



**GWINNETT
COUNTY
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS**

Gwinnett County Board of Education

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1. **Introduction**

The Gwinnett County Board of Education is responsible for matters relating to the operation of the Gwinnett County Public School System. The Board delegates to the professionally trained and certified staff employed by the school system the authority for selection of instructional resources.

For the purpose of this administrative procedure, the following terms are defined.

"Instructional resources" include print and digital resources (not equipment), whether considered core instructional materials, media center materials, instructional software, web-based applications, internet sites, or supplemental resources.

"Core instructional resources" include textbooks and other print and digital resources provided in multiple copies for use by a total class or a major segment of a class for learning of the grade level Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS), including the teacher resources.

"Supplemental resources" are defined as any medium, print or digital, designed to supplement the core resources for instruction.

"Media center" is the space, room or complex or rooms and spaces designated as a library, media center, instructional materials center or similar term. It may include units not contiguous to the center where facilities dictate. The units would include but not be limited to resource centers, production centers, and television studios.

"Media center resources" are defined as any medium, print or digital, designed to support the instructional program. These instructional resources are processed,

circulated, maintained and inventoried through the media center.

"Media specialist" includes librarians, school media specialists or other appropriately certificated persons responsible for selection of media.

All print and digital resources with reference to the topics of human sexuality or HIV/AIDS must be recommended by the Community Health Education Advisory Committee (CHEAC) and then be presented to the Board of Education by the CEO/Superintendent for consideration and approval. CHEAC has been established to review human sexuality and HIV/AIDS instructional resources and make recommendations concerning age/grade level appropriateness before the resources are presented to students. All resources, both print and digital, used in the schools for human sexuality or HIV/AIDS education must be approved by this system-level committee. For more information the Community Health Education Advisory Committee, please review P.IDBA (📄),

Software installed on GCPS technology should be used for the business of teaching, learning, and related support activities. Additionally, prior to installation on GCPS technology, all new and revised software must be evaluated. A software review process is available, along with a database that contains the results of current software testing efforts. For more information on software testing, please review P.EBCB (📄).

All instructional resources shall be purchased and used in compliance with current copyright laws.

2. Core Instructional Resources - Selection and Appeal

Core instructional resources will be reviewed for recommendation to the CEO/Superintendent for consideration and approval by the Board of Education according to the schedule established by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and aligned to the Georgia Board of Education adoption cycle.

Responsibility for coordinating the selection of core instructional resources will rest with the Instructional Resources & Support Office working in conjunction with the content area curriculum office and with input from both a Teacher Review Committee and an Instructional Resources Review Committee. There will be two periods for review and community input, once during the initial review of resources and again during the pilot review of resources.

The Teacher Review Committee will be established jointly by the Instructional Resources & Support Office and the content area curriculum office with recommendations made by local school principals. Members will:

- evaluate all submitted resources against established general and subject area criteria
- identify the resources which satisfy the criteria
- in schools, pilot the recommended resources

The Instructional Resources Review Committee examines the core instructional resources identified by the Teacher Review Committee. Members will:

- evaluate identified resources against established general criteria
- provide feedback for use when determining which resources will be included in the pilot process

The Instructional Resources Review Committee is chaired by the Director of Instructional Resources and Support and comprised of the following:

- representatives of the Teacher Review Committee

- representatives of the community selected from each Board of Education member's electoral district
- content area curriculum director
- Executive Director of Curriculum & Instruction

A technical review of all recommended resources will be completed according to guidelines established in conjunction with the Division of Information Management and Technology.

In the case of a limited review of core instructional resources, such as for a single newly proposed course or a publisher's revision of an adopted text, an ad hoc committee may be formed on behalf of the content area curriculum office. Any ad hoc committee must have a minimum of three members. Every possible attempt should be made to assure that ad hoc committees include parent and/or community representatives other than professional staff who also are parents or community members.

Recommendations of core instructional resources will be presented to the Board of Education by the CEO/Superintendent for consideration and approval.

