

REGIONAL SCHOOL UNIT 19

TO: RSU 19 Board of Directors
FR: Robin McNeil / Mike Hammer
DT: March 16, 2021
RE: **Policy Committee Meeting Agenda**



DAY: **Tuesday**
DATE: **March 23, 2021**
TIME: 6:30 PM
PLACE: **ZOOM ONLY**

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83662509475?pwd=Vk5HdE9NNXk0M3ZWZWpkL2pMbjFyQT09>

Join by Phone: 1-646-558-8656 ID: 836 6250 9475 Passcode: 735827

AGENDA

I. Public Comment

II. Policy Review

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| A. JHB | Truancy |
| B. IMB | Teaching About Controversial/Sensitive Issues |
| C. IHBH | Alternative Education Options/Programs |
| D. IJJ | Textbook Selection and Adoption (<i>Current RSU 19</i>) |
| IJJ | Instructional and Library-Media Materials Selection MSMA |
| IJJ-E | Challenge of Instructional Materials Form |
| E. IMBC to IMBAA | Alternatives to Biological Dissection |
| F. IMBB | Exemption from Required Instruction |
| G. IMC | Guest Speakers in Schools |

III. Other

IV. Adjournment

A.D.A. Notice: If you have a special need that must be met to allow you to fully participate in this meeting, please contact the Office of the Superintendent at least two (2) days prior to this meeting.

TRUANCY

TRUANCY DEFINED

A student is truant if ~~the student~~ he/she is required to attend school or alternative instruction under Maine compulsory attendance law (20-A MRSA § 5001-A) and he/she:

- A. ~~Is subject to the compulsory attendance law; and~~ Has completed grade 6 and has the equivalent of 10 full days of unexcused absences or 7 consecutive school days of unexcused absences during a school year; or
- B. Is at least 6 years of age and has not completed grade 6 and has ~~Has attained~~ the equivalent of ~~10~~ 7 full days of ~~non~~ unexcused absences or ~~7~~ 5 consecutive school days of ~~non~~ unexcused absences during a school year.
- C. A child 5 years of age or older and under 6 years of age who is enrolled in and who has not withdrawn from a public day school is required to attend that school during the time it is in session. Such a child will be considered truant if he/she has the equivalent of 7 full days of unexcused absences or 5 consecutive school days of unexcused absences during a school year.

ATTENDANCE COORDINATORS

~~The Board shall appoint one or more attendance coordinators in accordance with state law.~~

In accordance with Maine law, the Superintendent shall appoint one or more attendance coordinators. The duties of the attendance coordinator include, but are not limited to:

- A. Interviewing a student whose attendance is irregular and meeting with the student and the parents to determine the cause of the irregular attendance and filing a written report with the principal;
- B. Filing an annual report with the Superintendent summarizing school year activities, findings and recommendations regarding truants;
- C. Serving as a member of the dropout prevention committee; and

- D. Serving as the liaison between the school and the local law enforcement agency in matters pertaining to student absenteeism under Maine law.

TRUANCY PROCEDURES

As required by law, the following ~~statutory provisions~~ procedure shall be followed when a student is truant:

- A. ~~If the principal or attendance coordinator determines that a student is truant, the principal shall inform the Superintendent. The Principal shall first try to correct the problem, informally. Informal attempts to correct the problem must include referral to the school's Student Intervention Team (SIT) and meeting with the student and the student's parents to identify possible causes of the truancy and to develop a plan to implement solutions to the problem.~~
The principal, upon determining that a student is truant, shall notify the Superintendent of the student's truancy within five school days of the last unexcused absence.
- B. Within five school days of notification, the Superintendent/designee will refer the student who has been determined to be truant to the school's student assistance team **[OR: or the school's general education intervention system personnel OR: or to _____ (other title).**
- C. The student assistance team **[OR: intervention system personnel]** will meet to determine the cause of the truancy and assess the effect of the student's absences, as well as any future absences for the student. If it is determined that a negative effect exists, the student assistance team **[OR: intervention system personnel OR: _____ (other title)]** shall develop an intervention plan to address the student's absences and the negative effect of these absences.

