SEXUAL HARASSMENT – STAFF (M)

R 1552

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The Board of Education will not tolerate sexual harassment of employees by other school employees or third parties. The employer shall investigate and resolve allegations of sexual harassment pursuant to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (29 CFR 1604); Title IX of the of the Education Amendments of 1972 (34 CFR 106); Policy 1552; and this Regulation.

A. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 – 29 CFR 1604

1. Sexual Harassment – 29 CFR 1604.11

a. Definition of Sexual Harassment – Title VII

(1) Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

(a) Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment,

(b) Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or

(c) Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

b. With respect to conduct between fellow employees, an employer is responsible for acts of sexual harassment in the workplace where the employer (or its agents or supervisory employees) knows or should have known of the conduct, unless it can show that it took immediate and appropriate corrective action.

c. The employer may also be responsible for the acts of non-employees, with respect to sexual harassment of employees in the workplace, where the employer (or its agents or supervisory

employees) knows or should have known of the conduct and fails to take immediate and appropriate corrective action.

d. The employer should take all steps necessary to prevent sexual harassment from occurring, such as affirmatively raising the subject, expressing strong disapproval, developing appropriate sanctions, informing employees of their right to raise and how to raise the issue of harassment under Title VII, and developing methods to sensitize all concerned.

(1) The employee may submit a complaint, under 29 CFR 1604 to the Affirmative Action Officer.

(2) Upon receipt of the complaint the employer shall initiate the grievance procedure in accordance with Regulation 1552.

e. Where employment opportunities or benefits are granted because of an individual's submission to the employer's sexual advances or requests for sexual favors, the employer may be held liable for unlawful sex discrimination against other individuals who were qualified for but denied that employment opportunity or benefit.

2. Grievance Procedure for Title VII Complaints

The following grievance procedure shall be used for an allegation(s) of sexual harassment:

a. Reporting of Sexual Harassment Conduct

(1) Any individual with any information regarding actual and/or potential sexual harassment of an employee must report the information to the Principal, their immediate supervisor, the Title IX Coordinator, or the Affirmative Action Officer. The employer's Title IX Coordinator and the Affirmative Action Officer may be the same individual.

(2) The employer can learn of sexual harassment through other means such as from a witness to an incident, an anonymous letter, or a telephone call.

(3) The report may be made: in person; in writing; verbally by telephone; by mail to the office address; or by electronic mail. The report may be reported during business or non-business hours.

(4) A report to the Principal or an immediate supervisor will be forwarded to the Superintendent or designee and Affirmative Action Officer within one working day, even if the Principal or immediate supervisor feels sexual harassment conduct was not present.

(5) In the event the report alleges conduct by the Principal or the Affirmative Action Officer, the report shall be submitted to the Superintendent who will designate a school official to assume the Principal's or Affirmative Action Officer's responsibilities.

b. Affirmative Action Officer's Investigation

(1) Upon receipt of any report of potential sexual harassment conduct, the Affirmative Action Officer will begin an immediate investigation. The Affirmative Action Officer will promptly investigate all alleged complaints of sexual harassment, whether or not a formal grievance is filed, and steps will be taken to resolve the situation, if needed. This investigation will be prompt, thorough, and impartial. The investigation will be completed no more than ten working days after receiving notice.

(2) When an employee provides information about possible sexual harassment, the Affirmative Action Officer will initially discuss what actions the employee seeks in response to the sexual harassment.

(3) The investigation may include, but is not limited to, interviews with all individuals with potential knowledge of the alleged conduct, interviews with any employee(s) who may have been sexually harassed in the past by the employee, and any other reasonable methods to determine if sexual harassment conduct existed.

(4) The Affirmative Action Officer may request an employee involved in the investigation to assist in the investigation.

(5) The Affirmative Action Officer will provide a copy of Policy 1552 and this Regulation to all individuals who are interviewed with potential knowledge, upon request, and to any other individual the Affirmative Action Officer feels would be served by a copy of such documents.

(6) Any individual interviewed by the Affirmative Action Officer may be provided an opportunity to present witnesses and other evidence.

(7) The Affirmative Action Officer and/or Superintendent will contact law enforcement agencies if the conduct could potentially be criminal in nature.

(8) The employer may take interim measures during an investigation of a complaint.

(9) The Affirmative Action Officer will consider particular issues of welcomeness based on the allegations.

c. Investigation Results

(1) Upon the conclusion of the investigation, but not later than ten working days after reported to the Affirmative Action Officer, the Affirmative Action Officer will prepare a summary of findings to the parties. At a minimum, this summary shall include the individual(s) providing notice to the employer and the employee(s) who was alleged to be sexually harassed.

(2) The Affirmative Action Officer shall make a determination whether sexual harassment conduct was present.

(3) If the Affirmative Action Officer concludes sexual harassment conduct was not, or is not present, the investigation is concluded.

