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## **Library and Instructional Materials Selection and Reconsideration Policy**

### **Part 1: Selection of Instructional Materials and Library Resources**

#### **I. Objectives**

The Oyster River Cooperative School Board recognizes its responsibility for all matters related to the District schools. The responsibility for the selection and coordination of instructional matters and other resources are delegated to the professional trained personnel employed by the school District in this capacity.

Instructional materials are selected by the school district to implement, enrich, and support the educational program. Materials will serve both the breadth of the curriculum and the needs and interests of the faculty and students. The district is obligated to provide a wide range of materials on all levels of difficulty and in a variety of formats, with diversity of appeal, and representing the presentation of many different points of view.

The objective of the Library is to make available to students and faculty a collection of materials that will enrich and support the curriculum and meet the needs and interests of the students and faculty served.

#### **II. Responsibility for Selection**

While the selection of materials involves many people including administrators, teachers, students, and community residents, the responsibility for coordinating and recommending the selection and purchase of library media materials rests with the Librarian. The responsibility for selecting instructional materials rests with the professional staff.

#### **III. Criteria for Selection**

The following general selection criteria will be used for the selection of library and instructional materials, including electronic, print, and non-print resources, as they apply:

1. Instructional materials and library resources shall support and be consistent with the general educational goals of the state and the district, and the aims and objectives of ORCSD and specific courses.
2. Instructional materials and library resources shall be chosen to enrich and support the curriculum and the personal needs and interests of users.
3. Instructional materials and library resources shall meet high standards of quality in:
  - Enrichment and support of the curriculum department
  - Accurate and unbiased depiction of the diversity and pluralistic nature of society
  - Matching the appropriate skill levels of students
  - Contribution to the curriculum and the educational goals of the school
  - Relevance to the interests of students and faculty
  - Reviews found in standard selection sources
  - Recommendations based on a preview examination of materials by professional personnel, adults with special expertise, or students

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- Reputation and significance of the author, producer, and publisher
  - Currency or timeliness of material
  - Contribution to a breadth and diversity of representative viewpoints on controversial issues
  - Contribution to multicultural and pluralistic awareness
  - High degree of potential user appeal
  - Quality, durability, and variety of format
  - Suitability of format and appearance for intended use
  - Value commensurate with cost and/or need
4. Instructional materials and library resources shall be appropriate for the subject area and for the age, emotional development, ability level, learning style, and social development of the students for whom the materials are selected.
  5. Instructional materials and library resources shall be designed to provide a background of information that will motivate students and staff to examine their own attitudes and behavior; to comprehend their duties, responsibilities, rights and privileges as participating citizens in our society; and to make informed judgments in their daily lives.
  6. Instructional materials and library resources shall provide information on opposing sides of controversial issues so that users may develop under guidance the practice of critical analysis.

#### **IV. Selection of Learning Sources**

In selecting materials for use, staff members will evaluate the materials and may consult reputable balanced critical assessments, review journals, specialists and/or professionally trained personnel employed by the School District. With the materials used in group instruction, school staff will pay particular attention to the experience and needs of their students in preparatory and follow-up activities.

- In selecting instructional materials and library resources, the Librarian or other professional staff members will evaluate available resources and curriculum needs and will consult reputable, professionally recognized reviewing periodicals, standard catalogs, and other selection aids to help guide the selection.
- Recommendations for purchase may involve administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community members, as appropriate.
- Gift materials shall be judged by the criteria outlined in this policy and shall be accepted or rejected by those criteria.
- Selection is an ongoing process that should include the removal of materials no longer appropriate and the replacement of lost and worn materials still of educational value.

#### **V. Position on Intellectual Freedom**

This school subscribes in principle to the statements of policy on library philosophy as expressed in the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights*, a copy of which is appended to, and made a part of, this policy statement [Appendix A]. In the event that library or instructional materials are questioned, the principles of intellectual freedom shall be defended.

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## **Part 2: Procedures for Dealing with Challenged Materials**

### **I. Statement of Policy**

Despite the quality of the selection process, any parent/legal guardian or student may formally challenge instructional materials and library resources used in the school's educational program on the basis of appropriateness. The procedure concerning challenged materials is outlined below. Its purpose is to provide for a hearing with appropriate action, within the context of the principles of freedom of information, the student's right to access information, and the professional responsibility and integrity of the school faculty. No materials shall be removed from ORCSD before the process of review is completed.

