

SELECTING MATERIALS FOR SCHOOL LIBRARIES

The Board of Directors of the Maquoketa Valley Community School District subscribes in principle to the philosophy expressed in the American Library Association's LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS and more specifically to its application in the SCHOOL LIBRARY BILL OF RIGHTS as formulated by the American Association of School Librarians and endorsed by the Council of the American Library Association, July, 1955.

As an important part of the educational system, the school libraries accept as their basic objective the provision and servicing of materials carefully selected by trained personnel which will aid the individual in the pursuit of education, information and the creative use of leisure time.

In the formulation of selection policies to implement these general objectives, the libraries have placed the main emphasis on the education and informational functions. Materials have value to education if they contribute to the positive growth of an individual, either as an individual or in relation to society.

The responsibility for selection of school library materials is the ultimate responsibility of the Superintendent of Schools and within the schools it is delegated through proper channels to the libraries. Responsibility for selection within each school shall be delegated to the professionally trained personnel who knows the course of study, the methods of teaching, the individual differences of the students and the methods and procedures of selecting from the wide range of materials when they are no longer of value to the collection.

The selection of materials is a continuing process which shall include suggestions from administration, teachers, parents and students under the coordination of the librarian.

General criteria for selection of materials:

1. Do they meet the needs of the school curriculum?
2. Are they consistent with the maturity level of the students?
3. Do they provide the students with an understanding and appreciation of democratic principles and the American way of life?
4. Do they as a whole present impartially all sides of controversial issues?
5. Do they provide for the varied interests of the students?
6. Do they maintain balance and proportion in the collection as a whole?
7. Do they tend to develop and enrich the individual and his/her way of life:

(a) by contributing to his/her understanding of him/herself, his/her community, and the world?

(b) by giving insight into human values? By developing moral and spiritual values? By encouraging appreciation of recreational, literary and aesthetic values.

8. Are they available from other sources? Items will be considered in relationship to their presence in other collections in the area.

9. The value and impact of any literary work will be judged as a whole, taking into account the author's intent rather than individual words, phrases or incidents out of which it is made.

Principles of book selection:

1. To provide, first of all, the basic requisites of a balanced library collection.
2. To present sexual, racial, religious and ethnic groups in our community and our society in such a way as to build positive images with mutual understanding and respect.
 - (a) Portray all individuals as human and recognizable, displaying a familiar range of emotions, both negative and positive.
 - (b) Place no constraints on individual aspirations and opportunities.
 - (c) Give comprehensive, accurate and balanced representation to minority groups and women.
3. To select materials, within established standards, which will meet needs and find use.
4. To intelligently, quickly and effectively anticipate and meet needs through awareness of subjects of local, national and international interest and significance.
5. To strive for impartiality in all aspects of the selection process.

Criteria for book selection:

Consideration of the criteria below, whenever and wherever relevant, shall provide the basis for selection of materials.

1. Authority - Author's qualifications, that is, his/her education, position, the professional organizations with which he/she is identified, his/her experience, previously published works.

2. Scope

3. Reliability

- (a) Accuracy
- (b) Recency

4. Treatment of materials

- (a) Evidence of bias or prejudice for or against subject
- (b) Purpose
- (c) Level - scholarly, technical, general

5. Readability

- (a) Vocabulary, sentence length, structure
- (b) Use of language in an aesthetic manner while presenting information

6. Subject interest

7. Format

- (a) Adequate and accurate index
- (b) Paper of good quality and color
- (c) Print adequate and well-spaced
- (d) Adequate margins
- (e) Pertinent and effective illustrations
- (f) Firmly bound

8. Special features

- (a) Bibliographies
- (b) Experiments, projects
- (c) Glossary
- (d) Charts, maps, etc.

9. Potential use

- (a) Will it meet the requirements of reference work?
- (b) Will it help students with personal problems and adjustments?
- (c) Will it serve as a source of information for teachers and librarians?
- (d) Does it offer understanding of cultures other than a student's own?
- (e) Will it expand student's sphere of understanding?
- (f) Will it help students and teachers keep abreast of and understand current events?
- (g) Will it foster and develop hobbies and special interests?
- (h) Will it help develop aesthetic tastes and appreciation?
- (i) Will it serve the needs of students with special problems?
- (j) Does it have inspirational value?

Possible reasons to exclude materials:

1. Materials which obviously trade on a taste for sensationalism.
2. Purely pornographic materials are automatically eliminated; however, serious works which present an honest picture of some problem or aspect of life are not necessarily excluded because of coarse language or frankness.
3. Many materials will be excluded because of inferior literary quality, false values or a merely commercial aspect.

Weeding:

In order to provide a current, highly useable collection of materials in every library, librarians shall provide for constant and continuing renewal of the collection, not only by the addition of up-to-date materials, but by the judicious elimination of materials which no longer meet needs or find use.

Materials presenting accents on sex and profanity should be subjected to a test of literary merit and reality by the librarians, who take into consideration the reading public. While librarians would not in any case include the sensational or over-dramatic, the fact of sexual incidents or profanity appearing should not automatically disqualify a book. Rather, the decision should be made on the basis of whether the book presents life in its true proportions and whether circumstances are realistically dealt with.

This process of weeding will be done according to established and accepted standards for determining the relevance and value of materials in a given context.

Subjects which require specific definition:

1. Religion and Race - Materials which are representative of the many religious, racial and cultural groups and their contributions to our American heritage shall be provided. Materials should be well written, objective and, when taken as a whole, should not attempt to sway the emotions of the student toward or against any one group.
2. Sex - The use of profanity or unnecessary frankness in dealing with sex is to be deplored, but when the materials open a clearer vision of life, develop understanding of other people or break down intolerance, these virtues will be weighed against the possible harm to be done by some regrettable work or passage in the material, particularly where taste rather than morals is offended.

Simple books of sex information for young people belong on the open shelves. It seems important that young people gain sound information since they are sure to gain information of some kind on the subject. If the books are treated as are informative books on other subjects, much can be done to give young people a healthy attitude toward sex.

3, Narcotics, Alcohol and Tobacco - While certain materials on these topics may be dangerous in the hands of young people, materials which are written by qualified people in an unsensational style could be of great value. State law requires that we teach about the harmful effects of their use. To be avoided are presentations on the methods of taking or administering these substances and the pleasurable effect of the substance.

4. Political Systems - The facts and truth are the best way to compare political systems. Materials which present a clear picture of any political system are needed if students are to be able to judge and compare it with other systems.

Objectives of school library service:

1. To acquire books and materials consistent with the demands of the curriculum.
2. To develop in the students skills and resourcefulness in the use of books and librarians.
3. To effectively guide and counsel students in the selection and use of the books for their personal gratification as well as for curricular needs.
4. To foster in the student a wide range of significant interests.
5. To provide opportunities for aesthetic experiences and develop appreciation of the fine arts.
6. To encourage life-long education through the use of the library.
7. To work cooperatively and constructively with instructional and administrative staffs in the schools.

LEGAL REFERENCE:

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