

CLASSROOM FILMS AND VIDEO

Increasingly, nonprint media – broadcast, cable, satellite and recorded video; audio; film; CD-ROM, DVD and Internet have become every day and primary sources of information and recreation, as well as emotional and artistic experiences.

Instructors have included use of film and video in their classrooms for decades. Our students now arrive at our schoolhouse from homes and neighborhoods that include extensive and increasing routine exposure to nonprint media. As our programs and practices evolve in the early years of this new Century, teachers are charged by the Board of Education to be thoughtful regarding the amount of instructional time we allocate for students to view nonprint media in the classroom, and to be thoughtful regarding the commercial films and videos we choose to have our students view during class time.

This charge reflects the emerging awareness that academic responsibility includes sound decisions regarding how we choose to use the limited instructional time available each class period, each day, each week, each semester and each academic year.

It's important that teachers draw upon this exposure to develop critical thinking about nonprint media. Students do well to develop the knowledge, critical awareness and technical skills to become participants in, creators of, thinkers about and consumers of nonprint media, given the substantial use of nonprint media as part of everyday life.

Faculty may use materials that, while potentially controversial, need to be examined so students can confront the stereotyping, propagandizing and editorial gatekeeping so prevalent in mass media. Such examination allows students to discover that nonprint media may have historical, commercial, ideological and value-laden messages.

Periodic concerns from parents expressed to board members regarding classroom use of commercial video materials are the catalyst for this examination of district policy associated with instructor selection and use of classroom video materials. Such parental concerns were shared with the district level team during winter 2001, with the intent of promoting staff discussion and improving practices associated with classroom use of video materials throughout all our classrooms and thereby eliminating the need for additional guidance from the Board of Education.

Intent of this Policy

This policy is intended to provide guidelines in regard to selection and use of classroom video materials, with prime focus on commercial films and commercial videos. A specific definition of 'commercial' is included within the procedures section of this policy.

Guidelines

- Selection of films and videos for classroom study should be the province of teachers and librarians. The selection should be based on sound educational criteria, consistent with the district's updated mission statement and the district's policy on curriculum guides.
- The rating system of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) should not be used as the primary guide in selecting films or videotapes. The MPAA ratings are made by the film industry expressly without regard for artistic or educational value.
- Learning to dispute civilly is part of intellectual development. The classroom teacher's role in discussion of nonprint media is one of mediating between and among conflicting viewpoints and perceptions.

Faculty are Expected to:

1. Select appropriate films and videos for classroom use from a variety of outlets and viewpoints, to encourage student intellectual and aesthetic development.
2. Preview films and videos and provide rationales to students for their use.
3. Include sufficient introductory preparation for the students prior to showing films and videos for which controversy might be expected. Such preparation would include:
 - A. Carefully and clearly explaining the overriding educational purpose.
 - B. Identifying to students how they'll be actively engaged in the process during class time.
 - B. Scheduling time for substantial follow-up discussion and clarification of initial responses to the film or video, in regard to the educational purpose.
 - C. Employing inquiry-based classroom strategies to provide for such follow-up.
4. Develop techniques of leading respectful discussion and debate.
5. Guide students through the process of resolving conflict regarding what was heard or seen.
6. Provide a historical, cultural, economic or social context for any film or video used in the classroom.

8. Follow copyright laws as they apply to film and video, and follow fair-use laws of broadcast programming for educational purposes.
9. Mediate between and among conflicting student viewpoints and perceptions.

Selection Criteria for Films and Videos

Teachers will select films and videos for classroom use within the following parameters:

1. The film or video will connect clearly and relevantly with the course, enhancing or reinforcing student understanding of the course's content.
2. Teachers are encouraged to select films or videos in collaboration with colleagues, including but not limited to one or more of the following: grade level and/or department teams, grade level or department chairpersons, Principals, librarians, parents from the school's parent association or booster club, or that school's site-based shared decision making building level team.
3. The film or video will be judged by those involved with the selection process to be appropriate to the age level of the students in that course.
4. The film or video will not contain excessive or gratuitous violence or sexual explicitness inappropriate for the age level of students in that class.
5. The film or video will meet one or more of the following criteria:
 - Make information or concepts more accessible through other media.
 - Generate thought and discussion regarding the subject being studied.
 - Illustrate techniques of media manipulation.
6. The experience and background of their students.

Procedures for Use of Commercial Films and Videos*

The following procedures are to be used for all health films and videos, whether or not a particular health film or video is identified as 'commercial'.

In addition, these procedures are to be used by all teachers whenever an entire 'commercial' film or video program or a substantial portion of a 'commercial' film or video is selected by the instructor for use during class time at any point during the academic year.

'Commercial', in the context of this particular policy, is defined as any film or video other than those produced and sold expressly and exclusively for educational use. For example, any films or videos that are also routinely available in stores, broadcast via network television or cable television, or shown in movie theatres are all considered commercial films.

1. Early in the school year or semester, the teacher will send parents [via students] that individual teacher's list of commercial films intended for use that school year by that teacher. This list will include the MPAA rating where applicable. The teacher will provide a brief description of that film or video to the parent, upon parent request. That description will include a rationale for using that particular film or video material. If there is potential controversy related to language, violence, drug and alcohol abuse or sexual issues the description is to include mention of that. The board strongly encourages parents to obtain a copy of the description and review it. A copy of that list is to be provided to and kept available by the Principal.
2. If a commercial film or video that has not been included on the early list is intended for use by the teacher, a supplemental notice is to be sent to parents. That notice is to be provided so that parents have five (5) days notice prior to the commercial film or video being used in class.
3. Teachers will make alternative [equivalent but different] academically relevant assignments for students whose parents, or who themselves, do not wish to make use of a specific commercial film or video. In rare instances when a student would miss a significant portion of the course content because of objection to materials, the student's placement may be reconsidered.
4. Substitute plans [emergency and otherwise] that include use of film or video are to be constructed in a manner consistent with this policy, in general, and these procedures, in particular.

Excerpts of Video Materials

Short excerpts [such as ten minutes or less] of commercial film or video selections may be used on an ad hoc basis by the teacher to illuminate an idea or as part of a student report. While prior parental notification is not required in such instances, students are to be informed of content and allowed to briefly and easily excuse themselves from class if they so desire. All other aspects of this policy are to be followed.

Footnote

The Peru Central School District recognizes that each of our students has a different level of sensitivity. The board encourages parents to obtain from the teacher or from another source a copy of any commercial film or video in question and review it. As each teacher tries to know each student, we recognize that parents know their own child better.

Parents are encouraged to contact their child's teacher if they have any questions or concerns about a commercial film intended by the teacher for use in the classroom.

Adoption date: October 14, 2008