

Board Policy

Code No. 605.3E3

INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE BOARD TO THE RECONSIDERATION COMMITTEE

The policy of the Bettendorf School District related to the selection of instructional materials states that the responsibility for selection is delegated to the professionally trained and certificated staff employed by the school system (See Board Policy #605.1, 605.2, 605.3). It further outlines the criteria that staff use in making selections and provides a procedure (Request for Reconsideration of Instructional Material) by which residents of the school district or system employees may raise objection to instructional materials used in the District's educational program.

As a member of this reconsideration committee, you are asked to familiarize yourself with Policy #605.1 and 605.3 and Regulation 605.3R1. This background will help you to understand the philosophy of selection employed by the District and the steps of the reconsideration procedure of which you are a part. You will also read or view the questioned material as available, before the committee meets, and will evaluate it using the established form.

This committee has been formed in compliance with that policy. Its composition, nine members from administrative, faculty, and parental segments, assures a broad representation of interests, and by its very title, "Reconsideration Committee", suggests a positive approach to its task. Selection is a positive process. The selector looks for value, for strengths in the material. He/she does not succumb to irrelevancies introduced either by the prejudices of his own background or other pressures. He/she is swayed by arguments only when they have relevance to the work as a whole. The aim of the selector is to multiply the points of view which will find expression, not limit them--to be a channel for communication, not a bar against it.

In reconsidering materials, the role of this committee, and particularly of the chairperson, is to produce a climate for a free exchange of ideas. The committee should remember that the school system must be responsive to the needs, tastes, and opinions of the community it serves. It must distinguish between broad community sentiment and attempts to impose personal standards. Deliberations should concentrate on the appropriateness of the challenged material. The question to be answered by the committee is, "Is the material appropriate for its designated audience at this time?" The committee will be dealing with specific books, films, or other materials and their content.

It is important that the committee create and maintain a calm, nonvolatile environment in which to deal with a potentially volatile situation. For this reason it is important that members keep in mind their function is to reconsider, not defend, materials. They must recognize complainants are exercising their constitutional rights under due process, and they, too, have a legitimate role in the selection/retention process.

It is imperative that any information released to the media or other people in the course of this committee's deliberations comes only from the chairperson. Individual committee members will not discuss proceedings outside the committee before the final decision is reached to insure the objectivity of the group.

The committee's final recommendation will be:

1. To take no removal action;
2. To remove all or part of the challenged materials from the total school environment;
3. To allow students to use alternate titles approved by school personnel; or
4. To agree on a limitation of the educational use of the material.

The Board of Directors may accept or reject the recommendation of the reconsideration committee; any action shall be accompanied by a written explanation of the Board's reasons.

RECONSIDERATION COMMITTEE FORMS

The committee convened by the Assistant Superintendent to consider a request for the reconsideration of instructional material will use the attached forms to evaluate objectively the material under reconsideration.

Each instructional material under reconsideration will be reviewed and evaluated in terms of the general criteria that apply to all instructional material as well as the specific criteria applicable to the particular format. Finally, overall summary ratings for the general and specific criteria categories will appear on the "Summary Form for the Evaluation and Selection of Instructional Materials."

Each committee member will independently complete the following forms:

1. Checklist for Evaluation and Selection of Instructional Material--General Criteria (605.3E4).
2. Checklist for Evaluation and Selection of Instructional Material--Specific Format Criteria (605.3E5).
3. Summary Evaluation Form for Instructional Material (605.3E6).

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