

*Curriculum, Curricular Materials and Resource Materials*

The curriculum in each of the curricular areas will continue to be developed with maximum involvement of district staff members. The complete curriculum, curriculum guides and/or special materials related to specific curricula shall be distributed to all staff members according to their teaching assignment. It shall be the responsibility of each staff member to be thoroughly familiar with the materials, to utilize and implement the materials in their classroom, and to provide suggestions or recommendations concerning the curriculum that can be used in future developmental activities.

The Curriculum Council, and its provision for staff representation, is designed to be an open channel of communication for staff members to express concerns, suggestions and recommendations regarding the curriculum.

Access to School Materials

From time to time, ideas, operating procedures, record forms and publications developed in or for the District may be made available to outside non-profit or profit organizations for use or distribution upon approval of the Superintendent or designee. No outside organization shall be granted exclusive access to or control over the material that is made available. District Selection and Review of Curriculum, Curricular Materials and Resource Materials – Selection Criteria

The staff by virtue of its preparation and experience has the special competencies that enable it to evaluate materials critically. The staff shall establish criteria for the selection and evaluation of materials appropriate for the various grade levels and subject areas.

The following are specific criteria to be used in selection of materials including books, periodicals, pamphlets, motion pictures, slides, recordings, digital media, records, pictures, maps, globes, charts, games, transparencies, and models:

1. Content, style and organization which are consistent with the objectives and guidelines of the approved District program
2. Diversity in the types of materials to ensure applicability to a variety of instructional situations thereby increasing its chances of being more helpful and beneficial to a wider range of students
3. A style or format that is interesting and which will encourage interest in other sources of information and ideas as well as in the topic of that particular material
4. Cost which is realistic considering the purposes of the material and the fiscal resources of the District
5. Graphic illustrations and content which represent and reflect the diversity of cultures existing within our society and throughout the world
6. Reputation and significance of author/producer
7. Timeliness of subject

8. Importance of subject matter to the total educational program
9. Treatment of material
10. Quality of writing and illustrations
11. Format and/or technical excellence

The responsibility for the review, examination, and selection of curriculum, curricular materials and resource materials may be delegated by the Director of Curriculum, Instruction, Staff Development and Planning to committee(s) representative of the subject area, grade level, and buildings involved. A committee's recommendation shall be subject to review by the Director of Curriculum, Instruction, Staff Development and Planning. In the event that a member of the community questions the inclusion of a specific material in the educational program, the community member should follow the procedure set forth in this Regulation.

Additional guidelines for selection of materials for the library collection of all District schools are attached as Attachment A.

#### Religion in the Curriculum

Clear guidance on how to deal with issues created by cultural diversity in the classroom is difficult to define because student rights and school responsibilities must necessarily be stated in general principles. Such general principles are well-stated in the attached guidelines and shall serve as the basis for decision concerning school programs, ceremonies, and observances.

The District academic calendar shall be prepared so as to minimize conflicts with observances of major religious holidays. With regard to school attendance, tests, extracurricular or cocurricular activities and parent meetings, no penalties shall be imposed for absences related to observance of major religious holidays, except those imposed by external bodies such as the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association. Teachers shall assist students in making up work caused by such absences.

For additional information, see Attachment B "Religious Holidays in Public Schools" and Attachment C "Religious Expression in Public Schools."

#### Controversial Issues in the Curriculum

Both Principals and Curriculum Supervisors shall be responsible for informing all staff members of the Policy on coverage of controversial issues in the curriculum. In doing so they shall emphasize the basic assumption that the school is providing an opportunity for students to study controversial issues, not teaching controversial issues.

A teacher who is in doubt concerning the advisability of discussing certain issues and materials in the classroom shall confer with the Principal as to the appropriateness of doing so. The Principal should involve the Curriculum Supervisor or establish a special review procedure. If the teacher and Principal are unable to agree, the issue should be referred to the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee.

## Complaint Procedure

Complaints can be resolved most expeditiously if they are taken first to the staff member or administrator immediately in charge of the area in which the problem arises, then through successive administrative levels to the Superintendent, and subsequently to the Board of School Directors, if necessary. Whenever a complaint dealing with the curriculum, curricular materials and resource materials, or other matters covered by the accompanying Policy is made directly to the Board as a whole or to a Board member as an individual, it shall be referred to the Superintendent for study and possible resolution through normal channels.

