



LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Policy Bulletin

TITLE: GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS NOT OWNED, BROADCAST, OR RECOMMENDED BY THE DISTRICT

NUMBER: BUL-1270

ISSUER: James Morris, Assistant Superintendent
Instructional Support Services

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POLICY: It is the policy of the Los Angeles Unified School District to provide students with appropriate instructional materials that are relevant to the curriculum being studied and appropriate for the age and maturity level of the students being taught. Because of the widespread use of videocassette recorders, ease of home videotaping, and availability of rental videotapes and films, the Board of Education on October 17, 1988, established guidelines for the use of videotapes and films not owned, broadcast, or recommended by the District.

Because of the emergence of new technologies, this policy now applies to the use of filmed programs in any format, including videocassette, 16mm film, DVD, CD-ROM, broadcast television, or streamed file. The term "audiovisual media" is used in this bulletin to refer to all formats. The rating system of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), established in 1968, is the basis for the Board guidelines. (See Attachment A for MPAA definitions of the PG, PG-13, R, and NC-17 ratings.)

MAJOR CHANGES: This revision replaces Bulletin No. K-30, dated December 9, 2002, *Guidelines for the Use of Audiovisual Media Not Owned, Broadcast, or Recommended by the District*, from the Information Technology Division. The content has been revised to reflect the current District organizational structure and the impact of new technology.

BACKGROUND: Currently, videotapes and some DVDs and CD-ROMs are available to District staff: (1) from the 3,000 plus titles circulated and/or encoded for digital device playback by the AV Media Library at Adams Plaza Building and its satellites; (2) by the digital broadcast on KLCS-TV of titles owned by the District; and (3) by schools purchasing videocassettes, DVDs, and CD-ROMs recommended in the online database of audiovisual materials which is available on LAUSDnet at www.lausd.k12.ca.us/lausd/offices/avserv/overview.html.

GUIDELINES: The following guidelines are in effect:

1. Audiovisual media shown at a school must be relevant to the curriculum being studied and appropriate for the age and maturity level of students being taught.

ROUTING

Local District Superintendents
Local District Administrators,
Instructional Services
Administrators
Library Media Personnel
Teachers
ITAFs



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2. Audiovisual media shown at a school must use the established District and state criteria for the evaluation of instructional materials, especially with respect to racial and gender stereotyping and the depiction of violence, even in animation. Refer to California State Education Code Sections 60040-60045 and Section 60048 for the law that governs standards for evaluating instructional materials for social content or access the California Department of Education website to access *Standards for Evaluating Instructional Materials for Social Content* at:

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/documents/socialcontent.pdf>

3. Audiovisual media must be consistent with accepted standards of professional responsibility and must not reflect advocacy, personal opinion, bias, or partisanship.
4. Audiovisual media which have not been MPAA rated and are not owned, broadcast, or recommended by the District must be thoroughly reviewed by the instructor prior to their use.
5. MPAA NC-17 rated audiovisual media or any unrated material that might fall into this category shall not be shown in any elementary or secondary school classroom or as part of any District activity involving elementary or secondary school students.
6. MPAA R-rated audiovisual media or any unrated material that might fall into this category may be used in high school Grades 9–12 and in middle school Grades 7 and 8 with principal and parental written approval prior to the scheduled viewing date and must comply with the school’s policy on the evaluation and selection of instructional materials. (See Attachments B and C for the prior approval letter for parents and Attachment D for the prior approval form for the principal. Note: The parental approval letter should include the MPAA rating of the material.)
7. MPAA PG-13-rated audiovisual media or any unrated material that might fall into this category may be used in high school Grades 9–12 with the prior approval of the principal and must comply with the school’s policy on the evaluation and selection of instructional materials. In middle school Grades 7 and 8, written parental approval prior to the scheduled viewing date is also required. MPAA PG-13-rated videotapes may not be shown in elementary schools or in middle school Grade 6.
8. MPAA PG-rated audiovisual media or any unrated material that might fall into this category may be used in elementary schools or in middle school grade 6 with the prior approval of the principal and parents and must comply with the school’s policy on the evaluation and selection of instructional materials. MPAA G-rated videotapes and films may be used in elementary schools with principal approval and teacher review.



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9. If opinions differ over the appropriateness of the materials, the appeal process outlined in Article XXV, Sections 1.0 and 1.2 of the Agreement between the District and UTLA shall be followed.
10. The website for the Motion Picture Association of America contains a database of movie ratings. The URL is <http://www.mpa.org/movieratings>. When searching for a title, it is important to know as many details about the film as possible, such as producer, production date, cast, etc., because there are many films with the same title and the MPAA rating may be different for each one. For example, a search for *Hamlet* yielded four film titles with four different ratings—G, PG, PG-13, and R. Search results will show the film title, distributor, production date, rating, and the reason for the rating. Many titles also contain a link to an additional database that provides further descriptive information that will help identify a film.

