

# Collection Development Standards:

A Resource Guide for School Libraries



# Table of Contents

Purpose . . . . .	2
What is Collection Development? . . . . .	2
Collection Development Goals . . . . .	2
Key Players . . . . .	3
Parents and Guardians . . . . .	3
District Administration . . . . .	4
Certified School Librarians . . . . .	4
Developing a Policy . . . . .	4
Responsibility for Collection Development . . . . .	5
Assessment and Evaluation . . . . .	5
Selection . . . . .	7
Acquisition . . . . .	8
Reconsideration . . . . .	8
Deselection . . . . .	10
Parental Access Plan . . . . .	11
Compliance with Regulations . . . . .	11
Adopting and Maintaining a Policy . . . . .	12
Supplemental Information . . . . .	12
Appendix A. Glossary . . . . .	12
Appendix B. Practical Guidance . . . . .	13
Fiction Materials . . . . .	13
Nonfiction Materials . . . . .	13
Graphic Novels and Manga . . . . .	14
Appendix C. Sample Library Material Reconsideration Form . . . . .	14

## Purpose

This guide was created by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission to help school librarians, educators, district administrators, and the school community understand and apply the mandatory collection development standards ([13 Texas Administrative Code §4.2](#)) required by [Section 33.021, Texas Education Code](#). The guide describes the importance of a well-crafted collection development policy and provides methods and approaches for implementing the various policy components required by the standards. It is intended as a starting point for library and district staff, educators, and the school community to develop and adopt a policy that best meets local needs.

Districts are advised to verify legal requirements independently. Additionally, should the State of Texas implement additional requirements relating to collection development after the publication date of this guidance document, districts may need to revise their policies to ensure compliance.

## What is Collection Development?

Collection development is a systematic process for planning, acquiring, maintaining, and withdrawing library materials. A collection development policy formalizes a district's objectives and procedures for collection development.

The school library plays a vital role in students' educational development. Its collection gives students access to a wide variety of educational resources beyond those instructional materials only available in the classroom. A quality library collection promotes a reading culture and allows students to self-select materials to meet their interests and information needs. A thoughtful and intentional collection development policy and related processes are necessary to ensure a library collection meets student needs, satisfies district objectives, and reflects the varied interests and values of the community it serves.

School libraries are generally regarded as places for voluntary inquiry, and library resources are treated differently from the materials used in classroom instruction as part of a required curriculum. It is essential to note that materials in a school library collection are not instructional materials. Unlike instructional materials, students may select library resources and abandon them at any point in their reading journey. Students vary greatly in their maturity levels, backgrounds, and abilities; not all library materials will appeal to or be appropriate for all students. School library collections should include resources relevant to the students, campus, and school community they serve and must comply with all applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations.

## Collection Development Goals

Establishing clear goals is essential when creating a collection development policy. As outlined in 13 Tex. Admin. Code §4.2, a school library collection should:

- Enrich and support the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and curriculum established by Educ. Code §28.002 (relating to Required Curriculum), while taking into consideration students' varied interests, maturity levels, abilities, and learning styles;
- Foster growth in factual knowledge, literary appreciation, aesthetic values, and societal standards;

- Encourage the enjoyment of reading, foster high-level thinking skills, support personal learning, and encourage discussion based on rational analysis; and
- Represent the ethnic, religious, and cultural groups of the state and their contribution to Texas, the nation, and the world.

Collaboration among librarians, educators, parents, the school community, and other interested parties is critical to understanding local needs and establishing collection development goals. In a 2022 survey, the Texas State Library and Archives Commission’s collection development working group solicited feedback from parents and community members about their priorities and concerns for school libraries. The survey identified the following interests that were ranked most highly by participants:

- That a school library is a welcoming, inclusive, and valuable resource that students feel comfortable using.
- That the school library’s activities provide students access to various viewpoints supporting education.
- That district and campus policies relating to school libraries are shared publicly.
- That highly qualified certified school librarians develop and facilitate a campus library program.
- That the school library’s activities meet students’ interests, abilities, and maturity levels.
- That districts provide equal and consistent access to library resources (in person and virtually).
- That a school library’s activities support the curriculum of the district and the development of research skills.

## Key Players

Feedback from and participation by key interested parties is critical when crafting and implementing library policies. While the parties detailed here are integral to a policy’s success, the following list is not exhaustive. Districts should work to ensure that their processes include all parties necessary and appropriate to represent local needs.

