


INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT 271
Bloomington, Minnesota

REQUEST FOR SCHOOL BOARD ACTION

DATE OF BOARD MEETING: November 12, 2018

SUBJECT: Revised Policy 606.1, Procedure for Handling
Questioned Materials and Controversial Issues


ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT: Academic Services

APPROVAL OF ADMINISTRATIVE
CABINET MEMBER: Eric Melby, Ed.D. 
Assistant Superintendent

RESOLUTION FOR BOARD TO ADOPT:

RESOLVED, that the School Board of Independent School District 271 approves revised Policy 606.1, Procedure for Handling Questioned Materials and Controversial Issues.

RECOMMENDATION OF SUPERINTENDENT:

Approve. 

BACKGROUND:

The purpose of the current policy is to provide direction in handling questioned materials. The proposed revisions to the current policy and accompanying regulation adds language addressing controversial issues.

The District believes in the principles of intellectual freedom, as stated in its Instructional Materials Selection Policy 606. The District also recognizes that as students strive to reach their learning potential while preparing for career and college, they may encounter issues that could be considered controversial. Controversial issues are defined as contemporary problems, subjects, or questions of a political or social nature where there exist significant opposing viewpoints and/or multiple perspectives. Questioned materials and controversial issues can be useful pedagogical tools, and are acceptable for educational purposes, consistent with the curriculum, school programs and activities in an impartial and objective manner.

On October 16, 2018, the School Board Policy Committee reviewed and discussed the proposed revisions to Policy 606.1, prepared and presented by Administration. The accompanying revised regulation also was reviewed and is presented for information.

District's legal counsel reviewed the policy and regulation.

Adopted: August 28, 1984
Revised: July 17, 1990
January 25, 1999
February 27, 2017 [Routine Review]
November 12, 2018 [Revised-Additional Language]

Contact Person: Assistant Superintendent or Designee

POLICY 606.1 PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING QUESTIONED MATERIALS AND CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

I. PURPOSE:

To provide direction in handling questioned materials and controversial issues in schools.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

The Bloomington Public School System believes in the principles of intellectual freedom, as stated in its Instructional Materials Selection Policy 606. The District also recognizes that as students strive to reach their learning potential while preparing for career and college, they often encounter issues that may be considered controversial. Controversial issues are defined as contemporary problems, subjects, or questions of a political or social nature where there exist significant opposing viewpoints and /or multiple perspectives. Questioned materials and controversial issues can be useful pedagogical tools, and are acceptable for educational purposes, consistent with the curriculum, school programs and activities in an impartial and objective manner. Any resident, employee, or parent in the District may express concerns about materials used and controversial issues explored in the District's educational program. Whenever a concern is expressed, the District will respond with a defined procedure.

III. PROCEDURE

The defined procedures for responding to concerns expressed should, if possible, provide for resolution at the building level, second at the District level, and third at the School Board level. The standing District committee is provided in the event that resolution to the concern is not met at the building level.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOOL BOARD AND STAFF

- A. The School Board is responsible for the general operation of the District.
- B. Through Policy 606, the School Board delegates authority for the selection of resources to the professional staff employed by the District.
- C. Controversial issues are managed in accordance with the following principles:
 - 1. Schools are neutral places for rational discourse and objective study.
 - 2. Viewpoints in any context – spoken, displayed, or other expressive manners – that may cause a material disruption to the educational setting are prohibited.
 - 3. Viewpoints as expressed through displays, posters, bumper stickers, signs, etc. may be used for educational purposes consistent with the curriculum, school programs and activities only, and in an impartial and objective manner. Such viewpoints shall be removed upon completion of the unit of study.

4. Discussion of controversial issues shall allow students to explore a range of relevant and credible information and viewpoints pertaining to the issue under study and shall be presented in an intellectually safe environment free from bias, prejudice and indoctrination. Students shall form and express their own opinions based upon dispassionate, objective, unbiased study and discussion of the facts related to the controversy without fear of jeopardizing their relationship with teachers or the school.
 5. Educational professionals may express their personal opinion, when appropriate, provided the expression is characterized as personal opinion and does not attempt to persuade students to the educational professional's point of view. Instructors should consider the impact such expressions will have on the discussion or education setting. (*i.e. Will sharing a perspective usefully model the way one can take a stance on a complex topic, or will it more likely shut down students who may disagree?*)
 6. Educational professionals shall refrain from advocating personal beliefs or partisan points of view through speech or other expressive viewpoints regarding controversial issues in the course of their professional duties.
 7. Educational professionals shall discuss controversial subjects in a detached fashion, while maintaining objectivity and avoiding distortion of discussion. The point of teaching controversial issues is to inquire as to the origins of the controversy and the structures of competing arguments. Educational professionals should make controversial topics into objects of academic investigation and analysis.
- D. The inclusion of materials does not imply endorsement by the District.
- E. Policy and Regulation for Procedures for Handling Questioned Materials and Controversial Issues will be used when concerns or questions are raised about District selected instructional materials or controversial issues (as defined above) are used for educational purposes consistent with the curriculum, school programs and activities.

