



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING


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STATE SUPERINTENDENT

## **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** April 27, 2023

**TO:** Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents  
Public School Academy Directors

**FROM:** Dr. Diane L. Golzynski, Deputy Superintendent   
Finance and Operations

**SUBJECT:** Best Practices for School Library Collections

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and the Library of Michigan (LM) strongly support the concept of the freedom to read. School libraries provide students choices in what they read outside of, and separate from, the district's board-approved curriculum and instructional materials. The collection should provide materials of high interest to encourage student reading and learning for enrichment.

School librarians are committed to building collections that allow students to see themselves and others in what they read. School librarians work diligently to choose titles that accurately reflect the diverse experiences of students, parents, and communities that they serve. In March 2022, the American Library Association released a [study](#) reporting that 71% of voters oppose efforts to have books removed from their local libraries and 80% of parents have confidence in their local libraries to make good decisions about what books to include in their collections. Instructional materials, while related, are not considered to be a part of the school library collection and are subject to other guidance.

### **School Library Collection Development Policy**

Every Michigan school district should consider having a comprehensive written school library collection development policy that includes procedures for the reconsideration of materials. The policy should be written by a small but diverse committee, including but not limited to school librarians, educators, administrators, and parents. This locally created policy should be reviewed and updated on a regular schedule by certified school librarians or educators, with consideration of the collection's timeliness, relevance, age appropriateness, diversity, and variety. All significant changes or modifications to the policy should be handled according to local district protocol.

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A well-crafted and approved school library collection development policy allows school librarians and educators to provide students with spaces where diverse people, cultures, and thoughts are safe and accessible. Well-managed school library books and materials collections allow all students access to appropriate reading materials.

When developing a strong school library collection development policy, books and materials should be selected based on standard criteria that include the following best practices:

- Demonstrate literary merit, quality, value, and significance.
- Cover topics, authors, series, or genres that fill gaps in the current school library collection.
- Are current, relevant, accurate, and from reputable sources.
- Include electronic and multimedia resources to help meet the needs of individual learners. Districts benefit from offering print and non-print materials that take into consideration equity of access.
- Represent diverse viewpoints and cultures to ensure that the collection embodies the unique backgrounds of the student population, not simply of the district but of the state, country, and world.

### **Reconsideration of School Library Materials**

Effective school library collection development policies include a detailed reconsideration procedure. Local districts should have information on the procedure for reconsideration of individual books and material titles outside of the district's board-approved curriculum and instructional materials. The reconsideration procedure should:

- include the process to submit a request for individual books and material reconsideration;
- include an explanation of the structure of the reconsideration committee, with membership including librarians, teachers, at least one administrator, and parents/guardians on the committee;
- require committee members to be familiar with the school library collection development policy;
- be objective in the evaluation of the material in question within the scope of the school library collection development policy;
- require all parties to read or view all books and/or materials in question in full and not simply pull passages or parts of the work in question out of context; and
- be in support of the First Amendment and the freedom to read.

Communication with school staff, administration, and the greater community about the policy and procedure can help ensure that both will be implemented effectively and with fidelity. Additional support and resources for local districts are available at:

- [American Association of School Librarians](#): An Introduction to Collection Development for School Librarians, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition.
- [American Library Association Selection and Reconsideration Policy Toolkit](#): This resource can help with the review and revision of district policies and procedures.

- The Freedom to Read [statement](#) from the Michigan Association of School Librarians (MASL), the Michigan Council of Teachers of English (MCTE), and the Michigan Reading Association (MRA).

cc: Michigan Education Alliance  
Confederation of Michigan Tribal Education Departments