### Parents and Guardians

Parents are the primary decision-makers regarding their student’s access to library materials (Educ. Code §33.021(d)(2)(D)). It is important to recognize the essential partnership between parents and districts in fostering effective and positive educational experiences for students, and a collection development policy should clearly articulate a district’s approach to supporting parental involvement.

Within its collection development policy, the district is responsible for providing clear and transparent methods for parents to review and provide feedback on library holdings. As outlined in the mandatory standards, parental involvement should include (but is not limited to):

- Access to district and campus policies related to school libraries;
- Consistent access to library resources; and
- Opportunities for students, parents, educators, and community members to provide feedback on library materials and services.

These opportunities for feedback can take many forms depending on local needs.

Examples may include:

- Open houses, literacy nights, and other events or programs hosted in the library;
- Polls and surveys for parents to express views and provide feedback;
- Clear and concise digital access to the library website, the library catalog, and other digital resources;
- A calendar of library events; and
- Library newsletters.

Districts and campuses should proactively solicit and build upon areas of high interest to their parent and caregiver communities. At a minimum, districts should gather feedback on access to the library, access to the library’s catalog of materials, and methods for parents and school community members to offer suggestions on materials, policies, and ongoing library programs (such as book clubs, author visits, extracurricular support, UIL sponsorship, etc.). Additionally, districts should develop procedures that allow parents to communicate their preferences regarding their student’s access to library materials.

## District Administration

A school library collection development policy can only be effective with input from and approval by district administrators. Mandatory collection development standards require a collection development policy to be approved and instituted by a public school district’s board or governing body. Furthermore, it is the local school districts’ responsibility to ensure that school libraries implement and adhere to the mandatory standards.

## Certified School Librarians

School librarians bring an understanding of the information needs of their students, campuses, and communities and tremendous subject matter expertise to the policy-crafting process. As policies are developed and implemented, school districts should ensure a professional librarian certified by the State Board for Educator Certification or other dedicated professional library staff trained on proper collection development standards is responsible for selecting and acquiring library material.

## Developing a Policy

As required by the standards in 13 Tex. Admin. Code §4.2, a school library collection development policy must:

- Describe the purpose and collection development goals;
- Designate the responsibility for collection development;

- Establish procedures for the evaluation, selection, acquisition, reconsideration, and deselection of materials;
- Consider the distinct age groups, grade levels, and possible access to materials by all students within a campus;
- **[See note below, as referenced.]** Include a process to determine and administer student access to material rated by library material vendors as “sexually relevant” as defined by Educ. Code §35.001, consistent with any policies adopted by the Texas Education Agency and local school board requirements<sup>1</sup>;
- Include an access plan that, at a minimum, allows efficient parental access to the school district’s library and online library catalog, and
- Comply with all applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations.

Where necessary, the following sections discuss these requirements in more detail.

## Responsibility for Collection Development

As described in the standards, school districts should ensure a professional librarian certified by the State Board for Educator Certification or other dedicated professional library staff trained on proper collection development standards is responsible for selecting and acquiring library materials.

## Assessment and Evaluation

Collection assessment ensures that the current library collection provides reliable, current, and appealing materials and other information resources that meet community needs. When assessing a library collection, consider the following:

- **Inventory:** Conduct a materials inventory to confirm that catalog records accurately reflect items available in the library. Library staff often develop inventory schedules, focusing on one collection area at a time until an inventory of the entire collection is completed.
- **Collection analysis:** Analyze the collection (using catalog record data, the integrated library system, and/or other appropriate tools) to identify average copyright dates and materials usage data. These data will help identify areas in high demand, used infrequently, or that are obsolete. Determine priority areas for deselection or growth, informed by the collection analysis and district educational goals. Solicit input from the education community.
- **District and campus data:** Review district demographics and consider curricular needs, including formative and summative assessment data, circulation reports, campus/district goals, and other initiatives. Note any potential changes that may be needed as these goals and objectives are adjusted or revised.

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<sup>1</sup> At the time of publication, portions of the Education Code relating to library material vendor ratings are enjoined by federal courts and not in effect. Other provisions in the collection development standards prohibiting the possession, acquisition, and purchase of harmful material, as defined by Penal Code §43.24, and library material that is pervasively vulgar or educationally unsuitable as reference in *Pico v. Board of Education*, 457 U.S. 853 (1982) are not impacted and remain in effect.

