



Lincoln Public Schools  
Lincoln, MA 01773

**DRAFT** 9/30/2016 10/13/16 10/26/2016

## **PUBLIC COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE CURRICULUM OR INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS**

The School Committee, though it is ultimately responsible for all curriculum and instructional materials (including library books), recognizes the need and right of students to free access to many different types of books and materials. It also recognizes the right of the professional staff to select books and other materials supportive of the school system's educational philosophy and goals.

Criticism of a book or other materials used in the schools may be expected from time to time. In such instances, the critic should initiate a conversation with the teacher responsible for the use of the book or materials in question. Following this conversation, the matter may then be taken up with the relevant Principal. Following a discussion with the Principal, the matter may then be brought to the attention of the Superintendent.

No individual or group may exercise censorship of instructional materials and library collections. Individual parents may request that their children be exempt from the use of certain materials, and teachers may entertain timely, written requests for the provision of alternative materials. ~~Despite care taken to select materials that are needed and appropriate for use in the Lincoln Public Schools, objections to a selection may be made by the resident public. Any resident citizen or parent or guardian of a student may make a complaint regarding educational materials used in the schools. When a citizen disagrees with the content of particular material in the schools, a meeting will be held with the appropriate school personnel and/or the Principal with the purpose in mind of concluding, to the satisfaction of all concerned, the disagreement, in an amicable manner. All objections to materials should be settled informally, if possible. If at the conclusion of this informal meeting, the complainant is not satisfied, and still believes that it does not belong in the school, then the complainant will follow the procedure followed below.~~

The following procedure shall be followed whenever there is a formal request for the evaluation of material.

- Complainant files a written request for evaluation of challenged educational materials with the Superintendent of Schools.
- The challenged materials will remain in use in the school pending final decision.
- The Superintendent shall establish a Materials Review Committee with broad representation:
  - A teacher competent in the area of content covered by the material but not involved in the use of the material in question.
  - Administrators, directors, and supervisors appropriate to the level and/or subject for which the material is used.
  - A library media specialist shall serve on the review committee.
  - A member of the School Committee.
  - A member of the community not involved in the challenge of the material.





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- ~~— Superintendent refers the challenge to the Materials Review Committee.~~
- ~~— The Materials Review Committee action on a written request shall be taken no later than fifteen (15) school days after receipt of the request.~~
- ~~— A written report of the recommendation from the Materials Review Committee shall be submitted to the Superintendent no later than twenty (20) school days after the receipt of the written request for evaluation of challenged educational materials. The Superintendent shall then communicate a decision regarding the materials to the complainant within ten (10) school days.~~
- ~~— Should the decision of the Superintendent not satisfy the person requesting the evaluation, said person shall have five (5) school days to submit a written request for a hearing to appeal the Superintendent's decision to the School Committee.~~
- ~~— The School Committee shall review the Superintendent's decision within twenty (20) school days of the receipt of the written request.~~
- ~~— The School Committee will have five (5) school days following the hearing to respond in writing to the complainant.~~
  
- ~~— The administration and the School Committee recognize the rights of parents to request that their own child abstain from the use of particular educational materials. Provided a written request is made to the school principal, alternative material will be assigned if available. The School Committee, though it is ultimately responsible for all curriculum and instructional materials (including library books), recognizes the need and right of students to free access to many different types of books and materials. It also recognizes the right of the professional staff to select books and other materials supportive of the school district's educational philosophy and goals.~~

~~The School Committee has adopted the following guidelines for addressing concerns raised regarding curriculum and instructional materials:~~

- ~~0. No parent, group of parents, or other citizen has the right to determine curriculum or instructional materials for students other than their own children.~~
- ~~0. The School Committee recognizes the right of individual parents to request that their child not have to read a given book or other materials provided a written request is made to the appropriate school principal. Provided the request is timely, alternative material will be assigned if available.~~
- ~~0. The School Committee will not permit any individual or group to exercise censorship over instructional materials and library collections, but recognizes that at times a re-evaluation of certain material may be desirable. Should an individual or group ask to have any curriculum or instructional material withdrawn from school use:
  - ~~a. The person who objects to the curriculum or instructional material will be asked to submit a written complaint to the school principal that documents the concern and includes contact information and signature.~~~~



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- b. ~~Following receipt of the written complaint, the Superintendent or designee will review the materials in question using the criteria established in policy IJ, Instructional Materials to determine whether a re-evaluation of the materials is warranted. If a re-evaluation of materials is warranted, the Superintendent will form a review committee from among the faculty and administration to consider the complaint.~~
- c. ~~The Superintendent will review the complaint and the committee's re-evaluation and will render a decision in the matter. Should the decision be unsatisfactory to the complainant, the complainant may appeal it to the School Committee.~~
- 2. ~~The final decision for controversial curriculum or instructional materials shall rest with the School Committee.~~

~~In summary, the School Committee assumes final responsibility for all curriculum and instructional materials made available to students; it holds the professional staff of the~~

~~school district accountable for their proper selection. It recognizes the rights of individual parents with respect to controversial materials used by their own children; and it will provide for the possible re-evaluation of materials in classrooms and library collections upon written request. In addition, students' rights to learn and the freedom of teachers to teach will be respected.~~

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. c.76:5

CROSS REFS.: IJ, Instructional Materials

Resources: Wayland Public Schools, Policy KEC  
Weston Public Schools, Policy KEC  
Abbington Public Schools, Policy KEC

Adopted at School Committee Meeting of





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2.0 The challenged materials will remain in use in the school pending final decision.