2.1. Criteria for the Selection of Core Instructional Resources

Criteria for evaluation of core instructional resources shall be consistent with the general criteria for resource selection noted below. In addition, the specific subject area criteria shall be developed based upon the system mission, vision, and strategic goals for school improvement; student achievement data; goals, objectives, and continuous improvement plans of the program area; review of pertinent research literature; and criteria required by the Georgia Department of Education. Any item under review will be judged on its merits as an entire piece, not by portions or out-of-context selection.

The following general criteria shall be used in selecting and evaluating instructional resources:

- Resources shall support and be consistent with the system's mission, vision, and goals.
- Resources shall directly support instruction of the Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS) curriculum for a variety of learners.
- Resources shall promote the integration of higher level thinking skills as appropriate for intended students.
- Resources shall meet high standards of quality in factual content and presentation.
- Resources shall be appropriate for the subject area and for the age, emotional development, and social development of the students for whom the materials are selected.
- Resources shall have aesthetic, literary, or social value.
- Resources shall be written/produced by competent and qualified authors and publishers.
- Resources shall avoid bias and adhere to standards of sensitivity relative to student race, gender, religion, culture, ethnicity, disability and socioeconomic status.
- Physical format, medium, and appearance of resources shall be suitable for their intended use.

Core instructional resources are provided to each student enrolled in a course requiring the use of such resources by the students. The resources may be provided either in a print or digital version or both.

- In cases where non-textbook resources, such as, but not limited to, workbooks, practice sets, science supplies/ equipment, or computer science software, are designated core resources as recommended by the Instructional Resources Review Process and approved as core resources by the Board of Education, these items will be considered in the budget development process for consideration to be funded by the Board of Education.

2.2. Instructional Resources Review Process

The procedure for core instructional resources selection and adoption is as follows:

- Review of subject area and course Academic Knowledge and Skills, as outlined in Policy IB(📄), Procedure P.IB(📄),
- Development by the Department of Curriculum and Instruction of specific criteria for core instructional resources selection with a focus on support and alignment to the AKS for the subject area and courses.
- Selection of the Teacher Review Committee and the Instructional Resources Review Committee members.
- Evaluation of all submitted resources by the Teacher Review Committee and identification of those which satisfy the established criteria.
- Evaluation of identified resources by the Instructional Resources Review Committee according to the established criteria
- Use data from the Teacher Review Committee and the Instructional Resources Review Committee to determine which resources will be included in the pilot process
- In schools, pilot resources by Teacher Review Committee members and their students. Teachers will have the core instructional resources available for a minimum of four weeks.
- Conduct a public review of pilot resources for a minimum of four weeks.
- The Superintendent or designee shall present a full report and recommendation to the Board based upon the outcomes of the process.

2.3. Appeal Process for Core Instructional Resources

2.3.1 Appeal Process

The appeal process for core instructional resources challenges is different from the procedure used for instructional media center resources. The reason for this difference is that in the case of core resources, the Board has formally adopted them after considerable community comment and prior legal notice.

At the time the challenge is initiated and at all times during the challenge proceedings, the complainant must be a citizen of Gwinnett County. To initiate a core instructional resources challenge, the complainant shall complete an Appeal Form for Core Instructional Resources (attached) furnished by the school administration. The principal should then forward the completed form to the Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and Instructional Support.

A hearing on the issues will be held. The hearing may be conducted by the Board, or the Board may designate a committee presided over by a hearing officer or chairman or may designate a hearing officer sitting alone to conduct the hearing. A verbatim electronic or written record of the hearing shall be

made or recorded. The hearing officer, sitting alone or presiding over a panel, or the committee chairman, shall prepare findings and recommendations submitted to the Board within five (5) school working days of the close of the hearing. Notwithstanding any other provision of this procedure, the Board shall make its determination on the matter within ten (10) school working days of its receipt of the transcript of the hearing, and any decision of the Board shall be final.