- **Funding:** The library’s annual budget and available funding sources will influence how new materials may be acquired. Consider applying for grants and other fundraising opportunities to support collection development initiatives.
- **School community feedback:** Collect input from students, teachers, parents, and the school community on current and future collection needs.
- **Legal requirements:** The collection development standards prohibit the possession, acquisition, and purchase of harmful material (as defined by Texas Penal Code §43.24) and library material that is pervasively vulgar or educational unsuitable (as referenced in *Pico v. Board of Education*, 457 U.S. 853 (1982)).

Collection evaluation is an ongoing process to appraise the quality of a collection, ensuring that library goals and objectives serve the school community and meet its informational needs. The collection development standards require procedures for the evaluation of library materials, which should address some or all of the following considerations:

- **Curriculum connections and alignment:** Librarians must identify curriculum needs and assess the collection, with collaboration from educators, for areas needing improvement. Librarians should review whether and how library resources support the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), district curricula, and other district initiatives.
- **Maturity level:** Consider the curriculum requirements, reading levels, and interests of a material’s target audience. Grade classifications are generally divided as follows but may be adapted to meet local needs:
  - o Elementary: Kindergarten to fifth grade
  - o Middle school: sixth to eighth grade
  - o High school: ninth to twelfth grade
- **Literary merit and appeal:** Fiction materials considered for the collection should have literary and/or artistic merit.
- **Review sources:** District staff should identify review sources, award lists, and other professional tools that align with district standards to support the evaluation of library materials.
- **Professional partnerships:** Certified school librarians rely on their training to continuously evaluate, build, and maintain collections. In addition to this training, librarians benefit from working with their professional community to foster support, alignment among similar audiences and contexts, responsiveness to changing community needs, and engagement with the school community.
- **Balance:** Collections should include a variety of formats (print, audio, and electronic materials), digital content sources, genres, points of view, and community values.
- **Physical constraints:** Librarians should consider physical spaces for shelving and library programming to accommodate campus needs.

- **Patron feedback:** Librarians should actively solicit feedback from students, teachers, parents, and the school community to understand interests and desired materials for informational or pleasure reading.
- **Treatment of biased materials:** Materials that unfairly, inaccurately, or viciously treat a particular race, sex, ethnic group, age group, religion, etc., should not be selected unless an educational purpose (e.g., analysis, observation, historical development, interpretation, placement in context) exists that is consistent with district policies and goals.
- **Treatment of violence:** Materials that contain excessive violence beyond the scope of the material’s overall theme and targeted age range should not be selected.
- **Compliance with state and federal regulations:** Library collections must adhere to all federal and state requirements, including Educ. Code §33.021(b) relating to library standards, and 13 Tex. Admin. Code §4.2.

A general note regarding the examination of materials: Given the large number of materials considered for inclusion in a library collection, evaluation generally occurs during the selection process. While reading all potential titles is not feasible in most cases, hands-on examination of library materials is desirable to the maximum extent possible. Library materials can be explained at trade shows, conferences, book fairs, bookstores, and other libraries. When comprehensive examination of an item is not possible, library staff should rely on multiple forms of evaluation.

**However, materials that may deal with sensitive areas should undergo hands-on review.** To this end, certified school librarians or other dedicated professional staff should lead assessment efforts and determine how materials are evaluated.

## Selection

Selection refers to identifying materials to be included in a library’s collection. A certified school librarian or designated professional library staff should select library materials. In many cases, this is the responsibility of a district’s director of library services or the school librarian assigned to a campus, who coordinates purchasing, receiving, cataloging, processing, and distributing library materials.

A selection process must comply with all district policies for approving, purchasing, and acquiring library materials. If additional professional staff are needed to follow the established evaluation and selection functions detailed in a district’s collection development policy, the library director should collaborate with campus and/or district administration to identify teachers or other professional educators to assist as needed.

Library materials should be evaluated and selected on merit, and districts must employ at least two of the following evaluation methods described in 13 Tex. Admin. Code §4.2:

- Consideration of recommendations from parents, guardians, and local community members;
- Consultation with the school district’s educators and library staff and/or consultation with library staff of similarly situated school districts and their collections and collection development policies;
- An extensive review of the text of an item;



- The context of a work, including consideration of the contextual characteristics, overall fit within the existing school library collection, and potential support of the school curriculum or
- Consideration of authoritative reviews of the items from sources such as professional journals in library science recognized professional education or content journals with book reviews, national and state award recognition lists, library science field experts, and highly acclaimed author and literacy expert recommendations.