~~The Principal/SIT may implement interventions that best address the problem including~~ An intervention plan may include, but is not limited to:

1. Frequent communication between the teacher and the family;
2. Changes in the learning environment;
3. Mentoring;
4. Student counseling;
5. Tutoring, including peer tutoring;
6. Placement into different classes;
7. Evaluation for alternative education programs;
8. Attendance contracts;
9. Referral to other agencies for family services; and
10. Other interventions including, but not limited to, referral to the school attendance coordinator, student assistance team, or dropout prevention committee.

Failure of the student or the student's parents to appear at scheduled meetings does not preclude school administrators from implementing a plan to address a student's truancy.

~~B. As part of correcting the problem informally, the Principal shall require the student and his/her parents to attend one or more meetings with the SIT. The purpose of the meeting(s) is to reinforce the plan referenced in paragraph A or to develop an alternative plan. Such meetings may involve others including but not limited to case managers, therapeutic treatment providers, and representatives of the Department of Human Services, the Department of Behavioral and Developmental Services, and the Department of Corrections. The Principal shall schedule the meeting(s) at mutually convenient times.~~

D. The student and his/her parents/guardians shall be invited to attend any meetings scheduled to discuss the student's truancy and the intervention plan.

€ to E. If the ~~Principal/SIT~~ Superintendent/designee is unable to correct the student's truancy, the ~~Principal~~ Superintendent/designee shall serve or cause to be served upon the parent(s) in-hand or by registered mail a written notice that the student's attendance is required by law. The notice shall:

1. State that the student is required to attend school pursuant to 20-A M.R.S.A. §5001-A (the compulsory attendance law);
2. Explain the parent's right to inspect the student's attendance records, attendance coordinator's reports, and Principal's reports;

3. Explain that the failure to send the student to school and maintain the student in regular attendance is a civil violation in accordance with 20-A M.R.S.A. § 5053-A and ~~explain that the matter is being referred to the Superintendent for formal action~~ will jeopardize the student's status in the grade he/she is in;
4. State that the Superintendent/designee may notify local law enforcement authorities of a violation of 20-A MRSA § 5053-A and the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) of a violation under and 20-A MRSA § 5051-A(l)(C); and

[NOTE: The definition of "child abuse and neglect" includes "failure to ensure compliance with school attendance requirements [in regard to students from age 6 up to completion of sixth grade] by a person responsible for the child. This definition is in 22-MRSA § 4002.

The "mandatory reporting" statute is 22 MRSA § 4011-A.]

5. Outline the plan developed to address the student's truancy and the steps that have been taken to implement that plan.

~~D. The Principal will inform the Superintendent of Schools that they have a student referred to the SIT. If the previous informal efforts have not corrected the student's truancy, formal procedures will be initiated by the Superintendent.~~

~~E to F.~~ Prior to notifying local law enforcement authorities, the Superintendent/designee shall schedule at least one meeting of the student assistance team **[OR: intervention system personnel OR: _____ (other title)** as required by law and paragraph B of this policy and may invite a local prosecutor.

~~F. If a student remains truant and does not follow the plan designated to prevent future absences, the Superintendent shall notify the parent/legal guardian, by registered mail, that attendance is required by law, including the same information outlined in paragraph C, in said letter.~~

- G. If after three school days after the service of the notice described in paragraph ~~FE~~ of this policy the student remains truant and the parent(s) and student refuse to attend the meeting referred to in paragraph ~~EF~~, the Superintendent/designee shall report the facts of the unlawful absence to local law enforcement authorities.~~and DHHS.~~ Local law enforcement may proceed with enforcement action against the parent unless the student is at once placed in an appropriate school or otherwise meets the requirements of the compulsory attendance law.
- H. When a student is determined to be truant and in violation of the compulsory attendance law, and the student assistance team **[OR: intervention system personnel OR: other title]** has made a good faith attempt to meet the requirements, the Superintendent shall notify the Board of the student's truancy.

ANNUAL REPORT TO COMMISSIONER

The Superintendent shall submit an annual report regarding truancy to the Commissioner by October 1. The report must identify the number of truants in the school administrative unit in the preceding school year; describe the school unit's efforts to deal with truancy; account for actions brought to enforce the truancy law; and include any other information on truancy requested by the Commissioner.

Legal Reference: 20-A M.R.S.A. §§ 5001-A; 5051-A-5054-A
22 MRSA § 4002

Cross Reference: JEA Compulsory Student Attendance
JFC Student Withdrawal from School (Dropout Prevention Committee)
JLF Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

~~CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES POLICY~~
TEACHING ABOUT CONTROVERSIAL/SENSITIVE ISSUES

American academic tradition stresses the free contest of ideas as a vital element both in the development of curriculum and in classroom teaching.

