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Fort Hays Kansas State College Department of Library Science Policies and Procedures for Selection of Instructional Materials

Department of Library Science, Fort Hays Kansas State College

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FORT HAYS KANSAS STATE COLLEGE
DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARY SCIENCE

Policies and Procedures for
Selection of Instructional Materials

The following statement of policy-making with regard to instructional materials selection for the school library media center is offered as a guide for the formulation of a policy. It is believed that such a policy should be formally adopted by each school district as a basis for consistent excellence in choice of materials and as a document that can be presented to parents and other citizens for their further understanding of the purposes and standards of selection of these materials.

Patterns of Policy Making

The governing body of a school is legally responsible for all matters relating to the operation of that school. It is recommended that assumption of responsibility and the delegation of the authority for the selection of instructional materials should be adopted by the legally responsible body and then stated in a formal policy to the professionally trained personnel employed by the school.

Selection of Personnel

The responsibility for coordination of the selection of instructional materials for the school library media center should rest with the professionally trained media personnel. Administration, faculty, students and parents should be involved in the selection process. Final decision on purchases should rest with the professional personnel in accordance with the formally adopted policy.

Types of Materials Covered

Criteria for evaluation and selection of all types of instructional materials should be established. Such criteria should be available in written form.

Criteria of Selection

The primary objective of a school library is to implement, enrich and support the educational program of the school. Criteria for instructional materials selection should implement this basic objective.

Criteria for the selection of all instructional materials are both general, as found in the professional literature, and specific in terms of the needs of each school community.

General criteria are stated in terms of significant descriptors of the subject; integrity of treatment; and quality of the medium-style, clarity, originality, etc.

Specific criteria are determined by a study of the characteristics of the school's instructional program and the needs of students as affected by the community, as follows:
Needs of the individual school program
   a. Based on knowledge of the curriculum
   b. Based on requests from administrators and teachers

Needs of the individual student
   a. Based on knowledge of children and youth
   b. Based on requests by parents and students

Needs from these several sources will require a wide range of instructional materials for an acceptance level of quality, on all levels of difficulty, and with a diversity of appeal; and the presentation of different points of view—ethnic, religious, political and cultural.

Selection Tools

Reputable, unbiased, professionally prepared selection aids should be consulted as guides.

Challenged Materials

A procedure should be established for consideration of an action on criticism of materials by individual or groups. An example of such a procedure is included in the sample statement of policy included in this publication. The American Association of School Librarians endorsed the School Library Bill of Rights for School Library Media Programs basic to this procedure at the Atlantic City Conference, 1969.

School Library Bill of Rights for School Library Media Programs

The American Association of School Librarians reaffirms its belief in the Library Bill of Rights of the American Library Association. Media personnel are concerned with generating understanding of American freedoms through the development of informed and responsible citizens. To this end the American Association of School Librarians asserts that the responsibility of the school library media center is:

To provide a comprehensive collection of instructional materials selected in compliance with basic, written selection principles, and to provide maximum accessibility to these materials.
To provide materials that will support the curriculum, taking into consideration the individual's needs, and the varied interests, abilities, socio-economic backgrounds, and maturity levels of the students served.
To provide materials for teachers and students that will encourage growth in knowledge, and that will develop literary, cultural and aesthetic appreciation, and ethical standards.
To provide materials which reflect the ideas and beliefs of religious, social, political, historical, and ethnic groups and their contribution to the American and world heritage and culture, thereby enabling students to develop an intellectual integrity in forming judgments.
To provide a written statement, approved by the local Boards of Education, of the procedures for meeting the challenge of censorship of materials in school library media centers.
To provide qualified professional personnel to serve teachers and students.
A SAMPLE POLICY STATEMENT

Policies for Selection of Instructional Materials

I. Objectives of Selection

The primary objective of the school's educational media center is to implement, enrich and support the educational program of the school. It is the duty of the center to provide a wide range of materials on all levels of difficulty, with diversity of appeal, and the presentation of different points of view.

To this end, the Board of Education reaffirms the objectives of the Standards for School Media Programs, prepared jointly in 1969 by the American Association of School Librarians and the Department of Audiovisual Instruction, and asserts that the responsibility of the library media center is:

To provide materials that will enrich and support the curriculum, taking into consideration the varied interests, abilities, and maturity levels of the pupils served.
To provide materials that will stimulate growth in factual knowledge, literary appreciation, aesthetic values, and ethical standards.
To provide a background of information which will enable pupils to make intelligent judgments in their daily life.
To provide materials on opposing sides of controversial issues so that young citizens may develop under guidance the practice of critical analysis of all media.
To provide materials representative of the many religious, ethnic, and cultural groups and their contributions to our American heritage.
To place principle above personal opinion and reason above prejudice in the selection of materials of the highest quality in order to assure a comprehensive collection appropriate for the users of the library media center.

II. Responsibility for Selection of Materials

The Board of Education is legally responsible for all matters relating to the operation of schools.

The responsibility for the selection of instructional materials is delegated to the professionally trained personnel employed by the school system.

Selection of materials involves many people: principals, teachers, supervisors and media specialists. The responsibility for coordinating the selection of instructional materials and making the recommendation for purchase rests with the professionally trained media personnel.

III. Criteria for Selection of Instructional Materials

Needs of the individual school based on knowledge of the curriculum and of the existing collection are given first consideration.

Materials for purchase are considered on the basis of:

- overall purpose
- timeliness of permanence
importance of the subject matter
quality of the writing/production
readability and popular appeal
authoritativeness
reputation of the publisher/producer
reputation and significance of the author/artist/composer/
producer, etc.
format and price
Requests from faculty and students are given consideration.

IV. Procedures for Selection

In selecting materials for purchase, the media specialist evaluates the existing collection and consults:

reputable, unbiased, professionally prepared selection aids;
specialist from all departments and/or all grade levels;
the media committee appointed by the principal to serve in an advisory capacity in the selection of materials.

In specific areas the media specialist follows these procedures:

Gift materials are judged by basic selection standards, and are accepted or rejected by these standards.
Multiple items of outstanding and much in demand media are purchased as needed.
Worn or missing standard items are replaced periodically.
Out-of-date or no longer useful materials are withdrawn from the collection.
Sets of materials and materials acquired by subscription are examined carefully, and are purchased only to fill a definite need.
Salesman must have permission from the superintendent's office before going into any of the schools.

V. Challenged Materials

Occasional objections to a selection will be made by the public, despite the care taken to select valuable materials for student and teacher use and the qualifications of persons who select the materials.
The principles of the freedom to read and of the professional responsibility of the staff must be defended, rather than the materials.
A file is kept on materials likely to be questioned or considered controversial.
If a complaint is made, the procedures are as follows:

1. Be courteous, but make no commitments.
2. Invite the complainant to file his objections in writing and offer to send him a prepared questionnaire such as the one prepared by the National Council of Teachers of English, so that he may submit a formal complaint to the media committee.
3. Temporarily withdraw the material pending a decision of the media committee.
4. Inform the superintendent and the media supervisor.

5. The media committee will
   a. Read and examine materials referred to it.
   b. Check general acceptance of the materials by reading reviews.
   c. Weigh values and faults against each other and form opinions based on the material as a whole and not on passages pulled out of context.
   d. Meet to discuss the material and to prepare a report on it.
   e. File a copy of the report in the school and administrative offices.

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