In addition, a district may wish to expand the evaluation of certain materials beyond these methods required by rule. For example, materials from new authors, works on sensitive topics, and materials for upper grades may warrant additional review.

Partnerships and collaborations with other educators and librarians may be helpful throughout the evaluation and selection processes. Certified professional librarians and other dedicated professional library staff learn about and assess new materials through various means, including participation in professional development opportunities to learn about resources and engagement with colleagues formally and informally to discuss and share evaluations and reviews of, as well as information about, library materials considered for selection.

## Acquisition

Certified professional librarians or other dedicated professional library staff trained in proper collection development complete the assessment, evaluation, and selection processes to identify materials for acquisition. Several factors should be considered in the acquisition process:

- Library staff must consider the cost of materials and focus on acquiring resources that will reach a broad audience, have a reasonably long life expectancy (for physical items), and are available through a viable and sustainable subscription model (for digital content) where applicable.
- Staff should consider whether student payments of fines or fees for lost/damaged items are appropriate for and applicable to acquired materials.
- Purchases should be made from approved library material vendors, as designated by the district business office.
- Donated materials or gifts may be accepted if they meet the district's collection development policy requirements and comply with the mandatory collection development standards. However, donors must understand that donated materials may not be added to the collection.
- All acquisitions should comply with procurement procedures (e.g., ordering, invoicing and payment, shipping and receiving) outlined by the district and its policies.

## Reconsideration

Reconsideration of an item may occur at any point following the item's acquisition. As outlined in 13 Tex. Admin. Code §4.2, any parent or legal guardian of a student currently enrolled in the school district or an employee of the school district may request the reconsideration of a specific item in their school district's library catalog. The district is responsible for developing guidance and uniform

procedures relating to materials reconsideration. The district's policy should outline the treatment of materials being reconsidered, and processes must be completed within a consistent and reasonable timeframe outlined in the collection development policy as approved by the school board.

Every request for reconsideration should be documented in writing using a library material reconsideration form developed by the district. This form must be available through the district website and/or administrative office.

The following steps should be observed in a district's reconsideration processes:

- A requester may discuss their concern with library or school personnel before submitting a library material reconsideration form.
- If their concern is unresolved, the requester will be directed to complete the library material reconsideration form. At the time of submission, the completed request for reconsideration form must be distributed to the district superintendent or the superintendent's designee, the school librarian, and the school district board of trustees or governing body.
- After a request for reconsideration form has been submitted, the district should acknowledge receipt and communicate a reasonable timeframe, approved by the school board, for reviewing the item and a final decision. A committee should review materials as specified in the district's collection development policy to ensure a thorough and fair process. A reasonable timeframe should take into account:
  - o The time necessary to convene a committee to meet and review the item;
  - o Flexibility that may be necessary depending on the number of pending reconsideration requests; and
  - o Other factors relevant to a fair and consistent process, including informing the requester of the progress of the review in a timely fashion.

A district should establish criteria for convening a review committee, including a description of the committee composition. Districts may wish to involve the following parties in a review committee:

- The district curriculum director
- The district library services director
- A certified professional librarian from the district or a certified librarian from another similarly situated district if a local librarian is not available
- One or more certified teachers from the appropriate campus level
- A high school student, if a reconsideration request concerns high school materials and the district determines student participation is appropriate
- Additional members from the district community, including representation from parents, at the district's discretion

Once convened, a review committee is tasked with duties including:

- Reviewing the reconsidered item in its entirety

- Determining whether the material meets the guidelines established in the district’s collection development policy and is appropriate for its intended educational use
- Reviewing the local collection development policy to determine whether the material’s selection adhered to established processes
- Making a written recommendation to the school board, district superintendent, or other designee concerning the resolution of the reconsideration request

As the committee works through a reconsideration request, the requester may be permitted to testify in support of their request. The committee may also wish to hear testimony from other parties to identify relevant information not previously considered.

After the committee completes its work and submits its recommendation, the district superintendent or superintendent designee will make a final determination and inform the requester of the decision. Any appeals regarding this final decision should be handled according to local district or board policies.

If an item has gone through the reconsideration process and it is determined that the item should remain in the collection, the district may not be required to reconsider that item within two calendar years of the decision and may determine another timeframe, as approved by the district’s board or governing body. The district’s timeframe should be consistently applied to all reconsideration requests.