Teaching Controversial Issues

Training in reflective and responsive thinking, may be incorporated in course offerings at all grade levels. This training is impossible, or at least severely hampered, if the community does not respect the principles of freedom and recognize that dissent does not necessarily mean disloyalty. However, one form of dissent which is incompatible with freedom is that which attempts to end freedom. Irrational fears do just this, and thereby may block the school in its efforts to handle controversial issues in an atmosphere of freedom and thoroughness.

- A. It is the responsibility of the schools to make provision for the study of controversial issues.
1. The policy on controversial issues should be defined in terms of the rights of students rather than in terms of the rights of teachers.
 2. The study should be emphasized in the high school, when most students are mature enough to study the significant controversial issues facing our society. However, all grade level teachers will be guided in acknowledgement and discussion of controversial issues.
 3. The study should be objective and scholarly with a minimum emphasis on opinion and a maximum emphasis on facts and critical thinking including source verification and avoidance of confirmation bias.
- B. In the study of controversial issues, the students have the following rights:
1. The right to study any controversial issue which has political, economic, or social significance and concerning which (at the appropriate level) he/she should begin to have an opinion;
 2. The right to have free access to all relevant information;
 3. The right to form and express opinions on controversial issues without thereby jeopardizing relations with the teacher or the school; and

1st Reading: 10/20/09

Adopted: 11/17/09; Revised:

4. The right to study under competent instruction in an atmosphere free from bias and prejudice.
 5. The right to pursue further discussion with other teachers, an administrator or credible resource in order to more fully understand the topic or information surrounding the issue.
- C. The teacher employs the same methods in handling controversial issues as characterize the best teaching at any time. The teacher has access to the best practices as indicated by the Department of Education or vetted resources on the topic
1. The teacher, in selecting both the content and the method of instruction, is mindful of the maturity level of the students.
 2. The teacher has assured him/herself that the controversial subject to be discussed belongs within the framework of the curriculum to be covered, that the subject is significant as well as meaningful for the students, and that through the discussion, students will have the opportunity to grow.
 3. The teacher handles the classroom presentation in ways that will ensure a wide range of information and interpretation for the students' consideration and strives to present a balance among many points of view.
 4. The teacher does not use the classroom as a personal forum. ~~He/she does not employ the techniques of the demagogue or the propagandist for attention, for control, or simply for color. The teacher has the right to identify and express his/her own point of view in the classroom as long as he/she indicates clearly that it is his/her own.~~ Ideally, students would not know the opinion of the teacher when they walk out of the classroom.
 5. The teacher emphasizes keeping an open mind, basing one's judgment on known facts, looking closely at facts to evaluate them in terms of the subject under discussion, and being ready to change one's opinion should new facts come into light.
 6. The emphasis always is on the method of forming an opinion as much as on the opinion formed.

1st Reading: 10/20/09

Adopted: 11/17/09; Revised:

D. Parents have the following rights for the teaching of their students about controversial issues:

1. The opportunity to review curriculum and/or the material utilized as a part of the curriculum; and
2. The option of limiting their child's participation, in part or whole, in any discussion or course of a controversial nature. However, the wishes of the child's parents to restrict their child's participation in a class discussion will not infringe on other parents' rights to permit their children to participate in such discussion. An appropriate alternate assignment may be recommended by the teacher.

1st Reading: 10/20/09

Adopted: 11/17/09; Revised:

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION **OPTIONS/PROGRAMS**

~~The RSU 19 Board of Directors recognizes that there are students with the potential to complete their secondary education who have difficulty completing the conventional school program. Some students require more support and direct supervision than is reasonably available in conventional school setting, while others require a highly structured academic experience and a special focus on life skills and/or vocational education.~~

~~The Board will provide alternative education programs when there is an identified need, when establishment of such programs is feasible, and when such programs fall within the function normally associated with the public schools.~~

~~Alternative educational programs will seek to provide appropriate academic, social, and vocational experiences to assist students to re-enter the regular secondary program, move into another educational setting, or prepare them for successful employment.~~

that some students are at increased risk of school failure due to personal, social, emotional, behavioral or economic issues that impact learning and achievement. Other students may have experienced academic distress because they have learning styles that are difficult to accommodate or require more support, supervision or structure than is readily available in the conventional school program.

