

Censorship in the classroom

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In simple terms censorship in the classroom could be defined as Banning of Books or other learning materials from the Classroom. Censorship is “ the removal, suppression, or restricted circulation of literary, artistic or educational materials ..

. on the grounds that these are morally or otherwise objectionable in light of the standards applied by the censor,” (Mikulecky, 1981). In accordance to this definitions and other similar definitions, it could be observed that, various decisions made by school boards over what should be taught in schools might be classified as operations of censorship. Challenges to school materials are a widespread occurrence. What is the way of handling such challenges? How can they be shunned? What manuscripts should be taught in schools? It sounds like a straightforward question but the response can be multifarious (Mikulecky, 1981). Challenges to curriculum materials have torn apart societies.

On the one hand, those who support the banning of particular books argue that children in grades K-12 will be exposed to harm if they are not protected from unsuitable materials. Opponents of this idea are with the same force arguing that censorship of books and other curriculum content is a violation of the academic freedom and multiplicity of thought protected by various laws. Some of the classic works that have been banned fr4om schools over the recent years have been Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Scarlet Letter, Shakespeare’s Hamlet, and Mark Twain’s The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. According to the American Civil Liberties Union report, most frequently banned or challenged books of recent times are listed as Catcher in the Rye by J. D. Salinger, R.

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L. Stine's Goosebumps series and I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou. An account by the National School Boards Association (NSBA) states that censorship of school materials is widespread throughout the United States. Those challenges commonly work; almost one-third lead to materials being removed from schools or their use cut. Challenges to resources in school curriculum, as described in the Henry Reichmann's Censorship and Selection, Issues and Answers for Schools, commonly arise in these areas: sex and drug education teaching evolution with no reference to creationism literature showing children challenging parents and powers that be showing women conduct themselves in nontraditional ways " Invasions of privacy" — projects that require students to distribute personal information.

Various court cases that have dealt with censorship issues show a broad tendency toward supporting the schools, but they also caution the educators to be aware of values, that comprise of the minority values, in the societies that they serve. Experts have referred to the First Amendment of the Constitution as defending both students' rights to knowledge and the teachers' rights to academic autonomy. At the same time, legal experts make an argument that it is the right of the parents to disapprove books or materials that they think are damaging to their children (Terry II, 1986). In a milestone censorship case, Island Trees Union Free High School v. Pico (1982), the Court asserted that the " Constitution does not permit the official suppression of ideas," (Terry II, 1986) and the banned books were brought back to school. In this and many other cases, the Court looks as if to allow school boards a relatively free hand with core curriculum materials.

In another case, the Pico case, Justice Brennan's plurality opinion argued that a foundation for deciding censorship conflicts over school materials could rest upon the use of "established unbiased procedures for the review of controversial materials" (Terry II, 1986) at the local community level (Terry II, 1986). To avoid much controversy over censorship in the classroom, school boards necessitate clearly stated guidelines outlining how materials are selected. Selection guidelines should put into consideration the viewpoints of a variety of groups in the community and be put into practice by professionals. Those coming up with various guidelines should put into consideration parental and community concerns and demonstrate the acceptance of the national diversity. If selection guiding principle ignores rights of the minority, censorship questions may come up.

And school resources should not be preferred for partisan political rationale. To come up with a community compromise and avoid cries for censorship, Larry several strategies are recommended (Mikulecky, 1981): Ask parents to make contributions in developing school reading programs. Present recommended, instead of required, reading lists. Have files of professional reviews that support materials. Put off the perception that only one text can be used to teach a particular theme.

In communal bargaining agreements, negotiate articles that defend academic freedom and advocate for agreed-on selection processes. When controversy over censorship in the classroom flares up in spite of efforts to stay away from it, there are various ways of managing it to reduce damage. "good internal communications and public relations offer the best way to avoid unnecessary controversy" (Chion-Kenney, 1989). Some professionals <https://assignbuster.com/censorship-in-the-classroom/>

have recommended the following procedure, says (Chion-Kenney, 1989): Get together with the complainant and endeavor to come up with a resolution on the issue. If that does not work, ask for a written complaint with details of the questionable material, the effect it is considered to have on students, and what substitute material is suggested. Provide the complainant with a copy of published guidelines for contentious materials and give explanation on the process to be followed.

Have a review committee to table a final report with the school board. Notify the complainant of the assessment process and when committee meetings are scheduled. Provide an appeals procedure. As the complaint is being explored, avail the contentious material, apart from possibly to the scholar whose family has filed a dispute. School boards are lawfully accountable for what is taught in schools, according to general laws. It is the board that delegate powers to school officials and therefore it is held accountable for school policies.

In summing up, the NSBA report affirms that “ the challenge is not to avoid censorship, but to meet it head on with adequate policies and procedures that provide an open forum for deciding what should — or should not — take place in public schools” (Reichmann, 1988).