

## **Guidance for School Libraries on Collection Development Texas State Library and Archives Commission**

Voluntary standards for school libraries are developed by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission in consultation with the State Board of Education. The *School Library Programs: Standards and Guidelines for Texas* describe six common components for school library programs: Information Literacy, Inquiry, Reading, Digital Learning, Safe and Nurturing Environment, and Leadership. It includes metrics in support of measurability involving service to students and teachers.

Parents hold an essential role and have the right to guide what their student reads. They have the right to select alternative reading or instructional materials for their student. Parents are also invited to participate in a district's policy-making activities and to offer input. If parents are concerned about a selection by their child, they should contact the school librarian to discuss options, which may include filing of a formal request for reconsideration of a specific title. That reconsideration process should follow the established procedures set out in the district's policy.

The current standards, adopted in 2018, establish guidelines for school library programs at five levels: distinguished, accomplished, proficient, developing, and improvement needed. They recommend that school libraries have a mission, vision, goals, objectives, and a strategic plan which is in alignment with campus, district, and statewide plans and incorporates sound policies and procedures (Strand 6, Dimension 6). One of the most critical functions of school libraries is selecting resources in all formats to support students and educators, an activity known as collection development. A collection development policy is created with input from educators, parents, and other stakeholders to build a collection addressing local needs. The policy must comply with local, state, and federal laws and regulations and should follow professional library standards.

This guidance resource document is intended to assist school districts, school librarians, and communities in understanding the importance of a well-defined policy and is consistent with the standards described above. It is presented as a starting point from which school districts and professional library staff, working in concert with educators and the community, can implement the tool that best meets local needs.

A collection development policy should be updated regularly based on evaluations of the collection's currency, relevance, age appropriateness, diversity, and variety. Library collections should support the curriculum taught at the local and state level. The collection should also provide materials of high interest to encourage student reading and learning for pleasure.

### **Collection Development and Policies**

While every policy will be unique, professional library practices establish common policy areas. Collection development is a systematic process for planning, acquiring, and maintaining all library materials for students and teachers. An institutional collection development policy formalizes the objectives and processes that the institution should follow. This policy deals specifically with library collections, which are not instructional materials in themselves. School and classroom libraries are generally regarded as places for voluntary inquiry with library books treated differently from instructional materials used in classroom instruction. Students have a wide range of ability, maturity, and backgrounds, and not all materials will appeal to, or be appropriate for, all students.

#### **Importance of broad collections**

School library collections should include materials that are relevant to the campus and students it serves. They should also include a broad range of materials on topics that achieve key outcomes:

- Enrich and support the curriculum, while taking into consideration students' varied interests, abilities, learning styles, and maturity levels.
- Foster growth in factual knowledge, the enjoyment of reading, literary appreciation, aesthetic values, and societal standards.
- Present multiple viewpoints related to controversial issues to foster critical thinking skills, and encourage discussion based on rational analysis.
- Represent many ethnic, religious, and cultural groups and their contributions to the national heritage and world community.
- Provide a wide range of background information that will enable students to make intelligent decisions in their daily lives.

### **Selection, Choices, and Reconsideration**

Library materials should be professionally selected based on standard criteria, including the following:

- Demonstrate literary merit, quality, value, and significance.
- Receive favorable professional library reviews from nationally recognized review publications.
- Have received state or national awards or are included on recommended reading lists developed by library professionals and educators.
- Cover topics, authors, series, or genres that fill gaps in the school library collection.
- Include accurate and authentic factual content from authoritative sources.
- Have a high degree of potential user appeal and interest.
- Offer a global perspective that promotes equity of access, for example by including print and non-print materials such as electronic and multimedia to meet the needs of individual learners.
- Are requested or recommended by students and teachers.
- Mirror selections found in neighboring libraries in the region and/or districts.
- Represent diverse viewpoints and cultures appropriate to each campus to ensure the collection embodies the unique backgrounds of its student population.

### **Professional Library Practice**

Certified school librarians in Texas are educators first and foremost. As such, they are knowledgeable about the diverse learning needs of students and professional collection development practices. Librarians hold a master's degree, are required to complete an educator preparation program that includes graduate level courses on collection development and are also required to take 200 hours of professional development every five years. Librarians draw on professional resources and publications to guide building collections.

### **Transparency**

Libraries value transparency and library services are designed to enable individuals to find information they seek. To this end, libraries provide online catalogs that are publicly available to allow anyone to review holdings, including information about titles and how and where material can be assessed. Library policies and services should reflect this commitment to transparency and ensure the public knows how to access library catalogs.

### **Applicable Laws and Rules**

Collection development policies must be mindful of and comply with existing local, state, and federal laws and regulations. Section 33.021 of the Texas Education Code requires school libraries to consider the standards adopted by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, in consultation with the State Board of Education, when developing, implementing, or expanding library services. These standards, adopted at 13 TAC §4.1, emphasize the intellectual development of students, community collaboration, and privacy interests. In addition, collection development policies must demonstrate a commitment to protecting children from harmful materials as defined by Texas Penal Code §43.24 (Sale, Distribution, or Display of

Harmful Material to Minor). Under the statute, harmful material is defined as material whose dominant theme taken as a whole: (1) appeals to the prurient interest of a minor, in sex, nudity, or excretion; (2) is patently offensive to prevailing standards in the adult community as a whole with respect to what is suitable for minors; and (3) is utterly without redeeming social value for minors. It is an offense in Texas to distribute this material in violation of Texas Penal Code §43.24(b).

Removal of material should comport with the plurality opinion in *Bd. of Educ. v. Pico*, 457 U.S. 853 (1982), which uses the standard that no challenged instructional resource shall be removed solely because of the ideas expressed therein. The opinion allows the removal of materials because they are pervasively vulgar or based upon the lack of educational suitability of the library material. Finally, collection development policies must demonstrate a commitment to compliance with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) as specified in 47 U.S.C. Section 254(h)(5), including technology protection measures. School library staff are encouraged to consult with legal counsel regarding legal questions or requirements implicated by their policies and to ensure their collection's policies comply with state and federal law.

### **Key Definitions and General Elements of a Collection Development Policy**

The following elements are typically included in a collection development policy:

- Introduction – Statement of the institution's mission, vision, goals, and access philosophy.
- Community Input – School libraries should work with parents and educators to accept feedback on needs, learning areas, and potential materials for inclusion. Community forums and surveys are common approaches for gathering input.
- Collection Evaluation and Assessment – Review of how the collection has developed over time, as well as its strengths, gaps, and distinguishing features. Additional components include analysis of the collection's age, rate at which the collection is refreshed to remove outdated or worn items, collection size, collection formats, and collection use.
- Collection Goals – Statement on how the collection will address needs identified.
- Selection Responsibility – Listing of the authorized personnel and the process for selection.
- Selection Criteria – Guidance of selection decisions and choice criteria.
- Acquisitions – Guidelines for acquisition and purchasing.
- Gifts – Policy for handling donations of materials and support.
- Maintenance – Guidelines for managing, weeding, and discarding materials.
- Reconsideration of Library Materials – Procedures for handling challenges to materials detailing the rights of parents and students and offers a timeline. This policy should establish a transparent process, where the request is considered openly and fairly, according to the district's policy.
- Policy Adoption, Review and Revision – Timeline for creating and approving the collection development policy as well as the process for updating the policy. The policy should be submitted for the library's governing board for consideration and approval.

### **Reference**

[School Library Programs: Standards and Guidelines](http://www.tsl.texas.gov/ldn/schoollibrarystandards)  
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