Board Review: August 18, 1984
July 17, 1990
January 25, 1999
February 27, 2017 [Routine Review]
November 12, 2018 [Revised – Additional Language]

Contact Person: Assistant Superintendent or Designee

REGULATION 606.1 PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING QUESTIONED MATERIALS AND CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

I. PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING QUESTIONED MATERIALS AND CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

A. Statement of Policy

The Bloomington Public School System believes in the principles of intellectual freedom, as stated in its Instructional Materials Selection Policy 606. The District also recognizes that as students strive to reach their learning potential while preparing for career and college, they often encounter issues that may be considered controversial. Controversial issues are defined as contemporary problems, subjects, or questions of a political or social nature where there exist significant opposing viewpoints and/or multiple perspectives. Questioned materials and controversial issues can be useful pedagogical tools, and are acceptable for educational purposes, consistent with the curriculum, school programs and activities in an impartial and objective manner.

B. Procedure

The following procedure will be used when any resident, employee or parent/guardian in the District expresses concerns about materials used and controversial issues explored in the District's educational program. Resolution may be accomplished at any of these identified four levels of review.

1. Each concern shall be directed to the building principal who will:
 - treat each concerned person(s) request with confidentiality.
 - provide and explain the District Selection Policy 606.
 - inform concerned person(s) that his/her child is not required to be exposed to the questioned material. See Alternative Instruction Request Form, 606.1b.
 - try to resolve the questions of the concerned person(s) during the initial contact.
 - provide and explain use of the form, "Statement of Concern About Educational Materials", 606.1a.
 - inform Assistant Superintendent or designee and appropriate staff member(s) when the above form is given to a concerned person.
 - retain identified materials for use or place them in the reserve section in the school collection until review process is completed.

2. Upon receipt of the signed "Statement of Concern About Educational Materials" form, the principal will:

Step 1: Meet with the concerned person(s) and appropriate staff to discuss the information on the completed form.

Step 2: Appoint a building committee to investigate the questioned materials or controversial issues. (The committee will have representation from the administration, media center, teaching staff and citizens.)

Step 3: Review the findings of the building committee.

Step 4: Inform the concerned person(s) and Assistant Superintendent or designee of the committee's findings in writing.

3. If the concerned person(s) is not satisfied with the findings of the building committee, the principal will forward the concern to the Assistant Superintendent or designee who will:

Step 1: Convene a Questioned Materials Committee. The QMC shall consist of at least five (5) persons including:

- a. staff from grade and /or subject area
- b. media director
- c. building principal
- d. Learning and Teaching department director or designee
- e. citizen(s)

Step 2: Review the findings of the Questioned Materials Committee.

Step 3: Inform the concerned person(s) of the Questioned Materials Committee's findings.

4. If the concerned person(s) is not satisfied with the Questioned Materials Committee's findings and the Assistant Superintendent or designee decision, he/she may appeal to the School Board.

STATEMENT OF CONCERN ABOUT QUESTIONED MATERIALS

AUTHOR _____

TITLE _____

PUBLISHER (if known) _____ COPYRIGHT YEAR _____

TYPE OF MATERIAL/S _____

REQUEST Initiated by _____

ADDRESS _____ PHONE _____

CONCERNED PERSONS (S) REPRESENTS: () himself / herself
() organization / group

Name: _____

1. What brought this material to your attention? _____

2. Have you examined the material in its entirety? Yes ____ No ____
(if no, please explain) _____

3. What is your concern(s) about this material? (Please be specific)

4. Are you aware of the evaluation/reviews of this material by educational or
professional authorities? Yes ____ No ____
(if no, please explain) _____

5. What use would you recommend that the school make of this material?

Signature of Concerned Person(s) _____ Date _____

ALTERNATIVE INSTRUCTION REQUEST FORM

Date: _____

Person initiating request: _____

Student name: _____

School student is attending: _____

Course/subject being requested: _____

Specific content or curriculum in question

Basis of concern

Suggested alternative instructional activity to take place.

Person who will provide instruction _____

Evaluation and assessment of the quality of the student's work. (To be completed by school personnel.)

The instructor and principal of the school have reviewed this plan.

Date: _____

Signed: Instructor _____

Principal _____

Student or Parent _____