If a specific employee is involved because of the circumstances, that employee shall be advised of the nature of the complaint and shall be given every opportunity for explanation, comment, and presentation of the facts as the employee sees them.

Failing to reach a satisfactory resolution to the problem or complaint with the building administrator or Curriculum Supervisor immediately in charge of the area in which the problem arises, the complainant may request a review and further consideration through successive administrative levels to the Superintendent, and subsequently the Board, if necessary, as indicated below.

The building administrator or Curriculum Supervisor shall promptly provide the Superintendent with a written report which should include the following to the extent applicable:

- A statement of the complaint prepared by the complainant and using the format appended to this Regulation in Attachment D.
- A summary of the positions taken on both sides of the matter during the study of the complaint.
- A summary of the opportunity afforded both sides to be heard.
- A statement on how the complainant would propose to resolve the matter.
- A statement of how the staff member(s) involved would propose to resolve the matter.
- A statement on how the complaint can best be resolved from the point of view of the administrator.

If the complaint has not been resolved at the building level, the Superintendent may designate a central office administrator immediately in charge of the applicable area(s) to review the recommendation set forth in the report from the building administrator or Curriculum Supervisor in charge of the area. Alternatively, the Superintendent may elect to establish a review committee composed of central office administrator(s) immediately in

charge of the applicable area(s) and other staff members selected from the administrative and instructional areas directly concerned. In the event a review committee is formed, then in their deliberations, the review committee shall consider the educational philosophy of the District, the professional opinions of other teachers of the same subject and of other competent authorities, including outside experts, reviews of the materials by reputable bodies, the staff member's own stated objectives in using the materials, and the objections of the complainant. The findings of the review committee shall be made in writing and be transmitted to the Superintendent who will make a decision on the course of action to take and the appropriate response to the complainant.

If Board involvement becomes necessary to resolve the complaint, then the Superintendent shall submit the reports from the building level and central office administrator or, if applicable, District review committee, along with their recommendation to the Board.

An individual student may be excused from class activities involving the controversial issue in question. The staff member will then assign the student alternate activities of equal merit. Although individuals may be excused from the activity, the continuation of the activity by class, school or District shall not be restricted until final disposition has been made in accordance with this Regulation.

## **Tredyffrin Easttown School District School Library Collection Selection Guidelines**

Guided by the mission of the Tredyffrin/Easttown School District, the school library collection is curated to support the school curriculum, provide opportunities for students to read for enjoyment, and foster a culture of reading. Selection of materials is made with reference to the American Library Association School Library Selection Criteria and the PaLa and PSLA Position Statement. See below for the ALA, PaLa and PSLA information.

American Library Association School Library Selection Criteria 2023:

### **General Criteria:**

- Support and enrich the curriculum and/or students' personal interests and learning
- Meet high standards in literary, artistic, and aesthetic quality; technical aspects; and physical format
- Be appropriate for the subject area and for the age, emotional development, ability level, learning styles, and social, emotional, and intellectual development of the students for whom the materials are selected
- Incorporate accurate and authentic factual content from authoritative sources
- Earn favorable reviews in standard reviewing sources and/or favorable recommendations based on preview and examination of materials by professional personnel
- Exhibit a high degree of potential user appeal and interest
- Represent differing viewpoints on controversial issues
- Provide a global perspective and promote diversity by including materials by authors and illustrators of all cultures
- Include a variety of resources in physical and virtual formats including print and non-print such as electronic and multimedia (including subscription databases and other online products, e-books, educational games, and other forms of emerging technologies)
- Demonstrate physical format, appearance, and durability suitable to their intended use
- Balance cost with need

### **Top Five Recommended School Library Reviewing Sources:**

- Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) Notable Children's Books
- Booklist
- School Library Journal
- We Need Diverse Books website
- Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) Best Books for Young Adults

### **PaLa and PSLA Position Statement 2023**

The Pennsylvania Library Association (PaLA) and the Pennsylvania School Librarians Association (PSLA) are pleased to work together in supporting all library workers and libraries in Pennsylvania that face material and book challenges. Libraries provide access to and display a variety of materials representing a broad range of perspectives and experiences.