Maine law (20-A M.R.S.A. § 1 (2-A)) defines an “at-risk” student as one who:

- A. Is not meeting the requirements for promotion to the next grade level or graduation from high school;
- B. Is at risk for dropping out of school;
- C. Is habitually truant; or
- D. Is economically disadvantaged as signified by qualification for the National School Lunch Program under Federal regulations.

[NOTE: According to Maine Department of Education staff, subsection “D” is based on research demonstrating a statistical correlation between economical

1st Reading: 10/20/09

Adopted: 11/17/09 Revised:

disadvantage and failure to achieve a high school diploma.]

Factors associated with risk of school failure include but are not limited to failing grades; absenteeism and truancy; student or parent alcohol or drug abuse or dependency; pregnancy or parental responsibilities; self-destructive behaviors; depression and other mental health problems; abuse or neglect; homelessness; deficient social skills; disruptive behavior or multiple disciplinary incidents; family problems; and poverty.

When there is an identified need and it is feasible to do so, the school unit may establish one or more alternative education programs that are aligned with Maine's system of Learning Results. The purpose of alternative education programs is to provide at-risk students with curricula and assessment in a setting designed to effectively meet the student's academic, social and relational needs.

Alternative education programs may allow students to attend school part time or be scheduled apart from the regular school day and may include vocational components.

In combination with the alternative education program or in combination with each other, the school unit may offer other alternative learning options such as small class size; flexible scheduling; relevant alternative curricula and assessment; mentoring adults; skilled teachers; a focus on social, emotional and relationship skills; collaboration among home, school and social service agencies; and any other measures designed to accommodate the needs of at-risk students.

The objective of alternative learning, including the school unit's alternative education program, is to assist students in completing their high school education, move into another educational setting, prepare for successful employment, and/or acquire life skills.

The alternative education program is not a substitute for or an alternative to special education services. A student who is identified by the IEP team as having a disability and being in need of special education services will be provided services within the alternative education program as specified in his/her IEP.

1st Reading: 10/20/09

Adopted: 11/17/09 Revised:

If the superintendent approves, a RSU 19 student may be enrolled in an alternative education program in another school unit or in an approved private alternative program.

Legal Reference: 20-A MRSA §§ 4729; 5001-A; 5051-A; 5104-A

Cross Reference: JEA Compulsory Attendance
JFC Dropout Prevention/Student Withdrawal from School

1st Reading: 10/20/09
Adopted: 11/17/09 Revised:

TEXTBOOK SELECTION AND ADOPTION

~~It is the policy of the Board of Directors of RSU 19 to provide district students with textbooks which are appropriate to their developmental needs as learners in all subject areas where textbooks represent an essential part of the core curriculum.~~

~~To this end, the Board affirms that it is the responsibility of the professional community within the school system to make such recommendations as deemed necessary to keep RSU 19 academically competitive in terms of textbook selection and purchase.~~

PROCESS

~~For the purposes of this statement of policy, RSU 19 will follow a specific process leading to a selection, recommendation, and ultimate adoption of texts by the Board.~~

- ~~1. In RSU 19, textbook selection will be preceded by an intensive study to be completed by a K-12 Study Committee of teachers. (In some cases, the grade level span of committee representation may be narrowed, i.e., Maine Studies, Grades 4-8, or a special program which only affects one or two grade levels.) The Committee study and recommendation will involve a specifically identified procedure.
 - ~~a. Text Curriculum reviews will be based upon a 5-year rotating study cycle. (4-years in Science)~~
 - ~~b. A comprehensive needs assessment will be administered to all teachers who are using a given program at the identified time. (Changes which are anticipated will be based upon identified need.)~~
 - ~~c. Whenever possible, texts will be piloted in classrooms on a pre-selected basis.~~
 - ~~d. The district's curriculum goals will be applied to various texts, in order to identify the one which best meets the needs of district students~~
 - ~~e. Texts and related materials will undergo a thorough committee review.~~
 - ~~f. The study will include a cost analysis of a proposed change.~~
 - ~~g. The Superintendent of Schools will be presented with the Committee findings, cost analysis and recommendation for adoption.~~~~
- ~~2. All Committee recommendations will be forwarded to the Superintendent of Schools, for approval. The Superintendent or designee will make the final recommendation for adoption to the Directors of RSU 19.~~