2.3.2 Appeal Hearing Before the Board of Education or Its Designee

The hearing will be conducted according to Georgia State Board Policy BCAEA: 160-1-3-.04 SCHOOL LAW TRIBUNALS AND APPEALS, which requires the following:

- The Board or its designee shall notify the challenger and any other interested parties by such means as may be reasonable under the circumstances of the time and place for hearing.
- At the hearing, all witnesses shall be sworn by the chairperson or any member of the Board or its attorney.
- The Board shall cause the testimony and other evidence to be transcribed by a court reporter or other appropriate means.
- All witnesses sworn and testifying shall be subject to reasonable cross-examination, but the strict rules of evidence prevailing in courts of law shall not be applicable to hearings before local boards.
- At the conclusion of the hearing, the local board shall render its decision or else adjourn to a time not more than 15 school working days thereafter for rendition of its decision on the motion in writing. In the event the Board has designated a hearing officer or panel to conduct the hearing, time provisions under Section B of this procedure shall apply.

2.3.3 Other provisions for the Board 's consideration shall include the following :

- Public notice of the hearing shall be given five (5) school working days in advance of a scheduled hearing by a press release, legal advertisement, posting notice at the Board's central offices or any other means designed to give appropriate notice under the circumstances. The notice shall include the title of the challenged material and the time, date, and place of the hearing.
- Those persons entitled to present evidence at the hearing shall be the complainant, persons representing the school system's position on the resource, and intervenors who are citizens of Gwinnett County who have requested in writing to the superintendent the right to express their views and present evidence. This written request should be received in the superintendent's office at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the scheduled meeting.
- If the Board takes the matter under advisement, the school, the complainant, or any person who presented evidence at the hearing may file in writing with the Board within five (5) school working days of the close of the hearing their contentions, argument, and citation of authority in regard to the placement, substitution or removal of the challenged resource(s) and any allegations of defects in the hearing process.
- All parties shall be given written notice of the Board's decision along with the legal notice of their right to appeal the decision to the State Board of Education.

The following form is provided for Core Instructional Resources Appeal Requests:



Core Instructional Resources Appeal Form.pdf

3. Media and Supplemental Instructional Resources - Selection and Appeal

The responsibility for recommending selection of instructional resources is delegated to the professionally trained and certificated staff employed by the school system. While selection of library media resources involves many people (principals, teachers, students, coordinators, community persons and media specialists), the responsibility for coordinating the selection of most school instructional resources and making the recommendation of purchase rests with certificated media personnel, typically a media specialist.

3.1. School Media Committee .

The principals, with advice from their Local School Advisory Committees/School Council, will annually appoint the School Media Committees. Principals, assistant principals for instruction, technology coordinators, counselors, and media specialists are appointed by virtue of their positions. Additionally, one teacher from each grade level and/or content/special area should be represented. It is recommended that teachers serve staggered three-year terms to provide continuity. Student(s) and community representatives (at least 4 recommended) are appointed annually to the committee.

School Media Committees may select supplemental instructional resources for use in classrooms, and software and web-based applications for local area networks and stand alone computers, following school procedures. The committee also provides input to media selection and response to formal complaints regarding supplemental resources.

3.2. System Media Committee

The Superintendent or his designee shall annually appoint the System Media Committee. Central office members are appointed by virtue of their positions. Principals, media specialists and teachers serve staggered three-year terms to provide continuity. The Student representative is selected from School Media Committees. Community members are selected from School Media Committees and/or Local School Advisory Committees, PTA Executive Committees and/or School Council.

The System Media Committee shall be composed of:

- Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and Instructional Support
- Director of Media Services and Technology Training
- Assistant Superintendents
- Directors of Curriculum Program Areas
- One principal from each school level
- One media specialist from each school level
- One teacher from each school level
- One high school student
- One parent/community member from each school level representing each Board of Education district

Two important roles of the system-level Media Committees are input to media selection and response to formal complaints from the school level regarding instructional resources. From the standing System Media Committee, representatives

shall be chosen to review requests appealed from the schools.

The appropriate Assistant Superintendent, principal, media specialist and/or teacher shall participate in the appeal process when the school level they represent is involved. Community members for an appeal hearing shall exceed the number of school system representatives by one. The Director of Media Services and Technology Training or an appropriately trained designee shall serve as hearing officer for a system-level appeal of media resources.

