

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT
CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION/STUDENT SUPPORT

November 1, 2003

TO: Principals of Secondary Schools

FROM: Earlean C. Smiley, Ed.D., Deputy Superintendent
Curriculum & Instruction/Student Support

VIA: Area Superintendents

RE: GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH CHALLENGES TO
LANGUAGE ARTS MATERIALS

Attached are the "Guidelines for Dealing with Challenges to Language Arts Materials." A committee composed of secondary teachers, principals, and district administrators developed these procedures. Curriculum content should align to Broward County Public Schools Character Traits and School Board Policies 6000.1 and 6308.

Additionally, samples of the types of letters and forms to be used are attached for reference. The attachments include the following:

- Guidelines for Dealing with Challenges to Language Arts Materials
- Flow Chart of Procedures
- Sample Letter #1—Response to Parents Who Express Concern about Curriculum Content
- Request for Reconsideration of Language Arts Materials
- Sample Letter #2—Response Letter after Committee Evaluation Finding the Material Appropriate
- Sample Letter #3—Response Letter after Committee Evaluation and Removing of the Material
- Guidelines in Deciding the Appropriateness of Classroom Materials

Please disseminate and discuss this information with your faculty.

You may **contact Diane Fettrow or Anita Plummer, Curriculum Specialists, Language Arts 6-12, at 954-765-6514, if you have any questions.**

FT/ECS/DC/AP/DF:al
Attachments

cc: Dr. Frank Till, Superintendent of Schools
Area Superintendents
Area Directors

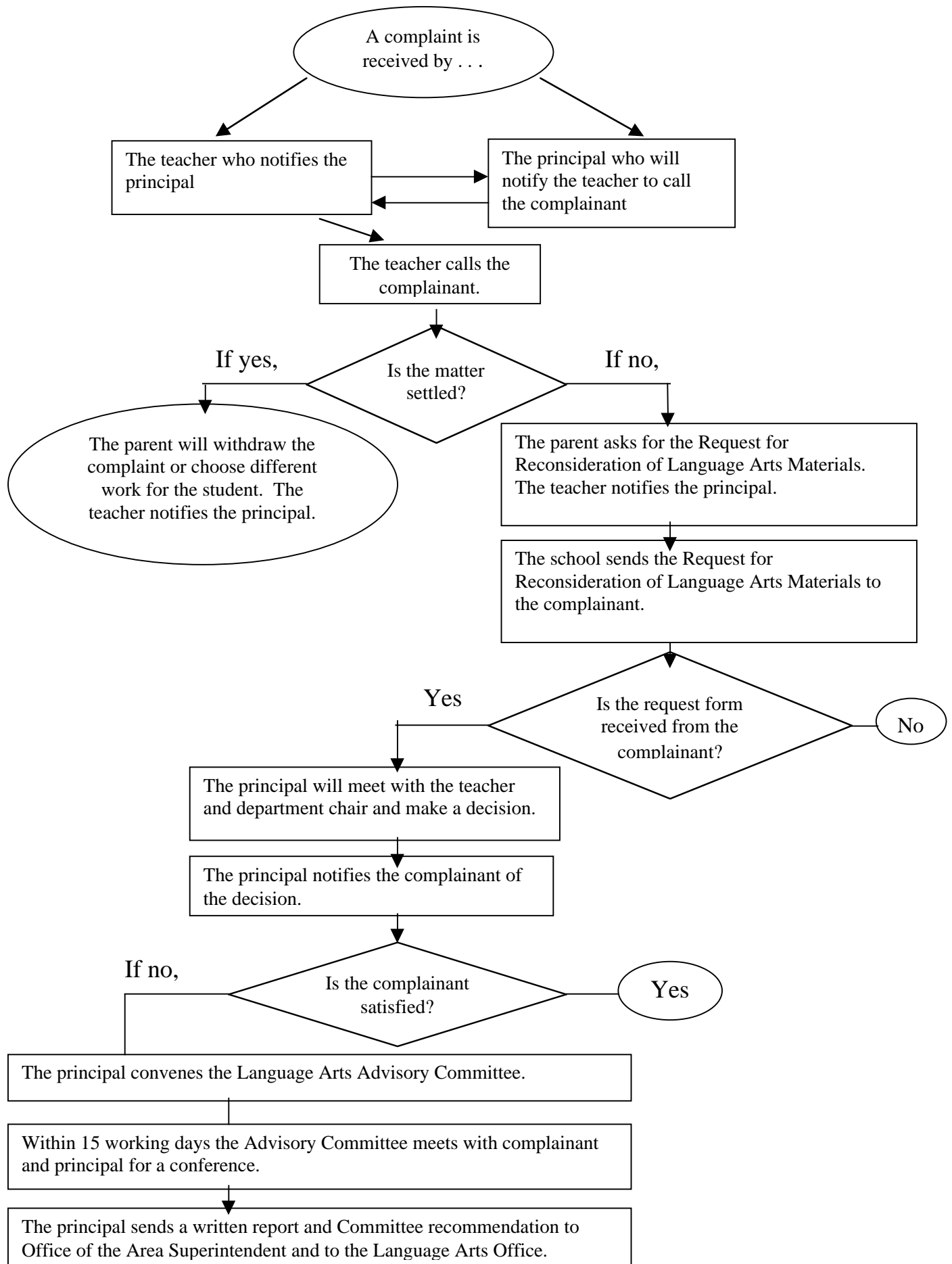
GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH CHALLENGES TO LANGUAGE ARTS MATERIALS

