

Public Concerns/Complaints about Instructional Resources

The district, though it is ultimately responsible for all curriculum and instructional materials including library books, recognizes the need and right of students to free access to many different types of books and materials. It also recognizes the right of the professional staff to select books and other materials supportive of the district's educational philosophy and goals.

District policy governs the selection of all instructional materials including library books and has established policies pertaining to the selection process. However, the following principles shall apply to the selection of books and other materials which present controversial topics or which for other reasons might be challenged.

Material that is challenged usually belongs to one of the three basic categories and will be treated as follows:

1. Religion–Factual, unbiased material on all major religions has a place in school libraries.
2. Ideologies–Libraries should, with no thought toward swaying reader judgment, make available a balanced collection of primary and factual material on the level of their students on various ideologies or philosophies which exert or have exerted a strong force, either favorably or unfavorably, in government, current events, politics, education and other phases of life.
3. Profanity/obscenity–Materials shall be subjected to a test of literary merit and reality by media specialists and teachers who will take into consideration the maturity of students and the standards of the community.

Criticism of a book or other materials used in the schools may be expected from time to time. In such instances:

1. The district recognizes the right of an individual parent to request that his own child not read a given book. When such a request is presented, the teacher and/or school administrator should resolve the situation, perhaps by arranging for use of alternative materials meeting essentially the same instructional purpose. This does not apply, however, to basic program texts and materials that the Board has adopted.
2. The district shall not permit any individual or group to exercise censorship over instructional materials and library collections but recognizes that at times a re-evaluation of certain materials may be desirable. Should an individual or group ask to have any book or other material withdrawn from school use:

- a. The person who objects to the book or other material shall be asked to sign a complaint on a standard form on which he will document his criticism.
- b. Following receipt of the formal complaint, the superintendent shall provide for a re-evaluation of the material in question.
- c. The re-evaluation shall be based on the points offered above as well as the principles governing the selection of all instructional materials. Additionally, the district wishes to emphasize that:
 - (1) A book shall not be excluded because of the writer's race or nationality or his political or religious views.
 - (2) The value of any book or other material shall be judged as a whole, taking into account the purpose of the material rather than individual, isolated expressions or incidents in the work.
- d. The superintendent or his designee shall review the complaint and re-evaluation and shall render a decision in the matter. Should the solution be unsatisfactory to the complainant, he may appeal the decision to the Board.

In summary, the Board assumes final responsibility for all books and instructional materials it makes available to students. It holds its professional staff accountable for their proper selection. It recognizes rights of individual parents with respect to controversial materials used by their own children. It will provide for the re-evaluation of materials in library collections upon formal request. On the other hand, students' right to learn and the freedom of teachers to teach shall be respected.

August, 2000

CROSS REFS.:

Administrative Policies:

IJ, Instructional Resources and Materials

IJJ, Textbook Selection and Adoption

IJL, Library Materials Selection and Adoption

Board Policy:

EL-3, Treatment of Students, Parents and Community

EL-14, Instructional Materials Selection and Adoption

Lake County School District R-1, Leadville, Colorado