Legal Reference: 20-A MRSA §§ 1001 (10-A); 1055 (4); 4002
Ch. 125 §§ 9.01, 9.03 (Me. Dept. of Ed. Rule)
P.L. 107-110 § 1061 (No Child Left Behind Act)

Cross Reference: IJJ-E – Challenge of Instructional Materials Form

INSTRUCTIONAL AND LIBRARY-MEDIA MATERIALS SELECTION

The Board is legally responsible for all matters relating to the operation of the schools, including the provision of instructional materials and maintenance of library-media resources that support the school system's curriculum.

While the Board retains its authority to approve the selection of instructional materials, it recognizes the educational expertise of its professional staff and the need for such staff to be involved in the recommendation of instructional materials. The Board delegates responsibility for the selection of instructional materials and library-media resources to the professionally trained personnel employed by the school system, subject to the criteria and procedures for selection and the Board's policy on challenged materials as described below.

[NOTE: Under 20-A M.R.S.A. § 1001(10-A), a school board is required to have a policy governing selection of educational materials. The statute also states that a board may approve educational materials. "Educational materials" are not defined in statute. Chapter 125 of the Department of Education Rules makes a distinction between "instructional materials" and "library-media resources," but does not use the term "educational materials." MSMA has provided definitions in this policy.]

OPTION 1 (Board delegation): With the assistance of professional staff, the Superintendent shall establish a system for the selection of instructional materials, including procedures to establish an orderly process for the review and recommendation of instructional materials. The Superintendent will be responsible for overseeing the purchase of instructional materials within budgetary parameters set by the Board. The Board expects the Superintendent to report on progress made in aligning instructional materials with curriculum development and evaluation in support of the content standards contained in Maine's system of Learning Results.

OPTION 2 (Board approval): With the assistance of professional staff, the Superintendent shall establish a system for the selection of instructional materials, including procedures to establish an orderly process for the review and recommendation of instructional materials. The Superintendent shall present his/her recommendations to the Board regarding the selection of textbooks and other instructional materials after completion of the review process. The Board will act on the Superintendent's recommendations concerning instructional materials. The Board expects the Superintendent to report on progress made in aligning instructional

materials with curriculum development and evaluation in support of the content standards contained in Maine's system of Learning Results.

Each school shall maintain a library-media program that includes books and other print materials, multimedia materials, online Internet resources and information technology that support the curriculum. A certified library-media specialist will be responsible for overseeing the library-media program, under the supervision of the Superintendent. As with instructional materials, the Board delegates responsibility for selection of library-media materials and technology and Internet resources to the school system's professionally trained staff, subject to the criteria and procedures for selection and the Board's policy on challenged materials described below.

Definitions

“Instructional materials” include textbooks and other print materials, online textbooks and instructional materials, other online/Internet resources (including access), software, and supplies and other materials to support instruction in subject areas and the implementation of standards for student learning.

“Library-media resources” include books, print materials, online/Internet resources (including access), multimedia materials and information technology that, as part of the library-media program, support the school system's curriculum.

Objectives of Selection

The Board recognizes that it is the primary objective of instructional materials to implement and support the curriculum, and of library-media resources to extend and enrich the educational programs of the schools. Quality instructional materials and library-media resources are essential to student learning. In preparing students to meet the content standards of the Learning Results, in supporting the achievement of the school unit's educational goals and objectives, and in providing enrichment opportunities that expand students' interests and contribute to a desire for lifelong learning, it is the responsibility of the instructional program and the library-media centers of the schools to provide a wide range of materials on all levels of difficulty, with diversity of appeal and the presentation of different points of view.

Criteria for Selection

Instructional and library-media materials selected should:

- A. Support achievement of the content standards of the Learning Results;
- B. Support the goals and objectives of the school system's educational programs;
- C. Enrich and support the curriculum;
- D. Take into consideration the varied interests, abilities, and maturity levels of the students served;
- E. Foster respect and appreciation for cultural diversity and varied opinions;
- F. Give comprehensive, accurate and balanced representation to minorities and women in history, science, leadership and the arts and acknowledge the contributions of ethnic, religious and cultural groups to our American heritage;
- G. Present a balance of opposing sides of controversial issues to enable students to develop a capability for critical analysis;
- H. Stimulate growth in factual knowledge, literary appreciation, aesthetic values and ethical standards;
- I. Provide a background of information that will enable students to make intelligent decisions in their daily lives; and
- J. Respect the constraints of the school unit's budget.

