

Selection Policy for School Library Media Center Collections Cambridge Public Schools

I. Introduction

The purpose of this library materials selection policy is to provide guidelines for the selection and review of print, non-print, and electronic resources, excluding textbooks, that reflect the philosophy and goals of the Cambridge Public Schools. This policy outlines the responsibility, objectives, and criteria for selection, as well as procedures for both selection and reconsideration of materials.

Each library collection is considered a segment of the total district library collection. Materials are shared and may be made available to any school library in the district.

The term “electronic resources” refers to those that the Library Media Coordinator and/or Specialist has selected for use--specifically; online services subscribed to annually, or designated curriculum-based sites on the World Wide Web. The Library Media department does not control material that may be available from other Internet sites, and use of the network is subject to the Cambridge Public Schools’ Acceptable Use Policy. Students must have a current signed Acceptable Use Policy on file in order to use library media center computers to access the Internet.

II. Responsibility

The Cambridge School Committee is responsible for establishing the policy of the Cambridge Public Schools.

The responsibility for the selection of all library media materials is delegated to the professional library media coordinator and/or specialist through the building principal. The selection process is a collaborative effort involving administrators, teachers, students, and library media specialists. The responsibility for coordinating and recommending the selection and purchase of library media materials rests with the library media coordinator and/or specialists, who have professional training and experience in materials selection.

In selecting materials, library, staff, administrators, and faculty are guided by the principles incorporated in the American Library Association’s “Library Bill of Rights”, the American Library Association and Association of American Publishers’ “Freedom to Read” statement, standards adopted by the American Association of School Librarians, school library standards of the Massachusetts School Library Media Association, and the Massachusetts Department of Education’s regulations pertaining to curricula (622 C.M.R. 5.01-5.03).

III. Objectives

The Cambridge School Committee recognizes that it is the primary objective of the library media centers to implement, enrich, and support the education programs of the schools. Materials are selected to advance the curriculum frameworks of the state, district, and individual schools. It is the duty of the library media centers to provide a wide range of materials on all levels of difficulty, with diversity of appeal and with presentation of different points of view.

To this end, the Cambridge School Committee reaffirms the American Library Association's Bill of Rights for School Library Media Programs and asserts that the responsibility of the School Library Media Center is:

1. To provide materials that will enrich and support the curriculum, taking into consideration the varied interests, abilities, and maturity levels of the students served.
2. To provide materials that will stimulate growth in factual knowledge, literary appreciation, aesthetic values, and ethical standards.
3. To provide a background of information which will enable students to make intelligent judgments in their daily lives.
4. 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. (Opinions expressed in library materials are not necessarily endorsed by the Cambridge School Committee.)
5. To provide materials representative of the many religious, ethnic, and cultural groups and their contributions to our American heritage.
6. To place principle above personal opinion and avoid prejudice in selection of materials of the highest quality in order to assure a comprehensive collection appropriate for the users of the library media center.

The Cambridge School Committee recognizes that the final decision as to what materials an individual student will use rests with that student's parents/guardians. However, at no time, will the wishes of one child's parents/guardians to restrict his/her reading or viewing of a particular item infringe on other parents/guardians rights to permit their child to read or view the same material.

IV. Selection Criteria

Materials selected should support the curriculum and interests of students, staff, and families, taking into account the diverse interests, age levels, ability levels, learning styles, and emotional and social development levels. Materials should encourage appreciation for both informational and recreational reading, viewing, or listening.

In order to achieve the objectives of the library media centers, materials will be selected with the following criteria in mind:

- Factual content
- Educational significance
- Readability
- Authenticity and accuracy
- Literary style and/or artistic quality
- Quality and variety of physical format
- Treatment of subject that is clear, comprehensible, skillful, convincing, well-organized, and unbiased
- Timeliness or permanence
- Durable and attractive construction
- Special features such as illustrations, photographs, maps, charts

4. The value of each work will be examined as a whole, transcending individual words, phrases, illustrations, or incidents.

5. Materials will be chosen in a variety of formats, with efforts to incorporate emerging technologies. Formats include print, non-print (i.e., videotapes, audiotapes, computer programs), and online resources.

6. Resource sharing will be considered while selecting materials. Materials may or may not be purchased based on collaborative relationships or in-school collections, depending upon extent of need.

V. Selection Procedures

1. Each library media specialist will submit a plan to the Coordinator of Library Media Services or designee for collection maintenance and development annually. In coordinating this process, the library media specialist will:

- Collaborate with library media colleagues for shared purchase selection to support the curriculum frameworks
- Purchase duplicates and replacements
- Share print, non-print, and online resource lists, resulting from teacher collaboration on student research and literary projects
- Maintain current knowledge of children's literature and information technology resources

2. Core reference collections (print, non-print, and online) will emphasize subject-related sources and will be evaluated and updated annually on a system-wide basis to ensure equitable access to information at all school regardless of size of collection and student population.

3. Selection tools from reputable, professionally-prepared sources will be consulted for selecting books, non-print, and electronic media.

4. When possible, items will be examined before purchase.

5. Gift materials will be evaluated by the same standards and criteria as purchased materials and are accepted or rejected by these standards. Gifts that do not meet criteria for library use but are appropriate for classroom or home use will be offered to the school community with the donor's consent.

