

Procedure for Academic Freedom and Responsibility

These guidelines address both print and non-print resources, including web sites and video. The guidelines concern materials containing slurs or stereotypes (racial, ethnic, religious, gender, disability, sexual orientation or physical appearance); materials containing graphic violence; materials including disturbing situations and/or concepts; and material with inappropriate language.

1. Selection Considerations

1. Follow the selection criteria in the Procedures for Selection of Instructional Materials ([School Board Policy 7250-R1](#)). Commercial films may only be shown if their use follows Fair Use Guidelines ([School Board Policy 2025](#)).
2. Determine how this material fits into the curriculum. Does it add value to your lesson?
3. Consider whether there are other, less objectionable, materials that do the same thing. Is this material unique?
4. Be sure the material is age appropriate.

NOTE: You are not being asked to change your selection. You are being asked to give thoughtful and careful consideration to your selection and to be prepared to articulate your reasoning.

2. Preparation

1. Don't be surprised! **Read or preview the material beforehand** and think about how you will deal with anything that might be controversial.
2. Talk to your administrator if you think the material might be controversial to give him/her:
a) a "heads up" and b) an opportunity to work collaboratively and to help you strategize.

NOTE: This can be very helpful, since your administrator is in favor of academic freedom, while being sensitive to the feelings of the community.

3. If there is objectionable language in a book you are reading aloud, decide beforehand whether you are going to say the words and how you will deal with that decision.
Factors to consider:
 1. The importance of the word to the context of the material and lesson
 2. The age of students
 3. The impact of the words on the children

4. Good communication with parents is essential.
If the content of the material is particularly glaring or egregious, be sure to notify parents, including a brief discussion of the content and how you will handle the situation, and indicating that you will be available to answer questions. (See [School Board Policy 9500-R1](#) for the procedures to follow if a parent objects to his/her child being exposed to the material in question.)

Commercial films and off-air recorded video present a particular challenge and many should be shown only with parental permission.

1. **Parental permission** should be obtained before showing films other than those with a G-rating
2. Un-rated films should not be assumed to have the equivalent of a G-rating
3. Parental permission should be obtained before showing any off-air recorded video (including news clips) that contains graphic violence or events that are likely to be disturbing to students

3. In the Classroom

1. Prior to using the material, do an age appropriate lesson on name-calling or stereotyping or prejudice – whatever is related to the “problem” in the material you will be using. The Multicultural Education Office has a great deal of material to assist you with this work.
2. As you attempt to address the problem manifest in the controversial material, do not make the common mistake of singling out children in your class who are members of the maligned group. Rather, teach about the minority group history or the names the same way you teach about mainstream history.
3. If you feel that certain students may need some extra comfort, reassurance, or conversation, speak with the students privately. Teachers must strike a delicate balance between identifying and calling out the unacceptable behavior and focusing undue attention on students who are members of the minority group being targeted.

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