

Instruction**Selection of Library Media Resources, Displays, and Programs**

The Newtown Board of Education (the “Board”) is legally responsible for all matters relating to the operation of its schools, including the library media centers. The Board recognizes the school library media center as a place for voluntary inquiry, the dissemination of information, and free expression, where students have access to a broad range of ideas and perspectives. The Board has adopted this policy after consulting with the Superintendent of Schools, the Assistant Superintendent (as the Director of Curriculum), and a certified school librarian employed by the Board, as required by state statute. The Board delegates to the Superintendent of Schools the authority and responsibility for library materials in all formats, library displays, and student programs. Responsibility for selection and maintenance of library materials rests with professionally trained library personnel (“library media specialists”) acting under the supervision of the building administrator, Assistant Superintendent, and Superintendent, using the Board’s selection and weeding criteria and procedures as described in this policy. The Board shall review and update this policy every five (5) years.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

- **“Individual with a vested interest”** means any school staff member employed by the Board, any student currently enrolled in the District, or a parent/guardian of a student currently enrolled in the District.
- **“Remove”** means deliberately taking library material out of a library’s collection. “Remove” does not include the process of “weeding” (clearing materials that are no longer useful).
- **“Library and Other Educational Material”** means any material maintained in a school library media center or otherwise made available to students, including but not limited to books, periodicals, digital resources, databases, audiovisual materials, and software, whether or not such materials are required for classroom instruction.

Selection Criteria

The Board has developed library media materials selection criteria with the following goals:

- To implement the educational goals and instructional objectives of the Newtown Public Schools (the “District”);
- To assist library media specialists in the selection of library materials;
- To inform the public about criteria upon which library selections are made;
- To maintain a well-balanced and broad collection of materials for information, reference, and research;
- To represent differing viewpoints on controversial issues;
- To provide a diverse collection that contains content by and about a wide array of people and cultures to authentically reflect a variety of ideas, information, stories, and experiences;
- To promote critical thinking and a love of lifelong learning by offering students a wide array of print and non-print materials;
- To provide recreational media resources; and
- To ensure all materials, displays, and programs are evaluated and made accessible in accordance with the protections against discrimination set forth in Connecticut General Statutes §10-15c, including, but not limited to, discrimination based on race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or disability.

The District shall not remove any library materials, displays, or programs because of the origin, background, or viewpoints expressed in them or those of the creator. The removal, exclusion, or censoring of any material on the sole basis that an individual with a vested interest finds such material offensive is prohibited.

Selection and Age Appropriateness Procedures

Selection of library media materials will be based upon consideration of the following:

- Relevancy or permanent value;
- Accuracy;
- Readability;
- Clear presentation and format;
- Educational significance;
- Need and value to the collection; and
- Such other resources, including recommended reading lists, as determined by the library media specialists.

Materials will also be evaluated for age appropriateness, in alignment with existing, Board-approved curricula, for:

- Elementary (grades PK–4);
- Intermediate (grades 5–6);
- Middle School (grades 7–8); and
- High School (grades 9–12).

In evaluating age appropriateness, the following criteria will apply:

Library media specialists will consult recognized review sources (“Library Review Resources”), including but not limited to:

- School Library Journal
- Kirkus
- Booklist
- Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) Best Books for Young Adults
- Common Sense Media
- Follett Titlewave

If there is agreement as to age appropriateness from at least two Library Review Resources and the material aligns with District curricular offerings for the relevant school level, the library media specialist may follow those recommendations.

If there is no agreement among Library Review Resources, or if materials are not reviewed by such sources, the library media specialist shall conduct an independent evaluation and make a recommendation, which will be reviewed in consultation with the building administrator and Assistant Superintendent (acting as Director of Curriculum).

Materials Containing Holistic Pedagogical Value

The Board recognizes that materials may include depictions of violence, explicit content, strong language, or other sensitive subject matter. Such content shall be evaluated as part of a holistic review of a material’s literary, artistic, and educational merit, as well as its age appropriateness.

Library materials shall not be excluded solely because of the presence of such content. Rather, materials will be evaluated in their full context and may only be excluded for legitimate pedagogical reasons or in accordance with professionally accepted standards of collection development and maintenance.

If a library media specialist determines that a material containing such content is appropriate for inclusion based on its overall merit, the specialist shall prepare a written **Rationale for Selection**. This rationale shall be reviewed and approved by the building administrator and Assistant Superintendent (acting as Director of Curriculum) and maintained on record.