### **II. Preliminary Complaint Request**

Upon receiving a complaint:

1. The librarian [or Principal, or other appropriate staff member] shall explain to the questioner the school's selection procedure, criteria, and qualifications of those persons selecting the resource.
2. The librarian [or other appropriate staff member] shall explain the particular place the questioned resource occupies in the educational program, its intended usefulness, and additional information regarding its use, or refer the party to someone who can identify and explain the use of the resource.
3. If the questioner wishes to file a formal challenge, a copy of the *ORCSD School Library and Instructional Materials Selection and Reconsideration Policy* and a *Request for the Reconsideration of Instructional Materials and Library Resources* form [Appendix C] shall be emailed to the party concerned by the library media director, along with a letter to the complainant [Appendix D].

### **III. Request for Formal Reconsideration**

#### **A) Preliminary Procedures**

1. The questioner must read or review the material in question in its entirety.
2. ORCSD will keep on hand and make available the *Request for Reconsideration of Instructional Materials and Library Resources* forms [Appendix C]. All formal objections to instructional materials and library resources must be made on these forms.
3. *The Request for Reconsideration of Instructional Materials and Library Resources* form shall be completed and signed by the questioner before further consideration will be given. The form shall be filed with the principal. If the form is not completed and returned, it shall be assumed that the questioner no longer wishes to file a formal complaint [as stated in the letter to complainant, [Appendix D].

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4. The superintendent shall be informed of the formal complaint received.
5. The request for reconsideration shall be referred to a reconsideration committee at the school level for reevaluation of the resource.

#### B) The Reconsideration Committee

1. Upon receipt of a request for the reconsideration of Instructional Materials and Library Resources, [Appendix C] the reconsideration committee shall arrange to meet within twenty working days after the complaint is received.

The Librarian will select and chair, with the support from the building principal, a reconsideration committee selected for diversity of opinion and relevant expertise.

The reconsideration committee will consist of:

- o Two to six members of the teaching staff,
  - o A school administrator, appointed by the administrative team
  - o Up to two students, as age appropriate
  - o Two adults, not employees of the District, appointed by the Superintendent
  - o One School Board Member
2. The reconsideration committee shall review the challenged resource and judge whether it conforms to the principles of selection outlined in the *ORCSD School Library and Instructional Materials Selection and Reconsideration Policy*.
  3. The identity of committee members will remain anonymous.

#### C) Resolution

1. The reconsideration committee shall:
  - a. Examine the challenged resource in its entirety
  - b. Determine professional acceptance by reading critical reviews of the resource
  - c. Weigh values and faults, and form opinions based on the material as a whole rather than on passages or selections taken out of context
  - d. Discuss the challenged resource in the context of the educational program
  - e. Discuss the challenged item with the individual questioner when appropriate
  - f. Prepare a written report
2. The written report shall be discussed with the individual questioner if requested.
3. The librarian shall retain the written report with copies forwarded to the superintendent, and the principal.
4. Notwithstanding any procedure outlined in this policy, the questioner shall have the right to appeal any decision of the reconsideration committee to the Superintendent whose sole role is to review the process used for consistency but will not supersede the integrity and thoroughness of the final recommendations of the review committee.

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#### D) Guiding Principles

1. Parent/Legal Guardian or student may raise objection to instructional materials and library resources used in ORCSD educational program, despite the fact that the individuals selecting such resources were duly qualified to make the selection, followed the proper procedure, and observed the criteria for selecting instructional materials and library resources.
2. The librarian should review the selection and objection rules with the teaching staff at least annually. The staff should be reminded that the right to object to instructional materials and library resources is one granted by policies enacted by the school board.
3. No parent has the right to determine reading, viewing, or listening matter for students other than his or her own children.
4. ORCSD supports the *Library Bill of Rights* and *The Freedom to Read Statement*, adopted by the American Library Association [Appendixes A and B]. When instructional materials and library resources are challenged, the principles of the freedom to read/listen/view must be defended as well.
5. Access to challenged material shall not be restricted during the consideration process.
6. A decision to sustain a challenge shall not necessarily be interpreted as a judgment of irresponsibility by the professionals involved in the original selection and/or use of the material.

#### List of Appendix's

- Appendix A – Library Bill of Rights
- Appendix B – The Freedom to Read Statement
- Appendix C – Request for the Reconsideration of Instructional Materials and Library Resources
- Appendix D – Sample Letter to Complainant

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## Appendix A

### 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.

I. 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.

II. 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.

III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. 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.

VII. 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.

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© American Library Association 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.

