

# CLOSTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

*Closter, New Jersey*

## MINUTES

### REGULAR MEETING

*Tenakill Middle School*

*January 7, 2026 - 7:30 PM*

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The Board meeting was called to order by Ms. Finkelstein at 7:48 PM.

The following Board Members were present:

Ms. Finkelstein, Ms. Micera, Ms. Argenziano, Mr. Paldi, Mr. Shih, Ms. Lee, Ms Ravid

The following Board Members were absent:

Ms. Estrems, Mr. Choi

Also present:

Mr. McHale and Mr. Villanueva

#### NEW JERSEY OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT STATEMENT - Read by the President:

The New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act was enacted to ensure the right of the public to have advance notice of and to attend the meeting of public bodies at which any business affecting their interests is discussed or acted upon. In accordance with the provisions of this Act, the Secretary to the Board of Education has caused notice of this meeting by having the date, time, and place thereof, posted at each school building within the district, district website, the Board of Education office, the Office of the Borough Clerk, and transmitted to *The Record* and *Northern Valley Suburbanite* newspapers.

#### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

#### *Presentation of the Fiscal Year 25 (SY 24-25) Annual Comprehensive Financial Report*

Mr. Jeffrey Bliss from Lerch, Vinci, and Bliss, LLP, presented the 2024-2025 Audit Report to the Board and the community.

- For the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2025, the District received an unmodified audit opinion, which means the financial statements are presented in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. The District also received an unmodified opinion regarding federal and state grants.
- There are no significant recommendations or internal controls violations for the fiscal year.
- The District added money to various reserves—capital, surplus, and maintenance—and continued to fund a \$650,000 tax relief for the SY 26-27 budget.

- Mr. Bliss highlighted the district's strong financial standing. He also noted that although the fund balance decreased, the difference is attributable to a previously committed project. In reality, the district was able to replenish funds in various reserves.
- He shared that the coming years will be extremely challenging for all school districts due to rising healthcare costs.
- Mr. Bliss commended the district's Business Office, Administrative Team, and Board of Education for their outstanding stewardship of taxpayer funds.

Ms. Finkelstein thanked Mr. Bliss and also expressed her appreciation to Mr. Villanueva and his team.

#### **SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT**

*Mr. Vincent McHale, Superintendent of Schools, shared with the Board and the community his report:*

- *He congratulated our re-elected Board members, Janine Micera, Gal Paldi, and Gregory Shi, and our newly elected Board member, Avishag Ravid, who were sworn in this evening. Thank you for your service to our school district and the Closter community!*
- *Congratulations to our music teachers, Ms. Pidi, Ms. Abbey, and Ms. Riecken, and our student musicians for their amazing performances in December! The Fourth Grade Chorus and Instrumental Ensemble presented a winter concert and cheered everyone's spirits with their songs of the season. Tenakill Middle School presented its magnificent winter concert with impressive performances by the chorus, band, and orchestra. Thank you to all for sharing your talents with the community.*
- *During the month of January, students in grades two through eight will be taking the mid-year Linkit! Assessment in language arts and mathematics. Students in grades K-3 are participating in literacy screening assessments to monitor their progress. Students in grades five through eight will also take a mid-year science assessment. The assessments provide teachers with information about how students are progressing toward grade-level standards. If you have any questions about any of the assessments, please get in touch with Ms. Zanin at Hillside Elementary School or Mr. McElroy at Tenakill Middle School.*
- *Kudos to PreK teacher, Josephine Hunt, for her recent appearance on CNN on January 2, 2026, during the morning news. She spoke about the impact of social media and screen time on children's mental health. Last year, Ms. Hunt led a teacher book study on The Anxious Generation by Jonathan Haidt and presented on this topic at the NJEA Teacher Convention in November 2025. He commended her commitment to raising awareness about the importance of collaboration between schools and families to help reduce student anxiety.*
- *He was pleased to report that we are making steady progress toward our 2025-2026 district Goals. A committee of administrators and teachers is scheduled to begin meeting on February 3, 2026, to develop grade-band rubrics aligned to the Profile of a Closter Learner, with drafts for PreK-2, 3-5, and 6-8 to be shared with principals and teachers for feedback and refinement. In addition, teachers at both schools continue to work toward the goal of completing five hours of professional development focused on student data analysis through ongoing review of NJSLA, LinkIt, Aimsweb, and other assessment data, with further learning planned during the January 19, 2026, professional development day. Finally, principals, in collaboration with school counselors, are actively gathering feedback on character education programs at each school, having already collected faculty input and, through scheduled Principal Advisory Committee discussions this month, will inform next steps.*

- Closter Public Schools will be closed for students on Monday, January 19, 2026, which is Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. The faculty and staff will participate in professional development on that day.
- We are excited to celebrate the Lunar New Year on Friday, January 30, 2026. This celebration will take place at both schools, with an exciting and educational assembly featuring our students. More information will be forthcoming.

#### **BOARD COMMITTEES**

*There were no board committee reports.*

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS**

Moved by Ms. Micera ▾, seconded by Ms. Argenziano ▾ to open the meeting to the public.

*Statements made by individual participants are limited to a duration of three (3) minutes unless otherwise announced at the beginning of the discussion. A maximum of 15 minutes for public input is scheduled as per bylaw 0167. The Board urges large groups to select one person to represent them. The Board reminds those individuals who take the opportunity to speak to please step up, identify themselves by name and address, and to limit their comments to items listed on the agenda.*

***There were no public comments.***

Moved by Ms. Micera ▾, seconded by Mr. Paldi ▾ to resume the regular order of business.

#### **BOARD OPERATIONS**

Moved by Ms. Lee ▾, seconded by Ms. Micera ▾ to approve Motions A - C.

