

Academic Freedom

- A. **The NJSBA believes** in the fundamental American right of freedom of speech, but also recognizes the need for local school district control over matters of particular sensitivity to individual school district communities. Because of the differing maturity levels of students at the various grade levels, care must be taken to ensure the appropriateness of instructional materials used in the classroom at all grade levels and in all subject areas.
- B. **The NJSBA believes** that classroom presentations on any controversial matter should include a review of diverse points of view, and that any expression of personal opinion should be so identified. NJSBA further believes that there is a need for greater academic freedom for teachers at the public secondary level (9-12) than at the public elementary level (preK-8).
- C. **The NJSBA believes** that the local board of education should serve as the final authority in determining the appropriateness of selected instructional materials at any grade level and in all subject areas, recognizing that there may be parental/community objections to any such material. [*Authority: BD 3/61, BD 1/71, BD 12/90, DA 11/97-SR, DA 11/02-SR, DA 11/07-SR, DA 11/12-SR, DA 11/17-SR, DA 11/22-SR*]
- D. **The NJSBA believes** that Boards of Education have the responsibility to ensure all instructional materials are age-appropriate, complement the district curriculum and/or student support programs, facilitate critical thinking, further learning, and are congruent with local community preferences. In light of this belief, a board of education book selection processes should only restrict access to or exclude a book or other learning materials from its curriculum, library, or other support resources following a process that evaluates the book or materials in a manner that is consistent with the constitutional and statutory protections afforded individuals by the State.

The NJSBA believes that in support of this belief NJSBA will encourage local boards to consult with other educational organizations and local stakeholders in the selection of curricular and support materials while retaining its statutory authority over such decisions. [*DA 12/23*]

Key Words: academic freedom, freedom of speech, controversial, instructional material selection