Gifts and Donated Materials

Gifts or donated materials are subject to the same selection criteria as purchased materials. Such materials will only be accepted after review in accordance with this policy. Materials that do not meet the established criteria will not be added to the School Library Collection.

Library Review Procedure, Collection Maintenance, and Weeding

Library media specialists will regularly review library and other educational materials using professionally accepted standards of collection maintenance and weeding (clearing materials no longer useful). This ongoing review is distinct from the reconsideration process and is conducted as part of routine professional practice.

Weeding shall be conducted systematically and may include consideration of:

- Worn or damaged materials;
- Superseded editions;
- Unnecessary duplication;
- Materials that are factually inaccurate;
- Age appropriateness; and/or
- Materials with little to no circulation over an extended period of time.

Material Reconsideration Requests

Prior to or concurrent with submitting a formal reconsideration request, a parent/guardian or eligible student is encouraged to engage in an informal discussion with the library media specialist and/or building administrator to share concerns and seek clarification. Participation in an informal discussion is voluntary and shall not be required prior to submitting a formal reconsideration request, nor shall it delay the initiation or timelines of the formal reconsideration process.

The Board acknowledges that, despite careful selection, requests to reconsider library materials, displays, or programs (“Material for Reconsideration”) may occur. Requests may be submitted by a parent or guardian of a student currently enrolled in the District or by an eligible student currently enrolled in the District (“Requestor”) using the Initial Reconsideration Request form.

Materials under reconsideration shall remain available during the review process.

Initial Reconsideration Request

Upon receipt of a request, the library media specialist shall:

- Notify the building administrator and Assistant Superintendent (acting as Director of Curriculum);
- Review the material in its entirety; and

- Determine whether the material meets the Selection Criteria.

If the library media specialist determines that the material may not meet the Selection Criteria, the material shall be referred for review by the building administrator and Assistant Superintendent (acting as Director of Curriculum) prior to any removal decision.

Following such review:

- If the material is determined not to meet the Selection Criteria, it shall be removed;
- If the material meets the Selection Criteria, it shall be retained.

The Requestor shall be notified of the outcome within ten (10) school days, unless additional time (not to exceed fifteen (15) school days) is required to develop or review a Rationale for Selection.

If applicable, a copy of the approved Rationale for Selection shall be provided to the Requestor.

Final Reconsideration Request and Review Committee

If the Requestor disagrees with the outcome of the initial review, a Final Reconsideration Request may be submitted to the Superintendent.

Upon receipt, the Superintendent (or designee) shall appoint a Review Committee consisting of:

- The Superintendent (or designee);
- The building principal (or designee);
- The Assistant Superintendent (acting as Director of Curriculum);
- A representative from the Board;
- At least one grade-level-appropriate teacher;
- Two parents/guardians (one with a student age 13 or younger and one with a student age 14 or older), who are not the Requestor; and
- A certified school librarian.

The Review Committee shall:

- Review the material in its entirety;
- Evaluate the request; and
- Issue a written decision.

The reconsideration process, including both initial and final review stages, shall be completed within sixty (60) school days of receipt of the Initial Reconsideration Request.

The Requestor may appeal the Review Committee's decision to the Board of Education. The Board's review shall be based on the record developed during the reconsideration process, unless the Board determines that additional information is necessary. In conducting its review, the Board may consider both the process followed and the substantive determination of the Review Committee. The Board may affirm, modify, or overturn the decision. If a decision of the Review Committee is appealed to the Board of Education, the Board shall publish its final decision on the District's Internet website in accordance with state law.

Moratorium on Reconsideration Requests

The District will not be required to reconsider the same material within three (3) years of a prior determination, unless new information, circumstances, or concerns are presented that were not previously considered.

Legal Protections

Any library media specialist or school staff member who, in good faith, implements this policy shall be immune from civil or criminal liability that might otherwise be incurred.

Library Media Restrictions and Reconsideration of Library Media Materials Instructions

These procedures are established in accordance with the Board of Education Policy on the Selection of Library Media Resources, Displays, and Programs.