Motions were approved ▾ by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

YEAS: Ms. Finkelstein, Ms. Micera, Ms. Argenziano, Mr. Paldi, Mr. Shih, Ms. Lee, Ms Ravid

NAYS: None

**A. APPROVAL - Board of Education Meeting Minutes**

Motion to approve the December 10, 2025, Board of Education meeting minutes.

**B. APPROVAL - Harassment, Intimidation or Bullying (HIB)**

Motion to affirm the decision of the Superintendent of Schools regarding Harassment, Intimidation or Bullying (HIB) incident TMS-2526-09 as reported to the Board in Executive Session at the December 10, 2025, meeting.

C. **APPROVAL - Pre-School Tuition Rates**

Motion to approve the following tuition rates for the 2026-2027 school year:

Preschool Full Day Program	\$12,730.00
PSD Voluntary Half-Day Extension	\$ 9,570.00

**CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION COMMITTEE**

*Chairperson: Members:*

Moved by Mr. Shih ▼, seconded by Ms. Micera ▼ to approve Motions A - C.

*Ms. Micera commented on item C and asked if the field trip was for Kindergartners. Mr. McHale answered yes.*

Motions were approved ▼ by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

YEAS: Ms. Finkelstein, Ms. Micera, Ms. Argenziano, Mr. Paldi, Mr. Shih, Ms. Lee, Ms Ravid

NAYS: None

A. **APPROVAL - Staff Coursework**

Motion to approve the following courses for the 2025-2026 school year as recommended to the Superintendent by the Principals:

Staff Member: Songhee (Joy) Lee

Course No./Title: EDUC 7644 82 SL4: Structured Literacy: Students with Reading Difficulties

Institution: Fairleigh Dickinson University

Credits: 3

Staff Member: Kaitlyn Yu

Course No./Title: EDUC 7644 82 SL4: Structured Literacy: Students with Reading Difficulties

Institution: Fairleigh Dickinson University

Credits: 3

Staff Member: Megan Weis

Course No./Title: EDUC 7644 82 SL4: Structured Literacy: Students with Reading Difficulties

Institution: Fairleigh Dickinson University

Credits: 3

Staff Member: Gila Rachlin  
Course No./Title: EDUC 501-5408: All Eyes on the IEP Documenting and Goal Setting for Related Service Providers  
Institution: Colorado State University-Pueblo (Teacher Education Program)  
Credits: 3

**B. APPROVAL - Staff Conferences**

Motion to approve the following staff conferences for the 2025-2026 school year:

Staff Member(s): Joseph Calabria  
Conference: Bergen County Consortium for Teachers of the Gifted  
Location: Wandell School, Saddle River, NJ  
Date: 1/26/26  
Cost to Board: \$8.84 (Transportation)

Staff Member(s): Joseph Calabria  
Conference: Bergen County Consortium for Teachers of the Gifted  
Location: New Milford High School, New Milford, NJ  
Date: 3/16/26  
Cost to Board: \$4.98 (Transportation)

Staff Member(s): Joseph Calabria  
Conference: Bergen County Consortium for Teachers of the Gifted  
Location: West Brook Middle School, Paramus, NJ  
Date: 6/5/26  
Cost to Board: \$7.99 (Transportation)

**C. APPROVAL - Field Trips**

Motion to approve the following field trips for the 2025-2026 school year:

School: Hillside Elementary School  
Group: Kindergarten  
Month: May 2026  
Destination: Health Barn USA  
Location: Ridgewood, NJ

## **FINANCE AND PHYSICAL PLANT COMMITTEE**

*Chairperson: Members:*

Moved by Ms. Argenziano ▼, seconded by Ms. Micera ▼ to approve Motions A - F.

Motions were approved ▼ by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

YEAS: Ms. Finkelstein, Ms. Micera, Ms. Argenziano, Mr. Paldi, Mr. Shih, Ms. Lee, Ms Ravid

NAYS: None

**A. APPROVAL - Payment of Bills**

Motion to approve the payment of bills from December 11, 2025, to December 31, 2025, in the amount of:

General Fund (Fund 10)	\$1,724,437.79
Special Revenue (Fund 20)	\$ 4,218.01
Enterprise (Milk – Fund 60)	\$ 673.08
NJ Dept. of Labor	\$ 4,286.88
Total	\$1,733,615.76

**B. APPROVAL - Payment of Bills**

Motion to approve the payment of bills from January 1, 2026, to January 5, 2026, in the amount of:

General Fund (Fund 10)	\$55,322.79
Total	\$55,322.79

**C. APPROVAL - Staff Remuneration**

Motion to approve remuneration to staff members as follows:

Staff Member: Brittany Travisano  
Course: MAT 924 Virtual Manipulatives  
MAT 932 Using Rich Math Tasks in the Classroom  
MAT 935 Art-Enhanced Math  
College/University: Fresno Pacific University  
Remuneration: \$1,000.00

D. **APPROVAL – Special Education Placement 1:1 Paraprofessional**

Motion to approve the following 2025-2026 Special Education 1:1 Paraprofessional for Closter Student:

<b>NJSMART#</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Placement</b>
5536231421	\$38,228.27	K	Valley Program

E. **APPROVAL - Purchase of mCLASS DIBELS Licenses**

Motion to approve the purchase of a three-year license for mCLASS DIBELS for Grades 2 and 3, including a half-day of professional development, in the total amount of \$14,762.50 from Amplify. Amplify is the sole source provider of the proprietary and patented mCLASS System, a hosted solution used for the administration and reporting of observation-based assessments.

F. **ACCEPTANCE - Fiscal Year 2025 (SY 24-25) Annual Comprehensive Financial Report**

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Closter Board of Education accepts the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) and Auditor's Management Report (AMR) for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, as audited by Lerch, Vinci & Bliss, LLP. The district received an unmodified opinion, indicating that the audited financial statements were free from material misstatements, errors, or discrepancies.