6. Library media specialists will inventory collections at least every two years. The same thought and care given to selection of materials will be exercised in weeding so that collections remain current and useful to the school community. The ALA recommends that three (3) to five (5) percent of collections (print and non-print) be weeded annually. Worn, damaged, or missing items basic to the collections will be replaced periodically.

VI. Reconsideration Procedures

Any resident of the City of Cambridge or any employee of the Cambridge Public Schools may challenge resources housed in a school's Library Media Center on the basis of appropriateness.

I. Informal Reconsideration

Occasional objections to material may be voiced by the public despite the qualifications of the person making the selection for that library media center, and the care taken in the selection process. Any such objection should be directed to the library media specialist in charge of that center and to the Coordinator, who can provide information regarding the selection and use of the material and explain the philosophy and goals of the library media center and program.

If the objection cannot be resolved at this level and the individual wishes to make a formal complaint, the library media specialist will notify the principal. A packet of materials will be forwarded to the complainant, which includes a dated cover letter, a copy of the district's materials selection policy, and a reconsideration request form. If no action is taken within a two-week period by the objecting party, the matter will be considered closed.

Challenged material will remain in use during the reconsideration period, and cannot be removed except upon action by the library media specialist, a Reconsideration Committee, the Superintendent, or formal action of the Cambridge School Committee. A parent or guardian filing a formal request for reconsideration may ask that access to challenged materials be denied to his/her child or children.

II. Formal Reconsideration at the School Level

At the school level, reconsideration requests will be heard by the Reconsideration Committee, a standing committee constituted each September to serve for that school year. The Reconsideration Committee will be chaired by the principal and will consist of the library media specialist, the library media coordinator, a member of the teaching staff, a member of the School Council, and another parent. At the high school level, a student also may serve as part of the Reconsideration Committee. At the time of composition, the Reconsideration Committee will meet to learn about the issues and process involved in a reconsideration.

When a signed and completed reconsideration request form is received by a principal, he/she will immediately notify members of the Reconsideration Committee and the Executive Director for Curriculum Development. A meeting of the Reconsideration Committee will be scheduled to occur within three (3) weeks of the date of submission of the request for reconsideration form and the complainant will be notified of the date and time of such meeting. Packets including copies of the reconsideration request form,

bibliographic data on the challenged material, and professional reviews or other relevant information about the challenged material will be forwarded to Reconsideration Committee members as soon as possible by the library media specialist. At the scheduled meeting, the complainant will have the right to address the Reconsideration Committee.

After the meeting, the Reconsideration Committee will consider the work as a whole, survey review literature, and assess the merits of the work in the context of a Library Media Center before making a decision. The Reconsideration Committee will issue a written report to the principal explaining the reasons for their decision to remove or to retain the work in question. If any members of the Reconsideration Committee disagree with the decision of the majority of committee members, then the report should include a section explaining the dissenting views.

A decision of the Reconsideration Committee to sustain a challenge shall not necessarily be interpreted as a judgment of irresponsibility by the professionals involved in the original selection of the material.

The principal will notify the complainant of the Reconsideration Committee's decision.

If the complainant is still not satisfied, he/she may, within two (2) weeks of the date of notification of the decision of the Reconsideration Committee, request an appeal to a district-wide committee.

3. Formal Reconsideration at the District Level

When a complainant is notified by the principal of the Reconsideration Committee's decision, he/she has the option to request an "Appeal of Reconsideration Committee Decision" form from the principal. Such an appeal must be submitted to the Office of the Superintendent within a two (2) week period from the date of notification of the Reconsideration Committee's decision.

The Superintendent's office will assemble a district level reconsideration committee chaired by the Superintendent or her/his designee. The District Reconsideration Committee will include the following: the principal of the school concerned; the Coordinator of the Library Media Department; the Executive Director for Curriculum Development and two community members who were not part of the initial Reconsideration Committee. Members of the District Reconsideration Committee are charged with the same responsibilities as the initial Reconsideration Committee, and will receive a copy of the school level Reconsideration Committee report as well as the original supporting materials.

A meeting of the District Reconsideration Committee will be scheduled to occur within a three (3) week period from the date the appeal was submitted. At the scheduled meeting, the complainant will have the right to address the District Reconsideration Committee.

After the meeting, the District Reconsideration Committee will consider the work as a whole, survey review literature, and assess the merits of the work in the context of a Library Media Center before making a recommendation. The District Reconsideration Committee will issue a written report to the Superintendent explaining the reasons for their recommendation to remove or to retain the work in question. If any members of the District Reconsideration Committee disagree with the recommendation of the majority of committee members, then the report should include a section explaining the dissenting views.

Any recommendation by the District Reconsideration Committee to sustain a challenge shall not necessarily be interpreted as a judgment of irresponsibility by the professionals involved in the original selection of the material.

The Superintendent will review each recommendation of the District Reconsideration Committee and shall make a determination whether the appeal will be granted or denied. The Superintendent will notify the complainant in writing as to whether the appeal was granted or denied.

4. Appeal to the School Committee

If the complainant is still not satisfied, he/she may, within two (2) weeks of the date of notification of the district level decision, appeal the decision to the Cambridge School Committee for a hearing before the full committee.

When such an appeal is filed with the Cambridge School Committee, the Office of the Superintendent will forward to the Cambridge School Committee a copy of the District Reconsideration Committee report as well as any supporting materials that were provided in connection with the District Reconsideration Committee meeting and a copy of the school level Reconsideration Committee report as well as the original supporting materials.