PaLA and PSLA believe that libraries in PA must:

1. Make available the widest possible range of viewpoints, opinions, and ideas, so that every person has the opportunity to freely read and consider information and ideas.
2. Resist any effort to censor library materials, programs, or displays by endorsing policies that serve to safeguard the principles of intellectual freedom and the freedom to read.
3. Not exclude materials because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.
4. Not proscribe or remove materials because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

We stand opposed to censorship and any effort to coerce belief, suppress opinion, or punish those whose expression does not conform to what is deemed to be orthodox in history, politics, or belief. We are committed to collaboratively supporting libraries and library workers as they uphold the First Amendment to the US Constitution and the freedom to read and learn for all library users.

## Religious Holidays in the Public Schools

### Questions and Answers

#### What do the courts say?

The Supreme Court has ruled that public schools may not sponsor religious practices (*Engel v. Vitale*, 1962; *Abington v. Schempp*, 1963) but may teach *about* religion.

While having made no definitive ruling on religious holidays in the schools, the Supreme Court let stand a lower federal court decision stating that recognition of holidays may be constitutional if the purpose is to provide secular instruction about religious traditions rather than to promote the particular religion involved (*Florey v. Sioux Falls School District*, 8th Cir., 1980).

#### Do religious holidays belong in the curriculum?

The study of religious holidays may be included in elementary and secondary curricula as opportunities for teaching *about* religions. Such study serves the academic goals of educating students about history and cultures, as well as the traditions of particular religions within a pluralistic society.

#### When should teaching about religious holidays take place?

On the elementary level, natural opportunities arise for discussion of religious holidays while studying different cultures and communities. In the secondary curriculum, students of world history or literature have opportunities to consider the holy days of religious traditions.

Teachers find it helpful when they are provided with an inclusive calendar noting major religious and secular holidays with brief descriptions of their significance.

#### How should religious holidays be treated in the classroom?

Teachers must be alert to the distinction between teaching *about* religious holidays, which is permissible, and *celebrating* religious holidays, which is not. Recognition of and information about holidays may focus on how and when they are celebrated, their origins, histories and generally agreed-upon meanings. If the approach is objective and sensitive, neither promoting nor inhibiting religion, this study can foster understanding and mutual respect for differences in belief.

Teachers will want to avoid asking students to explain their beliefs and customs. An offer to do so should be treated with courtesy and accepted or rejected depending upon the educational relevancy.

Teachers may not use the study of religious holidays as an opportunity to proselytize or to inject personal religious beliefs into the discussions. Teachers can avoid this by teaching through attribution, i.e., by reporting that "some Buddhists believe..."

May religious symbols be used in public school classes?

The use of religious symbols, provided they are used only as examples of cultural and religious heritage, is permissible as a teaching aid or resource. Religious symbols may be displayed only on a temporary basis as part of the academic program. Students may choose to create artwork with religious symbols, but teachers should not encourage or discourage such creations.

May religious music be used in public schools?

Sacred music may be sung or played as part of the academic study of music. School concerts that present a variety of selections may include religious music. Concerts should avoid programs dominated by religious music, especially when these coincide with a particular religious holiday.

The use of art, drama or literature with religious themes also is permissible if it serves a sound educational goal in the curriculum but not if used as a vehicle for promoting religious belief.

What about Christmas?

Decisions about what to do in December should begin with the understanding that public schools may not sponsor religious devotions or celebrations; study *about* religious holidays does not extend to religious worship or practice.

Does this mean that all seasonal activities must be banned from the schools? Probably not, and in any event such an effort would be unrealistic. The resolution would seem to lie in devising holiday programs that serve an educational purpose for all students—programs that make no students feel excluded or identified with a religion not their own.

Holiday concerts in December may appropriately include music to Christmas and Hanukkah, but religious music should not dominate. Any dramatic productions should emphasize the cultural aspects of the holidays. Nativity pageants or plays portraying the Hanukkah miracle are not appropriate in the public school setting.

In short, while recognizing the holiday season, none of the school activities in December should have the purpose, or effect, of promoting or inhibiting religion.

What about religious objections to some holidays?

Students from certain religious traditions may ask to be excused from classroom discussion or activities related to particular holidays. Some holidays considered by many people to be secular (for example, Halloween and Valentine's Day) are viewed by others as having religious overtones.

Excusal requests may be especially common in the elementary grades, where holidays often are marked by parties and similar non-academic activities. Such requests are routinely granted.

