

COLCHESTER SCHOOL DISTRICT

POLICY: MATERIALS AND INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY SELECTION, AND REVIEW POLICY

DATE ADOPTED: April 6, 2004

PHILOSOPHY

It is the policy of the Colchester School District that all educational materials and instructional activities used in our schools will appropriately reflect the Mission Statement of the Colchester School District.

SELECTION OF MATERIALS

RESPONSIBILITY:

1. The Board of Education is responsible for all matters relating to the operation of schools in the Colchester School District. Instruction materials should present opposing sides of controversial issues, so that with guidance young citizens may develop critical thinking. Instruction materials should be representative of different racial, religious, ethnic and cultural groups, emphasizing their valuable contribution to American heritage and should be free from sex role stereotyping to the extent possible.
2. The Board of Education delegates authority for the selection of educational materials and instructional activities to professional personnel. Decisions to purchase shall be based on the recommendations of media specialists, teachers, and/or principals with final approval by the Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee.
3. Information regarding any new classroom texts, library books, and/or other educational materials will be made available to parents and/or community members.

PROCEDURES FOR CURRICULA, CO-CURRICULA, AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR MATERIALS:

1. Curriculum task groups or academic departments are delegated the responsibility of selecting basic textbooks and materials for the instructional program. Whenever appropriate to the program/activity, general criteria for selection will include:
 - Relevance to Curriculum Objectives
 - Readability
 - Clarity and Organization
 - Suitability of Methods/Processes
 - Teacher Resources Available
 - Provision for Individual Differences
 - Cost

Date Warned: March 19, 2004
 First Reading: March 23, 2004
 Second Reading: April 6, 2004

- Durability
- Timeliness
- Reputation of Author
- Suitability for Age Group

In their review process, such groups will examine materials from several publishers using the criteria listed above. These groups may seek input from other teachers, administrators, librarians, students or parents. The decision to allocate funds for purchasing books will be based on staff recommendations and the approval of the building principal.

2. Teachers and advisors are delegated the responsibility of selecting supplementary books and materials for their classrooms, co-curricula, and/or extra-curricular activities. General criteria considered for selection of supplementary material will be the same as listed in #1 above. The teacher/advisor may seek input from the school librarian, other teachers, the principal, parents, and/or students. The decision to allocate funds for purchasing books will be based on staff recommendations and the approval of the building principal.
3. Any curricula, co-curricula, or extra-curricular material ordered without prior inspection will be previewed by the teacher/advisor before it is presented to students. If the educator questions suitability, the material will be referred to the librarian and principal for review.

PROCEDURE FOR LIBRARY MATERIALS:

1. School libraries exist to provide resources which will:
 - Enrich and support the curriculum, taking into consideration the varied interests, abilities and maturity levels of the students served.
 - Stimulate growth in factual knowledge, literary appreciation aesthetic values and ethical standards.
 - Help students develop the practice of critical reading and thinking.

Library collections will include materials representing different opinions on controversial issues in order to enable students to make intelligent judgments. Students will have access to a wide and varied collection. Library materials will not be excluded because of personal opinion, prejudice, or because of the race, sex, nationality, or social, political and/or religious views of the author(s). Finding controversial materials in a school library does not imply that the school/library supports the ideas contained in those materials.

2. Librarians are delegated the responsibility of selecting library materials. They may seek the assistance of teachers, administrators, specialists, parents and students along with the use of evaluation aids such as those approved by the Association of School Libraries and other catalogs or media reviews. The decision to purchase library materials will be based on the recommendation of the librarian with the approval of the principal.

3. Donated library materials will be subject to the same selection criteria as purchased materials. Librarians and/or principals will dispose of unsuitable donated materials in an approved manner.
4. The librarian will periodically evaluate library materials in order to maintain a BALANCED collection which is both historically accurate and appropriately current. The librarian will notify the building principal whenever he/she deems a material should be removed. Such materials will be disposed of in a manner approved by the Central Office administration.

PROCESS FOR OBJECTING AND/OR RECONSIDERING MATERIALS OR INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

RESPONSIBILITY:

Parents have final authority to approve materials and instructional activities used by their own children. Upon written parental request to the classroom teachers, librarian, and/or principal, a student will be excused from reading or viewing questioned materials. This authority of parents or guardians, however, extends only to their own children. Any citizen, group, or individual staff member wishing to have the School District reconsider the general use of any material or instructional activity will pursue the following defined course of action. While under consideration, the questioned material or activity will remain in circulation/use. This process also includes the ability of a staff member, parent, and/or other individual to ask for reconsideration of a material or instructional activity not currently in use or circulation.