The MPAA website also contains a listing of the TV Parental Guidelines, a rating system for all television programs which is modeled after the MPAA ratings. The TV Parental Guidelines may provide additional assistance in determining whether a film is appropriate. However, caution is necessary since the TV Parental Guide rating of a given film will most likely be based on an edited broadcast version and not the original uncut version, which may have received a harsher MPAA rating. More information about the TV Parental Guidelines may be found at <http://www.tvguidelines.org>.

11. For ready-reference, a chart summarizing the key points of this bulletin appears on Attachment E.

ASSISTANCE: For assistance or further information, please contact:

- Roberta Fujitani, Specialist, Educational Software Services, at (213) 207-2223 or roberta.fujitani@lausd.net
- Joan Kramer, Coordinating Librarian, Audiovisual Services (213) 207-2224 or joan.kramer@lausd.net



WHAT THE RATINGS MEAN

PG: “Parental Guidance Suggested; some material may not be suitable for children.”

This is a film which clearly needs to be examined or inquired about by parents before they let their children attend. The label PG plainly states that parents may consider some material unsuitable for their children, but the parent must make the decision.

Parents are warned against sending their children, unseen, and without inquiry, to PG-rated movies.

The theme of a PG-rated film may itself call for parental guidance. There may be some profanity in these films. There may be some violence or brief nudity. But these elements are not deemed so intense as to require that parents be strongly cautioned beyond the suggestion of parental guidance. There is *no* drug use content in a PG-rated film.

The PG rating, suggesting parental guidance, is thus an alert for examination of a film by parents before deciding on its viewing by their children.

Obviously such a line is difficult to draw. In our pluralistic society it is not easy to make judgments without incurring some disagreement. So long as parents know they must exercise parental responsibility, the rating serves as a meaningful guide and as a warning.

PG-13: “Parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.”

PG-13 is thus a sterner warning to parents to determine for themselves the attendance in particular of their younger children as they might consider some material not suited for them. Parents, by the rating, are alerted to be very careful about the attendance of their under-teenage children.

A PG-13 film is one which, in the view of the Rating Board, leaps beyond the boundaries of the PG rating in theme, violence, nudity, sensuality, language, or other contents, but does not quite fit within the restricted R category. Any drug use content will initially require at least a PG-13 rating. In effect, the PG-13 cautions parents with more stringency than usual to give special attention to this film before they allow their 12-year olds and younger to attend.

If nudity is sexually oriented, the film will generally not be found in the PG-13 category. If violence is too rough or persistent, the film goes into the R (restricted) rating. A film’s single use of one of the harsher sexually-derived words, though only as an expletive, shall initially require the Rating Board to issue that film at least a PG-13 rating. More than one such expletive must lead the Rating Board to issue a film an R rating, as must even one of these words used in a sexual context. These films can be rated less severely, however, if by a special vote, the Rating Board feels that a lesser rating would more responsibly reflect the opinion of American parents.

PG-13 places larger responsibilities on parents for their children’s moviegoing. The voluntary rating system is not a surrogate parent, nor should it be. It cannot, and should not, insert itself in family decisions that only parents can, and should, make. Its purpose is to give prescreening advance informational warnings, so that parents can form their own judgments. PG-13 is designed to make these parental decisions easier for films between PG and R.

R: “Restricted, under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian.”

In the opinion of the Rating Board, this film definitely contains some adult material. Parents are strongly urged to find out more about this film before they allow their children to accompany them.

An R-rated film may include hard language, or tough violence, or nudity within sensual scenes, or drug abuse or other elements, or a combination of some of the above, so that parents are counseled, in advance, to take this advisory rating very seriously. Parents must find out more about an R-rated movie before they allow their teenagers to view it.

NC-17: “No children under 17 admitted.”

This rating declares that the Ratings Board believes that this is a film that most parents will consider patently too adult for their youngsters under 17. No children will be admitted. NC-17 does not necessarily mean “obscene or pornographic” in the oft-accepted meaning of those words. The Board does not and cannot mark films with those words. These are legal terms and for courts to decide. The reasons for the application of an NC-17 rating can be violence or sex or aberrational behavior or drug abuse or any other elements which, when present, most parents would consider too strong and therefore off-limits for viewing by their children.

From *The Voluntary Movie Rating System*, Motion Picture Association of America. 1994.