Other factors that should be considered are accuracy and currency of material; importance of the subject matter; scholarship; quality of writing and production; and reputation and significance of the author, artist or composer.

In evaluating software, multimedia materials and online/Internet resources, additional factors that should be considered include purpose for use;

content; format (degree of interactivity or student involvement); appropriate use of graphics, sound and animation; feedback provided; and ease of use.

Procedures for Selection

Meeting the needs of the individual schools, based on knowledge of the curriculum and the existing collections of instructional and library-media materials, shall be the highest priority. Basic learning materials, i.e., those that are the predominant instructional materials used by most members of the class, are used for a significant portion of the course or receive major emphasis during a course, or are essential to student achievement of content standards of the Learning Results are to take priority in the selection process.

Before recommending materials for purchase, professional staff should evaluate the existing collection, consulting reputable, unbiased, professionally prepared selection aids and specialists from all departments and/or all grade levels.

Social studies and science textbooks should not be older than five years unless up-to-date supplemental instructional materials are also available.

Whenever possible, purchase of non-print materials and multimedia, Internet and technology resources shall be made only after personal evaluation by the librarian/media specialist and/or other appropriate professional staff. Reviewing aids may be used in lieu of personal evaluation.

Multiple copies of outstanding and much-in-demand materials should be purchased as needed. Worn or missing standard items should be replaced periodically. Out-of-date or no-longer-useful materials should be withdrawn from the collection/circulation.

Donated Materials

Gift materials are to be evaluated by the same criteria as purchased materials and are to be accepted or rejected by those criteria and in accordance with Board policy on gifts and donations.

Parental Authority

A student's parent/guardian may inspect, upon request, any instructional material used as part of the curriculum. The Superintendent will be responsible for developing and implementing procedures for providing access to instructional material within a reasonable time after such a request is made.

The Board recognizes that the final authority as to what materials an individual student will be exposed rests with that student's parents or guardians. However, at no time will the wishes of one child's parents to restrict his/her reading or viewing of a particular item infringe on other parents' rights to permit their children to read or view the same material.

Library-media center materials will not be removed from the collection because of criticism except in accordance with Board policy.

Challenged Materials

Despite the care taken to select materials for student and teacher use and the qualifications of the persons who select the materials, the Board recognized that objections may be raised occasionally by students, parents, school staff or community members.

In the event a complaint is made, the following procedures will apply:

- A. The complaint shall be heard first by the person providing the materials in question.
- B. If the complaint is not resolved, the complainant shall be referred to the building Principal and requested to fill out the "Instructional and Library-Media Materials Challenge Form." A copy of the form will be forwarded to the Superintendent.
- C. the Superintendent shall appoint a committee composed of the following persons to review the complaint: one Principal at the appropriate grade level; one librarian/media specialist; one classroom teacher; the department head in the subject area of the challenged materials; one community member.
- D. The review committee shall: read and examine the materials referred to them; check general acceptance of materials by reading

reviews; weigh values and faults against each other and form opinions based on the material as a whole and not on passages or portions pulled out of context; meet to discuss the material and to prepare a written report on it.

E. The report of the committee shall be forwarded to the Superintendent who will inform the complainant of the results.

F. No materials shall be removed from use until the review committee has made a final decision.

G. The review committee's decision may be appealed to the Board. The Board may set aside a portion of a regular meeting or call a special meeting for the purpose of receiving testimony from representatives of the various points of view. The material in question shall be:

1. Reviewed objectively and in its full content;
2. Evaluated in terms of the needs and interest of students, school, curriculum and community;
3. Considered in the light of differing opinions; and
4. Reviewed in light of the criteria for initial selection and purpose as provided herein.

The Board will announce its decision in writing not later than the conclusion of the next regular meeting of the Board following its receipt of said testimony.