**PERSONNEL AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

*Chairperson: Member:*

Moved by Ms. Ravid □, seconded by Ms. Micera □ to approve Motions A - G.

Motions were approved □ by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

YEAS: Ms. Finkelstein, Ms. Micera, Ms. Argenziano, Mr. Paldi, Mr. Shih, Ms. Lee, Ms Ravid

NAYS: None

A. **APPROVAL - Appointment of Amanda Cummings as Mentor for the 2025-2026 School Year**

Motion to approve the appointment of Amanda Cummings as a mentor to provisionally licensed teacher, Paul Donevan, for 11 weeks of mentoring (1/5/26-3/31/26).

B. **APPROVAL - Rescindment of Appointment - Debra Pohl Monesmith as Paraprofessional for the 2025-2026 School Year**

Motion to rescind the appointment of Debra Pohl Monesmith as a paraprofessional for the 2025-2026 school year.

C. **APPROVAL - Appointment of Kaitlin Lange to provide Home Instruction for Student #5220678010**

Motion to retroactively approve the appointment of Kaitlin Lange to provide home instruction for Student #5220678010, at a rate of \$50 per hour, for ten hours per week, effective December 16, 2025. Home instruction will be provided until the District secures an appropriate out-of-district placement.

D. **APPROVAL - Appointment of Anthony Scrazati as Long-Term Leave Replacement Custodian**

Motion to approve the appointment of Anthony Scrazati as Long-Term Leave Replacement - Custodian - from January 8, 2026, through June 30, 2026. Salary will be \$46,340 plus \$100 for Black Seal License, pro-rated.

E. **APPROVAL - Substitute Teachers/Paraprofessionals/Custodians**

Motion to approve the following substitute teachers/paraprofessionals/custodians for the 2025-2026 school year:

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Certification</u></b>
Anthony Scrazati	Black Seal Low-Pressure Boiler License
Alina Zankevich	Substitute Teaching Certification
Ann Suttoro	Substitute Custodian

F. **APPROVAL - Leave of Absence for Brittany Travisano, Tenakill Middle School Special Education Teacher**

Motion to approve Brittany Travisano, TMS Special Education Teacher, for a leave of absence, as follows:

- Paid sick leave starting on or about April 29, 2026, through the end of the 2025-26 school year; and
- An FMLA and NJFLA child bonding leave from September 1, 2026, through November 21, 2026, with an anticipated return to work on November 23, 2026.

G. **APPROVAL - Resignation of Tenakill Middle School Paraprofessional Shailaja Suva**

Motion to accept the resignation of Shailaja Suva, TMS Paraprofessional, effective January 16, 2026.

**POLICY COMMITTEE**

*Chairperson: Member:*

Moved by Mr. Paldi ▾, seconded by Ms. Micera ▾ to approve Motion A.

Motion was approved ▾ by a roll call vote of the Board as follows:

YEAS: Ms. Finkelstein, Ms. Micera, Ms. Argenziano, Mr. Paldi, Mr. Shih, Ms. Lee, Ms Ravid

NAYS: None

**A. APPROVAL - First Reading of Policies / Regulations**

Motion to approve first reading of the following policies and regulations, as per Appendix A:

- P 2530 Resource Materials
- P 2535 Library Material
- P 9130 Public Complaints
  
- R 2530 Resource Materials
- R 2535 Library Material
- R 9130 Public Complaints

**OLD/NEW BUSINESS**

*Mr. Villanueva informed the trustees that he will be sending multiple emails related to the completion of required trainings.*

*Mr. McHale shared that Ms. Hunt completed her administrator internship in the building and will continue her work by hosting a parenting series at Tenakill Middle School. He noted that all are welcome to attend and explained that the series is designed to strengthen the relationship between the community and the schools.*

*Ms. Hunt then thanked Mr. McHale for recognizing her accomplishments.*

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Moved by Ms. Micera ▾, seconded by Ms. Argenziano ▾ to open the meeting for public comments.

***There were no public comments.***

Moved by Ms. Micera ▾, seconded by Mr. Paldi ▾ to close the meeting to public comments.

**CLOSED SESSION MOTION (If required)**

Moved by Ms. Micera ▾, seconded by Mr. Paldi ▾ to approve the following Closed Session Motion.

Motion was approved ▾ by a voice vote of the Board:

YEAS: Ms. Finkelstein, Ms. Micera, Ms. Argenziano, Mr. Paldi, Mr. Shih, Ms. Lee, Ms Ravid

NAYS: None

BE IT RESOLVED that the Closter Board of Education will adjourn to a Closed Session to discuss the following:

**HIB  
Legal Matters**

The matters so discussed will be disclosed to the public as soon as and to the extent that such disclosure can be made without adversely affecting the public.

The Board went into Closed Session at 8:41 PM.

The Board reconvened from Closed Session at 9:47 PM.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by Ms. Micera, seconded by Mr. Paldi to adjourn the meeting at 9:48 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Floro M. Villanueva, Jr.  
Business Administrator/Board Secretary

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Resource Materials  
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## 2530 RESOURCE MATERIALS

The Board of Education shall provide resource materials to implement ~~the school district's and school~~ educational goals and objectives to ~~meet~~ as student needs dictate and as district resources permit. Resource ~~Such~~ materials include, but are not limited to, reference ~~materials~~ books; fiction and nonfiction books; maps; audio and audio-visual materials; pamphlets; periodicals; pictures; online references; other supplementary titles; ~~maps, library print and non print~~ materials, and other sources of information for use by students that are not designated as textbooks. Resource materials are not library material as defined in N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-3 and Policy and Regulation 2535.