(4) If the Affirmative Action Officer determines that sexual harassment has occurred, the employer shall take reasonable and effective corrective action, including steps tailored to the specific situation. Appropriate steps will be taken to end the harassment such as counseling, warning, and/or disciplinary action. The steps will be based on the severity of the harassment or any record of prior incidents or both. A series of escalating consequences may be necessary if the initial steps are ineffective in stopping the harassment.

(5) In the event the Affirmative Action Officer determines a hostile environment exists, the Superintendent shall take

steps to eliminate the hostile environment. The employer may need to deliver special training or other interventions to repair the educational environment. Other measures may include directing the harasser to apologize to the employee that was sexually harassed, dissemination of information, distribution of new policy statements or other steps to communicate the message that the employer does not tolerate sexual harassment and will be responsive to any employee that reports such conduct.

(6) In some situations, the employer may need to provide other services to the employee that was sexually harassed, if necessary, to address the effects of the sexual harassment on that employee. Depending on the type of sexual harassment found, these additional services may include an independent reassessment of the work performance of the employee that was sexually harassed, counseling, and/or other measures that are appropriate to the situation.

(7) The Superintendent will take steps to avoid any further sexual harassment and to prevent any retaliation against the employee who made the complaint, was the subject of the sexual harassment, or against those who provided the information or were witnesses.

(a) The Affirmative Action Officer will inform the employee that was sexually harassed to report any subsequent problems and will make follow-up inquiries to see if there have been any new incidents or retaliation.

(8) All sexual harassment grievances and accompanied investigation notes will be maintained in a confidential file by the Affirmative Action Officer.

d. Affirmative Action Officer's Investigation Appeal Process

(1) Any individual found by the Affirmative Action Officer's investigation to be guilty of sexual harassment conduct, or any individual who believes they were sexually harassed but not supported by the Affirmative Action Officer's investigation, may appeal to the Superintendent.

(a) The Superintendent will make their determination within ten working days of receiving the appeal.

(2) Any individual who is not satisfied with the Superintendent's determination may appeal in writing to the Board.

(a) The Board will make its determination within forty-five calendar days of receiving an appeal from the Superintendent's determination.

3. United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Case Resolution

Individuals not satisfied with the resolution of a Title VII allegation of sexual harassment by the employer may request the EEOC to investigate the allegations.

a. Any alleged victim of sexual harassment may appeal a decision of the Affirmative Action Officer, Superintendent, or the employer to the EEOC.

b. Any individual may report an allegation of sexual harassment to the EEOC at any time. If the EEOC is asked to investigate or otherwise resolve incidents of sexual harassment of employees, the EEOC will consider whether:

(1) The employer has a policy prohibiting sexual harassment and a grievance procedure;

(2) The employer has appropriately investigated or otherwise responded to allegations of sexual harassment; and

(3) The employer has taken immediate and appropriate corrective action responsive to quid pro quo or hostile environment sexual harassment.

B. Title IX of the of the Education Amendments of 1972 – 34 CFR 106

1. Definitions – 34 CFR 106.30

a. For the purpose of Section B. of this Regulation and in accordance with 34 CFR 106:

(1) "Sexual harassment" means conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

(a) An employee of the employer conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the employer on an employee's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct;

(b) Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable individual to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies an individual equal access to the employer's education program or activity; or

(c) "Sexual assault" as defined in 20 USC 1092(f)(6)(A)(v), "dating violence" as defined in 34 USC 12291(a)(10), "domestic violence" as defined in 34 USC 12291(a)(8), or "stalking" as defined in 34 USC 12291(a)(30).

(2) "Complainant" means an employee currently employed by the employer who is alleged to be the victim of conduct that could constitute sexual harassment.

(3) "Decision-maker" (34 CFR 106.45(b)(7)) means an employee(s) who is not the Title IX Coordinator or the employee who conducted the investigation, designated by the Superintendent, to objectively evaluate the relative evidence and reach conclusions about whether the respondent is responsible for the alleged sexual harassment in accordance with the provisions of 34 CFR 106.

(4) "Formal complaint" means a document filed by a complainant or signed by the Title IX Coordinator alleging sexual harassment against a respondent and requesting that the employer investigate the allegation of sexual harassment. The phrase "document filed by a complainant" means a document or electronic submission (such as by electronic mail or through an online portal provided for this purpose by the employer) that contains the complainant's physical or digital signature, or otherwise indicates that the complainant is the individual filing the formal complaint.

(5) "Investigator" (34 CFR 106.45(b)(5)) means an employee(s) who may be the Title IX Coordinator and who is not a decision-maker designated by the Superintendent to investigate alleged sexual harassment in accordance with 34 CFR 106. The investigator may be the employer's

Affirmative Action Officer only if the Affirmative Action Officer is not the Title IX decision-maker.

(6) "Program or activity" and "program" (34 CFR 106.2(h)(2)(ii)) means all of the operations of a local educational agency (as defined in 20 USC 8801), system of vocational education, or other school system.

(a) "Education program or activity" (34 CFR 106.44(a)) includes locations, events, or circumstances over which the employer exercised substantial control over both the respondent and the context in which the sexual harassment occurs.