Legal Reference: 20-A MRS § 1001 (10-A); 1055 (4); 4002
Ch. 125 §§ 9.01, 9.03 (Me. Dept. of Ed. Rule)
P.L. 107-110 § 1061 (No Child Left Behind Act)

Cross Reference: IJJ-E – Challenge of Instructional Materials Form

CHALLENGE OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS FORM

Type of Material: Book Magazine/Periodical Film Recording
 Software Other (Please specify) _____

Author (if known) _____

Title _____

Publisher (if known) _____

Person making complaint: _____

Telephone _____ Street _____
 Address _____ Town _____

Complainant represents: Him/herself
 Organization _____
 Other group _____

1. To what portion of the material do you object? (Please be specific, cite pages, scenes, etc.) _____
2. What do you feel might be the negative result of reading/viewing/hearing this material? _____
3. For what age group would you recommend this material? _____
4. Is there anything good about this material? _____
5. Did you read/view/hear all of the material? _____ If not, what parts did you read/view/ hear? _____
6. Are you aware of the professional reviews/judgment of this material? _____
7. What do you believe is the theme and/or intention of this material? _____
8. What would you like the school to do about this material?
 - Do not assign it to my child.
 - Do not assign it to any students.
 - Withdraw it from the library and/or instructional program.
 - Refer it to the Educational Media Review Committee for evaluation.

9. In its place, what material would you recommend? _____

Signature of Complainant

Date

ALTERNATIVES TO BIOLOGICAL DISSECTION

The Board recognizes that divergent opinions exist among parents and students regarding the appropriateness of using dissection as a means of achieving certain instructional goals in the biological sciences. Therefore, in order to ensure that legitimate objections to dissection are taken into account while at the same time protecting the integrity of the instructional program, the following procedure shall be observed:

- A. In instances where students and/or parents object to dissection on ethical or moral grounds, a written request from the parents of the student wishing to be excused from dissection shall be submitted to the teacher in whose class the dissection is to occur. The request shall state the reasons for requesting that the student be excused from dissection;
- B. The teacher, in consultation with the department head, shall review the request. (In instances where the department head is the teacher to whom the request is submitted or there is no department head, he/she shall consult with the school principal or their designee.) Those reviewing the request may wish to schedule an interview with the parent(s) and/or student in order to gain information needed to reach a decision;
- C. If the request is approved, an alternative activity, closely related and of comparable rigor, will be assigned in lieu of the laboratory dissection. The alternatives may include such activities as computer simulations and research;
- D. If the request is disapproved, the parent(s) may appeal the decision to a committee (comprised of the school principal, or his/her designee, the guidance counselor, and the teacher in whose class the dissection is to occur) which will review the request. The committee may wish to schedule an interview with the parent(s) and/or student in order to gain information needed to reach a decision;
- E. The student will be responsible for and evaluated on the material covered in the alternative activity; and
- F. The alternative activity will carry credit equivalent to the dissection activity.

1st Reading: 12/21/10

Adopted: 01/24/11

EXEMPTION FROM REQUIRED INSTRUCTION

The curriculum of the school unit is designed to reflect the learning expectations for all students in all content areas of the system of Learning Results, as well as other statutory and regulatory requirements and content areas specified by the Board.

The Board acknowledges that from time to time individual students may be exposed to some ideas and materials with which they or their parent(s)/legal guardian disagree. Students and their parent(s)/legal guardian cannot be required to adopt ideas with which they disagree, but such disagreement alone is not a sufficient basis to exempt a student from the prescribed curriculum. Exemptions from the required curriculum should be minimized because they can detract from the overall instruction provided to the class as a whole and the educational objectives sought to be achieved by the curriculum.

The Board recognizes, however, that there could be topics in the curriculum which may be objectionable to individual students and/or parent(s)/legal guardian based on their particular sincerely held religious, moral or philosophical beliefs. Exemption from instruction which infringes on such beliefs may be requested by the parent(s)/legal guardian.

Requests for exemption from instruction must be made in writing to the building Principal and are subject to the approval of the Principal. The Principal shall notify the Superintendent as soon as practicable of any request for exemption from instruction and of his/her decision. If the Principal denies an exemption request, the parent(s)/legal guardian may appeal to the Superintendent.

In considering requests for exemption, factors that the Principal should consider may include:

- A. The alignment of the curriculum with the system of Learning Results;
- B. Whether the course or content area is required by state law or Board policy;
- C. The educational importance of the material or instruction from which exemption is requested;
- D. Evidence regarding the sincerity of the belief on which the request is based;
- E. Whether the school has a legal obligation to accommodate the exemption request;
- F. The effect of exemption or accommodation on the validity of the local assessment system; and
- G. Other factors that bear upon the particular request.