## Deselection

Collection maintenance is an integral piece of collection development. Materials must be regularly removed from circulation or deselected to keep a collection current and relevant to school community needs. This process, also called “weeding,” may happen at any time based on an item's condition (e.g., wear and tear, other significant damage) or take place systematically, as various parts of the collection are assessed throughout the year.

The deselection process should consider the following factors:

- **Age of materials:** Some materials may no longer be suitable for the collection due to age. For example, a nonfiction science and technology item may become obsolete over time and should be considered for deselection three to five years or more past its copyright date.
- **Physical condition:** Heavily used or damaged materials may be in too poor a condition to continue circulating and should be considered for deselection and possible replacement. Older editions of items may not appeal to students, and replacement copies may be considered for purchase to help drive student engagement.
- **Space considerations:** Changes to the physical space in a library may enhance patron usability or be necessary to meet library needs and goals. Limited shelving space may require some materials to be deselected to make room for new acquisitions.
- **Teacher collaboration:** Feedback and differing viewpoints from fellow educators may be helpful to deselection and rearranging processes.

- **Changes to curriculum and/or local needs:** As school curriculum or district goals evolve or change, the library collection should be assessed to determine whether materials should be added or deselected.

As required by the collection development standards, a district’s collection development policy must prohibit the removal of material based solely on the ideas contained in the material or the personal background of the author or characters in the material.

While intended for use by public libraries, *CREW: A Weeding Manual for Modern Libraries* (commonly referred to as the CREW Manual) is a helpful tool for libraries of all types to assist with developing a regular schedule of assessment and deselection for various parts of a library collection.

## Parental Access Plan

The collection development standards in 13 Tex. Admin. Code §4.2 require that a school library collection development policy must include an access plan that, at a minimum, allows efficient parental access to the school district’s library and online catalog. Where possible, a district should make its library catalog available and accessible on the open web. Districts may develop other solutions related to parental access to meet local needs.

## Compliance with Regulations

A district’s collection development policy must comply with all applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations. As required by Educ. Code §33.021, a collection development policy must:

- Recognize that parents are the primary decision-makers regarding their student’s access to library material;
- **[See note below, as referenced.]** Prohibit the possession, acquisition, and purchase of harmful material, as defined by Penal Code §43.24, library material rated sexually explicit material by the selling library material vendor under Educ. Code §35.002<sup>2</sup>, or library material that is pervasively vulgar or educationally unsuitable as referenced in *Pico v. Board of Education*, 457 U.S. 853 (1982); and
- Recognize that obscene content is not protected by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

Additionally, a collection development policy must be required for all library materials available for use or display, including material in school libraries, classroom libraries, and online catalogs. Should teachers wish to develop classroom libraries, the district must ensure compliance with the district’s collection development policy. A district’s policy for classroom libraries may differ from the school library policy, but it must adhere to the requirements outlined in the mandatory collection development standards.

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<sup>2</sup> At the time of publication, portions of the Education Code relating to library material vendor ratings are enjoined by federal courts and not in effect. Other provisions in the collection development standards prohibiting the possession, acquisition, and purchase of harmful material, as defined by Penal Code §43.24, and library material that is pervasively vulgar or educationally unsuitable as reference in *Pico v. Board of Education*, 457 U.S. 853 (1982) are not impacted and remain in effect.

Standards also require that a collection development policy must:

- Ensure schools provide library catalog transparency, including but not limited to:
  - o Online catalogs that are publicly available; and
  - o Information about titles and how and where materials can be accessed;
- Recommend schools communicate effectively with parents regarding collection development (addressed in the *Parents and Guardians* paragraphs in a previous section) and
- Prohibit the removal of material based solely on the ideas contained in the material or the personal background of the author of the material or characters in the material (see the previous paragraphs regarding *Deselection*.)

District staff are advised to consult with their legal counsel regarding any questions specific to their policy implementation.

## Adopting and Maintaining a Policy

District administration and school library staff should work together to determine an appropriate timeline for developing or revising policies that meets community expectations. While the collection development standards do not specify a timeline for policy adoption, the Texas State Library and Archives Commission strongly encourages districts to begin these conversations as soon as feasible.

Each Texas public school district board or governing body must approve and institute a collection development policy that satisfies the requirements outlined in 13 Tex. Admin. Code §4.2. School districts may include provisions or procedures in addition to these minimum requirements so long as the added procedures do not conflict with the minimum requirements.