(7) "Respondent" means an individual who has been reported to be the perpetrator of conduct that could constitute sexual harassment.

(8) "Title IX Coordinator" (34 CFR 106.8(a)) means an individual designated and approved by the employer to coordinate its efforts to comply with its responsibilities under 34 CFR 106, Policy 1552, and this Regulation. The individual must be referred to as the "Title IX Coordinator" and may also be the investigator but cannot be the decision-maker.

2. Employer's Response to Sexual Harassment – 34 CFR 106.44

a. The employer with actual knowledge of sexual harassment in an education program or activity of the employer against an individual in the United States, must respond promptly in a manner that is not deliberately indifferent.

(1) The employer has "actual knowledge" when an employee receives a complaint of sexual harassment or an employee is aware of behavior that could constitute sexual harassment.

(a) Any school employee who receives a complaint of sexual harassment or is aware of behavior that could constitute sexual harassment is required to report that information to the Title IX Coordinator.

(2) The employer is deliberately indifferent only if the employer's response to sexual harassment is clearly

unreasonable in light of the known circumstances, pursuant to 34 CFR 106.44(a).

The United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights may not deem the employer to have satisfied the employer's duty to not be deliberately indifferent under 34 CFR 106 based on the employer's restriction of rights protected under the United States Constitution, including the First Amendment, Fifth Amendment, and Fourteenth Amendment.

b. Informal Resolution – 34 CFR 106.45

(1) The employer may not require as a condition of employment or continuing employment, or enjoyment of any other right, waiver of the right to an investigation and adjudication of formal complaints of sexual harassment. Similarly, the employer may not require the parties to participate in an informal resolution process and may not offer an informal resolution process unless a formal complaint is filed. However, at any time prior to reaching a determination regarding responsibility, the employer may facilitate an informal resolution process, such as mediation, that does not involve a full investigation and adjudication, provided that the employer:

(a) Provides to the parties a written notice disclosing: the allegations, the requirements of the informal resolution process including the circumstances under which it precludes the parties from resuming a formal complaint arising from the same allegations, provided; however, that at any time prior to agreeing to a resolution, any party has the right to withdraw from the informal resolution process and resume the grievance process with respect to the formal complaint, and any consequences resulting from participating in the informal resolution process, including the records that will be maintained or could be shared; and

(b) Obtains the parties' voluntary, written consent to the informal resolution process.

3. Grievance Process - 34 CFR 106.45

a. The employer will use the grievance process outlined in 34 CFR §106.45 and this Regulation to address formal complaints of sexual harassment.

b. Parents, students, unions and associations, and staff members shall receive notice of the grievance procedures and the Title IX Coordinator's name or title, office, address, email address, and telephone number in accordance with 34 CFR 106.8(a).

c. The employer's grievance process may, but need not, provide for a hearing pursuant to 34 CFR 106.45(b)(6)(ii).

d. The Title IX Coordinator must promptly contact the complainant in accordance with 34 CFR 106.44(a).

e. In response to a formal complaint, the employer will follow a grievance process that complies with 34 CFR 106.45.

(1) Upon receipt of a formal complaint, the Title IX Coordinator shall provide written notice to the parties who are known in accordance with 34 CFR 106.45(b)(2)(i).

(2) The Title IX Coordinator shall provide the investigator with a copy of the formal complaint if the Title IX Coordinator is not the investigator.

(3) The investigator shall investigate the allegations contained in a formal complaint pursuant to 34 CFR 106.45(b).

f. The investigator shall create an investigative report in accordance with the provisions of 34 CFR 106.45(b)(5)(vii).

(1) The investigator will attempt to collect all relevant information and evidence.

(2) While the investigator will have the burden of gathering evidence, it is crucial that the parties present evidence and identify witnesses to the investigator so that they may be considered during the investigation.

(3) While all evidence gathered during the investigative process and obtained through the exchange of written questions will be considered, the decision-maker may in their discretion grant lesser weight to last minute information or evidence introduced through the exchange

of written questions that was not previously presented for investigation by the investigator.

(4) To the greatest extent possible, and subject to Title IX, the employer will make reasonable accommodations in an investigation to avoid potential re-traumatization of a complainant.

(5) The investigative report shall be provided to the decision-maker in accordance with the provisions of 34 CFR 106.45(b)(6)(ii).

g. The decision-maker, who cannot be the same person as the Title IX Coordinator or the investigator, shall issue a written determination regarding responsibility pursuant to 34 CFR 106.45(b)(7).

(1) To reach this determination, the decision-maker will apply

[Select One Option Below

___ the preponderance of the evidence standard,

___ clear and convincing evidence standard,**]**

which shall be the same standard of evidence for formal complaints against students as for formal complaints against employees, including faculty, and apply the same standard of evidence to all formal complaints of sexual harassment pursuant to 34 CFR 106.45(b)(1)(vii).

(2) The decision-maker will facilitate a written question and answer period between the parties.

(a) Each party may submit their written questions for the other party and witnesses to the decision-maker for review.