~~The Superintendent shall be responsible for the selection and maintenance of all resource materials, in accordance with the following standards:~~

1. ~~Material will be suited to the varied interests, abilities, reading levels, and maturation levels of the students to be served;~~
2. ~~Wherever possible, materials will provide major opposing views on controversial issues so that students may develop under guidance the practice of critical reading and thinking;~~
3. ~~Wherever possible, materials will represent the many religious, ethnic, and cultural groups and their contribution to American heritage;~~
4. ~~Materials will be factually accurate and of genuine literary or artistic value;~~
5. ~~Materials will be of a quality and durability appropriate to their intended uses and longevity;~~
6. ~~Materials will relate to, support, and enrich the courses of study adopted by the Board.~~



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Resource Materials

The Superintendent will develop regulations for the selection of resource materials **pursuant to Regulation 2530** that provide for the effective consultation of teaching staff members at all appropriate levels; ensure that the Board's budgetary allotment for resource materials is efficiently spent and **appropriately wisely** distributed throughout the instructional program and the district; and ensure an inventory of resource materials that is well balanced and well rounded in coverage of subject, types of materials, and variety of content.

The Superintendent will evaluate the continuing effectiveness and utility of resource materials and recommend to the Board the removal of **resource** those materials that no longer meet the standards set forth in **Regulation 2530 and this Policy**. Any request by an individual for the removal of resource materials will be governed by **Policy and Regulation 9130 on public complaints**.

Adopted:



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Library Material  
**M**

## 2535 LIBRARY MATERIAL

The Board of Education believes the freedom to read is a human right, constitutionally protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution, and individuals have the right to free inquiry and the right to form their own opinions. The freedom to read does not require an individual to agree with topics or themes within a material, but instead allows a reader to explore and engage with differing perspectives to form and inform their own views pursuant to the "Freedom to Read Act" N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-1 through N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-7.

In accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-4, the purpose of Regulation 2535 and this Policy is to: provide standards for the curation of library material, establish criteria for the removal of existing school library material or library material selected for inclusion in the school library, and provide protection against attempts to censor library material.

### A. Definitions – N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-3

#### 1. For the purpose of Regulation 2535 and this Policy:

- a. "Board of Education" means a Board of Education as defined in N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-2, the Board of Directors of an educational services commission, a Board of Trustees of a charter school, a Board of Trustees of a renaissance school project, or any other local education agency.
- b. "Censorship" means to block, suppress, or remove library material based on disagreement with a viewpoint, idea, or concept or solely because an individual finds certain content offensive, but does not include limiting or restricting access to any library material deemed developmentally inappropriate for certain students.
- c. "Diverse and inclusive material" means any material that reflects any protected class as enumerated in the "Law Against Discrimination," N.J.S.A. 10:5-1 et seq.; material



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produced by an author who is a member of a protected class as enumerated in the "Law Against Discrimination," N.J.S.A. 10:5-1 et seq.; and material that contains the author's points of view concerning contemporary problems and issues, whether international, national, or local; but excludes content that is inappropriate for grades served by the school library.

- d. "Individual with a vested interest" means any teaching staff member employed by the Board of Education, any parent of a student enrolled in the school district at the time the removal form required pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-5 is filed, and any student enrolled in the district at the time the removal form required pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-5 is filed.
- e. "Library material" means any material including, but not limited to, nonfiction and fiction books, magazines, reference books, supplementary titles, multimedia and digital material, software and instructional material, and other material not required as part of classroom instruction belonging to, on loan to, or otherwise in the custody of a school library.
- f. "School library staff member" means a school library media specialist, school librarian, any certificated or non-certificated staff member assigned to duties in a school library, or any individual carrying out or assisting with the functions of a school library media specialist or school librarian.

## B. Library Material Curation – N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-4

- 1. The Board of Education shall have control over the content of this Policy, except this Policy shall at a minimum:
  - a. Recognize that library material should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all students and should present diverse points of view in the collection as a whole;



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- b. Acknowledge that library material shall not be removed from a school library because of the origin, background, or views of the library material or those contributing to its creation;
- c. Recognize the importance of school libraries as centers for voluntary inquiry and the dissemination of information and ideas;
- d. Promote the free expression and free access to ideas by students by prohibiting the censorship of library material;
- e. Acknowledge that a school library media specialist is professionally trained to curate and develop the school library collection that provides students with access to the widest array of developmentally appropriate library material available to schools; and
- f. Establish a procedure for a school library staff member to review library material within a school library on an ongoing basis, which shall include, but not be limited to:
  - (1) The library material's relevance;
  - (2) The condition of the library material;
  - (3) The availability of duplicates;
  - (4) The availability of more recent developmentally appropriate library material; and
  - (5) The continued demand for the library material.

2. The Board of Education, in consultation with school library staff members, shall have discretion in selecting, purchasing, or acquiring library material for inclusion in the school library. Nothing in N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-4 or this Policy shall be construed to require the Board of Education to purchase, or otherwise acquire, library material for a school library.



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3. Nothing in N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-4 and this Policy shall be construed to restrict the Board of Education's authority to select textbooks and school supplies related to the curriculum.

## C. Library Material Recommendation and Selection Process

1. The school library staff member in each school building will accept the written requests of teaching staff members for new and revised library material. Each request should include:
  - a. The name and originator of the library material;
  - b. The publisher or distributor;
  - c. A brief description of the library material; and
  - d. The reason for the request, including the relevance of the library material to the instructional program.
2. The school library staff member shall review each recommendation against the standards for selection in B.1.f. above and the amount budgeted for library material in the current or succeeding school year, as appropriate.
3. The school library staff member shall present to the Superintendent or designee a list of recommended purchases of library material. The list will include multiple copies of library material when a high level of interest and need is anticipated.
4. Standards to be applied in the selection of library material shall relate to, support, and enrich the courses of study adopted by the Board of Education.

