

PROCEDURE TITLE: Evaluation and Selection of School Library Materials		
ADOPTION/EFFECTIVE DATE: May 2024	MOST RECENTLY AMENDED: August 2026	MOST RECENTLY REAFFIRMED:
POLICY/PROCEDURE MANUAL SUMMARY CATEGORY: Instruction		

I. Purpose

Evaluating and selecting materials for the school library collection is one of the most important roles of professional school librarians. The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR 13A.05.04.01, *et seq.*) and Education Article, §4-142, Annotated Code of Maryland specify that the materials, services and resources provided in a school library media program are provided for interest, information, and instructional support of students and school personnel of the schools the program serves. The purpose of this procedure is to:

- A. Outline the process of evaluation, selection, and reconsideration of library materials.
- B. Provide an overview of the principles that govern the development of library collections in Harford County Public Schools.
- C. Ensure library materials support curricular goals, general interest, information, and inquiry.
- D. Ensure commitment to free access to ideas and information in library media collections reflecting various viewpoints.

II. Definitions

- A. **Library Materials** references any print or non-print material cataloged and processed as part of the school library media center for students and staff. District support and oversight for evaluating and selecting library materials is provided through the Harford County Public Schools Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Division.
- B. **The School Library Media Specialist** is a leader, teacher, instructional partner, program administrator, and information specialist who is responsible for creating an equitable, welcoming, and flexible space that encourages creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving to ensure school achievement and success.
- C. **Collection Development** is the process of planning, building, and selecting a comprehensive and balanced collection of library materials based on selection

criteria, the ongoing assessment of the information needs of the library's students and educators as demonstrated by usage statistics.

- D. **Intellectual Freedom** is the right of library users to read, seek information, and speak freely as guaranteed by the First Amendment.
- E. **The Reconsideration Committee** includes individuals charged with reviewing a challenged book and evaluating the work in light of the criteria outlined in the library's selection policy.
- F. **In Principle** means a complaint falls into a category substantively addressed in a prior decision.

III. Procedures

A. General Provisions

- 1. An important consideration for inclusion in the school library media collection is whether the material contributes to the fulfillment of the curriculum, meeting the instructional needs of students and teachers. In addition, consideration is made for general interest material that promotes literacy and builds reading skills.
- 2. To maintain a well-balanced collection, acquisitions should be made systematically, and the collection be consistently reevaluated.
- 3. To provide a wide range of materials on different levels of difficulty and representing different points of view is critical in creating a learning environment and opportunities that nurture discussions and conversations.
- 4. District support and oversight for evaluating and selecting materials is provided through the Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Division of Harford County Public Schools.

B. School-Based Evaluation and Selection of Library Materials

- 1. School library media specialists are delegated with the responsibility for the review, evaluation, and selection of materials to develop the school library media collection, utilizing guidelines found in the selection and evaluation administrative procedure.
- 2. The school library media specialist will consider suggestions from the school personnel, students, and community members.
- 3. It is the responsibility of the school library media specialist to provide a well-balanced collection of materials considering the following criteria:
 - a. Supports the assessed curricular needs, reflecting the identified learning outcomes of the instructional program.
 - b. Supports the informational needs and interest of students.
 - c. Appropriateness for recommended level (elementary, middle, high).
 - d. Includes a variety of formats.
 - e. Earns favorable reviews in professional review sources and favorable recommendations based on preview and examination of materials by library media professionals.