(b) The questions must be relevant to the case and the decision-maker will determine if the questions submitted are relevant and will then forward the relevant questions to the other party or witnesses for a response.

(c) The decision-maker shall then review all the responses, determine what is relevant or not

relevant, and issue a decision as to whether the respondent is responsible for the alleged sexual harassment.

(d) The decision-maker will issue a written determination following the review of evidence. The written determination will include:

(i) Identification of allegations potentially constituting sexual harassment as defined in Policy and Regulation 1552 and 34 CFR 106.30;

(ii) A description of the procedural steps taken from the receipt of the complaint through the determination, including any notifications to the parties, interviews with parties and witnesses, site visits, and methods used to gather evidence;

(iii) Findings of fact supporting the determination, conclusions regarding the application of this formal grievance process to the facts; and

(iv) A statement of and rationale for the result as to each allegation, including any determination regarding responsibility, any disciplinary sanctions the decision-maker imposed on the respondent that directly relate to the complainant, and whether remedies designed to restore or preserve equal access to the employer's education program or activity will be provided to the complainant; and procedures and permissible bases for the parties to appeal the determination.

(e) The written determination will be provided to the parties simultaneously.

(f) Notwithstanding a temporary delay of the grievance procedure or the limited extension of the grievance procedure time frames with good cause, the written

determination shall be provided within sixty calendar days from receipt of the complaint.

(i) The sixty calendar day time frame does not include the appeal process.

4. Appeals – 34 CFR 106.45(b)(8)

a. The employer will offer both parties an appeal from a determination regarding responsibility, and from the Title IX Coordinator's dismissal of a formal complaint or any allegations therein in accordance with 34 CFR 106.45(b)(8)(i).

b. As to all appeals, the employer will comply with the requirements of 34 CFR 106.45(b)(8).

c. The Superintendent shall designate an appeal officer for each appeal filed.

(1) The appeal officer shall not be the same individual as the decision-maker that reached the determination regarding responsibility or dismissal, the investigator, or the Title IX Coordinator in accordance with 34 CFR 106.45(b)(8)(iii)(B).

(2) Ensure that the appeal officer complies with the standards set forth in 34 CFR 106.45(b)(1)(iii).

d. The employer shall give both parties a reasonable, equal opportunity to submit a written statement in support of, or challenging, the outcome.

e. The employer shall administer the appeal process, but is not a party and will not advocate for or against any appeal.

f. A party may appeal only on the following grounds and the appeal shall identify the reason(s) why the party is appealing:

(1) There was a procedural error in the hearing process that materially affected the outcome;

(a) Procedural error refers to alleged deviations from employer policy, and not challenges to policies or procedures themselves;

(2) There is new evidence that was not reasonably available at the time of the hearing and that could have affected the outcome;

(3) The decision-maker had a conflict of interest or bias that affected the outcome;

(4) The determination regarding the policy violation was unreasonable based on the evidence before the decision-maker:

(a) Appealing on this basis is available only to a party who participated in the hearing; and

(5) The sanctions were disproportionate to the hearing officer's findings.

(6) The employer may offer an appeal equally to both parties on additional bases.

g. The appeal must be submitted in writing to the Title IX Coordinator within ten calendar days following the issuance of the notice of determination.

h. The appeal must identify the ground(s) for appeal and contain specific arguments supporting each ground for appeal.

i. The Title IX Coordinator shall notify the other party of the appeal, and that other party shall have an opportunity to submit a written statement in response to the appeal, within ten calendar days.

j. The Title IX Coordinator shall inform the parties that they have an opportunity to meet with the appeal officer separately to discuss the proportionality of the sanction.

k. The appeal officer shall decide the appeal considering the evidence presented at the hearing, the investigation file, and the appeal statements of both parties.

l. In disproportionate sanction appeals, input the parties provided during the meeting may also be considered.

m. The appeal officer shall summarize their decision in a written report that will be sent to the complainant and respondent within twenty calendar days of receiving the appeal.

5. Supportive Measures – 34 CFR 106.30

a. “Supportive measures” mean non-disciplinary, non-punitive, individualized services offered as appropriate, as reasonably available, and without fee or charge to the complainant or the respondent before or after the filing of a formal complaint or where no formal complaint has been filed pursuant to 34 CFR 106.30(a).

b. The employer’s response must treat complainants and respondents equitably by offering supportive measures as defined in 34 CFR 106.30 to a complainant, and by following a grievance process that complies with 34 CFR 106.45 before the imposition of any disciplinary sanctions or other actions that are not supportive measures as defined in 34 CFR 106.30, against a respondent.

c. The Title IX Coordinator must promptly contact the complainant to discuss the availability of supportive measures as defined in 34 CFR 106.30, consider the complainant's wishes with respect to supportive measures, inform the complainant of the availability of supportive measures with or without the filing of a formal complaint, and explain to the complainant the process for filing a formal complaint.

