

CHALLENGE OF LEARNING MATERIALS

Background

Intellectual Freedom comprehends the right of every individual to have access to all expressions of knowledge and creativity. This basic right requires that students be granted freedom to read as an integral part of their education. Because students require practice in handling the freedom to read, it becomes the responsibility of the professional educators to make available material representing the widest range of interests, so that students may freely explore the world of ideas, be they popular or unpopular. (Freedom to Read Statement of the Learning Resources Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association).

Instructional resource materials used in the delivery of educational programs must comply with the guidelines provided by the Government of Alberta and the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Employees, students or parents may challenge the appropriateness of curriculum and instructional materials being used in the schools used in Division schools.

Definitions

Instructional resources are those resources selected by the teacher for student use.

Curriculum resources are those resources used by teachers in preparation for teaching.

Learning resources are those resources available in school libraries.

Procedures

1. The Board is legally responsible for the selection of materials purchased with public funds, other than those recommended by Alberta Education.
2. The decision to sustain a challenge shall not necessarily be interpreted as a judgment of irresponsibility on the part of the professionals involved in the original selection and/or use of learning resources materials.
3. The basic principles of the freedom to read, listen and view shall be defended.
4. No parents have the right to determine reading, viewing, or listening matter for students other than for their own children.
5. Access to challenged material shall not be restricted during the reconsideration process.

6. The major criterion for the final decision shall be the appropriateness of the material for its intended use.
7. Although material is challenged, principles of freedom to read/listen/view and the professional responsibility of staff must be defended.
8. A decision to sustain a challenge shall not necessarily be interpreted as a judgment of irresponsibility on the part of the professional(s) involved in the original selection and/or use of the challenged material.
9. Upon receiving a complaint concerning a learning resource, there are three (3) stages in dealing with the challenge: Informal, Formal, and Appeal. A satisfactory resolution of the complaint may occur at any point in the process. The item in question shall remain in circulation until a decision is reached.

10. Informal Reconsideration

- 10.1 If a complaint is made, an attempt is to be made to resolve the matter informally at the school level.
- 10.2 The Principal or designate shall:
 - 10.2.1 Listen to the nature of the challenge.
 - 10.2.2 Explain the guiding principles involved in the selection of learning resources and the manner in which the learning resource in question is utilized in the school; or
 - 10.2.3 The Principal may form a committee of the Principal or designate, teacher/teacher-librarian and a parent from the community to reach a decision on the resource.
 - 10.2.4 The Principal or designate shall discuss the decision with the parent.
- 10.3 An individual parent may submit a written request to the Principal to restrict access to his/her child of a given learning resource.
- 10.4 If unresolved at this stage, proceed to Formal Reconsideration.

11. Formal Reconsideration

- 11.1 The complainant may pursue a formal reconsideration, by completing a Request for Reconsideration of a Learning Resource form and forwarding it to the Principal.
- 11.2 The Principal shall forward copies of the completed Request for Reconsideration of Learning Resources form to the Assistant Superintendent of Instructional Services.
- 11.3 The request for reconsideration shall be referred to a Reconsideration Committee composed of:
 - 11.3.1 The Assistant Superintendent of Instructional Services,
 - 11.3.2 The Principal,
 - 11.3.3 The Division teacher-librarian or school library staff,

- 11.3.4 One (1) parent or member of the community chosen by the Principal,
- 11.3.5 Student representation at the discretion of the Principal.
- 11.4 The Reconsideration Committee shall examine the challenged learning resource. Two (2) checklists may be used for completing this procedure. They are:
 - 11.4.1 Reconsideration of Learning Resources – Non-fiction.
 - 11.4.2 Reconsideration of Learning Resources – Fiction and Other Literary Forms.
- 11.5 The Reconsideration Committee will:
 - 11.5.1 Be allowed time to meet and review to complaint, the item in question, critical reviews of the resource, and any other pertinent information.
 - 11.5.2 When appropriate, discuss the challenged item with the individual complainant to clarify the basis of the challenge.
 - 11.5.3 Form opinions based on the material as a whole rather than on words, passages, or sections taken out of context.
 - 11.5.4 Reach a decision.
 - 11.5.5 Inform the complainant of the Committee's decision.

12. Appeal

- 12.1 The complainant may appeal any decision of the Reconsideration Committee directly to the Superintendent.

Reference: Section 18, 20, 39, 60, 61, 113 Education Act
Guide to Education ECS to Grade 12