Guiding Principles

- Parents and/or guardians have the right to determine what library and other educational materials their child(ren) has(have) access to and may choose to restrict access to specific materials.
- Eligible students currently enrolled in the District may participate in the reconsideration process in accordance with Board policy.
- The school library media center supports voluntary inquiry, the dissemination of information, and free expression for all students.
- Library media specialists responsible for selecting materials are duly qualified to make such selections and will follow the procedures set forth in Board policy.
- Collaborative conversations between library media specialists, administrators, and parents/guardians are essential to building and maintaining strong home-school connections and should be the first step in addressing concerns.
- The principal will review the selection criteria and reconsideration process with library media staff annually.
- When library media materials are challenged, the principles of the freedom to read, listen, and view must be upheld.
- Access to library materials will not be restricted during the reconsideration process.
- Any decision to remove materials does not necessarily reflect negatively on the professional judgment involved in the original selection or use of the materials.

Library Media Resource Restriction Requests

Parents/guardians who wish to restrict their child from accessing specific library materials may complete the NPS Library Media Resource Restriction Form. The form will be shared with families electronically prior to the start of each school year and submitted to the library media specialist at the child's school. This process allows parents/guardians to manage their child's access and is intended to serve as a partnership tool between home and school.

All submitted forms will be maintained as part of the student's educational record and handled in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

Instructions

1. Requests must identify specific titles of materials to be restricted for the individual student.
2. Requests that seek to restrict access based on general topics or themes will not be honored.
3. A separate form must be completed for each child.

4. Before submitting a request, parents/guardians should verify that the material is part of the collection of their child's school library.
5. Requests should be limited to a reasonable number of specific titles per submission. If a parent/guardian seeks to restrict a large number of materials, a meeting with the building principal and library media specialist will be required to discuss appropriate options.
6. Parents/guardians selecting this option are expected to communicate directly with their child regarding any restrictions.
7. While this process may reduce the likelihood that a student will access certain materials, it does not guarantee that a student will not encounter such content through browsing, peer interaction, or other means.
8. Library collections are continually updated. Parents/guardians are encouraged to periodically review available materials and update restriction requests as needed

Reconsideration of Library Media Materials

Reconsideration of library and other educational materials shall follow the procedures established in Board policy.

- Requests for reconsideration may be submitted only by a parent or guardian of a student currently enrolled in the District or by an eligible student currently enrolled in the District.
- Materials subject to reconsideration shall remain available during the review process.
- The reconsideration process includes both an initial review and, if requested, a final review by a Review Committee in accordance with Board policy.
- Forms included in the regulation must be submitted to initiate the review process.
- The process shall be completed within the timelines established in Board policy.

Implementation and Review

The building principal, in collaboration with the library media specialist, is responsible for implementing these procedures at the school level.

These procedures shall be reviewed periodically to ensure continued alignment with Board policy and applicable state law.

Initial Reconsideration Request Form

Privacy Notice: This form may be subject to a **Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)** request. Questions regarding FOIA may be directed to the building principal.

Instructions:

1. You must be an **Individual with a Vested Interest**, as defined in the policy, to submit this form.

Eligibility (Check one):

☐ **Staff Member** employed by the Board.

☐ **Parent/Guardian** of a student currently enrolled in the District.

☐ **Student** currently enrolled in the District.

2. You are encouraged to have an informal discussion with the library media specialist before filing.
3. This form is an attestation that you have read, viewed, or attended the material/program in its entirety.

Requester Name: _____

Address/Phone/Email: _____

Item for Reconsideration:

☐ **Library Material** (Title/Author): _____

☐ **Library Display** (Description/Location): _____

☐ **Student Program** (Name/Date): _____

Objection Details: *Please cite specific passages, pages, or aspects of the display/program you question (use additional paper if needed):*

What action are you requesting?

☐ Re-evaluation of age-appropriateness

☐ Removal from collection/program cancellation

☐ Other: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Decision to be issued within 10 school days (up to 15 if a new Rationale is required).

Final Reconsideration Request Form

Instructions:

1. This form is for use only after an **Initial Reconsideration Request** has been completed.
2. The **Review Committee** must issue a final decision not later than **sixty (60) school days** from the date the **Initial Request** was first received.

Requester Name: _____

Date Initial Request was filed: _____

Basis for Appeal:

*Explain how the material/program fails to comply with the criteria set forth in **Policy 6131.1**:*

Additional Resources: Are there resources or diverging viewpoints you wish the Review Committee to consider that were not part of the initial review?

Action Requested:

☐ Re-evaluation of age-appropriateness

☐ Removal from circulation

☐ Moved to a different school level (e.g., Middle to High School)

☐ Other: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Submit to: Superintendent of Schools, 3 Primrose Street, Newtown, CT 06470