## D. Censorship of School Library Material Prohibited, Right to Reserve, Check Out – N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-6

1. The Board of Education shall not remove library material from a school library in the district because of the origin, background, or views of the library material or those contributing to its creation, and shall not engage in censorship of library material.



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Library Material

2. The Board of Education shall allow a student to reserve or check out any developmentally appropriate library material, including diverse and inclusive material, regardless of the origin, background, or views of the library material or those contributing to its creation.

## E. Removal Request Procedure

Any request by an individual with a vested interest to have library material removed from a school library in the district shall follow the grievance procedure outlined in Regulation 2535 in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-5.

## F. Immunity, School Library Staff – N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-7

A school library staff member who engages in activities as required by N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-4 through 18A:34A-6 and B. through E. above shall be immune from civil and criminal liability arising from good faith actions performed pursuant to the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-4 through 18A:34A-6 and B. through E. above.

N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-1 through N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-7

Adopted:



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COMMUNITY

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Public Complaints and Grievances

Nov 25

## 9130 PUBLIC COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES

**The Board of Education shall establish procedures for the hearing and settlement of Any person or group having a legitimate interest in the schools of this district may present a request, suggestion, or complaints concerning district staff members personnel, the educational program, instructional or resource materials, or the operations of the district. Complaints regarding library material as defined in N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-3 shall be addressed in accordance with Policy and Regulation 2535. The Board directs the establishment of procedures for the hearing and settlement of requests and complaints shall that provide a means for resolving complaints them fairly and impartially, and permit appropriate resolution redress, and protect district personnel from unnecessary harassment.**

**The grievance procedure outlined in Regulation 9130 shall not be utilized by a district staff member or Board member unless the district staff member or Board member is doing so in their capacity as a parent of a student currently enrolled in the district.**

When a Board member is confronted with a complaint concerning district staff members, the educational program, instructional or resource materials, or the operations of the district an issue, the Board member he/she will withhold comment, commitment, and/or opinion and refer the complaint or inquiry to the Superintendent in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1.j., who shall review the complaint in accordance with Regulation 9130 according to established procedures.

Only in these cases where satisfactory adjustment cannot be made by the Superintendent and the staff shall communications and complaints be referred to the Board for resolution.

Any misunderstandings or disputes between the public and school district staff members should, whenever possible, be settled by direct, informal discussions among the interested parties. It is only when such informal meetings fail to resolve differences that more formal procedures shall be employed. A complaint about a school program or personnel should be addressed to the Building Principal; a complaint about instructional or resource materials should be addressed to the Superintendent.



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Public Complaints and Grievances

~~The Superintendent shall establish Procedures for the resolution hearing of requests and complaints regarding district staff members personnel, the educational program, instructional and resource materials, and the operations of the school district shall. Procedures will be governed by Regulation 9130. the following guidelines:~~

1. ~~The matter will be resolved initially, wherever possible, by informal discussions between or among the interested parties.~~
2. ~~A matter that cannot be resolved informally may be appealed at successive levels of authority, up to and including the Board of Education.~~
3. ~~The complaint and its immediate resolution be reduced to writing at the first and at each successive level of appeal.~~
4. ~~A reasonable period of time, not to exceed \_\_\_\_\_ working days, will be permitted for the filing of an appeal in writing at each successive level. A decision at each level of appeal must be rendered no later than \_\_\_\_\_ working days after the appeal is filed, except that the Board shall have thirty calendar days to make its decision.~~
5. ~~In the case of complaints about instructional or resource materials, the initial complaint must set forth in writing the author, title, and publisher of the materials as well as those specific portions of the material or the work to which objection is taken; the complainant's familiarity with the work; the reasons for the objection; and the use of the work in the schools. The Superintendent shall appoint a committee of professional staff members and community representatives to review the challenged material against the standards for the selection of resource materials established by Board policy. The committee will report its findings to the Board. No challenged material may be removed from the curriculum or from a collection of resource materials except by action of the Board of Education, and no challenged material may be removed solely because it presents ideas that may be unpopular or offensive to some. Any Board action to remove material will be~~



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~~accompañado por la declaración del Consejo de sus razones para la remoción.~~

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6. ~~A complainant shall be notified that a decision of the Board may be appealed to the Commissioner of Education.~~

Adopted:



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Nov 25

## R 2530 RESOURCE MATERIALS

### A. Definition

**“Resource materials” means are all those sources of information for the use of students that have not been designated as textbooks and generally must be shared by individual students. Resource materials include, but are not limited to, reference materials books;; fiction and nonfiction books;; maps;; audio and audio-visual materials;; CD-ROM’s; pamphlets;; periodicals;; pictures; and on-line references; other supplementary titles; and other sources of information for use by students that are not designated as textbooks. Resource materials are not library material as defined in N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-3 and Policy and Regulation 2535 may be maintained in classroom library collections and/or in the school library or media center.**

### B. Selection Process

1. **The teaching staff member shall submit written requests for new resource materials to the Principal or designee in the teaching staff member’s school building. The \_\_\_\_\_ in each school building will accept the written requests of teaching staff members for new and revised reference materials. Each written request should include the:**
  - a. **The name and originator of the resource material; work;**
  - b. **The its publisher or distributor;;**
  - c. **A brief description of the resource material;; and**
  - d. **The reason for the request, including the relevance of the resource material to the instructional program;;**



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2. All ~~written requests~~ recommendations will be forwarded to the Superintendent or designee \_\_\_\_\_ for consideration; and. The \_\_\_\_\_ will attempt to review each requested work or, alternatively, to consult with other educational institutions that have used the material.
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ may consult such selection aids as booklists, school library journals, previews, school library catalogs, and subject bibliographies prepared by specialists in the field.
34. The Superintendent or designee \_\_\_\_\_ shall evaluate ~~will measure~~ each ~~written request~~ recommendation against the selection standards for selection as outlined in (see C. below paragraph C) and the amount budgeted for resource materials in the current or succeeding school year, as appropriate.
45. The \_\_\_\_\_ will present to the Superintendent or designee will develop a list of recommended purchases, no later than \_\_\_\_\_ each year. The list may will include multiple copies of resource materials when for which a high level of interest and need is anticipated.

