

Controversial Material

Step 1 for Instructional Materials

Internal Preview

1. If a teacher is considering the instructional use of supplemental material such as, but not limited to, a novel, videotape, website, drama selection, or television/cable broadcast that may be controversial, the material should be evaluated by one or more of the following groups:
 - Other teachers of the grade level or subject area involved
 - The teacher and the department head, team leader, etc.
 - Other appropriate personnel groups such as the school review committee for challenges, etc.
2. The group should first determine whether the material is controversial. If it is controversial, the group should proceed to step 3. If the group determines that the material is not controversial, they do not need to continue the process, or they may choose to confer with school administrators.
3. Next, the group should determine whether the controversial material is appropriate for the grade level involved. If the material is not appropriate for the grade level involved, it should not be used for instruction. If the group determines that the controversial material is appropriate for the grade level involved, it should be presented to the principal for preview.
4. If the principal agrees that the material is both controversial and appropriate for the grade level involved, a letter should be sent to parents (see back cover for details).

Guidelines:

1. **Purpose:** Videotapes and other multimedia used in schools must be incorporated into the curriculum as part of the teaching activities of the program or course involved. They may not be used for entertainment, reward, or behavior modification purposes.
2. **Ratings:** Movies with a rating of X, NC17, R, PG, or PG13 and television programs with a rating of MA, 14, or PG may not be used unless the principal approves the content and communicates the educational purpose to the community. See the front and back covers of this document for the process regarding internal preview and parental permission letters.

Guidelines for Letters to Parents

Step 2 for Instructional Materials

8 Required Elements

8 Required Elements for Teacher's Letter to Parents

Regarding Controversial Material To Be Used
for Instructional Purposes

1. Name and description of the novel, videotape, website, drama selection, television/cable broadcast, or other material with potential controversy
2. Educational purpose
3. Controversial issues involved with the material, such as the following cautionary warning codes:
 - Violence
 - Profanity
 - Sexual situations, activity, or innuendo
 - Sensuality
 - Suggestive dialogue
 - Nudity
 - Drug abuse
 - Other
4. Example of the material causing concern
5. Ratings, if available (movies on videotape/DVD & some television programs)
6. Copy of the material available for parental review
7. Option for an alternate work and instruction
8. Parent signature for approval or for an alternate work and instruction

Note: The following decision was made by a districtwide committee following a challenge during the 2001-2002 school year. The novel in question had been assigned for required reading.

Decision: *The Chocolate War* by Robert Cormier has been reserved for use, at the option of the teacher and principal, in the following grades only: advanced tenth grade classes and all levels of eleventh and twelfth grade classes. The school should follow the guidelines on the front and back of this publication.