3.3. Selection and Review of Media Resources

While selection of library media resources involves many people (principals, teachers, students, coordinators, community persons and media specialists), the responsibility for coordinating the selection of most school instructional resources and making the recommendation of purchase rests with certificated media personnel. Selection is an ongoing process which shall include the removal of media resources no longer appropriate and the replacement of lost and worn resources still of educational value. Media includes all resources considered part of the library media center collection, plus all instructional resources housed in resource centers and classrooms (if any) which are not core resources.

In selecting resources for purchase for the library media center, the School Media Committee will evaluate the existing collection and the curriculum needs. The Media Specialist will consult reputable, professionally prepared selection aids and other appropriate sources. These instructional resources are processed, circulated, maintained and inventoried through the media center.

Review sources considered appropriate for use in selection of library media resources include but are not limited to the following:

- H. W. Wilson's Standard Catalog Series
- Reviews in professional journals
- Experts in the field
- Personal inspection

Recommendations for purchase of library media resources will be solicited and/or accepted from faculty, students, parents, and community. Gift materials shall be recommended by the criteria in Section 2.1 above and shall be accepted or rejected by those criteria. The appropriate Media Committee shall evaluate the acceptability of gift materials.

Selections are forwarded to the Office of the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee through the principal or other person in charge for order placement.

Selections for the district circulating videotape collection will be approved by the System Media Committee.

3.4. Selection and Review of Supplemental Resources

Selection and/or review of supplemental resources may also be conducted at the local school for use and/or purchase. Supplemental resources are defined as any medium or resource, print, or digital, designed to supplement the core resources for instruction of the AKS in a subject or course. These resources may include trade/books, classroom periodicals, laboratory resources, videos, software and electronic media, manipulatives, etc.

Criteria for supplemental resources shall be consistent with the general criteria for

core resources selection and appropriate subject area criteria. (See section 2.1 for more information.)

The written, local school procedure for supplemental resources selection/review shall include:

- Development and documentation of specific criteria for supplemental resources selection/review, consistent with but not necessarily limited to the criteria for core resources selection (see Section 2.1).
- Selection/Review of all supplemental resources by the Principal and/or Principals' designee prior to classroom/instructional use. This is to include any resources acquired from an external source, from other GPCS schools, or from colleagues within the school. All resources should be reviewed according to the school criteria prior to each classroom/instructional use.
- Selection/Review of networked instructional software should be as referenced in Procedure P.EBCB(📄): Data Access and Security Review of software for stand-alone computers by School Media/Technology Committee.

3.4.1. Appeal process of Media and Supplemental Resources

From the standing School Media Committee, the Principal shall select the representatives to review formal complaints to instructional resources filed at the school except those involving Board-adopted core resources. (For formal complaints involving Board-adopted core resources, see Section 2.3.)

Community representatives for an appeal hearing committee shall exceed the number of school members by one and shall be selected from the school parent population.

The principal or appropriately trained designee shall serve as the hearing officer for an appeal of media and supplemental resources.

3.4.2. Appeal Process

There are four levels of review, in order: school, system, GPCS Board, and the State Board of Education. Reviews must occur in the appropriate order. Once the supplemental resource has been reviewed at the school level, and a decision has been reached, it cannot be challenged at that school again. Instead, it will need to be brought before the next level. Following a review and decision at the school, system, and the GPCS Board, another appeal of that resource will not be entertained by the school district, but must be reviewed at the State Board of Education level.

Objections may be raised to media and locally approved supplemental resources used in the system's educational program despite the fact that the individuals selecting such resource were duly qualified to make the selection, followed proper procedure, and observed the criteria for selecting such resource.

To have standing either to initiate a complaint or intervene in the appeal process, a person must be a citizen of Gwinnett County. The Gwinnett County Public Schools' Appeal Form for Supplemental and Media Resources (attached) must be completed by the complainant.

In the event of a severe overload of challenges at any level, the committee may appoint a subcommittee of members to consolidate challenges and to make recommendations to the full committee. The composition of this

subcommittee shall approximate the representation on the full committee.

Once the complainant receives a positive decision after a hearing, he/she cannot continue to appeal at the next level. All requests for reconsideration can only be appealed to the next level. Such written appeals may be filed by the complainant, administration, or parents who serve as interveners.

