

PUBLIC CONCERNS/COMPLAINTS ABOUT INSTRUCTIONAL AND LIBRARY RESOURCES

The Colorado Springs School District 11 Board of Education (the Board), 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. (See Board Policies IB, Academic Freedom, IJJ, Instructional Resources and Materials Selection, Adoption, Acquisition, and Reconsideration, and IJL, Library Media Selection, Adoption, Acquisition, and Reconsideration)

The Board has approved principles governing the selection of all instructional materials including library books and has established policies pertaining to the selection process. (See Board Policies IJJ and IJL) However, the Board wishes to amplify its principles on the selection of books and other materials which present controversial topics or which for other reasons might be challenged. (see exhibits to Board Policies IJJ and IJL)

Material that is challenged usually belongs to one of the three basic categories: religion, ideology or profanity/obscenity. Board policies regarding these areas shall be 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 Board recognizes the right of an individual parent/guardian to request that his or her own child not read a given book or materials. (See Board Policies IMB, Teaching about Controversial/Sensitive Issues, and IMBB, Exemptions from Required Instruction) When such a request is presented, the teacher and/or school administrator should attempt to resolve the situation. If an impasse occurs, the process of reconsideration established in Board Policy IJJ and IJL shall be followed.
2. The Board 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. If the situation cannot be resolved informally at the school level, 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. (See exhibits to Board Policies IJJ and IJL)
- b. Following receipt of the formal complaint, the Superintendent or designee 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 and/or library materials. Additionally, the Board emphasizes 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 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.

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CROSS REFS.: IB, Academic Freedom
IGA, Curriculum Development, Adoption and Maintenance
IJJ, Instructional Resources and Materials, Selection, Adoption, Acquisition and Reconsideration
IJL, Library Media Selection, Adoption, Acquisition and Reconsideration
IMB, Teaching About Controversial/Sensitive Issues
IMBB, Exemptions from Required Instruction