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## **Appendix B**

### **The Freedom to Read Statement**

The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is continuously under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove or limit access to reading materials, to censor content in schools, to label "controversial" views, to distribute lists of "objectionable" books or authors, and to purge libraries. These actions apparently rise from a view that our national tradition of free expression is no longer valid; that censorship and suppression are needed to counter threats to safety or national security, as well as to avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals. We, as individuals devoted to reading and as librarians and publishers responsible for disseminating ideas, wish to assert the public interest in the preservation of the freedom to read.

Most attempts at suppression rest on a denial of the fundamental premise of democracy: that the ordinary individual, by exercising critical judgment, will select the good and reject the bad. We trust Americans to recognize propaganda and misinformation, and to make their own decisions about what they read and believe. We do not believe they are prepared to sacrifice their heritage of a free press in order to be "protected" against what others think may be bad for them. We believe they still favor free enterprise in ideas and expression.

These efforts at suppression are related to a larger pattern of pressures being brought against education, the press, art and images, films, broadcast media, and the Internet. The problem is not only one of actual censorship. The shadow of fear cast by these pressures leads, we suspect, to an even larger voluntary curtailment of expression by those who seek to avoid controversy or unwelcome scrutiny by government officials.

Such pressure toward conformity is perhaps natural to a time of accelerated change. And yet suppression is never more dangerous than in such a time of social tension. Freedom has given the United States the elasticity to endure strain. Freedom keeps open the path of novel and creative solutions and enables change to come by choice. Every silencing of a heresy, every enforcement of an orthodoxy, diminishes the toughness and resilience of our society and leaves it the less able to deal with controversy and difference.

Now as always in our history, reading is among our greatest freedoms. The freedom to read and write is almost the only means for making generally available ideas or manners of expression that can initially command only a small audience. The written word is the natural medium for the new idea and the untried voice from which come the original contributions to social growth. It is essential to the extended discussion that serious thought requires, and to the accumulation of knowledge and ideas into organized collections.

We believe that free communication is essential to the preservation of a free society and a creative culture. We believe that these pressures toward conformity present the danger of limiting the range and variety of inquiry and expression on which our democracy and our culture depend. We believe that every American community must jealously guard the freedom to publish and to circulate, in order to preserve its own freedom to read. We believe that publishers and librarians have a profound responsibility to give validity to that freedom to read by making it possible for the readers to choose freely from a variety of offerings. The freedom to read is guaranteed by the Constitution. Those with faith in free people will stand firm on these constitutional guarantees of essential rights and will exercise the responsibilities that accompany these rights.

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We therefore affirm these propositions:

1. *It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions, including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority.*

Creative thought is by definition new, and what is new is different. The bearer of every new thought is a rebel until that idea is refined and tested. Totalitarian systems attempt to maintain themselves in power by the ruthless suppression of any concept that challenges the established orthodoxy. The power of a democratic system to adapt to change is vastly strengthened by the freedom of its citizens to choose widely from among conflicting opinions offered freely to them. To stifle every nonconformist idea at birth would mark the end of the democratic process. Furthermore, only through the constant activity of weighing and selecting can the democratic mind attain the strength demanded by times like these. We need to know not only what we believe but why we believe it.

2. *Publishers, librarians, and booksellers do not need to endorse every idea or presentation they make available. It would conflict with the public interest for them to establish their own political, moral, or aesthetic views as a standard for determining what should be published or circulated.*

Publishers and librarians serve the educational process by helping to make available knowledge and ideas required for the growth of the mind and the increase of learning. They do not foster education by imposing as mentors the patterns of their own thought. The people should have the freedom to read and consider a broader range of ideas than those that may be held by any single librarian or publisher or government or church. It is wrong that what one can read should be confined to what another thinks proper.

3. *It is contrary to the public interest for publishers or librarians to bar access to writings on the basis of the personal history or political affiliations of the author.*

No art or literature can flourish if it is to be measured by the political views or private lives of its creators. No society of free people can flourish that draws up lists of writers to whom it will not listen, whatever they may have to say.

4. *There is no place in our society for efforts to coerce the taste of others, to confine adults to the reading matter deemed suitable for adolescents, or to inhibit the efforts of writers to achieve artistic expression.*

To some, much of modern expression is shocking. But is not much of life itself shocking? We cut off literature at the source if we prevent writers from dealing with the stuff of life. Parents and teachers have a responsibility to prepare the young to meet the diversity of experiences in life to which they will be exposed, as they have a responsibility to help them learn to think critically for themselves. These are affirmative responsibilities, not to be discharged simply by preventing them from reading works for which they are not yet prepared. In these matters' values differ, and values cannot be legislated; nor can machinery be devised that will suit the demands of one group without limiting the freedom of others.