Inquiries regarding the appropriateness of particular Language Arts materials are a normal part of the process of providing a wide variety of resources for student use. Such inquiries should be handled confidently, diplomatically, and expeditiously.

If a complaint is received, the following guidelines should be implemented:

1. Hold an informal conference to advise the complainant of the selection procedures. Do not enter into an extended discussion or try to defend the merits of the material. Make no commitment. The principal or his designated representative should participate in this discussion, if possible.
2. If the complainant is dissatisfied and wishes to pursue the matter, request that the complainant submit a written "Request for Reconsideration of Language Arts Materials."
3. Immediately inform the principal and Language Arts Department Chairperson.
4. Keep the challenged material in the classroom during the reconsideration process.
5. Upon receipt of the completed "Request for Reconsideration of Language Arts Materials" Form, the school should convene a Language Arts Advisory Committee, who should take the following steps:
 - a. Read, view, or listen to the material in its entirety within 15 working days.
 - b. Check general acceptance of the material by reading critical reviews and consulting recommended lists.
 - c. Determine the extent to which the material fits the selection policy and supports the curriculum.
 - d. Judge the material for its strength and value as a whole and not in part.
 - e. Prepare a written report and recommendation.
6. Present the written report and recommendation of the committee to the principal and to the Language Arts Curriculum Specialists, Diane Fettrow or Anita Plummer, at the KCW Administration Building, 12th floor. The principal will inform the complainant of the committee's decision. The principal should also inform the appropriate administrator in the office of the Area Superintendent.

Procedure for Handling Challenges to Instructional Materials



SAMPLE LETTER #1

Response to Parents/Community Members Who Express Concern
about Curriculum Content

Dear _____:

Your concerns about the reading selection entitled _____
used in the _____grade language arts class, have been referred to me.

I appreciate your thoughts regarding materials used in the language arts class.
Educators and parents working cooperatively can help to improve all aspects of
education.

Please complete the enclosed form, *Request for Consideration of Language Arts Materials*,
and return it to me at your earliest convenience.