## C. Selection Standards

Standards to be applied in the selection of resource materials are those set forth below: in Policy 2530, repeated here.

1. Resource materials will be suited to the varied interests, abilities, reading levels, and maturation levels of the students to be served.
2. Wherever appropriate possible, resource materials will provide major opposing views on controversial issues so that students may develop, under guidance, the practice of critical reading and thinking.



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3. Wherever appropriate possible, resource materials will include the basic tenets of multiculturalism in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:7-1.7 represent the many religious, ethnic, and cultural groups and their contributions to American heritage.
4. Resource materials will be factually accurate, as appropriate, and of genuine literary or artistic value.
5. Resource materials will be of a quality and durability appropriate to their intended uses and longevity.
6. Resource materials will relate to, support, and enrich the curriculum courses of study adopted by the Board of Education.
7. Resource materials will support the New Jersey Student Learning Standards.

D. Periodic Removal of Resource Reference Materials

1. The Superintendent or designee \_\_\_\_\_ shall will conduct a periodic review of resource materials reference collections for their:
  - a. Continuing usefulness;;
  - b. Relevance to the curriculum and the New Jersey Student Learning Standards;;
  - c. Representation of the needs and interests of all grade levels, subject areas, and departments; and
  - d. Balance of content, types of resource materials, and manner of presentation.



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2. Standard **resource** materials subject to frequent use that are worn or missing should be replaced periodically.
3. Outdated **resource** materials and **resource** materials no longer relevant to the curriculum may be withdrawn from the collection on Board of **Education** approval.
4. **Any request by an individual for the removal of resource materials will be governed by A complaint about reference materials shall be handled in accordance with Policy and Regulation 9130.**

Issued:



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**M**

## R 2535 LIBRARY MATERIAL

Any individual with a vested interest requesting to have library material removed from a school library in the district shall follow the grievance procedure outlined below in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-5.

### A. Definitions – N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-3

#### 1. For the purpose of Policy 2535 and this Regulation:

- a. “Board of Education” means a Board of Education as defined in N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-2, the Board of Directors of an educational services commission, a Board of Trustees of a charter school, a Board of Trustees of a renaissance school project, or any other local education agency.
- b. “Censorship” means to block, suppress, or remove library material based on disagreement with a viewpoint, idea, or concept or solely because an individual finds certain content offensive, but does not include limiting or restricting access to any library material deemed developmentally inappropriate for certain students.
- c. “Diverse and inclusive material” means any material that reflects any protected class as enumerated in the “Law Against Discrimination,” N.J.S.A. 10:5-1 et seq.; material produced by an author who is a member of a protected class as enumerated in the “Law Against Discrimination,” N.J.S.A. 10:5-1 et seq.; and material that contains the author’s points of view concerning contemporary problems and issues, whether international, national, or local; but excludes content that is inappropriate for grades served by the school library.



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- d. "Individual with a vested interest" means any teaching staff member employed by the Board of Education, any parent of a student enrolled in the school district at the time the removal form required pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-5 is filed, and any student enrolled in the district at the time the removal form required pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-5 is filed.
- e. "Library material" means any material including, but not limited to, nonfiction and fiction books, magazines, reference books, supplementary titles, multimedia and digital material, software and instructional material, and other material not required as part of classroom instruction belonging to, on loan to, or otherwise in the custody of a school library.
- f. "School library staff member" means a school library media specialist, school librarian, any certificated or non-certificated staff member assigned to duties in a school library, or any individual carrying out or assisting with the functions of a school library media specialist or school librarian.

B. The following procedure shall be adhered to any time an individual with a vested interest submits a complaint requesting removal of library material from any of the district's school libraries.

- 1. Complaints about library material shall be made on a request for removal form and submitted to the Principal of the school building in which the library material is challenged to initiate a review of the material.
- 2. The individual with a vested interest shall complete and sign a request for removal letter. The request for removal letter shall include:
  - a. The title, author, and publisher of the library material at issue;



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- b. Sections of the library material to which the individual with a vested interest objects; and
  - c. An explanation of the reasons for the objection.
3. Within five working days of the receipt of the request for removal letter, the Principal or designee shall forward the request for removal to the Superintendent.
4. Upon receipt of the request for removal letter, the Superintendent or designee shall appoint a review committee consisting of:
  - a. The Superintendent or designee;
  - b. The Principal or designee of the school in which the library material is challenged;
  - c. The school library media specialist or a school library staff member;
  - d. A representative selected by the Board of Education;
  - e. At least one grade-appropriate teacher familiar with the library material, provided the teacher selected is not the individual who submitted the request for removal form;
  - f. A parent of a student enrolled in the school district, provided the parent selected is not the individual who submitted the request for removal form;
  - g. If appropriate, and at the discretion of the Superintendent, in cases where a student enrolled in the district in grades nine through twelve filed the request for removal form, a student enrolled in the district in grades nine through twelve may volunteer to serve on the review committee if that student did not file the request for removal form. The Superintendent shall consult with the Principal of the school involved in the removal request in making this determination; and



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- h. Any additional members the Superintendent or designee deem necessary.
5. The challenged library material shall remain within the school library and available for a student to reserve, check out, or access until there is a final decision reached by the Board of Education pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-5.b.(5) and B.7. below.
6. The review committee members shall evaluate the request for removal form and review the challenged library material in its entirety. The review committee shall meet to discuss the library material and concerns raised and make a recommendation on whether the challenged library material should be removed from circulation, retained, or limited in use. The review committee shall submit its written report with recommendations to the Board of Education no later than sixty school days from the date of the next regularly scheduled Board of Education meeting after receipt of the request for removal form:
  - a. A copy of the review committee's report shall also be provided to the individual with a vested interest who filed the request for removal form and the Principal who received the request for removal form.
7. The Board of Education shall review the review committee's report and make a final determination on whether the library material is to be removed from the school library or limited in use. The Board of Education shall provide a written statement of reasons for:
  - a. The removal, limitation, or non-removal of a library material; and
  - b. Any final determination that is contrary to the recommendations of the review committee.
8. The written statement of reasons shall be posted on the Board of Education's website in a prominent and easily accessible location within thirty days of the determination.



