

SELECTION OF LEARNING RESOURCES

“Public Complaints About Curriculum”

I. Introduction

1. The Board recognizes the student's right of free access to many different types of learning resources. The Board also recognizes the responsibility of teachers and ultimately administrators to select books and other materials in accordance with current trends in education, course requirements and Manitoba Education and Training directives, and to make those materials available in the schools.
2. The Board recognizes the right of an individual parent to request that their dependent child not be required to use a specific learning material in conflict with their beliefs.
3. Any parent who requests reconsideration of the use of any learning material must do so in writing to the principal on the prescribed form and according to School Division policy.

II. Guidelines for access to learning resources

1. No parent or group of parents, outside the Board, has the right to determine the learning materials for students other than for their own children.
2. Books or other learning materials of sound factual authority shall not be prescribed or removed from library shelves or classrooms because of partisan doctrinal approval or disapproval.
3. Learning materials shall not be excluded on the sole basis of the race, nationality, or the political or religious views of the writer or of its style and language.

III. Selection and review of learning resources

Selection of learning resources is a process by which trained professional educators choose or reject instructional materials according to standards congruent with educational goals. The selection process also includes the replacement of lost and worn materials still of educational value, and the removal of materials which no longer meet the criteria for selection.

1. Schools should provide students with a wide range of educational learning resource materials at appropriate levels of difficulty, with diversity of appeal and with representation of different points of view to meet their developmental needs.

2. The acquisition of learning resources should be consistent with the educational goals and aims of the Province and Kelsey School Division.
3. The responsibility for the provision of learning materials is vested in the Board of Trustees. The school principal is normally responsible for the selection and review of educational learning resources but in practice may delegate the selection and review of learning materials to designated instructional personnel.
4. The principal should take into account prevailing community concerns and interests in selecting learning materials for a school. Mutual understanding should be promoted in response to parental concerns of particular selections which have been approved in a school course.
5. The selection of learning materials shall in no way hinder the teacher's right to utilize authorized works in the classroom.

IV. Criteria for selection

The general criteria for selection of learning materials shall include:

1. Learning resources shall provide for the developmental needs of all students consistent with the goals of the School Division.
2. Learning resources shall be factually accurate where applicable.
3. Learning resources should be selected for their aesthetic, literary, and/or social value.
4. The presentation of the content shall be appropriate to the intended users. Such factors as the student's ability, motivation, maturity, first language, learning style, age, and other special needs should be taken into account.
5. Learning resources should motivate students and staff to examine their own attitudes and behaviours and to comprehend their duties, responsibilities, rights, and privileges as participating citizens in our society.
6. Learning resources shall be designed and selected to help students gain an awareness of Canada and Manitoba's pluralistic society.
7. Emphasis should be placed on the selection of Canadian authored or Canadian produced learning resources after other criteria have been considered.

8. Teaching styles, curriculum content, language of instruction, and methodology are to be considered.
9. Factors such as durability, safety, ease of assembly, and ease of storage should be considered.
10. While materials should be free from stereotyping and prejudice, learning resources containing a particular bias may be provided to meet specific curriculum objectives.
11. The selection of learning resources regarding controversial issues shall be directed toward maintaining a balanced collection representing various points of view. For example, learning resources may depict historical and contemporary forces in order to aid the understanding of social, economic, and political problems.
12. Learning resources should be selected for their strengths rather than rejected for their weaknesses.

V. Procedures for reconsideration of instructional resources

In order to allow for the parental desire to ensure that their children are not exposed to materials they find objectionable, each school principal shall utilize a procedure developed in the school in order to first try and resolve the issue informally should it arise.

A. Informal reconsideration

1. Challenges must be handled with the understanding that no parent or guardian has the right to determine reading, viewing, or listening matter for students other than their own. While concerns about materials are being considered, access to the challenged materials or other related materials shall not be restricted.
2. Should a challenge be sustained, such a decision should not be interpreted as a judgment of irresponsibility on the part of those who originally selected the materials.
3. Any complainant who wishes to request reconsideration of any learning resources in the school must make such request in writing on the "Request for Reconsideration" form provided through the principal. Refusal by the complainant to fill out the form will be considered as ending the matter.

B. Process

1. This first stage of the reconsideration process should bring the complainant, the principal, and other designated instructional personnel together at a mutually agreeable time and in an informal setting where opinions and information can be freely exchanged.
2. After hearing the concerns about the material, the principal and other appropriate instructional staff will provide explanations about the materials in question. Such explanations may include the purpose of learning resources in the school's curriculum, the criteria used in selection, and the relationship of this particular item to the purpose and criteria for selection.
3. If the explanations are satisfactory to the complainant, the reconsideration process will terminate at this stage.
4. If this meeting does not arrive at a resolution that is satisfactory to all concerned parties, the complainant may launch the formal reconsideration process.
5. Any decision to withdraw a learning resource shall be reported to the Superintendent.

C. Formal Reconsideration

1. Allegations will be considered upon receipt of the formal request for consideration. The Superintendent will establish a Reconsideration Committee. This committee shall consist of the following representation (other than the complaint):
 - a) the principal acting as the non-voting chair
 - b) two teachers conversant with the material in question
 - c) a designated instructional staff member.
 - d) two parents/guardians from the community or one student in place of a parent/guardian
 - e) two citizens from the community who do not have children in that school
2. The function of the Reconsideration Committee shall be to:
 - a) examine the challenged resource
 - b) study critical reviews of the resource
 - c) weigh strengths and weaknesses based on the resource as a whole and not on passages or sections in isolation
 - d) consult School Division resource persons and/or community persons with related professional knowledge including, if possible, the person responsible for the selection of the resource.
 - e) discuss the challenged item with the complainant
 - f) decide whether the item should be retained or removed from the collection in question; and
 - g) prepare a written report.

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3. Written Reports

- a) the Chair shall discuss the written report with the complainant.
- b) written reports will be retained by the Superintendent with copies on file in the offices of the School Division and the principal of the school. A minority report may also be filed. The reports shall be available for examination upon request.
- c) The decision of the Reconsideration Committee is binding only for the individual collection of the particular school.
- d) any decision to withdraw a learning resource shall be reported through the Superintendent to the Board.

4. Appeals

Notwithstanding any procedure outlined in this document, the complainant shall have the right to appeal any decision of the Reconsideration Committee to the Board of School Trustees as the final review panel. The final decision about the controversial learning resources will rest with the School Board.