(1) Supportive measures shall be available to the complainant, respondent, and as appropriate, witnesses or other impacted individuals.

d. The Title IX Coordinator shall maintain consistent contact with the parties to ensure that safety, emotional well-being and physical well-being are being addressed.

e. Generally, supportive measures are meant to be short-term in nature and will be re-evaluated on a periodic basis.

(1) To the extent there is a continuing need for supportive measures after the conclusion of the resolution process, the Title IX Coordinator will work with appropriate employer resources to provide continued assistance to the parties.

f. The employer is required to offer supportive measures to the complainant even if the respondent ceased being employed by the employer prior to the filing of a formal complaint.

(1) If the respondent ceases to be employed by the employer after a formal complaint is filed, the employer may dismiss the complaint, but must still offer supportive measures to the complainant pursuant to 34 CFR 106.45(b)(3)(ii).

6. Remedies - 34 CFR 106.45

a. The Title IX Coordinator shall be responsible for effective implementation of any remedies in accordance with 34 CFR 106.45(b)(7)(iv).

b. Following receipt of the written determination from the decision-maker, the Title IX Coordinator will facilitate the imposition of sanctions, if any, the provision of remedies, if any, and to otherwise complete the formal resolution process.

(1) Emergency Removal

Nothing in 34 CFR 106 precludes the employer from removing a respondent from the employer's education program or activity on an emergency basis, provided that the employer undertakes an individualized safety and risk analysis, determines that an immediate threat to the physical health or safety of any individual arising from the allegations of sexual harassment justifies removal, and provides the respondent with notice and an opportunity to challenge the decision immediately following the removal. This provision may not be construed to modify any rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, or the Americans with Disabilities Act.

(2) Administrative Leave

Nothing in 34 CFR 106 Subpart D precludes the employer from placing an employee on administrative leave during the pendency of a grievance process that complies with 34 CFR 106.45. This provision may not be construed to modify any rights under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 or the Americans with Disabilities Act.

c. The Superintendent or designee, after consultation with the Title IX Coordinator, will determine the sanctions imposed and remedies provided, if any.

(1) The imposition of sanctions or provisions of remedies will be revisited by the Title IX Coordinator following the appeal officer's decision, as appropriate.

d. The Title IX Coordinator must provide written notice to the parties simultaneously.

e. The employer must disclose to the complainant the sanctions imposed on the respondent that directly relate to the complainant when such disclosure is necessary to ensure equal access to the employer's education program or activity.

(1) Remedies and supportive measures that do not impact the respondent should not be disclosed in the written determination; rather the determination should simply state that remedies will be provided to the complainant.

f. It is important to note that conduct that does not meet the criteria under Title IX may violate other Federal or State laws or employer policies regarding employee misconduct or may be inappropriate and require an immediate response in the form of supportive measures and remedies to prevent its recurrence and address its effects.

7. Recordkeeping – 34 CFR 106.45(b)(10)

a. The employer must maintain for a period of seven years records of:

(1) Each sexual harassment investigation including any determination regarding responsibility and any audio or audiovisual recording or transcript required under 34 CFR 106.45(b)(6)(i), any disciplinary sanctions imposed on the respondent, and any remedies provided to the complainant designed to restore or preserve equal access to the employer's education program or activity;

(2) Any appeal and the result therefrom;

(3) Any informal resolution and the result therefrom; and

(4) All materials used to train Title IX Coordinators, investigators, decision-makers, and any individual who facilitates an informal resolution process. The employer must make these training materials publicly available on its website, or if the employer does not maintain a website the

employer must make these materials available upon request for inspection by members of the public.

b. For each response required under 34 CFR 106.44, the employer must create, and maintain for a period of seven years, records of any actions, including any supportive measures, taken in response to a report or formal complaint of sexual harassment. In each instance, the employer must document the basis for its conclusion that its response was not deliberately indifferent, and document that it has taken measures designed to restore or preserve equal access to the employer's education program or activity. If the employer does not provide a complainant with supportive measures, then the employer must document the reasons why such a response was not clearly unreasonable in light of the known circumstances. The documentation of certain bases or measures does not limit the employer in the future from providing additional explanations or detailing additional measures taken.

8. Compliance

The Superintendent or designee shall consult with the Board Attorney to ensure the employer's response to any allegations of sexual harassment and the employer's grievance process are in accordance with 34 CFR 106.44 and 34 CFR 106.45.

9. Training

a. The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that Title IX Coordinators, investigators, decision-makers, appeal officers, and any person who facilitates an informal resolution process, receive training in accordance with 34 CFR 106.45(b)(1)(iii).

(1) The employer must ensure that decision-makers receive training on any technology to be used at a live hearing and on issues of relevance of questions and evidence, including when questions and evidence about the complainant's sexual predisposition or prior sexual behavior are not relevant, as set forth in 34 CFR 106.45(b)(6).

(2) The employer also must ensure that investigators receive training on issues of relevance to create an investigative report that fairly summarizes relevant evidence, as set forth in 34 CFR 106.45 (b)(5)(vii). Any materials used to train Title IX Coordinators, investigators, decision-makers, and any individual who facilitates an informal resolution

process, must not rely on sex stereotypes and must promote impartial investigations and adjudications of formal complaints of sexual harassment.