- f. Assessed for currency of information as related to content and purpose with consideration of a recent copyright date as appropriate to the subject.
 - g. Assessed for accuracy in content where facts are presented objectively with consideration given to the authority of the author, organization, and publisher/producer.
 - h. Provides a global perspective and promotes diversity as a positive attribute of our society.
 - i. Represents differing viewpoints providing students access to a variety of resources to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- 4. All materials shall be evaluated using professional review sources, and when possible, on personal inspection. Using the following professional review sources, school library media specialists determine if the material meets the criteria for selection and contains at least two favorable reviews recommending the material for the age of students/patrons:
 - a. Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA)
 - b. Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) Notable Children's Books
 - c. Booklist
 - d. Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books
 - e. Horn Book
 - f. Kirkus Reviews
 - g. Library Journal
 - h. School Library Journal
 - i. State and National Book Award Lists (including Caldecott, Newbery, National Book Award, Charlie May Simon, Arkansas Diamond, Coretta Scott King).
- 5. Utilizing age and grade recommendations in the professional review sources and considering the community standard relevant to HCPS students, School Library Media Specialists will evaluate materials holistically for age and developmental appropriateness, assessing each work's themes, conclusion, and meaning for students. Selection decisions consider the following criteria in context rather than in isolation at all levels:
 - a. Language (profanity, slurs, derogatory terms)
 - b. Sexual content (nudity, romantic relationships, sexual situations)
 - c. Violence (intensity, graphic detail, historical/educational context, consequences)
 - d. Substance references (alcohol, drugs, tobacco)
 - e. Social issues (discrimination, stereotyping, bias, representation)
 - f. Behavioral content (criminal activity, risk-taking behaviors)
 - g. Complex or sensitive themes (death, loss, mental health, religious content, moral dilemmas)
 - h. Humor and comedic content (bodily functions, satire, treatment of authority)

6. If a book does not have reviews available or when books do not clearly fit into the selection criteria, school library media specialists will meet in level Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to collectively determine if the book would be included in the HCPS library collection and the age-appropriate level for these specific titles. When the PLC is unable to come to a consensus, the book will be presented to the Reconsideration Committee.
7. Library media center materials shall be reviewed regularly to ensure the continued appropriateness of the center's collection to the school's curriculum and to maintain the collection in good repair. Materials should be weeded from the library and disposed of when the materials:
 - a. No longer meet the selection criteria,
 - b. Have not circulated for a long period of time, or
 - c. Are too worn to be economically repaired.
8. Materials may not be excluded from a school library media program solely because of origin, background, or views of the individual who created the material.
9. Materials may not be excluded or removed from the catalogue of a school library media program because of partisan, ideological or religious disapproval.

C. Gifts and Donations

Generally, gifts and donations are governed by applicable board policy, including Policy 0031-000 *Solicitation and Acceptance of External Funds and Other Resources*. In addition, the following procedure shall govern gifts and donations of library materials.

1. School-based donations
 - a. School library media specialists will evaluate print or non-print materials presented as gifts or donations to the library media center using the selection criteria used for all purchased library materials.
 - b. Any items determined to be unacceptable shall be returned to the donor or disposed of at the discretion of the library media specialist.
 - c. Gifts and donations, like purchased resources, will be removed from the collection at the end of their useful life.
2. District donations
 - a. Donations of materials for multiple libraries throughout the district should be initiated through the Manager of Family and Community Partnerships.
 - b. The Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment will collaborate with the Librarian Professional Learning Communities to review and evaluate district donations to libraries based on selection criteria used for all purchased library materials.
 - c. Within 30 days, the donor will be contacted regarding the inclusion of the materials within the Harford County Public Schools' Library Media Centers.

- d. Gifts and donations, like purchased resources, will be removed from the collection at the end of their useful life.

D. Reconsideration Process

The reconsideration process exists to address concerns or objections regarding specific items in the library collection.

If an item in a school's library collection raises concerns, the school librarian should be contacted to have an open dialogue to address and resolve concerns. Should the need for a formal review persist, a reconsideration request for a library book can be initiated by an employee, parent/guardian, or student within the school system.

To ensure a balanced and manageable process, an individual should submit a reasonable number of reconsideration requests.

1. The Reconsideration Committee

a. Selection Process

1. Interested members will submit applications to be included in the pool of applicants. The application for the pool of applicants is available once every two years.
2. When a reconsideration request is received, a committee will be randomly selected from the pool of applicants to review that specific book.
3. Each committee is convened solely to address the book named in that reconsideration application and is dissolved upon completion of the review.
5. Selection from the pool will be random to ensure impartiality.

a. Membership

1. A reconsideration committee will be randomly selected of the applicants and comprised of 9 members and 2 alternates. An effort will be made to ensure that the membership is representative of our district. Each committee will be comprised of:
 - a. 2 parents of HCPS students,
 - b. 2 Harford County community members,
 - c. 1 HCPS teacher,
 - d. 1 HCPS administrator,
 - e. 1 HCPS school library media specialist, and
 - f. 2 HCPS 8th – 12th grade students.
2. A non-voting facilitator appointed by the Supervisor of Innovation in Learning will distribute materials, facilitate meetings, and finalize the report for each committee.