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9. All decisions on whether to remove from circulation, retain, or limit in use library material shall be based on the library material as a whole, not isolated passages.
10. All request for removal forms and outcomes shall be maintained in accordance with other similar records in the district.
11. Library material that has been challenged pursuant N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-5.b.(1) through 18A:34A-5.b.(5), Policy 2535, and this Regulation shall not be subject to challenge for at least one year in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-5.b.(6).
12. The district may consolidate requests for removal of the same challenged library material in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-5.b.(7).
13. The Board of Education's determination issued in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-5, Policy 2535, and this Regulation which denies a request for removal shall not constitute a controversy or dispute pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:6-9. However, an individual with a vested interest, as defined in N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-3, may file a petition of appeal of the Board of Education's final determination to remove library material to the Commissioner of Education through the Office of Controversies and Disputes in accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:6-9 and the procedures set forth in State Board of Education regulations.
14. Nothing in N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-1 through 18A:34A-7, Policy 2535, and this Regulation shall be construed as creating a separate legal cause of action regarding any determination issued pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-1 through 18A:34A-7, Policy 2535, and this Regulation.
15. A school library staff member who engages in activities as required by N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-4 through 18A:34A-6 shall be immune from civil and criminal liability arising from good faith actions performed pursuant to the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-4 through 18A:34A-6.

Adopted:



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Public Complaints and Grievances

Nov 25

## R 9130 PUBLIC COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES

All complaints and grievances addressed to the Board of Education, Board members individually, school officials, or district staff members shall be referred to the Superintendent for consideration in accordance with the following procedures.

A. Complaints Regarding a Teaching Staff Member Other Than an Administrator or Supervisor

1. First Level

- a. The complainant will be directed to address the **complaint matter** to the **teaching staff member**.
- b. The **teaching staff member** will be directed to discuss the **matter directly with the complainant** and to make every reasonable effort to **address the complaint** explain the **difficulty and/or** and take appropriate action, if **necessary**, in accordance with district **polices and regulations** and within **the teaching staff member's his/her authority and district regulations**.
- c. The **teaching staff member** will report the **complaint in writing** **matter**, and whatever action **that** may have been taken to resolve the **complaint matter**, to the **teaching staff member's Principal or supervisor**.

2. Second Level

- a. If the **complaint matter** cannot be satisfactorily resolved to the **complainant's satisfaction** at A.1. above the **first level**, the complainant **may appeal the teaching staff member's resolution** to **may discuss the matter with the teaching staff member's Principal or supervisor**.



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b. The Principal or supervisor will take all reasonable and prudent steps to resolve the complaint and meet with the complainant to discuss the Principal or supervisor's resolution to the complaint or to explain to the complainant why the matter cannot be resolved as the complainant wishes.

## 3. Third Level

a. If the complaint matter cannot be satisfactorily resolved to the complainant's satisfaction at A.2. above the second level, the complainant may, within five three working days (see Policy 9130) of their his/her meeting with the teaching staff member's Principal or supervisor, submit a written request for a conference to the Superintendent a written request for a conference. The written request shall, at a minimum, include: the specific nature of the complaint and a statement of the facts giving rise to it.

(1) The specific nature of the complaint and a brief statement of the facts giving rise to it,

(2) The respect in which it is alleged that the complainant or the complainant's child has been unfairly treated or adversely affected, and

(3) The remedy sought by the complainant.

b. A copy of the complainant's written request for a conference will be submitted sent to the Board of Education by the Superintendent.

c. Within seven working days (see Policy 9130) of the Superintendent's receipt of the written request for a conference, the Superintendent shall conduct the a conference, at a time convenient to the complainant and the Superintendent, and attempt to resolve the complaint matter informally. The time for conference will be extended if the complainant is unable to schedule a convenient meeting.



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d. The Superintendent shall record in writing ~~their his/her~~ disposition of the complaint and shall, within ten working days ~~(see Policy 9130)~~ of the conference, ~~submit~~ provide a copy of ~~their~~ the written disposition to the complainant and to the Board.

## 4. Fourth Level

a. A complaint that is not resolved ~~to the complainant's satisfaction~~ by a conference with the Superintendent at A.3.c. above or that seeks a remedy beyond the Superintendent's jurisdiction authority may be appealed by the complainant to the Board of Education.