Adopted:

RESOURCE MATERIALS

R 2530

A. Definition

"Resource materials" means all those sources of information for the use of students that have not been designated as textbooks and generally must be shared by individual students. Resource materials include, but are not limited to, reference materials; fiction and nonfiction books; maps; audio and audio-visual materials; pamphlets; periodicals; pictures; online references; other supplementary titles; and other sources of information for use by students that are not designated as textbooks. Resource materials are not library material as defined in N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-3 and Policy and Regulation 2535.

B. Selection Process

1. The teaching staff member shall submit written requests for new resource materials to the Principal or designee in the teaching staff member's school building. Each written request should include:

   a. The name and originator of the resource material;

   b. The publisher or distributor;

   c. A brief description of the resource material; and

   d. The reason for the request, including the relevance of the resource material to the instructional program;

2. All written requests will be forwarded to the Superintendent or designee for consideration; and

3. The Superintendent or designee shall evaluate each written request against the selection standards as outlined in C. below and the amount budgeted for resource materials in the current or succeeding school year, as appropriate.

4. The Superintendent or designee will develop a list of recommended purchases. The list may include multiple copies of resource materials when a high level of interest and need is anticipated.

C. Selection Standards

Standards to be applied in the selection of resource materials are those set forth below:

1. Resource materials will be suited to the varied interests, abilities, reading levels, and maturation levels of the students to be served.

2. Wherever appropriate, resource materials will provide major opposing views on controversial issues so that students may develop, under guidance, the practice of critical reading and thinking.

3. Wherever appropriate, resource materials will include the basic tenets of multiculturalism in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:7-1.7.

4. Resource materials will be factually accurate, as appropriate, and of genuine literary or artistic value.

5. Resource materials will be of a quality and durability appropriate to their intended uses.

6. Resource materials will relate to, support, and enrich the curriculum adopted by the Board of Education.

7. Resource materials will support the New Jersey Student Learning Standards.

D. Periodic Removal of Resource Materials

1. The Superintendent or designee shall conduct a periodic review of resource materials for their:

   a. Continuing usefulness;

   b. Relevance to the curriculum and the New Jersey Student Learning Standards;

   c. Representation of the needs and interests of all grade levels, subject areas, and departments; and

   d. Balance of content, types of resource materials, and manner of presentation.

2. Standard resource materials subject to frequent use that are worn or missing should be replaced periodically.

3. Outdated resource materials and resource materials no longer relevant to the curriculum may be withdrawn from the collection on Board of Education approval.

4. Any request by an individual for the removal of resource materials will be governed by Policy and Regulation 9130.

Issued:

LIBRARY MATERIAL (M)

R 2535

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Any individual with a vested interest requesting to have library material removed from a school library in the district shall follow the grievance procedure outlined below in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-5.

A. Definitions – N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-3

1. For the purpose of Policy 2535 and this Regulation:

a. "Board of Education" means a Board of Education as defined in N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-2, the Board of Directors of an educational services commission, a Board of Trustees of a charter school, a Board of Trustees of a renaissance school project, or any other local education agency.

b. "Censorship" means to block, suppress, or remove library material based on disagreement with a viewpoint, idea, or concept or solely because an individual finds certain content offensive, but does not include limiting or restricting access to any library material deemed developmentally inappropriate for certain students.

c. "Diverse and inclusive material" means any material that reflects any protected class as enumerated in the "Law Against Discrimination," N.J.S.A. 10:5-1 et seq.; material produced by an author who is a member of a protected class as enumerated in the "Law Against Discrimination," N.J.S.A. 10:5-1 et seq.; and material that contains the author's points of view concerning contemporary problems and issues, whether international, national, or local; but excludes content that is inappropriate for grades served by the school library.

d. "Individual with a vested interest" means any teaching staff member employed by the Board of Education, any parent of a student enrolled in the school district at the time the removal form required pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-5 is filed, and any student enrolled in the district at the time the removal form required pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-5 is filed.

e. "Library material" means any material including, but not limited to, nonfiction and fiction books, magazines, reference books,

supplementary titles, multimedia and digital material, software and instructional material, and other material not required as part of classroom instruction belonging to, on loan to, or otherwise in the custody of a school library.

f. "School library staff member" means a school library media specialist, school librarian, any certificated or non-certificated staff member assigned to duties in a school library, or any individual carrying out or assisting with the functions of a school library media specialist or school librarian.

B. The following procedure shall be adhered to any time an individual with a vested interest submits a complaint requesting removal of library material from any of the district's school libraries.

1. Complaints about library material shall be made on a request for removal form and submitted to the Principal of the school building in which the library material is challenged to initiate a review of the material.

2. The individual with a vested interest shall complete and sign a request for removal form available in the Principal's office. The request for removal form shall include:

a. The title, author, and publisher of the library material at issue;

b. Sections of the library material to which the individual with a vested interest objects; and

c. An explanation of the reasons for the objection.

