Merchantville Board of Education 130 South Centre Street Merchantville, NJ 08109	File Code : 6161.1 Adopted : 02/27/1979 Revised : 05/26/2020 Reviewed : 07/15/2024

Guidelines for Evaluation & Selection of Instructional Materials

The board of education believes that textbooks should support and enrich the curriculum and make possible the achievement of the district's instructional goals. The chief school administrator shall develop procedures for continual review of new texts being offered and evaluation of those already in use to ensure that the textbooks used in this district are up to date in the factual matter they present and further the district's instructional goals. Textbooks and instructional materials should be judged by additional standards which shall include, but not be limited to:

A. Does the material reflect the district's affirmative action/equity policy, which prohibits the teaching or encouragement of bias based on any categories listed in law or board policy?

B. Does it help pupils develop abilities in critical reading and thinking?

C. Does it provide effective basic or advanced education for the pupils for whom it is intended?

The review process shall:

A. Be conducted by teaching staff members, particularly those teachers who will be using the materials as an integral part of the instructional program;

B. Include a written review of the material which shall reflect the consensus of the teaching staff;

C. Provide an opportunity for public inspection of the recommended text.

When adopting instructional materials for use in the schools, the board shall adopt inclusive instructional materials that portray the cultural and economic diversity of society including the political, economic, and social contributions of persons with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, where appropriate.

The chief school administrator shall develop administrative rules outlining a procedure for the selection of instructional materials that meets the above criteria. Instructional materials used within the district should be sufficient in quantity and scope to meet the needs of every pupil in the district.

The board, by law, makes the final textbook selection decision. However, prior to final adoption, the recommendations resulting from each review will be given thorough consideration.

Any citizen who objects to the final selections made by the board should follow the procedures outlined in regulation 6161.2 Complaints regarding instructional materials.

<u>Animal dissection is not required and alternative education to be provided:</u>

The board, by law, will allow pupils to refuse to participate in animal dissection.

1. The board will offer an alternate education program for a course or portion of a course involving dissection of animals.

2. A public school pupil from kindergarten through grade 12 may refuse to dissect, vivisect, incubate, capture or otherwise harm or destroy animals or any parts thereof as part of a course of instruction.
   a. “Alternative education project" means the use of video tapes, models, films, books, computers, or any other tools which provide an alternative method for obtaining and testing the knowledge, information, or experience required by a course of study.
   b. "Animal" means any living organism that is an invertebrate, or is in the phylum chordata or organisms which have a notochord and includes an animal's cadaver or severed parts of an animal's cadaver.

3. The school shall notify pupils and their parents or guardians at the beginning of each school year of the right to decline to participate in the activities enumerated in subsection a. of this section and shall authorize parents or guardians to assert the right of their children to refuse to participate in these activities. Within two weeks of the receipt of the notice, the pupils, parents or guardians shall notify the school if the right to decline participation in the enumerated activities will be exercised.

4. Any pupil who chooses to refrain from participation in or observation of a portion of a course of instruction in accordance with this section shall be offered an alternative education project for the purpose of providing the pupil with the factual knowledge, information or experience required by the course of study. A pupil may refuse to participate in an alternative education project which involves or necessitates any harmful use of an animal or animal parts.

5. A pupil shall not be discriminated against, in grading or in any other manner, based upon a decision to exercise the rights afforded pursuant to this act.

Key Words

Evaluation, Instructional Materials, Selection of Instructional Materials, Evaluation of Instructional Materials

Legal References:

N.J.S.A. 18A:4-25	Prescribing minimum courses of study for public schools; approval of courses of study
N.J.S.A. 18A:33-1	District to furnish suitable facilities; adoption of courses of study
N.J.S.A. 18A:34-1	Textbooks; selection; furnished free with supplies; appropriations
N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.35	History of disabled and LGBT persons included in middle and high school curriculum
N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.36	Policies, procedures pertaining to inclusive instructional materials
N.J.S.A. 18A:35-1 et seq.	Curriculum and Courses
See Particularly:	
N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.25	Refusal to participate in certain school activities related to animal dissection
N.J.A.C. 6A:7-1.4	Responsibilities of the district board of education
N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-20.1 et seq.	Purchase and loan of textbooks

Comprehensive Equity Plan, State Department of Education

Possible Cross References:

*1312	Community complaints and inquiries
*2224	Nondiscrimination/affirmative action

*5145.4	Equal educational opportunity
6000	Concepts and roles in instruction
*6010	Goals and objectives
*6121	Nondiscrimination/affirmative action
*6140	Curriculum adoption
*6141	Curriculum design/development
*6142.1	Family life education
*6144	Controversial issues
*6161.2	Complaints regarding instructional materials
*6163.1	Media center/library

*Indicates policy is included in the Critical Policy Reference Manual.

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