In addition, some parents and students may make requests for excusals from discussions of certain holidays even when treated from an academic perspective. If focused on a limited, specific discussion, such requests may be granted in order to strike a balance between the student's religious freedom and the school's interest in providing a well-rounded education.



Administrators and teachers should understand that a policy or practice of excusing students from a specific activity or discussion cannot be used as a rationale for school sponsorship of religious celebrations or worship for the remaining students.

May students be absent for religious holidays?

Sensitive school policy on absences will take account of the religious needs and requirements of students. Students should be allowed a reasonable number of excused absences, without penalties, to observe religious holidays within their traditions. Students may be asked to complete makeup assignments or examinations in conjunction with such absences.

What steps should school districts take?

In a pluralistic society, public schools are places for persons of all faiths or none. Schools may neither promote nor denigrate any religion. In order to respect religious liberty and advance education, we recommend that each school district take the following steps:

- Develop policies about the treatment of religious holidays in the curricula and inform parents of those policies.
- Offer pre-service and in-service workshops to assist teachers and administrators in understanding the appropriate place of religious holidays in the schools.
- Become familiar with the nature and needs of the religious groups in the school community.
- Provide resources for teaching *about* religions and religious holidays in ways that are constitutionally permissible and educationally sound.

(Source: "Religious Holidays in the Public Schools: Questions and Answers," American Association of School Administrators, 1801 N. Moore Street, Arlington, VA 22209)

## **Religious Expression in Public Schools**

Student prayer and religious discussion: The Establishment Clause of the First Amendment does not prohibit purely private religious speech by students. Students therefore have the same right to engage in individual or group prayer and religious discussion during the school day as they do to engage in other comparable activity. For example, students may read their Bibles or other scriptures, say grace before meals, and pray before tests to the same extent they may engage in comparable non-disruptive activities. Local school authorities possess substantial discretion to impose rules of order and other pedagogical restrictions on student activities, but they may not structure or administer such rules to discriminate against religious activity or speech.

Generally, students may pray in a nondisruptive manner when not engaged in school activities or instruction, and subject to the rules that normally pertain in the applicable setting. Specifically, students in informal settings, such as cafeterias and hallways, may pray and discuss their religious views with each other, subject to the same rules of order as apply to other student activities and speech. Students may also speak to, and attempt to persuade, their peers about religious topics just as they do with regard to political topics. School officials, however, should intercede to stop student speech that constitutes harassment aimed at a student or a group of students.

Students may also participate in before or after school events with religious content, such as "see you at the flag pole" gatherings, on the same terms as they may participate in other noncurriculum activities on school premises. School officials may neither discourage nor encourage participation in such an event.

The right to engage in voluntary prayer or religious discussion free from discrimination does not include the right to have a captive audience listen, or to compel other students to participate. Teachers and school administrators should ensure that no student is in any way coerced to participate in religious activity.

Graduation prayer and baccalaureates: Under current Supreme Court decisions, school officials may not mandate or organize prayer at graduation, nor organize religious baccalaureate ceremonies. If a school generally opens its facilities to private groups, it must make its facilities available on the same terms to organizers of privately sponsored religious baccalaureate services. A school may not extend preferential treatment to baccalaureate ceremonies and may in some instances be obliged to disclaim official endorsement of such ceremonies.

Official neutrality regarding religious activity: Teachers and school administrators, when acting in those capacities, are representatives of the state and are prohibited by the establishment clause from soliciting or encouraging religious activity, and from participating in such activity with students. Teachers and administrators also are prohibited from discouraging activity because of its religious content, and from soliciting or encouraging antireligious activity.

Teaching about religion: Public schools may not provide religious instruction, but they may teach about religion, including the Bible or other scripture: the history of religion, comparative religion, the Bible (or other scripture) as literature, and the role of religion in the history of the United States and other countries all are permissible public school subjects. Similarly, it is permissible to consider religious influences on art, music, literature, and social studies. Although public schools may teach about religious holidays, including their religious aspects, and may celebrate the secular aspects of holidays, schools may not observe holidays as religious events or promote such observance by students.

Student assignments: Students may express their beliefs about religion in the form of homework, artwork, and other written and oral assignments free of discrimination based on the religious content of their submissions. Such home and classroom work should be judged by ordinary academic standards of substance and relevance, and against other legitimate pedagogical concerns identified by the school.

