CHALLENGED INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL

Introduction

Birmingham Public Schools believes that education is the responsibility of the entire school community, including parents, teachers, administrators, students, and citizens living in our school district. The school district supports parents and recognizes their right to know the curriculum we use and the books their child is checking out of our libraries. The school district also supports the principles of freedom of information and the student's right to access materials as stated in the American Library Association's documents: The Freedom to Read, Freedom to View, Library Bill of Rights, and Access to Resources and Services in the School Library, and interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights. Occasionally, a parent may wish to ensure that their child does not have access to a book or books, or a member of the school community may object to library materials despite the quality of the selection process.

When concerns are raised about curriculum and library materials, it is the intent of the Birmingham Public Schools to:

A. Review material objectively and in its full context.
B. Evaluate material in terms of the needs and interests of students, school, curriculum, community, and material selection policy.
C. Consider material in the light of differing opinions.
D. Offer the family the option to ensure their child does not have access to texts they personally object to their child accessing.

At any time, a parent or guardian can share a book title or list of book titles with the librarian/teacher they do not want their child to access. The librarian will register the titles to the student's account so that the student does not have access to check out the book or books in question.

Procedure for Handling Challenging Materials

A. If a parent or guardian of a student wishes to ensure that their child does not have access to a book or books, they should contact the classroom teacher or librarian with the text's title and discuss the appropriate next step.
B. Challenged material will not be withdrawn until the final decision has been made by the Superintendent or Board of Education. Individual students may be given a substitute assignment/book at the parent's request. Parents may also restrict their student's access to the challenged materials upon request. The classroom teacher or librarian may approve a parent or guardian's request to restrict access to a book for his or her own child, but the classroom teacher or librarian may not agree to remove a book or other material from the school in its entirety. A decision to remove challenged material must be made by the Superintendent or Board.

C. If the classroom teacher/librarian and the complainant cannot agree on a parent or guardian's request to restrict the access of his or her own child to a book or book(s), the complainant shall register the objection in writing to the classroom teacher/librarian and building administrator on Form I-34 (Request for Reconsideration of Materials). This form may be obtained from any school office or library. Upon receipt of the completed form, the classroom teacher/librarian and building administrator will confer with the complainant and appropriate staff to resolve the issue.
D. If the classroom teacher/librarian and building administrator cannot resolve the challenge, the Assistant Superintendent of Student Learning & Inclusion shall confer with the complainant in a further attempt to resolve the issue. If the challenge is not resolved, the Assistant Superintendent shall work with the building administrator to appoint a committee to review the challenge.
E. If a parent, guardian, or other member of the community requests that a book or other challenged material be withdrawn from the school or District, the complainant shall register the objection in writing to the Assistant Superintendent of Student Learning & Inclusion on Form I-34 (Request for Reconsideration of Materials). This form may be obtained from any school office or library. Upon receipt of the completed form, the Assistant Superintendent shall work with the building administrator to appoint a committee to review the challenge.
F. The committee referenced in paragraghs D and E shall be composed of the following:
    - Two parents
    - Three appropriate-level teachers
    - Two appropriate level students (if secondary)
    - Administrator from Student Learning and Inclusion
    - Appropriate library facilitator or department head
    - School librarian or classroom teacher
    - Appropriate level school administrator
G. If a review committee is formed, the complainant shall be allowed to present their views to the review committee.
H. The Committee shall decide by a majority vote within the first twenty working days after the date it is convened. Criteria used by the review committee will be:

The criteria are listed below:

- Educational significance: contribution subject matter makes to the curriculum.
- High artistic quality, aesthetic value, and/or literary style.
- Reading level and interest level of students.
- Representation of diversity and global perspective, including race, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, and gender identity.
- Reviews found in standard selection sources.
- Recommendations based on preview and examination of materials by professional personnel.
- Reputation and significance of author, producer, and publisher.
- Validity, timeliness, and appropriateness of material.
- Contribution the material makes to the breadth of representative viewpoints on controversial topics.

- Value commensurate with cost and/or need.
- Quality and value of the format.

I. The committee's recommendation shall be made to the Superintendent, who will decide within five working days.

J. If the challenged material is a previously Board-approved textbook, the Superintendent's decision is subject to approval by the Board of Education.[1] The challenger may appeal the decision of the Superintendent to the Board of Education on previously Board-approved textbooks. Such an appeal shall be made in writing within ten working days of receipt of the Superintendent's decision. The complainant must appeal to the Board by submitting the written appeal to the Board President, with a copy sent to the Superintendent. If the complainant does not submit a timely, written appeal, the Superintendent's decision on previously approved textbooks, the Superintendent's decision shall be final and binding. In all other instances of books, such as library books, the Superintendent's decision shall be final and binding.

K. If appealed, the challenger will be notified in writing of the decision of the Board of Education within five working days. The decision of the Board of Education will be final.

[1] The Revised School Code provides that "[t]he board of each school district shall select, approve, and purchase the textbooks to be used by the pupils of the schools on the subjects taught in the district." MCL 380.1422(1). However, the Revised School Code does not require Board approval for other books, such as library books.