

A recommended policy to consider.

Instruction

Selection of School Library Material

Definition

The Board of Education supports the essential role school libraries provide in the district's schools ensuring access to a wide range of print and/or non-print materials for all students. In addition, the Board values the role of the school librarian/media center professional in supporting reading engagement and skills development and the overall enhancement of the learning process. School libraries exist to support teaching and learning in all grades, to encourage the development of critical thinking skills, to help foster a love of reading and learning and to provide access to informational and recreational materials for its school communities.

The Board of Education embraces the Library Bill of Rights, as adopted by the American Library Association, which specifies the responsibility of the school library is to:

1. Provide materials that will enrich and support the curriculum, taking into consideration the varied interests, abilities, and maturity levels of the students served.
2. Provide materials that will stimulate growth in factual knowledge, literary appreciation, aesthetic values, and ethical standards.
3. Provide background information that will enable students to make intelligent judgments in their daily lives.
4. Provide materials on opposing sides of controversial issues to enable young citizens to develop critical reading and thinking skills.
5. Provide materials representative of the many religious, ethnic, and cultural groups and their contributions to our American heritage.
6. Place principle above personal opinion and reason above prejudice in the selection of materials in order to assure a comprehensive collection appropriate for the users of the library.

For the purpose of this policy, school library materials will be defined as print and/or non-educational materials other than textbooks approved by the Board through its Approval of Textbooks Policy (6161).

Within the framework of constitutional protection, it is the responsibility of the professional staff to select and use materials to support the educational program. The Board acknowledges the role of the district's professional staff to consider and evaluate library materials on the basis of their utility in meeting instructional, informational, and other user needs in the diverse school community.

Instruction

Selection of School Library Material (continued)

Criteria for Selection of Materials

1. Needs of the individual student, based on knowledge of students and requests of professional staff, parents and students;
2. Needs of the individual school, based on knowledge of the curriculum and requests from professional staff;
3. Provision of a wide range of materials on various levels of difficulty with a diversity of appeal and the presentation of different points of view;
4. Consistency with the philosophy and goals of the school and its programs;
5. Representation of diverse points of view, backgrounds and experiences;
6. Consideration of age, interests, abilities, social development, and maturity levels.

Recommendations for purchase may be made to the school librarian/media specialist by administrators, teachers, students, district personnel, and community members. The purchase of materials is subject to the approval of the appropriate administrator.

Donated resources shall meet the criteria outlined in the Gifts of Library Policy (6163.11)

For any concerns or complaints related to selected library/media materials, please refer to Policy 1312.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-18a Contents of textbooks and other general instructional materials.

10-229 Change of textbooks

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FREE TO LEARN

A Policy on Academic Freedom and Public Education

Adopted by Connecticut State Board of Education

Academic freedom is the freedom to teach and to learn. In defending the freedom to teach and to learn, we affirm the democratic process itself. American public education is the source of much that is essential to our democratic heritage. No other single institution has so significantly sustained our national diversity, nor helped voice our shared hopes for an open and tolerant society. Academic freedom is among the strengths of American public education. Attempts to deny the freedom to teach and to learn are, therefore, incompatible with the goals of excellence and equity in the life of our public schools.

With freedom comes responsibility. With rights come obligations. Accordingly, academic freedom in our public schools is subject to certain limitations. Therefore, the STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION affirms that:

Academic freedom in our public schools is properly defined within the context of law and the constraints of mutual respect among individuals. Public schools represent a public trust. They exist to prepare our children to become partners in a society of self-governing citizens. Therefore, access to ideas and opportunities to consider the broad range of questions and experiences which constitute the proper preparation for a life of responsible citizenship must not be defined by the interests of any single viewpoint. Teachers, school administrators, librarians, and school media specialists must be free to select instructional research materials appropriate to the maturity level of their students. This freedom is itself subject to the reasonable restrictions mandated by law to school officials and administrators.

At the same time, local school officials must demonstrate substantial or legitimate public interest in order to justify censorship or other proposed restrictions upon teaching and learning. Similarly, local boards of education cannot establish criteria for the selection of library books based solely on the personal, social or political beliefs of school board members. While students must be free to voice their opinions in the context of a free inquiry after truth and respect for their fellow students and school personnel, student expression which threatens to interfere substantially with the school's function is not warranted by academic freedom. Students must be mindful that their rights are neither absolute nor unlimited. Part of responsible citizenship is coming to accept the consequences of the freedoms to which one is entitled by law and tradition. Similarly, parents have the right to affect their own children's education, but this right must be balanced against the right other parent's children have to a suitable range of educational experiences. Throughout, the tenets of academic freedom seek to encourage a spirit of reasoned community participation in the life and practices of our public schools.

Since teaching and learning are among the missions of our public schools, the STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION affirms the distinction between teaching and indoctrination. Schools should teach students how to think, not what to think. To study an idea is not necessarily to endorse an idea. Public school classrooms are forums for inquiry, not arenas for the promulgation of particular viewpoints. While communities have the right to exercise supervision over their own public school practices and programs, their participation in the educational life of their schools should respect the constitutional and intellectual rights guaranteed school personnel and students by American law and tradition.

Accordingly, the STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION, in order to encourage improved educational practices, recommends that local school boards adopt policies and procedures to receive, review, and take action upon requests that question public school practices and programs. Community members should be encouraged, and made aware of their rights to voice their opinions about school practices and programs in an appropriate administrative forum. The STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION further recommends that local school boards take steps to encourage informed community participation in the shared work of sustaining and improving our public schools.

Finally, the STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION affirms that community members and school personnel should acknowledge together that the purpose of public education is the pursuit of knowledge and the preparation of our children for responsible citizenship in a society that respects differences and shared freedom.

Library Bill of Rights

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

1. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.
2. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.
3. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.
4. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.
5. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.
6. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.
7. All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948;
February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; January 29, 2019

Inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996