- b. Confidentiality: For all reconsideration requests, the petitioner's personal information (including name, address, and other identifying details) shall be redacted before circulation to the Reconsideration Committee.
 - c. Committee Training: All committee members will receive resources on intellectual freedom principles, legal tenets including First Amendment protections and due process rights, federal and state education laws, and appropriate age standards in preparation for participating on the reconsideration committee.
- 2. Initiating a Reconsideration Request
 - a. Timeline: Reconsideration requests may be submitted between September 1 – April 1.
 - b. Submit a Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials form found on the Library Media Page of the HCPS Website:
<https://www.hcps.org/departments/curriculum/LibraryMedia.aspx>
 - c. Library materials will remain in use during the reconsideration process.
 - d. The Supervisor of Innovation in Learning under the direction of the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment will study the request to determine if the matter has been covered in principle by a previous decision. If the matter has been covered in principle, the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment will refer the matter directly to the Superintendent with a recommendation. The Superintendent will render a written decision and notify all individuals who filed a Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials form accordingly.
 - e. The Supervisor of Innovation in Learning under the direction of the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment will engage a reconsideration committee and it will convene within thirty (30) working days of the reconsideration request.
- 3. Deliberations of the Reconsideration Committee
 - a. The committee members will:
 - 1. Read the entire work,
 - 2. Read the reconsideration form presented anonymously,
 - 3. Read copies of the professionally prepared reviews and list of awards, and
 - 4. Review the Harford County Public Schools Administrative Procedure: Evaluation and Selection of School Library Media Materials.

- b. The committee will meet and discuss the work based on the criteria in the Harford County Public Schools Administrative Procedure: Evaluation and Selection of School Library Media Materials and vote to make its decision to retain, move the resource to a different level, restrict the resource, or remove the resource. If the committee votes to restrict the resource to only high school students in combined Middle/High School libraries, the item will be designated as available to high school students only in the library catalog and maintained in a designated location accessible only upon request by a high school student.
- c. If consensus is not reached through a majority vote (6 of 9), a second committee will engage in the reconsideration of that resource.
- 4. Reporting Decisions
 - a. The facilitator of the committee will issue a report, responding to the specific concern and evaluating the material in relationship to the criteria for selection will be written and provided to the Supervisor of Innovation in Learning within ten (10) working days of the committee recommendation.
 - b. The Supervisor of Innovation in Learning will provide the report and a recommendation to the Superintendent within ten (10) working days of receipt of the committee's report. The recommendation and committee report will be posted publicly for the local school community (employee, parent/guardian, or student) to provide written comment using a link on the Library Media Reconsideration Page of hcps.org. The public comment window will be open for thirty (30) working days.
 - c. The Superintendent will render a decision within thirty (30) working days of the conclusion of the public comment window and will notify all individuals filing a "Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials" form.
 - d. The Superintendent's written decision, the basis of the decision and notice of the right to appeal to the local school board for individuals and organizations with established standing will be posted on the Library Media Reconsideration Page of hcps.org.
 - e. Appeals addressing the Superintendent's decision in writing will be directed to the President of the Board of Education and must be received by the Board of Education within ten (10) working days of the issuance of the Superintendent's decision.
 - f. The Superintendent's decision is considered prima facie correct and the local board may not substitute its judgment for that of the local superintendent unless the decision is arbitrary, unreasonable or illegal.

Approved By:

Dyann R. Mack Ed.D.

Dyann Mack, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Procedure Action Dates					
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Responsibility for Procedure Maintenance & References	
LAST EDITOR/DRAFTER NAME: Martha Barwick	JOB POSITION OF LAST EDITOR/DRAFTER: Supervisor of Innovation in Learning
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LEGAL REFERENCES¹

References are set forth in the Procedure.

¹ All references are to specific federal or Maryland statutes or regulations. References are provided for convenience and informational purposes only and are not to be considered as exhaustive or as precluding Harford County Public Schools from relying upon any other statutes or regulations in support of a policy or procedure.