

POLICY NAME: SAMPLE POLICY CONCERNING THE SELECTION OF SCHOOL LIBRARY MATERIALSⁱ

DATE APPROVED: DECEMBER 15, 2017 BY OSLA COUNCIL

OBJECTIVE

School Libraries play a critical role in the academic, intellectual, and social development of students at all levels. It is essential that library collections reflect a wide range of learning resources to support the diverse and multifaceted needs of both teachers and students.

This document is intended as a resource to support school libraries in the development of selection policies which affirm the principles of intellectual freedom.

DEFINITIONS

Learning Resources: Learning resources refers to any print or non-print materials, including a variety of audio-visual and digital materials, used by teachers and students for formal or informal teaching and/or learning purposes.

Censorship: Censorship is defined as the removal, suppression, or restricted circulation of literary, artistic, or educational images, ideas, and/or information on the grounds that they are morally or otherwise objectionable.

While the selector seeks reasons to include material in the collection, the censor seeks reasons to exclude material from the collection. It is the responsibility of the Teacher-Librarian and school library staff to provide a diverse, balanced, and high-quality collection representing all points of view on controversial issues.ⁱⁱ

Freedom of Expression: In Canada, section 2(b) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects “freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression, including freedom of the press and other media of communication.” Please refer to OLA’s [statement on the Intellectual Rights of the Individual](#).

RESPONSIBILITY

The Teacher-Librarian, with the assistance of school library staff, is responsible for the selection and approval of library resource materials. Teacher-Librarians receive specialized training in materials evaluation and in the selection and overall development of the library’s print and electronic collection.

PURPOSE OF SCHOOL LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

The purpose of education is to investigate ideas and to prepare individuals for creative and productive lives. Access to ideas is essential to the promotion and encouragement of freedom of thought and expression.

Learning resources shall be selected to encourage critical / independent thinking and objective judgment. Learning resources should present different points of view and contribute to the students' growing understanding and appreciation of their culture and other cultures and of ideas of the past and present. They should likewise contribute to students' understanding and appreciation for media, help develop critical analysis and viewing skills, and provide the opportunity to make informed judgments about media.

It shall be the function of a school library to provide a wide range of materials in diverse formats that consider the ability and maturity level of the students served.

The Ontario Ministry of Education Curriculum documentsⁱⁱⁱ have requirements for teaching and diversity of resources and lessons. For example, *Ontario Considerations for program planning*^{iv} states,

The Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education strategy focuses on respecting diversity, promoting inclusive education, and identifying and eliminating the discriminatory biases, systemic barriers, and power dynamics that limit the ability of children to learn, grow, and contribute to society. Antidiscrimination education continues to be an important and integral component of the strategy.

SELECTION CRITERIA FOR LEARNING RESOURCES

The criteria outlined below apply to all learning resources. Although not all supplementary resources will meet all of the criteria listed below, it is expected that staff members will exercise their professional expertise, judgment, and sensitivity to apply the criteria when choosing resources.

- a) Appropriateness to Program
- b) Suitability for Students
- c) Nature and Degree of Bias
- d) Canadian Content and Publication
- e) Quality of Visual and Physical Format
- f) Cost and Durability

Appropriateness to Program

- Does the material support the curriculum as outlined in Ministry, Board, and school documents?
- Does the material support specific kinds of programs or modifications, e.g., Special Education, ESL/ELD (English as a Second Language/English Literacy Development), enrichment, remediation, upgrading?
- Is the material appropriate for the grade(s) and level(s) of instruction?

Suitability for Students

- Will the resource enrich the learning experiences of students?
- Will the resource sustain the interest of students?
- Will the resource be appropriate to the maturity and experience of students?
- Will the resource be relevant and reflective of students' lives?
- Will the resource be appropriate for learning styles and skills of the intended audience?
- Is the material available in accessible formats for students who have disabilities?

Equity and Inclusiveness

Recognizing that bias exists in all learning materials:

- Are people of a variety of races, religions, genders, sexual orientations, classes, abilities, and age represented?
- Are Indigenous peoples and a range of their issues and experiences represented?
- Does the material depict individuals and groups in a range of social, economic, and political environments?
- Does the resource address issues from a variety of perspectives?
- Can the examples of stereotyping and discrimination (including language, visuals, omissions, or distorted perspectives) be used by the teacher for anti-discriminatory educational purposes?
- If the material contains controversial issues, can they be addressed in ways that are educationally appropriate to students and programs respecting culture, religion and community of origin?

Canadian Content

- Does the material present a broadly-based perspective of Canada within a global framework?
- Does the material present Indigenous Canadians in contemporary contexts where appropriate?
- Does the material present Canada and its people within a multicultural context?
- Is the material written, illustrated, or edited by a Canadian?
- Is the material edited, printed, or bound in Canada?