Exemption from required instruction does not excuse the student from meeting the requirements of the Learning Results or from total credit hours or other requirements for graduation, or from performing alternative work.

When the Principal determines that the curriculum that has been aligned with the system of Learning Results conflicts with sincerely held religious beliefs of a student or his/her parent or legal guardian, reasonable accommodation in the curriculum shall be made for the student, within the scope of existing resources. Alternative instruction may be provided by the school or through approved independent study. Any alternative instruction shall be approved in advance by the Principal in consultation with appropriate instructional staff and shall meet the standards and objectives of the part of the curriculum that is being replaced. When requests for exemption from required curriculum are made for religious reasons, a parent/guardian who is dissatisfied with the Principal's decision may appeal to the Superintendent. If the accommodation in the curriculum that is requested is so great that the validity of the local assessment system is compromised, the Superintendent will determine how to address the situation, subject to the approval of the Commissioner.

When a student is exempted from any portion of the regular curriculum for other than religious reasons (exemption based on sincere philosophical or moral beliefs), the staff will make reasonable efforts, within the scope of existing resources, to accommodate alternative instruction for the student. Alternative instruction may be provided by the school or through approved independent study. Any alternative instruction shall be approved in advance by the Principal in consultation with the classroom teacher, and shall meet the standards and objectives of the part of the curriculum that is being replaced. When requests for exemption are made for philosophical or moral reasons, a parent/guardian who is dissatisfied with the Principal's decision may appeal to the Superintendent, whose decision shall be final.

Legal Reference: 20-A MRSA § 6209
LD 1536, Chap. 51 Resolves
Ch. 127 § 3.07 (Me. Dept. of Ed. Rules)
Ch. 131 (Me. Dept. of Ed. Rules)

Cross Reference: ADF – School District Commitment to Learning Results
IJJ – Instructional and Library Material Selection
IMB – Teaching About Controversial/Sensitive Issues
IMBAA – Alternatives To Biological Dissection

GUEST SPEAKERS IN SCHOOLS

The Board encourages school administrators and teachers to invite guest speakers when the speaker's program supports or supplements the curriculum and provides a learning experience appropriate to the grade level(s) of students.

The Board believes that it is important for students to have access to information, to appreciate the knowledge, experience and accomplishments of others, to be exposed to issues upon which there may be disagreement, and to learn to discriminate between facts and opinion, analyze and discuss different points of view and draw their own conclusions.

SPEAKERS IN THE CLASSROOM

Because guest speakers may have particular viewpoints and opinions, it is important that teachers have a clear understanding of the speaker's purpose, prepare students for the experience in advance and provide appropriate follow-up activities. Teachers should strive to provide a balance of viewpoints and opinions through discussion or other activities that allow for the presentation of opposing views. This may include, when practicable, the invitation of speakers with different points of view.

Teachers are expected to use professional judgment in determining the appropriateness of an issue to the curriculum and/or the maturity of students. When unsure, the teacher should consult with the building principal.

A staff member who wishes to invite a speaker must obtain the approval of the building principal before doing so. Requests for speakers must be submitted at least one week in advance. A staff member whose request has been denied may appeal to the Superintendent, whose decision shall be final.

Teachers should notify parents in advance if a speaker's presentation may be controversial.

The teacher who has invited the speaker remains responsible for the supervision of students and must be present at all times when the speaker is in the classroom.

1st Reading: 06/21/12
Adopted: 07/17/12

SPEAKERS AT SCHOOL ASSEMBLIES

Principals may invite or approve speakers for school assemblies when the experience is consistent with the objectives of this policy. Special assemblies should be scheduled in a way that minimizes interruption of the instructional program. Whenever practicable, staff should be given advance notice of such assemblies at least 7 days in advance.

SPEAKER GUIDELINES

The Superintendent/designee may develop rules or guidelines for speaker conduct and decorum.

Profanity, vulgarity and the advocacy of violence, violation of the law, Board policies or school rules or promotion of use of tobacco, drugs or alcohol or other substances or items that are illegal for minors will not be permitted.

Cross Reference: IMB – Teaching About Controversial/Sensitive Issues
 IMBAA – Exemption From Required Instruction

1st Reading: 06/21/12
Adopted: 07/17/12