3. Within five working days of the receipt of the request for removal form, the Principal or designee shall forward the request for removal to the Superintendent.

4. Upon receipt of the request for removal form, the Superintendent or designee shall appoint a review committee consisting of:

a. The Superintendent or designee;

b. The Principal or designee of the school in which the library material is challenged;

c. The school library media specialist or a school library staff member;

d. A representative selected by the Board of Education;

e. At least one grade-appropriate teacher familiar with the library material, provided the teacher selected is not the individual who submitted the request for removal form;

f. A parent of a student enrolled in the school district, provided the parent selected is not the individual who submitted the request for removal form;

g. If appropriate, and at the discretion of the Superintendent, in cases where a student enrolled in the district in grades nine through twelve filed the request for removal form, a student enrolled in the district in grades nine through twelve may volunteer to serve on the review committee if that student did not file the request for removal form. The Superintendent shall consult with the Principal of the school involved in the removal request in making this determination; and

h. Any additional members the Superintendent or designee deem necessary.

5. The challenged library material shall remain within the school library and available for a student to reserve, check out, or access until there is a final decision reached by the Board of Education pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-5.b.(5) and B.7. below.

6. The review committee members shall evaluate the request for removal form and review the challenged library material in its entirety. The review committee shall meet to discuss the library material and concerns raised and make a recommendation on whether the challenged library material should be removed from circulation, retained, or limited in use. The review committee shall submit its written report with recommendations to the Board of Education no later than sixty school days from the date of the next regularly scheduled Board of Education meeting after receipt of the request for removal form:

a. A copy of the review committee's report shall also be provided to the individual with a vested interest who filed the request for removal form and the Principal who received the request for removal form.

7. The Board of Education shall review the review committee's report and make a final determination on whether the library material is to be

removed from the school library or limited in use. The Board of Education shall provide a written statement of reasons for:

a. The removal, limitation, or non-removal of a library material; and

b. Any final determination that is contrary to the recommendations of the review committee.

8. The written statement of reasons shall be posted on the Board of Education's website in a prominent and easily accessible location within thirty days of the determination.

9. All decisions on whether to remove from circulation, retain, or limit in use library material shall be based on the library material as a whole, not isolated passages.

10. All request for removal forms and outcomes shall be maintained in accordance with other similar records in the district.

11. Library material that has been challenged pursuant N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-5.b.(1) through 18A:34A-5.b.(5), Policy 2535, and this Regulation shall not be subject to challenge for at least one year in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-5.b.(6).

12. The district may consolidate requests for removal of the same challenged library material in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-5.b.(7).

13. The Board of Education's determination issued in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-5, Policy 2535, and this Regulation which denies a request for removal shall not constitute a controversy or dispute pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:6-9. However, an individual with a vested interest, as defined in N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-3, may file a petition of appeal of the Board of Education's final determination to remove library material to the Commissioner of Education through the Office of Controversies and Disputes in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:6-9 and the procedures set forth in State Board of Education regulations.

14. Nothing in N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-1 through 18A:34A-7, Policy 2535, and this Regulation shall be construed as creating a separate legal cause of action regarding any determination issued pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-1 through 18A:34A-7, Policy 2535, and this Regulation.

15. A school library staff member who engages in activities as required by N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-4 through 18A:34A-6 shall be immune from civil and

criminal liability arising from good faith actions performed pursuant to the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-4 through 18A:34A-6.

Adopted:

PUBLIC COMPLAINTS

R 9130

All complaints addressed to the Board of Education, Board members individually, school officials, or district staff members shall be referred to the Superintendent for consideration in accordance with the following procedures.

A. Complaints Regarding a Teaching Staff Member Other Than an Administrator or Supervisor

1. First Level

a. The complainant will be directed to address the complaint to the teaching staff member.

b. The teaching staff member will make every reasonable effort to address the complaint and take appropriate action, if necessary, in accordance with district policies and regulations and within the teaching staff member's authority.

c. The teaching staff member will report the complaint in writing, and whatever action that may have been taken to resolve the complaint, to the teaching staff member's Principal or supervisor.

2. Second Level

a. If the complaint cannot be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction at A.1. above, the complainant may appeal the teaching staff member's resolution to the teaching staff member's Principal or supervisor.

b. The Principal or supervisor will take all reasonable and prudent steps to resolve the complaint and meet with the complainant to discuss the Principal or supervisor's resolution to the complaint.

3. Third Level

a. If the complaint cannot be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction at A.2. above, the complainant may, within five working days of their meeting with the teaching staff member's Principal or supervisor, submit a written request for a conference to the Superintendent. The written request shall, at a minimum, include the specific nature of the complaint and a statement of the facts giving rise to it.

b. A copy of the complainant's written request for a conference will be submitted to the Board by the Superintendent.

c. Within seven working days of the Superintendent's receipt of the written request for a conference, the Superintendent shall conduct the conference, at a time convenient to the complainant and the Superintendent, and attempt to resolve the complaint informally.

d. The Superintendent shall record in writing their disposition of the complaint and shall, within ten working days of the conference, submit a copy of their written disposition to the complainant and the Board.