Quality of Visual and Physical Format

- Is the material well-organized and presented clearly and logically?
- Is the format of illustrations, graphics, pictures, photographs, and artwork of a high quality?

Cost and Durability

- Is the cost of the material justified for its use?
- Is the resource durable?

PROCEDURE FOR CHALLENGE OF LEARNING RESOURCES

Because of the diversity of values and expectations in a school community, any student, parent or member of the community may request that learning media used in the educational program be reconsidered on the basis of appropriateness.

Requests should be treated objectively and unemotionally. The appropriate staff shall:

- explain the particular place the questioned learning resource occupies in the education program;
- describe its intended educational usefulness;
- provide additional information regarding its use; or
- refer the party to someone who can explain the use of the resource.

If the petitioner is not satisfied, the concern should be expressed in writing (please see Appendix C for a sample Formal Request for System Reconsideration of Learning Media).

APPENDIX A – ONTARIO LIBRARY ASSOCIATION STATEMENT ON THE INTELLECTUAL RIGHTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL*

In affirming its commitment to the fundamental rights of intellectual freedom, the freedom to read and freedom of the press, as embodied in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Ontario Library Association declares its acceptance of the following propositions:

1. That the provision of library service to the public is based upon the right of the citizen, under the protection of the law, to judge individually on questions of politics, religion and morality.
2. That intellectual freedom requires freedom to examine other ideas and other interpretations of life than those currently approved by the local community or by society in general, and including those ideas and interpretations which may be unconventional or unpopular.
3. That freedom of expression includes freedom for a creator to depict what is ugly, shocking and unedifying in life.
4. That free traffic in ideas and opinions is essential to the health and growth of a free society and that the freedom to read, listen and view is fundamental to such free traffic.
5. That it is the responsibility of libraries to maintain the right of intellectual freedom and to implement it consistently in the selection of books, periodicals, films, recordings, and other materials, and in the provision of access to electronic sources of information, including access to the internet.
6. That it is therefore part of the library's service to its public to resist any attempt by any individual or group within the community it serves to abrogate or curtail access to information, the freedom to read, view and listen by demanding the removal of, or restrictions to library information sources in any format.
7. That it is equally part of the library's responsibility to its public to ensure that its selection of material is not unduly influenced by the personal opinions of the selectors, but determined by the application of generally accepted standards of accuracy, style and presentation.

*Endorsed by the membership of the OLA at the 96th Annual General Meeting, 1998.

[http://accessola2.com/data/1/rec_docs/381_ola1.pdf]

APPENDIX B – STATEMENT FROM THE CANADIAN FEDERATION OF LIBRARY ASSOCIATIONS**

“The Canadian Federation of Library Associations recognizes and values the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms as the guarantor of the fundamental freedoms in Canada of conscience and religion; of thought, belief, opinion, and expression; of peaceful assembly; and of association.

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations supports and promotes the universal principles of intellectual freedom as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which include the interlocking freedoms to hold opinions and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

In accordance with these principles, the Canadian Federation of Library Associations affirms that all persons in Canada have a fundamental right, subject only to the Constitution and the law, to have access to the full range of knowledge, imagination, ideas, and opinion, and to express their thoughts publicly. Only the courts may abridge free expression rights in Canada.”

**Approval History: ~ June 27, 1974 Amended November 17, 1983; November 18, 1985; and September 27, 2015

[<http://cfla-fcab.ca/en/guidelines-and-position-papers/statement-on-intellectual-freedom-and-libraries/>]

3. What do you believe is the purpose of this learning resources in our school?

4. What, in your opinion, is the main idea conveyed through this learning resource?

5. What, in your opinion, may be the results of a student's exposure to this learning resource?

6. What do you see as the merits of this learning resource?

7. What judgements of this media by professional critics are appropriate to this discussion?

8. In your opinion, for what age group would this learning resource be appropriate?

9. Please recommend an alternative learning resource that you would consider as providing the appropriate information and perspective on this topic.

Signature

ⁱ This policy document has been adapted with thanks from documents provided by Simcoe County District School Board, Near North District School Board, Toronto District School Board, Lester B. Pearson School Board and Grand Erie District School Board.

ⁱⁱ Adapted from: American Association of School Librarians:

http://www.ala.org/aasl/sites/ala.org.aasl/files/content/aaslissues/intellectual_freedom_brochure0212.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Ontario Ministry of Education Curriculum:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/curriculum.html>

^{iv} <https://www.ontario.ca/document/kindergarten-program-2016/considerations-program-planning>