3.0 The Superintendent shall establish a Materials Review Committee with broad representation:

3.1 A teacher competent in the area of content covered by the material but not involved in the use of the material in question.

3.2 Administrators, directors, and supervisors appropriate to the level and/or subject for which the material is used.

3.3 A library media specialist shall serve on the review committee.

3.4 A member of the School Committee.

3.5 A member of the community not involved in the challenge of the material.

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Adopted at School Committee Meeting of \_\_\_\_\_

## INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL SELECTION

### PUBLIC COMPLAINTS ABOUT CURRICULUM OR INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL

#### I. GUIDELINES FOR MATERIAL SELECTION

It is the policy of the Lincoln Public Schools to establish procedures in the selection and approval of books and audio-visual equipment which will:

- A. Support and enrich all subjects of the curriculum, taking into consideration the varied interests, abilities and maturity levels of the students served.
- B. Present in fair perspective the culture, history, activities and contributions of persons and groups of different races, nationalities, sexes, religions and ethnic origins.
- C. Give extensive information and factual knowledge which will enable students to make intelligent judgments in their daily lives.
- D. Support and be consistent with the objectives and goals of specific courses of study approved by the School Committee.
- E. Stimulate growth in knowledge, literary appreciation, aesthetic values, and ethical standards.
- F. Present aspects of social, economic, and political systems and issues so that students have practice, under guidance, in the processes of critical reading, thinking and evaluating.
- G. Offer the student an opportunity to develop an awareness of a social order which allows for the full development of the individual.
- H. Develop the life-long habit of wide reading which fosters freedom in the exchange of ideas.

#### II. RESPONSIBILITY FOR SELECTION

The purchase of instructional materials is legally vested in the School Committee. The Committee delegates to the staff the actual selection of materials. The staff chooses materials geared to the needs and interests of the student and faculty.

#### III. CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

- A. Criteria for the selection of materials consistent with the guidelines for materials and selection noted above should be based on the needs of the school, as determined from a knowledge of children.

- B. Suitable materials are selected according to grade and level of interest.
- C. A wide range of materials is provided for all levels of ability with a diversity of appeal and presentation of different points of view.
- D. Factual accuracy, authoritativeness, balance and integrity are required in the materials provided.
- E. Materials of high quality and superior format are chosen with consideration given to stimulating presentation, including imagination, vision, creativity, and style appropriate to the idea.

#### IV. PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING OBJECTIONS

- A. The suitability of particular books or other materials may be questioned by any parent, student, or citizen of the Lincoln or Hanscom communities. A Request Form for Re-evaluation of Materials is available at the Principals' offices. This form should be completed by the complainant and presented to the Principal who will forward a copy to the Superintendent.
- B. The material in question shall be reviewed by a committee composed of:
  - Principal
  - Subject teacher at the appropriate level
  - Parent representative(s) appointed by the appropriate parent group. On the Lincoln campus, this would be the PTA or METCO; on the Hanscom campus, this would be the Hanscom Parent Organization or the Hanscom Representatives to the School Committee.
  - Librarian

The review committee shall function at the call of the Principal upon receipt of a complaint. The material shall be considered with the specific objections in mind. The complainant shall have the opportunity to meet with the review committee as shall any other persons involved in the selection or use of the questioned material. The review committee shall endeavor to arrive at a decision as rapidly as possible and shall transmit its decision, including minority reports if any, to all interested parties. If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision of the review committee, he/she may ask for School Committee consideration of the matter. The School Committee's decision will be final.

- C. The staff shall have no obligation to remove material from use during the review process.
- D. The review of questioned materials shall be treated objectively and as an important matter. The best interests of the students, curriculum, the school and the community shall be of paramount importance.



V. INSTRUCTIONS TO EVALUATING COMMITTEE

- A. Bear in mind the principles of the freedom to learn and to read and base your decisions on these broad principles rather than on defense of individual material. Freedom of inquiry is vital to education in a democracy.
- B. Study thoroughly all materials referred to you and read available reviews. The general acceptance of the materials should be checked by consulting standard evaluation aids and the collections in other schools.
- C. Passages or parts should not be pulled out of context. The values and faults should be weighed against each other, and the opinions based on the material as a whole.
- D. Your report, presenting both majority and minority opinions, will be presented to the Superintendent who will forward it to the School Committee for possible action.

See Also: Intellectual Freedom Documents of the American Library Association and The Student's Right to Read from the National Council of Teachers of English. (Both filed under "Reports" - Material Selection)

Approved at School Committee Meeting of August 17, 1979

Reaffirmed at School Committee Meeting of February 11, 1985