4. Fourth Level

a. A complaint that is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction by a conference with the Superintendent at A.3.c. above or that seeks a remedy beyond the Superintendent's authority may be appealed by the complainant to the Board.

(1) The complainant shall, within three working days of their receipt of the Superintendent's written disposition, submit a written request with supporting documentation to the Superintendent for an informal hearing before the Board. The complainant's request, along with the Superintendent's disposition at A.3.d. above, shall be provided to the Board.

b. The Board shall decide whether to grant or deny the complainant's request for an informal hearing and provide their decision in writing to the complainant within five working days upon receiving the request for an informal hearing.

(1) If the Board denies the request for an informal hearing, the Board shall render a decision on the appeal and provide the decision in writing to the complainant within ten working days.

(2) If the Board grants the request for an informal hearing, the Board shall schedule the informal hearing within forty-five working days upon receiving the request for an informal hearing. At the conclusion of the informal hearing, the Board shall render a decision and provide the decision in writing to the complainant within ten working days at the conclusion of the informal hearing.

(a) The Board may designate a committee of the Board to conduct an informal hearing with the complainant.

(b) The Board may permit the complainant to present witnesses.

(c) The Board will comply with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act and Bylaw 0162 regarding any public complaints, where applicable.

5. Reasonable efforts will be made to expedite time sensitive complaints.

B. Complaints Regarding a Support Staff Member

1. The complaint procedure set forth in A.1. above will be followed and the complainant will be directed to discuss the complaint first with the support staff member, if appropriate.

2. If the complaint cannot be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction at A.1. above, the complainant may follow the complaint procedure set forth in A.2. above.

3. If the complaint cannot be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction at A.2. above, the complainant may, within three working days of their meeting with the support staff member's supervisor, submit to the Superintendent a written request for a conference in accordance with A.3. above.

4. A complaint that is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction by a conference with the Superintendent at A.3.c. above or that seeks a remedy beyond the Superintendent's authority may be appealed to the Board of Education in accordance with A.4. above.

C. Complaints Regarding an Administrative Staff Member or Supervisory Staff Member

1. The complainant shall discuss the complaint first with the administrative staff member or supervisory staff member who is the subject of the complaint.

2. An appeal of the discussion with the administrative staff member or supervisory staff member will be made directly to the Superintendent in accordance with A.3. above.

3. A complainant wanting to appeal the Superintendent's written disposition to the Board of Education shall follow the appeal procedures as outlined in A.4. above.

D. Complaints Regarding a Program, Practice, or Operation

1. A complaint regarding a district or school policy; procedure; program; or operation, including entitlement programs established by State or Federal law, should be addressed, initially, to the Superintendent who will refer the complaint to the appropriate administrator or supervisor.

2. A complaint that cannot be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction at D.1. above may be appealed to the Superintendent and, thereafter, the Board of Education in accordance with the procedures set forth in A.3. and A.4.

E. Complaints Regarding Textbooks, Instructional Supplies, and Resource Materials

1. Complaints regarding textbooks, instructional supplies, and resource materials used in the district shall be submitted in writing by the complainant to the Superintendent.

2. The written complaint shall, at a minimum, include:

a. The title, author, and publisher of the material at issue;

b. Sections of the material to which the complainant objects (by page(s) and item(s));

c. An explanation of the reason(s) for the objection;

d. The students or class for whom the material is intended; and

e. The way in which the material is used or presented to students.

3. Within seven working days of the receipt of the written complaint, the Superintendent shall appoint a review committee consisting of:

a. The head of the department in which the material is being used;

b. A teaching staff member in the subject area of the material;

c. A Board of Education member;

d. The Principal of the school in which the material is used or presented; and

e. Any other staff member designated by the Superintendent.

4. The review committee will meet to evaluate the complaint and review the material at issue.

   a. The standards used by the review committee to review textbooks will be those set forth in Regulation 2510.

   b. The standards used by the review committee to review instructional supplies will be those set forth in Regulation 2520.

   c. The standards used by the review committee to review resource materials will be those set forth in Regulation 2530.

5. The review committee will report its findings and recommendations to the Superintendent within fifteen working days upon the appointment of the review committee.

6. The Superintendent will submit the review committee's findings and recommendations to the Board at the next regularly scheduled Board meeting.

7. If the Board acts to remove the material at issue or to limit access to the material at issue, its action will be accompanied by a statement of reasons for the removal or limitation.

   a. The Board shall render its decision within forty-five working days of receipt of the review committee's findings and recommendations.

8. A copy of the review committee's findings and recommendations and the Board's action, if any, will be given to the complainant within five working days of the Board's action.

9. The complainant will be informed, in writing, that a decision of the Board may be appealed to the Commissioner of Education as permitted by law.

Issued: