



International Reading Association

A membership organization of literacy professionals

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RESOLUTION

On the Selection of Reading Materials

In the schools of a democratic society, the rights of students to learn are essential, and students should have free access to all materials that will enhance their education. Such access is the means by which independent thought and creativity are nurtured, and it makes possible the development of individuals who can search for truth, create and analyze options, make personal decisions intelligently, and make critical judgments about public policy.

The selection of materials is a professional process. Teachers, parents/guardians, administrators, media specialists, and members of boards of education should develop and approve a strong statement that outlines the process by which materials are selected. It is important that this selection policy be explained to the public and used and supported by the professionals responsible for the formal education of students.

Educators, of course, respect the rights of members of the community to express concern about educational programs. The rights and needs of students--considering the reality of diverse populations in classrooms--must receive the highest priority. Discussions among educators and parents about educational philosophy or the merits of materials selected for instruction are *desirable*. In such sessions, people might have different positions. In rare cases where a parent requests alternate reading assignments for his or her child, an alternative assignment should be considered.

It is vital that every school system follow the selection policy and procedures as developed and approved by the professionals responsible for the education of students in the schools. The International Reading Association, together with the American Library Association, the Association of American Publishers, and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, endorses the following summary of recommended procedures for selecting educational materials, educating the community about them, and responding to any objections that may arise.

Before a Challenge Arises

Establish in writing a materials selection policy. It should specify the local criteria and procedures for selecting curricular and library materials, and all school personnel should strictly adhere to the policy.

Establish in writing a clearly defined method for dealing with complaints. An important part of this policy statement should be formal review procedures for challenged material. A form should be used to identify the complainant's specific concerns; a broad-based committee that includes parents and other citizens as well

as school personnel should be established to review challenged materials; and no restrictions should be placed on the use of the materials until the review process has been completed.

Establish continuing communication with the *school community*. It should be kept informed about educational objectives, curricula, and classroom and library programs. The community should be informed especially about policies and procedures for selecting instructional and library materials.

After a Challenge Has Been Made

Attempt to resolve the challenge informally. School personnel should meet with the complainant to hear specific recommendations and to explain how and why the challenged material was selected. If the complainant still wants to challenge the material, the school official should provide the formal request-for-review form.

Take no action to review challenged materials until a written request for review is filed. The review procedures then should be started immediately, and the school board should be informed of the details of the complaint.

Strictly adhere to established procedures throughout the review process. School personnel should be reminded that there are to be no restrictions on the use of the materials until the entire review process is completed.

Inform the general public. Any review of challenged materials should be conducted openly, and the community should be able to know about the issue through local media or school-related communications, such as parents' associations and school newsletters.

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