PROCEDURE:

It is understood that each step in the following sequenced process will be completed as quickly as possible. Resolution to the objection may be achieved at the end of any step, or the objector may decide to proceed to the next step in the process.

- Step 1: The individual or group will discuss any concerns informally with the librarian or other educator(s) using the material or instructional activity. Subsequently, the educator(s) will share these concerns with other staff members and the building administrator who might be impacted by a decision on this book or material or instructional activity.
- Step 2: If an individual or group has further concerns, they will respond in writing or on audio tape to the "Request for Reconsideration of Educational Material or Instructional Activity" (Appendix A). The educator using the material will complete the form "Response to Questioned Material or Instructional Activity" (Appendix B). Copies of these forms will be exchanged and forwarded to the building principal who will meet with both parties. After this meeting, the principal will forward copies of the two forms and minutes of this meeting to the Central Office administrators. This step will be completed within five working days.

Step 3: If an individual or group has further concerns, the appropriate building level Material Evaluation Committee will meet to evaluate the questioned material or activity. Everyone involved in this process will be expected to read and examine the challenged material or consider the instructional activity according to the procedures established in this Selection Policy. Whenever available, critical reviews of the challenged material will also be read. The Committee is charged with forming an opinion based upon the material in its entirety. At this point in the process, School Board members and the public/community will be notified of the objection and the material or activity in question.

Members of each building level Material Evaluation Committee will include: the principal, librarian, two teachers, one student with parental permission (OPTIONAL), and one community member. If it is not deemed appropriate for a student to participate in any group process, a parent will be invited to substitute in the student position. Should the objection involve library materials, the librarian will be replaced on this committee by another staff member appointed by the principal. This Committee will meet with the individual objector or a representative of the group. A written decision from this Committee will be forwarded to the Central Office administration, the individual or group who submitted the request, and the teacher/librarian. This step will be completed within ten working days.

Step 4: If either the individual/group or the teacher/librarian is dissatisfied with the Committee's decision, an appeal may be made to the Central Office administration who will meet with the principal, a representative from the Material Evaluation Committee, and the parties involved.

After this meeting, a Central Office administrator will respond in writing to all parties, approving, modifying, or overruling the Committee's decision. This step will be completed within five working days. At this point in the process, copies of all written documentation regarding the complaint will be forwarded to the School Board and made available to the public/community at large.

Step 5: If any of the parties involved is dissatisfied with the administrator's decision, an appeal may be made within 10 school days to the Board of Education. In a warned meeting, the Board will schedule such an appeal within the next two regularly scheduled Board meetings following the request. A final decision regarding the questioned material will be made by the School Board, meeting in public session. The Board's decision regarding the status of any questioned material or activity will hold for a minimum of one calendar year.

APPENDIX A

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL OR INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY

Request Initiated by:

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Citizen Represents:

_____ Self

_____ Organization: Name _____

_____ Other Group: Name _____

1. To what do you object? (Please be specific.)

2. What is educationally positive about this material or activity?

3. What do you feel might be the result(s) of using this material or activity?

4. Do you recommend this material or activity for use with any age group? If yes, please state age/grade levels.

(Continued...)

Materials and Instructional Activity Selection, and Review Policy

Appendix A

Page 2

5. How much of this material or activity have you read, viewed, used and/or heard?

6. What do you believe is the theme and/or purpose of this material or activity?

7. What would you like your school to do about this material or activity?

8. What is the benefit of having this material or activity in our school district?

Other Comments:

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Check here if you wish your identity kept confidential at Step 4 in our process.

APPENDIX B

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONED MATERIAL OR INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY

TITLE: _____

AUTHOR: _____

PUBLISHER/DATE: _____

NAME OF RESPONDER: _____

1. Where and how is this material/activity used?

2. What do you believe is the theme and/or purpose of this material/activity?

3. In general, why should this material/activity be included in the library, or studied in the curriculum by students at the grade/group level indicated?

4. Specifically, what is the unique value of this material/activity?

(Continued...)

Materials and Instructional Activity Selection, and Review Policy

Appendix B

Page 2

5. What do you feel might be the impact of removing this material/activity?

6. Have you read any critical or literary reviews of this material or activity? If yes, cite these reviewers and their opinions.

7. What do you feel should be done with this material or activity and why?

8. Can you recommend any material or activity in place of that which is questioned? Why or why not?

Other Comments:

Signature: _____

Date: _____