5. *It is not in the public interest to force a reader to accept the prejudgment of a label characterizing any expression or its author as subversive or dangerous.*

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The ideal of labeling presupposes the existence of individuals or groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is good or bad for others. It presupposes that individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine. But Americans do not need others to do their thinking for them.

6. *It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians, as guardians of the people's freedom to read, to contest encroachments upon that freedom by individuals or groups seeking to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large; and by the government whenever it seeks to reduce or deny public access to public information.*

It is inevitable in the give and take of the democratic process that the political, the moral, or the aesthetic concepts of an individual or group will occasionally collide with those of another individual or group. In a free society individuals are free to determine for themselves what they wish to read, and each group is free to determine what it will recommend to its freely associated members. But no group has the right to take the law into its own hands, and to impose its own concept of politics or morality upon other members of a democratic society. Freedom is no freedom if it is accorded only to the accepted and the inoffensive. Further, democratic societies are more safe, free, and creative when the free flow of public information is not restricted by governmental prerogative or self-censorship.

7. *It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians to give full meaning to the freedom to read by providing books that enrich the quality and diversity of thought and expression. By the exercise of this affirmative responsibility, they can demonstrate that the answer to a "bad" book is a good one, the answer to a "bad" idea is a good one.*

The freedom to read is of little consequence when the reader cannot obtain matter fit for that reader's purpose. What is needed is not only the absence of restraint, but the positive provision of opportunity for the people to read the best that has been thought and said. Books are the major channel by which the intellectual inheritance is handed down, and the principal means of its testing and growth. The defense of the freedom to read requires of all publishers and librarians the utmost of their faculties and deserves of all Americans the fullest of their support.

We state these propositions neither lightly nor as easy generalizations. We here stake out a lofty claim for the value of the written word. We do so because we believe that it is possessed of enormous variety and usefulness, worthy of cherishing and keeping free. We realize that the application of these propositions may mean the dissemination of ideas and manners of expression that are repugnant to many persons. We do not state these propositions in the comfortable belief that what people read is unimportant. We believe rather that what people read is deeply important; that ideas can be dangerous; but that the suppression of ideas is fatal to a democratic society. Freedom itself is a dangerous way of life, but it is ours.

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This statement was originally issued in May of 1953 by the Westchester Conference of the American Library Association and the American Book Publishers Council, which in 1970 consolidated with the American Educational Publishers Institute to become the Association of American Publishers. Adopted June 25, 1953, by the ALA Council and the AAP Freedom to Read Committee; amended January 28, 1972; January 16, 1991; July 12, 2000; June 30, 2004.

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**Appendix C**

**Request for the Reconsideration of Instructional Materials and Library Resources**

Request Initiated by: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Town: \_\_\_\_\_

Complainant is  student  parent/guardian of student

Complainant represents: \_\_\_\_\_ himself/herself

\_\_\_\_\_ name of group

\_\_\_\_\_ other: \_\_\_\_\_

Resource on which you are commenting:

\_\_\_\_\_ Book                      \_\_\_\_\_ Video                      \_\_\_\_\_ Other

\_\_\_\_\_ Magazine                      \_\_\_\_\_ CD

\_\_\_\_\_ Newspaper                      \_\_\_\_\_ Website

Author/Producer: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Publisher: \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the following questions either in the space provided, or on additional pages.

1. Have you been able to discuss this work with the teacher or librarian who ordered it or who used it?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes      \_\_\_\_\_ No

2. Did you read the entire book, or view the entire material? If not, which parts?



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## Appendix D

### Sample Letter to Complainant

Date

Dear:

We appreciate your concern over the use of \_\_\_\_\_ at  
the Oyster River Cooperative School: \_\_\_\_\_.

The school has developed procedures for selecting materials but realizes that not everyone will agree with every selection made.

To help you understand the selection process, we are sending a copy of Oyster River's *Library and Instructional Materials Selection and Reconsideration Policy*.

If you are still concerned after you review this material, please complete the *Request for the Reconsideration of Learning Resources form* and return it to me. You may be assured of prompt attention to your request. If I have not heard from you within two weeks from the date listed above, we will assume you no longer wish to file a formal complaint.

Sincerely,

Librarian