Yours truly,

Enclosure

BROWARD COUNTY SCHOOLS

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF MEDIA CENTER MATERIALS

1. Request initiated by:
Name _____ Phone _____
Address _____
School _____
2. Representing (individual / name of organization or group) _____
3. Request submitted to: _____
4. Item to be reconsidered:
Author _____ Format _____
Title _____ Copyright Date _____
Publisher / Producer _____
5. Have you read (or viewed or listened to) the entire material? _____
If not, what parts have you read (heard / viewed)? _____

6. Specify the portion of the material to which you object. (Please be specific—cite pages, film sequence, band on a record, parts of a kit, etc.) _____

7. What do you think is the effect of this material on students in a learning situation? _____

8. What are the positive qualities of this material? _____
9. What do you believe is the theme of this material? _____

10. For what age group would you recommend this material? _____
11. To your knowledge, what has been the judgment of qualified professional persons regarding this matter? (State / district adoption committee, book reviews, court decisions, etc.) _____

12. What action would you like taken on this matter?
Do not assign to my child _____
Re-evaluate this material _____
Other _____

13. In its place, what other material of equal quality would you recommend that would convey as valuable a picture and perspective of its them?

NOTE: Please feel free to attach additional material, references, or any pertinent information.

Signature _____ Date _____

S A M P L E L E T T E R # 2

Response to Parents/Community Members after Committee Evaluation
Finding the Material Appropriate

Dear _____:

Your concerns, outlined on the *Request for Reconsideration of Language Arts Materials* form, were reviewed by the school's committee for reconsideration of language arts materials.

The committee has found this material appropriate for classroom use at this level. Due to your concerns, your child will be permitted to substitute another appropriate selection, which meets your approval as a parent. However, it is the committee's decision to keep this selection on the list of materials used in the classroom.

Thank you for your interest in the education of our children.

Yours truly,

SAMPLE LETTER #3

Response to Parents/Community Members after Committee Evaluation and Removal of the Material

Dear _____:

Your concerns, outlined on the *Request for Reconsideration of Language Arts Materials* form, were reviewed by the school's committee for reconsideration of language arts materials.

After reviewing your concerns, the committee has reconsidered the material and has removed the selection, _____,
from the list of materials to be used in the _____ grade language arts class
at our.

Thank you for your interest in the education of our children.

Yours truly,

GUIDELINES IN DECIDING THE APPROPRIATENESS OF CLASSROOM MATERIALS

Preserving the students' right to read freely as a hallmark of our free society is a special obligation of teachers. It is a part of their professional responsibility to guide each student's learning to improve the quality of the choices he/she makes in the exercise of the right to read. Therefore, we must recognize the professional right as well as the responsibility of English teachers to select books for their classes, to recommend books for individual reading, and to discuss with a student any work read whether the teacher has recommended it or the student has discovered it for himself/herself.

Book Selection Procedures

Professional training has equipped the English teacher to select books for students. It must be assumed that good taste, common sense, and an awareness of professional responsibility to students will guide teachers in making wise selections. To strengthen their own judgments, however, English teachers at each school should consult with one another, under the leadership of their department chairperson, to compile basic booklists for use within their department and articulate with Language Arts teachers at the feeder schools in their zone. Each school should establish a Language Arts Advisory Committee, that maintains written rationales, which explain how selections meet the selection criteria. Should a book on the booklists be questioned and the committee of teachers cannot make a unanimous decision, the principal should be asked to decide the question.

In every decision regarding the appropriateness of a particular work, the following questions should be considered:

1. Does the selection encourage critical thinking in relation to controversial situations and points of view?
2. Does the selection have recognized literary merit?
3. Does the selection meet the state's mandate of presenting voices from diverse cultures?
4. Will the study of this work help achieve specific curriculum objectives?
5. Are there other works that will achieve the same objectives as well?
6. Is the selection readable for students of diverse ability levels?
7. Is this study of work suited to the maturity level of the students for whom it is intended?
8. How does the selection of the piece support the vertical teams' concept within a particular zone?
9. Has there been any strong opposition to this selection in the local community?
10. Will this selection draw upon the students' backgrounds and interests?