant and the appropriate schools will receive notification.
- J. 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.
- K. 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 of the full committee.
- L. Committee members directly associated with the selection, use, or challenge of the challenged material shall be excused from the committee during the deliberation on such materials. The Superintendent may appoint a temporary replacement for the excused committee member, but such replacement shall be of the same general qualifications of that person excused.
- M. If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision, he or she may request that the matter be placed on the agenda of the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board.

The Watertown Unified School District shall not discriminate in the selection and evaluation of instructional and library materials on the basis of sex, race, national origin, ancestry, creed, pregnancy, marital or parental status, sexual orientation or physical, mental, emotional, or learning disability.

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