Special meetings may be called by the Principal or Superintendent to consider temporary removal of resources in unusual circumstances. Temporary removal shall require a majority vote by the appropriate Media Committee.

3.4.3. Procedures for appeal at the school level

The school official or staff member receiving a complaint regarding instructional resources shall explain the selection process utilized and the appeal procedures for challenged materials. He/she shall refrain from voicing personal opinion. Written documentation of this contact should be filed with the school principal. The resource in question shall remain in use unless removed through section 3.4.2, paragraph 6.

In the event that the complainant making an objection to resource is not satisfied with the initial explanation, the complainant should be referred to the Principal or designee who shall explain the selection and reconsideration process and refrain from expressing personal opinion.

If, after consultation, the complainant desires to file a formal complaint, a copy of the Appeal Form for Supplemental and Media Resources should be given to the complainant by the Principal or his designee.

The Appeal Form for Supplemental and Media Resources shall be completed and signed by the complainant. The form shall be filed with the Principal and a copy forwarded to appropriate system personnel (Director of Media Services and Technology Training).

Any action taken related to challenged resources must be taken by the appropriate Media Committee and not by an individual. A meeting will be scheduled and all committee members and the complainant notified. The complainant shall be notified in writing and invited to attend and present the Appeal Form for Supplemental and Media Resources.

Each committee member shall read, view or listen to the resource in question in its entirety, and read available professional evaluations pertaining to the resource. The Media Specialist and/or Director of Media Services and Technology Training shall compile necessary professional evaluations of the resource in question.

The deliberations and balloting of the Media Committees shall be in private.

The Media Committee shall meet to:

- Hear the concerns expressed by the complainant. The Media Committee and the complainant are to provide any documentation to be presented and the name, address, and phone numbers of any additional speakers for the hearing to the hearing officer at least five working days before the appeal hearing date.
- Discuss the resources relative to appropriateness to grade level,

- appropriateness to curriculum, etc.
- In a meeting with a quorum present, render a majority decision relative to requested actions. In determining the suitability and value of the resource, the appeal committee may consider the following:
 - (1) relevance
 - (2) pervasive vulgarity
 - (3) quality, content and manner of presentation, appropriateness to age, and the sophistication of students and grade level
 - (4) space limitations

The committee's decision may be to:

- Take no removal action,
- Remove the challenged resource from the local school where the complaint was initiated. Action to remove shall be based on evidence that the resource is pervasively vulgar and/or lacking in educational value throughout,
- Restrict the use by students,
- Place the resource at another school level.

Within five (5) working days of the Media Committee meeting, the principal shall:

- Officially notify the complainant in writing of the decision reached and advise of the right to appeal.
- File a copy of the Appeal Form for Supplemental and Media Resources and all communications including the committee decision with the appropriate system personnel.

3.4.4. Procedures for appeal at the district level

Appeals from the School Media Committee must be made within ten (10) working days after formal notification of the decision to the Director of Media Services and Technology Training who will convene the System Media Committee. The final decision on any item challenged to the System Media Committee is binding only at the school where the complaint was initiated.

The complainant shall address a written request for appeal to the Director of Media Services and Technology Training.

The Director of Media Services and Technology Training shall notify other Principals and Associate Superintendents of the appeal and of the Media Committee action on it for their information.

The resource in question shall remain in use unless removed through section 3.4.2, paragraph 6.

3.4.5. Procedures for appeal at the School Board level

Appeals must be made within ten (10) working days after formal notification of the decision by the System Media Committee.

The proceedings before the Board will be governed by the procedures for board hearings set out under Policy BC&E: Appeals (Hearings). The hearing may be conducted by the Board or the Board may designate a panel presided over by a hearing officer or may designate a hearing officer sitting

alone to conduct the hearing.

The Director of Media Services and Technology Training shall notify the Principals of the action taken by the Board. Implementation of a decision rendered by the School or System Media Committee shall be held in abeyance until the appeal process is exhausted. The resource in question shall remain in use unless removed through section 3.4.2, paragraph 6.

The following form is provided for Supplemental and Media Resources Appeal Requests:



Supplemental-Media Resources Appeal Form.pdf