Drafting and approval of policies should follow established district processes, and an approved policy must be accessible to parents and other members of the school community. Once adopted, a school district's collection development policy should be reviewed at least every three years and updated as necessary.

## Supplemental Information

### Appendix A. Glossary

**Certified School Librarian:** An individual with the academic qualification for librarians working in Texas public schools. A certified school librarian has completed required coursework, passed assessments, and is deemed proficient in the discipline. A professional school librarian must have at least two years' work experience as a Kindergarten–12th-grade teacher in a public or accredited private school, obtained a master's degree in library science or any related discipline, completed a state-approved program (e.g., the State Board for Educator Certification) in library science or its related discipline, and passed the TExES School Librarian Certification exam.

**Collection Development:** The process of building useful, balanced collections within a set budget based on the library's users' ongoing information needs. It includes assessment, evaluation, selection, acquisition, and deselection.

**Collection Evaluation:** A systematic consideration of a collection to determine its intrinsic merit.

**Deselection:** The process of removing materials from the library collection based on an established process, also known as “weeding.” It considers factors that include the average age of the materials, visual assessment, space considerations, teacher input, and changing curricular needs.

**Instructional Materials:** Materials directly related to the curriculum required by Educ. Code §28.002(a).

**Library Material Vendor:** Any entity that sells library material to a public primary or secondary school in this state.

**Reconsideration:** A process for reviewing and responding to concerns, complaints, or objections to library resources based on the objector’s expression that the material is offensive or inappropriate.

**Selection:** A process for considering materials for addition to a library collection. Selection processes reflect an institution’s philosophy, mission, guiding principles, or other foundational documents and provide a framework for consistently evaluating and acquiring library resources in all formats using a standard set of criteria.

## Appendix B. Practical Guidance

Below are some general considerations for both selection and deselection of materials.

### Fiction Materials

- The characters are exciting and elicit discussion of the novel’s themes.
- The book has or expresses significant impacts or observations on/about society.
- The themes elicit good discussion, not one trite message tied up neatly at the end. There is room for ambiguity and consideration of ideas from different angles.
- The book is fresh/demonstrates innovation in style – the message, characters, voice, and plot and structure are not just repetitive of books that have come before it.
- The themes and the story appeal to a broad audience and are relevant over time; the story has withstood/has the potential to withstand the test of time.
- The book is artfully written. Consider using literary elements to convey the theme (e.g., symbols, foreshadowing, imagery) to create a piece of art, not just entertainment.
- The novel, or elements of it, evokes a strong emotional response that speaks to the human condition rather than being a story of mere sentimentality, cliché, or “pulp fiction.”

### Nonfiction Materials

- Is the information current and error-free?
- Is the author qualified to write about the topic?
- Is the material written in logical order?
- Are the language and comprehension appropriate for the intended audience?
- Does the material use a variety of text structures to help clarify information and assist the reader with understanding?

## Graphic Novels and Manga

- Is this a popular/requested series?
- Who is this series geared toward?
- Consider official age ratings, available reviews, and recommendations from reputable sources to ensure alignment with school district guidelines and educational goals.
- Seek core lists compiled by library suppliers and other reputable sources to provide initial guidance.
- Concerning manga (a specific style of Japanese graphic novel), look specifically at the labeling of “all-ages,” “teen,” and “mature.” Use these labels as a guide to select age-appropriate titles. Review this content carefully and consult reputable review sources before making a final decision.
- Library staff should strive to conduct a hands-on review of this material.

## Appendix C. Sample Library Material Reconsideration Form

Below are examples of information that may be included in a request for reconsideration form. Districts may identify additional information to include based on local needs.

- Name of the requester
- Name of requester’s student currently enrolled in the district (or affiliation to the school district, if submitted by district staff)
- Requester’s address, phone, and email
- Requester’s preferred means of communication
- Information about the resource being requested for reconsideration, including:
  - o Title of the resource
  - o Author
  - o Date of publication
- Date of the request
- Questions for the requester, including:
  - o What brought this resource to your attention?
  - o Describe the book content you reviewed—whole book or chapters?
  - o What specific concerns do you have about this resource?
  - o Are there other resources that provide additional information and/or offer other viewpoints?
  - o What action(s) are you requesting—removal of the resource, moving the resource to a different audience, limiting access?