(1) The complainant shall, within three working days of their receipt of the Superintendent's written disposition, submit a written request with supporting documentation to the Superintendent for an informal hearing before the Board. The complainant's request, along with the Superintendent's disposition at A.3.d. above, shall be provide to the Board.

b. ~~The complainant may, within three working days (see Policy 9130) of his/her receipt of the Superintendent's written disposition, submit a written request for a hearing before the Board. The request will include a copy of the Superintendent's disposition at Level 3.~~

be. ~~The Board shall, decide whether to grant or deny within forty-five calendar days (see Policy 9130) of the receipt of the complainant's request for conduct an informal hearing and provide their decision in writing to the complainant within five working days upon receiving the request for an informal hearing before a committee of Board members, in which the complainant will present his/her complaint. The Board may, on the petition of the complainant, permit the examination of witnesses. The Board may permit the teaching staff member complained of to testify in his/her own behalf.~~



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- (1) If the Board denies the request for an informal hearing, the Board shall render a decision on the appeal and provide the decision in writing to the complainant within ten working days.
- (2) If the Board grants the request for an informal hearing, the Board shall schedule the informal hearing within forty-five working days upon receiving the request for an informal hearing. At the conclusion of the informal hearing, the Board shall render a decision and provide the decision in writing to the complainant within ten working days at the conclusion of the informal hearing.
  - (a) The Board may designate a committee of the Board to conduct an informal hearing with the complainant.
  - (b) The Board may permit the complainant to present witnesses.
  - (c) The Board will comply with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act and Bylaw 0162 regarding any public complaints, where applicable.
- d. The Board shall, within ten calendar days (see Policy 9130) of the hearing, advise the complainant in writing of the Board's disposition of the complaint.
- e. The complainant will be advised that the Board's decision may be appealed to the Commissioner of Education.

5. Reasonable efforts will be made to expedite time sensitive a complaints that arises at the end of the school year so that the matter can be resolved before the interruption of summer vacations.



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## B. Complaints About an Administrative Staff Member

1. The procedure set forth in A will be followed and the complainant will be directed to discuss the matter first with the administrator.
2. A complaint about a Principal or a central office administrator will omit the second level of the complaint procedure. Appeal of the first level discussion will be made directly to the Superintendent in accordance with A.3.

## BC. Complaints Regarding a Support Staff Member

1. The **complaint** procedure set forth in A.1. above will be followed and the complainant will be directed to discuss the **complaint** first with the support staff member, **if appropriate**.
2. If the **complaint** cannot be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction at A.1. above, the complainant may follow the **complaint** procedure set forth in A.2. above.
3. If the **complaint** cannot be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction at A.2. above, the complainant may, within three working days of their meeting with the support staff member's supervisor, submit to the Superintendent a written request for a conference in accordance with A.3. above.
4. A **complaint** that is not resolved to the complainant's satisfaction by a conference with the Superintendent at A.3.c. above or that seeks a remedy beyond the Superintendent's authority may be appealed to the Board of Education in accordance with A.4. above.

## C. Complaints Regarding an Administrative Staff Member or Supervisory Staff Member

1. The complainant shall discuss the complaint first with the administrative staff member or supervisory staff member who is the subject of the complaint.



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2. An appeal of the discussion with the administrative staff member or supervisory staff member will be made directly to the Superintendent in accordance with A.3. above.
3. A complainant wanting to appeal the Superintendent's written disposition to the Board of Education shall follow the appeal procedures as outlined in A.4. above.

## D. Complaints Regarding About a Program, Practice, or Operation

1. A complaint regarding directed to a matter of district or school policy;; procedure;; program;; or operation, including entitlement programs established by Sstate or Ffederal law, should be addressed, initially, to the Superintendent who will refer the complaint to the appropriate administrator or supervisor department head most directly concerned with the matter, in accordance with A.1.
2. A complaint that cannot be satisfactorily resolved to the complainant's satisfaction at D.1. above at the first level may be appealed to the Superintendent and, thereafter, the Board of Education in accordance with the procedures set forth in A.3. and A.4.

## E. Complaints Regarding Textbooks, About Instructional Supplies, and Resource Materials

1. Complaints regarding about textbooks, library books, reference works, and other instructional supplies, and resource materials used in the district shall will be submitted made in writing by the complainant and submitted to the Superintendent.
2. The complainant will complete and sign a complaint form available in the Principal's office. The written complaint form shall, at a minimum, will include:
  - a. The title, author, and publisher of the material at issue; work complained of;



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- b. **Sections of the material to which the complainant objects** ~~The specific portions or language complained of (by page(s) and item(s));~~
  - e. ~~The complainant's familiarity with the work objected to;~~
  - cd. **An explanation of the reason(s) for the objection;**
  - de. The students or class for whom the **material work** is intended; and
  - ef. The way in which the **material work** is used or presented to students.
3. Within seven working days of the receipt of the **written** complaint form, the Superintendent shall appoint a review committee consisting of:
  - a. The head of the department in which the **material work** is being used;;
  - b. A **teaching staff member teacher** in the subject area of the **material; work**;
  - e. ~~A library staff member;~~
  - cd. A **Board of Education** member;;
  - e. ~~A lay person knowledgeable in the area of the work, and~~
  - df. The Principal of ~~the~~ a school in which the **material work** is used or presented; and
  - e. Any other staff member designated by the Superintendent.
4. The review committee will meet to evaluate the complaint and review the material at issue objected to. ~~The standards used by the committee will be those set forth in Policy 2530.~~



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- a. The standards used by the review committee to review textbooks will be those set forth in Regulation 2510.
- b. The standards used by the review committee to review instructional supplies will be those set forth in Regulation 2520.
- c. The standards used by the review committee to review resource materials will be those set forth in Regulation 2530.
5. The review committee will report its findings and recommendations to the Superintendent Board within fifteen working days upon the appointment of the review committee.
6. The Superintendent will submit the review committee's findings and recommendations to the Board at the next regularly scheduled Board meeting.
76. ~~The Board will receive the report of the committee. If the Board acts to remove the material at issue work complained of or to limit access to the material at issue work, its action will be accompanied by a statement of reasons for the removal or limitation.~~
  - a. The Board shall render its decision within forty-five working days of receipt of the review committee's findings and recommendations.
87. A copy of the review committee's findings and recommendations report and the Board's action, if any, will be given to the complainant within five working days of the Board's action.
98. The complainant will be informed, in writing, that a decision of the Board may be appealed to the Commissioner of Education as permitted by law.

Issued:

