

VI. Policies

Behavior Expectations

Library behavior expectations can vary significantly from library to library. For instance, many school libraries do not allow any food or drink, others not only allow it, but have busy coffee shops within the library. Additionally, students have a wide array of assumptions about what is acceptable behavior in a school library. A written behavior policy is an essential tool for establishing and conveying expectations consistently to all students, faculty, and visitors. The policy is dependent on the needs and personality of the school library.

Written behavior policies should be clear, concise, and in positive language. The policy can be made accessible through multiple channels: postings in the library, on the website, in the student handbook, and hand-outs during orientations. The policy should be continually evaluated, as behaviors and challenges will shift from year to year. Both reinforcement of positive behaviors and consistent monitoring of negative behaviors will help create a desired library environment.

A Behavior Expectation Policy may address items such as:

- How students access the Library Media Center – classes, passes, etc.
- How frequently this access may be
- When students may access the LMC
- Length of time that must be spent in the LMC
- Behaviors expected of each student
- Noise level
- Work level
- Computer use -Internet, social networks, email, chat rooms, game sites, etc.
- Use of electronic devices – Ipod, Blackberry, cell phones, pagers, etc.
- Access to food and drink
- Leisure time activities – board games, card games, etc.

A conduct policy from the Yarmouth High School's Student Handbook (2008-2009):

The Library is a place for quiet study, research and reading. Students should come to the library prepared to work. Students must sign in and out at the circulation desk with legible, complete, and accurate information when coming to the Library from a class or a study hall. Students must sign out before going to the rest rooms. There is no food or drink allowed in the library. Students may not leave the Library during the last 10 minutes of the period.

Samples of Behavior Expectations are also available online.

<http://owlnet.overlake.org/Library>

Circulation

A circulation policy exists in order to provide guidelines and procedures which allow optimal access to the library collection by all patrons, provide financial accountability, and minimize loss. Each library should have a written circulation policy which clearly indicates and defines each of the following items:

- Who can borrow library materials?
- Should all patrons be treated equally regarding borrowing materials? For example, should teachers have a longer loan period than students? Should older students have a longer loan period than younger students?
- How many items can a patron have checked out at one time?
- Which materials can be circulated?
- Should all materials be available to all patrons? May teachers borrow videos, but students may not?
- Do different material types circulate for different loan periods? For example, reference materials could be due the next day while novels circulate for two weeks.
- For how long may the materials be checked out?
- What are the renewal, reserve and hold policies?
- What are the procedures for Interlibrary Loan?
- Are there overdue fines and if so, how are they calculated?
- Can library privileges be restricted? Why and how?
- What happens if an item is lost or damaged? Does this correspond to your district or school policies for replacing lost or damaged school property?
- How do you handle the circulation of equipment such as DVD players, televisions, projectors, cameras, etc? Is circulation of these items limited to teachers? May students sign out equipment? With what parameters? With parental permission? With teacher permission? Who will be responsible if the equipment is damaged or lost?
- What are the circulation procedures if the library is not staffed? In some cases, school libraries are staffed for just a few days each week. What Procedures are in place for the circulation of materials? (See Procedures chapter for suggestions.)
- What are the circulation procedures if there is a substitute for the librarian? Is it different if there is an automated system? (See Procedures chapter for suggestions.)

Other considerations may include

- Can grade reports or diplomas be held until materials are returned and/or fines paid?
- Can participation in school activities be curtailed if materials or fines are overdue? (i.e. Seniors cannot attend marching practice with outstanding obligations.)



- Is there a grace period before fines are applied?
- Is there an alternative to paying fines – i.e. patrons can “work” in the library to pay the fine? Patrons can bring in non-perishable food items for a local food cupboard in lieu of fines?

Sample Library Circulation Policies may be found at:

University Laboratory High School, Urbana, IL

<http://uni.uiuc.edu/library/policies>

Pollard Memorial Library, Lowell, MA

<http://www.pollardml.org/circpol.html>

Overdue Library Material

School libraries circulate a wide variety of materials to an ever-increasing variety of patrons. In addition, schools deal with multiple levels of regulation that may begin with the librarian but extend to classroom teachers, building administrators, central office policies, regional cooperative organizations, state agencies and federal privacy regulations. The expanded scope must be considered when developing policies related to the borrowing and use of school library materials.

There are several aspects to developing an overdue policy that should be considered. These include:

1. Determining borrowing periods
2. Determining if and how policies will differ for students, faculty, staff, parents, community members and other libraries.
3. Implementing methods for notifying patrons
4. Recordkeeping
5. Deciding about fines or alternative payment methods
6. Following up with patrons who do not return materials
7. Choosing options for lost and/or damaged materials
8. Replacing materials

Borrowing periods in school libraries are often determined based upon the amount of time students are normally given to complete assignments whether your library operates on a fixed or flexible schedule. Thus your circulation period is likely to be different from that of a public or university library. Since interlibrary loans are often circulated on a different basis, students and faculty need to be aware that these materials may have alternate loan periods. Public library loan periods are often based on the popularity of titles with new, best-selling books circulating for only 5-7 days.

School libraries will want to be careful in setting up numerous loan periods, especially when dealing with younger students. Most librarians believe that at the elementary level establishing a pattern of borrowing and returning is a skill they want to teach children. Using one set time period (one week, two weeks) best does that this. Circulation periods can begin to vary as students progress through to high school.

School libraries must also deal with differing expectations of borrowing groups. Students may have a basic understanding of policies and procedures because they have been instructed in them. The same should hold true for faculty, staff and administration. Library policies should specify if borrowing privileges are different for specific groups. Often faculty members want to borrow materials for a longer time period. More often the problem arises that faculty within a particular department want to loan materials among themselves. This can cause problems when materials are not returned on time and the borrower cannot remember to whom they “loaned” them! If a school library is available to parents or if it serves as both a school and community library additional policies may need to be developed. Most school departments have policies regarding use of resources



by home-schooled students and these usually include library materials. Decisions also need to be made concerning loans to other schools/libraries within a school district and whether or not the library will participate in statewide interlibrary loan programs. All of the above decision points need to be addressed because they will all result in overdue material.

Many schools do not allow the library to charge overdue fines because of the differing economic situations of students. Education is supposed to provide an equal playing field for all students and often the charging of fines is seen as an undue hardship for disadvantaged students. School libraries may be successful in charging for lost materials but sometimes this does not happen until just before the student graduates. In elementary and middle schools, it may help at the end of the year to send a list of students with overdue materials to the librarian at the next school level they will be attending. If your principal is supportive, it may help to have him/her send a letter to the student about the overdue material. Also, many students leave or transfer without notice, taking textbooks and library materials with them. Students transferring to another school, are sometimes required to have the librarian sign a form stating that they have no outstanding overdues. It is inferred that records may not be sent until books are returned but this may not legally be the case. One should check with the registrar, guidance director or principal to be sure.

Keeping all of the above in mind, an Overdue Policy should be developed and shared with patrons (students, staff, parents). Make sure that the policy specifically addresses the following:

- When an item is considered to be overdue
- Is there a grace period beyond the actual date due
- What steps will be taken by library staff to notify the patron of the overdue material
- What are the consequences for failing to return overdue library material
- What steps can the patron take in place of returning the overdue material

Some samples of overdue policies may be found online at:

University Laboratory High School (Urbana, IL)
<http://www.uni.uiuc.edu/library/policies/index.php>

Jordan School District (Utah)
http://departments.jordandistrict.org/iss/Elementary/media_assistant_manual08/man_index.html

Collection Development

Collection development policies provide the legal responsibility and framework of who has the responsibility for choosing school library materials. School library selection policies serve as a guide to the library staff in the selection of materials. They also serve to inform the public of the criteria by which all materials are selected. A materials selection policy should be approved by the appropriate school governance board.

Sample collection development policy

What follows here is a school selection policy, but it can be adapted for public or special library use as needed. Keep in mind that the selection policies should be flexible so as to include print and non-print materials, computer-related materials, audio and visual materials. This sample is also available at

<http://130.111.214.138/~MASL/about/intelfred/ifhandbook2.html>.

The _____ School Committee recognizes that it is the primary objective of the library media centers in our schools to implement, enrich, and support the educational programs of the schools. It is the duty of the library media center to provide a wide range of materials on all levels of difficulty, with diversity of appeal and the presentation of different points of view.

To this end, the _____ School Committee reaffirms the Bill of Rights for school library media programs and asserts that the responsibility of the school library media center is:

To provide materials that will enrich and support the curriculum, taking into consideration the varied interest, abilities, and maturity levels of the student served.

To provide materials that will stimulate growth in factual knowledge, literary appreciation, aesthetic values and ethical standards.

To provide a background of information which will enable students to make intelligent judgements in their daily life.

To provide materials on opposing sides of controversial issues so that young citizens may develop under guidance the practice of critical analysis of all media.

To provide materials representative of the many religious, ethnic, and cultural groups and their contribution to our American heritage.



To place principle above personal opinion and reason above prejudice in selection of materials of the highest quality in order to assure a comprehensive collection appropriate for the users of the library media center.

In addition, the _____ School committee recognizes that the final authority as to what materials an individual student will be exposed rests with that student's parents or guardians. However, at no time will the the wishes of one child's parents to restrict his/her reading or viewing of a particular item infringe on another parent's rights to permit their child to read or view the same material.

Responsibility for selection of library materials

The _____ School committee is legally responsible for all matters relating to the operation of schools. The responsibility for the selection of instructional materials is delegated to the professionally trained personnel employed by the school department.

Selection of materials for the library media centers involves many people: principals, teachers, department heads, students and community members. The responsibility for the coordination of the selection of library materials and the recommendation for purchase rests with the professionally trained, certified library media people.

Criteria for selection

The needs of the individual school based on knowledge of the curriculum and of the existing collection are given first consideration.

Materials for purchase are considered on the following bases: overall purpose, timeliness or permanence, importance of the subject matter, quality of the writing/production, readability and popular appeal, authoritativeness, reputation of the publisher/producer, reputation and significance of the author/artist/ composer/producer, etc., and format and price.

Gift materials are judged by the same standards and are accepted or rejected by those standards. Multiple copies of outstanding and much in demand materials are purchased as needed. Worn or missing standard items are replaced periodically.

Out of date or no longer useful materials are withdrawn from the collection.

Textbooks are not purchased, nor are multiple copies to supplement classroom sets.

Procedures for selection

In selecting the materials for purchase, the library media center personnel evaluates the existing collection, consulting reputable, unbiased, professionally prepared selection aids and specialists from all departments and/or all grade levels. Whenever possible,



purchase of non-print materials shall be done only after personal evaluation by the librarian/media specialist or any other professional staff.

Reviewing aids may be used in lieu of personal evaluation. Books and other print items should be purchased only if favorably reviewed in one or more of the selection aids or if they have been personally reviewed.

Other selection policy resources:

Other examples of selection policies may be found at:

Baltimore County Public Schools

<http://www.bcps.org/offices/lis/office/admin/selection.html>

Bentley School:

http://www.bentleyschool.net/intranet/library/lis_mspolicy.html

Wilmington School District:

<http://www.dves.k12.vt.us/Users/cethier/libpol.html>



Challenged Materials

Despite the care taken to select materials for student and teacher use and the qualifications of the persons who select the materials, it is recognized that occasional objections may be raised by community members, students or school staff. It is best to be prepared.

First, make sure that there is a materials selection policy in place. Second, make sure that a process for the review of library materials is an integral component of the selections policy. Third, report any challenges to library materials to the Intellectual Freedom committee of MASL. <http://130.111.214.138/~MASL/about/intelfred/ifhandbook2.html>. The Intellectual Freedom committee can guide you through this process, assist in finding supportive materials and add this challenge to their database.

In the event a complaint is made, the following procedures will apply:

1. The complaint shall be heard first by the person providing the materials in question.
2. The complainant shall be referred to the building principal and requested to fill out the "Request for Review of Library Materials" form. A copy of the form will be forwarded to the Superintendent of Schools.
3. The Superintendent shall appoint a committee composed of the following persons to review the complaint: one principal at the appropriate grade level; one librarian/media specialist; one classroom teacher; the department head in the subject area of the challenged materials; one community member.
4. The review committee shall: read and examine the materials referred to them; check general acceptance of the materials by reading reviews; weigh values and faults against each other and form opinions based on the materials as a whole and not on passages or portions pulled out of context; meet to discuss the material and to prepare a written report on it.
5. The report of the committee shall be forwarded to the Superintendent of Schools who will inform the complainant of the results.
6. No materials shall be removed from use until the committee has made a final decision.



REQUEST FOR REVIEW OF LIBRARY MATERIALS (sample)

Author: _____

Title: _____

Publisher (if known): _____

Request initiated by _____

Telephone: _____ Address: _____

Street or Box # _____

City or Town _____ Zip Code _____

Complainant represents: Self Organization or other group

Name of Organization or Group: _____

1. To what in the material do you object? (Please be specific; cite pages.)
2. What do you feel might be the result of using this material?
3. For what age group would you recommend this material?
4. Is there anything good about this material?
5. Did you read the entire material?
If not, what parts?
6. Are you aware of the judgment of this material by critics?
7. What do you believe is the theme of this material?
8. What would you like the library to do about this material?
9. In its place, what book of equal literary quality would you recommend that would convey as valuable a picture and perspective of our civilization?

Date: _____ Signature of Complainant: _____



Other resources for Challenged Materials:

ALA/Office for Intellectual Freedom

50 E Huron Street
Chicago, IL 60611
1-800-545-2433

<http://www.ala.org/ala/oif/challengesupport/challengesupport.cfm>

National Coalition Against Censorship

275 Seventh Avenue
New York, NY 10001
212-807-6222
E-mail ncac@ncac.org

People for the American Way

2000 M. Street, NW Suite 400
Washington, D.C. 20036
1-800-326-7329
E-mail pfaw@pfaw.org



Gifts

Occasionally, someone will want to give you books or other materials no longer needed or used. Make sure that your Collection Development Policy addresses gift materials. These should be subject to the same guidelines and standards as purchased materials. It is advisable to have an understanding with the donor that the donated items will also fall under the same guidelines for weeding as other materials in your collection. This may avoid hard feelings when the time comes to dispose of donated materials. If the materials to be donated do not fit in with items that would enhance your collection, do not accept the donations. Thank the donor and suggest another place for his/her donation.

Because most schools are non-profit, these gifts may qualify as a tax deduction for the donor. Give the donor an itemized receipt or thank you note acknowledging the donation. ***Do not assign a dollar value to the donation. It is the responsibility of the donor to determine the value of the gift for tax purposes***