ATTACHMENT B

SAMPLE LETTER

SAMPLE LETTER

SCHOOL LETTERHEAD

Date _____

Dear Parents of Guardians,

Your child is currently involved in studying _____

(describe unit of study and class, if appropriate). It is our intention to use the program
_____ (title) _____ (MPAA rating)
on _____ (date) because _____

(describe the use of this videotape in relation to your academic goals and objectives).

This letter is being sent to you in compliance with the District policy requiring parents/guardians to approve the intended use of filmed programs in any format (including videocassette, 16mm film, DVD, CD-ROM, broadcast television, or streamed file) which are not owned, broadcast, or recommended by the District prior to their scheduled showing. As part of that policy, we ask you to complete the form below, authorizing or exempting your child from the videotape showing. Please return your completed form to your child's teacher. Students exempted from this showing will be required to complete an alternative assignment. Should you have any questions regarding the program listed above, please contact me.

Signature of principal: _____

(name of school)

Name of student: _____

Please check A or B:

- A. I give permission for my child to view _____ (program title).
- B. I prefer that my child be given an alternative assignment.

Signature of parent or guardian: _____ Date: _____



CARTA DE MUESTRA

CARTA DE MUESTRA

MEMBRETE DE LA ESCUELA

FECHA

Estimados padres de familia o tutores:

Su hijo(a) está estudiando actualmente _____

(describir el tema de estudio y la materia, si procede). Tenemos la intención de utilizar el programa _____ (título) con la clasificación _____ de la MPAA, el _____ (fecha), porque _____

(describir el uso de este video en relación con sus metas y objetivos académicos)

Se les envía esta carta a ustedes en conformidad con los reglamentos del Distrito, los cuales requieren que los padres o tutores aprueben el uso planeado de los programas filmados en cualquier formato (incluidos los videocasetes, las películas de 16mm, los DVD, los CD-ROM, la televisión o las películas en tiempo real por Internet) que no sean propiedad del Distrito ni transmitidos o recomendados por éste antes de la hora programada para su proyección o transmisión. Para cumplir con este reglamento, les pedimos que llenen el formulario a continuación para autorizar o eximir a su hijo(a) de la proyección del video. Tengan la bondad de llenar el formulario y devolvérselo al maestro de su hijo(a). A los alumnos exentos de mirar este video se les obligará a realizar una tarea alternativa. Si tienen alguna pregunta sobre el programa detallado arriba, hagan el favor de comunicarse conmigo

Firma del (de la) director(a): _____

(nombre de la escuela)

Nombre y apellido del (de la) estudiante: _____

Haga el favor de marcar la A o la B:

A. Doy mi autorización para que mi hijo(a) mire _____ (título del programa).

B. Prefiero que a mi hijo(a) se le asigne una tarea alternative.

Firma del padre, la madre o el tutor: _____ Fecha: _____



SAMPLE FORM

SAMPLE FORM

LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
_____ SCHOOL

STATEMENT REGARDING USE OF AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA WHICH IS
NOT OWNED, BROADCAST, OR RECOMMENDED BY THE DISTRICT

Date: _____

Teacher's name: _____ Room: _____

Subject: _____ Grade Level: _____

Title or description of program: _____

Producer (if known): _____

Network (if known): _____

Material: Rented _____ Purchased _____ Taped at home/school _____

Parental permission is required: Yes _____ No _____ MPAA Rating: _____

If parental approval is required and/or the rating is R, explain what content may be considered objectionable.

I plan to use the above program in my classroom on _____ (date) for the following reason (describe its use in relation to your academic goals and objectives):

This program complies with the school's policy on the evaluation and selection of instructional materials. It is appropriate for the grade level, and the instructional content enhances the curriculum. If this program has been recorded off-air or from a streamed site, I affirm that it will be erased according to "fair use" interpretations of federal copyright regulations.

Teacher's signature: _____

Approved: _____ Date: _____

Principal's signature



SUMMARY OF LAUSD POLICY REGARDING THE USE OF AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA

AUDIENCE	MPAA RATING	COMMENTS
Elementary School	NC-17, R, and PG-13 PG G	May not be shown Needs principal and parental approval Needs teacher review for appropriateness and principal approval
Middle School Grade 6	NC-17, R, and PG-13 PG	May not be shown Needs principal and parental approval
Grades 7 and 8	NC-17 R and PG-13 PG	May not be shown Needs principal and parental approval Needs teacher review for appropriateness
High School Grades 9–12	NC-17 R PG-13 PG	May not be shown Needs principal and parental approval Needs principal approval Needs teacher review for appropriateness