Religious literature: Students have a right to distribute religious literature to their schoolmates on the same terms as they are permitted to distribute other literature that is to school curriculum or activities. Schools may impose the same reasonable time, place, and manner or other constitutional restrictions on distribution of religious literature as they do on nonschool literature generally, but they may not single out religious literature for special regulation.

Religious excusals: Subject to applicable State laws, schools enjoy substantial discretion to excuse individual students from lessons that are objectionable to the student or the student's parents on religious or other conscientious grounds. School officials may neither encourage nor discourage students from availing themselves of an excusal option. Under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, if it is proved that particular lessons substantially burden a student's free exercise of religion and if the school cannot prove a compelling interest in requiring attendance, the school would be legally required to excuse the student.

Released time: Subject to applicable State laws, schools have the discretion to dismiss students to off-premises religious instruction, provided that schools do not encourage or discourage participation or penalize those who do not attend. Schools may not allow religious instruction by outsiders on school premises during the school day.

Teaching values: Though schools must be neutral with respect to religion, they may play an active role with respect to teaching civic values and virtue, and the moral code that holds us together as a community. The fact that some of these values are held also by religions does not make it unlawful to teach them in school.

Student garb: Students may display religious messages on items of clothing to the same extent that they are permitted to display other comparable messages. Religious messages may not be singled out for suppression, but rather are subject to the same rules as generally apply to comparable messages. When wearing particular attire, such as yarmulkes and head scarves, during the school day is part of students' religious practice, under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act schools generally may not prohibit the wearing of such items.

### The Equal Access Act

The Equal Access Act is designed to ensure that, consistent with the First Amendment, student religious activities are accorded the same access to public school facilities as are student secular activities. Based on decisions of the Federal courts, as well as its interpretations of the Act, the Department of Justice has advised that the Act should be interpreted as providing, among other things, that:

General provisions: Student religious groups at public secondary schools have the same right of access to school facilities as is enjoyed by other comparable student groups. Under the Equal Access Act, a school receiving Federal funds that allows one or more student noncurriculum-clubs to meet on its premises during noninstructional time may not refuse access to student religious groups.

Prayer services and worship exercises covered: A meeting, as defined and protected by the Equal Access Act, may include a prayer service, Bible reading, or other worship exercise.

Equal access to means of publicizing meetings: A school receiving Federal funds must allow student groups meeting under the Act to use the school media -- including the public address system, the school newspaper, and the school bulletin board -- to announce their meetings on the same terms as other noncurriculum-student groups are allowed to use the school media. Any policy concerning the use of school media must be applied to all noncurriculum related student groups in a nondiscriminatory manner. Schools, however, may inform students that certain groups are not school sponsored.

Lunch-time and recess covered: A school creates a limited open forum under the Equal Access Act, triggering equal access rights for religious groups, when it allows students to meet during their lunch periods or other noninstructional time during the school day, as well as when it allows students to meet before and after the school day.

(Source: Statement of Principles on Religious Expression in Public Schools, Richard W. Riley, Secretary, U.S. Department of Education, August 10, 1995)

Complaint Form to be completed by the Complainant

Note: If there is not enough space to respond adequately to these questions in the space provided and would prefer to use an alternate document, then please follow this format.

1. Please summarize the nature of the issue which gives rise to the complaint: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Is the issue involved a part of an accepted and approved curriculum?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Don't know \_\_\_\_\_

3. Were opposing points of view also presented pertaining to this issue?  
Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ Don't know \_\_\_\_\_

4. Would you please specify your objection regarding the matter under consideration?  
a. For example, if it is thought the controversial issue should not be in the curriculum at all, please give reasons and indicate what you feel might be the result of including this controversial issue in the curriculum:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. For example, if it is thought the controversial issue should not be in the curriculum at this grade level and curriculum area, please indicate why and suggest another grade level and curriculum area:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

c. For example, if it is thought the instructional methods were inappropriate, please explain:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

d. For example, if it is thought the curriculum, curricular materials or resource materials used were inappropriate, please explain:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

e. Please suggest possible resolutions.

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f. Other specific concerns:

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Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosure: Regulation 6130 *“Curriculum, Curricular Materials and Resource Materials”*