

Curriculum, Curricular Materials and Resource Materials

All schools shall be organized under the standards set forth by the current *Pennsylvania Public School Code of 1949*, as amended.

Curriculum consistent with the Philosophy of Education of the District (Policy #6121) and state law shall be developed in sufficient breadth and depth to serve all students attending our schools. This program of studies shall be sufficiently varied to prepare students for both civic responsibility and occupational competency.

It is our objective to provide educational programs and opportunities of the highest quality.

Definitions

Curriculum means a series of planned instruction that is coordinated, articulated and implemented to result in achievement of specific knowledge and skills in accordance with the District's educational philosophy and strategic plan.

Curricular materials mean those resources, including textbooks, which are to be used as a source of information in a course. **Textbooks** mean those books including, but not limited to, those in electronic format which are to be used as the source of information in a course.

Resource materials include library books, periodicals and newspapers, audiovisual materials, computer software and other technological resources such as online resources, subscriptions and artificial intelligence enhancements (collectively "technological resources"), classroom reference books, maps, tests, manipulatives and any materials used for instruction not included in the category of curricular materials.

Curriculum Development

The Board recognizes its responsibility for the development, assessment and improvement of the educational program of the schools. To this end, the curriculum shall be evaluated, adapted, and developed on a continuing basis and in accordance with a plan for curriculum improvement.

As educational leader of the District, the Superintendent shall be responsible to the Board for the development of curriculum. The Superintendent shall establish procedures for curriculum development which ensure effective participation of the various school constituencies and draw upon available outside resources as appropriate.

District Selection and Review of Curriculum, Curricular Materials and Resource Materials

Consistent with the District's Philosophy of Education to promote intellectual, cultural, social, and ethical development of its students, the District shall provide materials which will contribute to the realization of this philosophy and which are aligned with state law.

In fulfilling this responsibility, the District shall:

1. Provide materials that will enrich and support the curriculum, taking into consideration the varied interests, abilities, and maturity levels of the students served.
2. Provide materials that will stimulate growth in factual knowledge, literary appreciation, aesthetic values, and ethical standards.
3. Provide a background of information which will enable students to make intelligent judgments in their daily life.
4. Provide materials representing opposing sides of controversial issues so that young citizens may develop, under guidance, the practice of critical reading and thinking.
5. Provide materials representative of the many religious, ethnic, and cultural groups and their contributions to our American heritage.
6. Place principle above personal opinion and reason above prejudice in the selection of materials of the highest quality.*

Materials shall be selected using these guidelines. Criteria for selection, review, and budgetary projection shall be defined and disseminated by the administration. The administration shall annually present to the Board listings and recommendations on classroom textbooks which have been selected for purchase by the staff and recommended by the Superintendent of Schools or designee. A classroom textbook is considered any book purchased for classroom use in quantities of fifteen copies or more. Supplementary textbooks, six to fourteen copies of a single title, shall be recommended for adoption and purchased as needed.

Access to Curriculum Information

This Policy is established to comply with the requirement of the State Board of Education that school districts provide access to information about the curriculum. The Board desires to provide opportunities to review curricular materials and resource materials and have access to information about curriculum, including academic standards to be achieved, curricular materials and resource materials and assessment techniques.

Upon request, the District will promptly make available existing information about the curriculum, including academic standards to be achieved, curricular materials, resource materials and assessment techniques.

In accordance with the procedure set forth in the accompanying regulation, parents and guardians may request a District review of the curriculum, including academic standards to be achieved, curricular materials, resource materials, and assessment techniques.

Parents and guardians have the right to inspect curricular materials and resource materials. Requests to review such materials shall be made in writing to the Director of Curriculum, Instruction, Staff Development and Planning and shall be granted within a reasonable time from receipt of the written request. Curricular materials and resource materials may be reviewed at the District administration building or applicable school and in the presence of the Director of Curriculum, Instruction, Staff Development and Planning or designee.

Parents and guardians shall have the right to have their children excused from specific instruction which conflicts with their religious beliefs, upon receipt by the School District of a written request specifically outlining the topics from which the student is to be excused.

Religion in the Curriculum

Religious institutions and orientations are central to human experience, past and present. An education excluding such a significant aspect would be incomplete. It is essential that the teaching about--and not of--religion be conducted in a factually objective, balanced and respectful manner.

Therefore, the practice of the District shall be as follows:

1. The District supports the inclusion of religious literature, music, drama and the arts in the curriculum and school activities provided these are intrinsic to the learning experience in the various fields of study, represent selections from a variety of cultures, and are presented objectively.
2. The emphasis on religious themes in the arts, literature and history shall be only as extensive as necessary for a balanced and comprehensive study of these areas. Such studies shall never foster any particular religious tenet or demean any religious belief or non-belief.
3. When students respond to questions or assignments in ways which reflect their beliefs or non-beliefs, they shall be accommodated unless there is compelling concern that would prevent such accommodation. For example, students are free to express religious belief or non-belief in compositions, art forms, music, speech and debate.

Controversial Issues in the Curriculum

A controversial issue involves a problem about which different individuals and groups urge conflicting courses of action. It is an issue for which society has not found a solution, and it is of sufficient significance that each proposed way of dealing with it is objectionable to some sector of the citizenry. The objection may result from a feeling that a cherished belief, an economic interest, or a basic principle is threatened.

Because the development of rational thinking and preparation for citizenship are among the educational goals of the school system, the District has a responsibility to include, in various curriculum areas at all grade levels, content dealing with current critical issues, some of which will be controversial.

The District, as an educational institution, and the individual classroom teacher have a responsibility to give the student:

- An opportunity to study controversial issues which have political, economic or social significance about which students will begin to have an opinion.
- Access to all relevant information, including the materials that circulate freely in the community.
- Competent instruction balancing the various points of view in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice.
- The right to form and express opinions on controversial issues without jeopardizing relations with teachers or the schools.

In fulfilling this responsibility, the teacher shall make a deliberate effort to achieve balance within a reasonable period of time in the viewpoints and information to which students are exposed.

In selecting certain controversial issues to be included in the instructional program the staff shall use the following guidelines:

- The issue should contribute toward helping students develop techniques for examining other controversial issues.
- The issue should be suitable for students of the maturity and background represented in the class.
- The issue should be related to the course content and help achieve course objectives.
- The issue should be of continuing significance.

In instances where a controversial issue arises on an unanticipated basis during the course of a class discussion, as the result of a student's question, or in the coverage of current events, and where that issue is neither directly related to the course content nor specified as a part of the curriculum, the staff member may deal with the issue on a limited basis, recognizing the existence of legitimate student interest and devoting sufficient time to the question to assure balanced, impartial coverage. Recognizing the difficult position in which teachers will sometimes be placed in carrying out this Policy and in giving students an opportunity to study a controversial issue, the Board places trust and confidence in its employees and will support their actions in such a manner that they are protected insofar as possible from anonymous, unreasonable, or ill-considered complaints.

* Adapted from the School Library Bill of Rights of the American Association of School Librarians

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