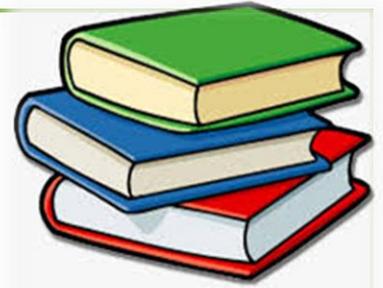


APPENDIX V - 40

TIPS FOR SELECTING AND USING INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS WITH SENTITIVE CONTENT



Despite the care taken to select worthwhile texts for student reading and the qualifications of teachers selecting and recommending books, occasional objections to a work will undoubtedly be made. All texts are potentially open to criticism. However, with proper scaffolding school curricula should reflect a spectrum of social and political views and experiences. Students need these valuable opportunities to criticize different points of view and develop important critical thinking that will serve them not only in school, but also throughout their adult lives.

All instructional materials should:

- Have a clear connection to established curriculum goals and objectives.
- Meet the learning outcomes of the course or grade level.
- Address the needs of students for whom they are intended.

SELECTION

* A multi-dimensional approach to material selection that prioritizes critical literacy, cultural responsiveness, and text complexity.

- Materials are appropriate for your students' age, maturity level, and ability to comprehend and discuss complex issues.**
- Educational, Literary and Intellectual Merit/Value.** How well does the book address the established curriculum/unit goals and objectives? The ideas and issues explored in the texts are significant and appropriate to sustain intensive study, raise challenging ideas and facilitate student development of a "critical consciousness".
- Materials are relevant to student needs and provide a window into the identities and experiences of people whose lives are different.** Both comprehension and engagement are enhanced when students can activate relevant background knowledge as they read, connecting their personal experiences with vicarious experiences and those of others.
- Text's present accurately and authentically the richness of the people depicted** (physical characteristics, social and economic status, intellectual and problem-solving abilities).
- Text-sets of different genres are used to capture diversity in all areas and present multiple viewpoints on a given theme or concept.** Expand the lens to include gender, sexual orientation, income, ability, national origin, age, etc. Use texts-sets to stretch students' capabilities or open their eyes to other cultures and new ways of life.
- Select materials** that support coordinated instruction within and between grade levels, courses, and disciplines.

BEST PRACTICE

- Communicate with parents.** Include in your syllabus the reading list for the year (or semester). For every book include a summary, a rationale for its selection, and most - important a brief description of how you plan to unpack any sensitive content. **In the event a parent objects to any learning material or activity, the student may be withdrawn from the activity or given an alternative text or assignment.** *It is crucial that even if a comprehensive reading list includes a variety of challenging, controversial texts, the texts are contextualized into the general course.
- Plan, Plan, Plan.** This is always true for using controversial materials, but we think it is doubly true when hoping to hold these discussions. *What written or research assignments will go along with these discussions? What will you do if a student gets uncomfortable or a discussion gets off track?*
- Provide a Pre-reading Assignment and Discussion Framework.** Provide a balanced, fact-based pre-reading that explores multiple sides of the concepts, a student framework to guide them in critical analyzes and classroom discussions. Students should enter the discussion with a “shared reading” to which they can refer when they contribute to the discussion.
- Create a Safe Space.** Model how to engage in difficult dialogue and how to raise the level of productive discourse. Affirm your classroom as a judgment-free space where discomfort can be explored to build trust and help better engage students in the learning. Students should be allowed to express discomfort and should be treated as an opportunity for further conversation.
- Keep discussions tied to the material.** Encourage students to link their claims and assertions to appropriate evidence from the text. The role of the educator is to provide balanced perspectives.
- Teach the whole book.** Texts or instructional materials are to be considered in their entirety, not judged solely on portions taken out of context. Connect the texts to broader learning outcomes, while balancing exposure to culture and diversity.

OBJECTIONS TO LEARNING MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES

- Review district’s policy** as soon as possible to be ready to clearly communicate when an objection arises.
- A parent who objects to any learning material or activity may request to withdraw their student from the activity or from the class or program in which the material is used and request an **alternative assignment.**
- Objections should be in writing and specific** in its description of the activity or learning material to which the parent or guardian objects.