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Mission:

The Bloomfield Hills School District Libraries focus on the development of a culture of reading, support reading for learning and personal enjoyment, and provide opportunities for learners to read for pleasure. We strive:

- to encourage the pursuit of personal interests through reading and research
- to support student achievement of curricular goals and objectives
- to encourage curiosity about the world around us

Guiding Principles for the BHS Library

Whether during an informal complaint or a formal reconsideration of a library resource, library staff, administrators, and Reconsideration Committee members complete their work using general agreed-upon principles such as:

- Libraries have diverse materials reflecting differing points of view, and a library's mission is to provide access to information to all users.
 - All library users have a First Amendment right to read, view, and listen to library resources.
 - The [Library Bill of Rights](#) and the [Freedom to Read Statement](#) of the American Library Association can be used as guiding documents.
 - Any person has the right to express concerns about library resources and expect to have the objection taken seriously.
 - When library resources are reconsidered, the principles of the freedom to read, listen, and view are defended rather than specific materials.
 - A questioned item will be considered in its entirety, not judged solely on portions taken out of context.
 - Parents or guardians have the right to guide the reading, viewing, and listening of their children but must give the same right to other parents/guardians.
 - Questioned items will remain in circulation during the reconsideration process.
 - *The reconsideration process should be completed in its entirety and not subverted or ended prematurely, leaving the library open to legal challenge.*
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Public School District Selection Policy Objectives

Objectives are, of necessity, broad and should relate to the mission of the school and its instructional program. Instructional and library materials are selected by the school district to implement, enrich, and support the educational program and personal interests of each student.

School Library Selection Policy Objectives

- To provide faculty and students with materials that enrich and support the curriculum and meet the needs of the students and faculty served
- To provide students with a wide range of educational materials on all levels of difficulty and in a variety of formats, with diversity of appeal, allowing for the presentation of many different points of view
- To select materials that present various sides of controversial issues, giving students an opportunity to develop analytical skills resulting in informed decisions
- To select materials in all formats, including up-to-date, high quality, varied literature to develop and strengthen a love of reading
- To allow students an abundance of choice in leisure reading to grow their love of reading, foster a culture of reading in the community, and provide windows and mirrors to both see themselves in books as well as see others different from themselves.

School Library Responsibility for Selection

Although the Board of Education or governing authority is legally responsible for the resources used in a school, it delegates the selection of the library's resources to its professional school library personnel. Many selection policies direct the library professional to seek recommendations and work collaboratively with others in the school community during the selection process. Teachers, students, administrators, and others participate by making recommendations; however, strong policies state that the final responsibility for the selection decisions rests with the school library professional.

School Library Responsibility for Selection

The elected Board of Education shall delegate to the superintendent of schools or district administrator the authority and responsibility for selection of library materials in all formats. Responsibility for actual selection rests with professionally trained library personnel using the board's adopted selection criteria and procedures.

BHS Library Selection Criteria

General Criteria:

- Support and enrich the curriculum and/or students' personal interests and learning
- Meet high standards in literary, artistic, and aesthetic quality; technical aspects; and physical format
- Be appropriate for the subject area, age relevant, emotional development, ability level, learning styles, or social, emotional, and intellectual development of the students for whom the materials are selected
- Incorporate accurate and authentic factual content from authoritative sources
- Earn favorable reviews in standard reviewing sources and/or favorable recommendations based on preview and examination of materials by professional personnel
- Exhibit a high degree of potential user appeal and interest
- Represent differing viewpoints on controversial issues
- Provide a global perspective and promote diversity by including materials by authors and illustrators of all cultures
- Provide selections that represent the full range of groups that make up our society
- Include a variety of resources in physical and virtual formats including print and non-print such as electronic and multimedia (including subscription databases and other online products, e-books, educational games, and other forms of emerging technologies)
- Demonstrate physical format, appearance, and durability suitable to their intended use
- Requests and/or suggestions for the purchase of materials shall be considered from faculty, administration, parents, and students as deemed appropriate
- Balance cost with need

Top Recommended School Library Reviewing Sources:

- Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) Notable Children's Books
- Booklist
- School Library Journal
- Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) Best Books for Young Adults
- Kirkus Reviews
- Other professional sources, as needed

Acquisitions Procedures in School Libraries

Because most school libraries have only a single school librarian, that individual is responsible for creating a collection to support instruction, literacy, and students' recreational reading. Materials selection policies generally allow for library professionals to seek input from teachers,

other professional staff, and students. School librarians are also responsible for weeding or de-selecting collection materials following policy guidelines as well as making a decision as to whether gift items will be accepted.

School Library Acquisitions Procedures

- In selecting learning resources, professional personnel will evaluate available resources and curriculum needs and will consult reputable, professionally prepared aids to selection, and other appropriate sources.
- Recommendations for purchase involve administrators, teachers, students, district personnel, and community members, as appropriate.
- Gift materials shall be judged by the selection criteria and shall be accepted or rejected by those criteria.
- Selection is an ongoing process that should include removing materials that are no longer used or needed, adding materials, and replacing lost and worn materials that still have educational value.

Selecting Materials on Controversial Topics in School Libraries

The majority of users served in school libraries are minors, and American society is often very protective of its youth. These two facts create challenges for school librarians selecting materials on a range of perspectives on topics which may be considered controversial by some in the school community. Hot button topics that may be deemed controversial and offensive to some range from LGBTQ-themed resources to politics, race relations, and sexually explicit language. Court decisions including *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District* (1969) *Board of Education*, *Island Trees Union Free School District v. Pico* (1982) established that minors do have First Amendment rights in schools including the right to receive information. Ethically, school librarians find guidance for selecting resources which may be considered controversial in the American Library Association's [Library Bill of Rights](#), the American Library Association's Code of Ethics, and the [Freedom to Read Statement](#). Therefore, school librarians are ethically responsible to provide access to resources with varying perspectives for students' curricular and personal information needs.

School Library Selection of Materials on Controversial Topics

BHS subscribes to the principles expressed in the American Library Association's [Library Bill of Rights](#). It is the responsibility of the school district to provide a wide range of materials on different levels of difficulty and representing different points of view. School library professional staff will provide materials on opposing viewpoints on controversial issues to enable students to develop necessary critical thinking skills and to be discriminate users of information and productive members of society.

School Library Collection Maintenance and Weeding

Annually or biannually, the school librarian will conduct an inventory of the school library collection and equipment. The inventory can be used to determine losses and remove damaged or worn materials which can then be considered for replacement. The inventory can also be used to deselect and remove materials that are no longer relevant to the curriculum or of interest to students. Additionally, school librarians should develop a collection maintenance plan that includes systematic inspection of materials that would result in weeding outdated, damaged, or irrelevant materials from the collection.

School Library Support for Intellectual Freedom

Statement

The school libraries of this district are guided by the principles set forth in the Library Bill of Rights and its interpretative statements, including “Access to Resources and Services in the School Library Program” and The Students’ Right to Read statement of the National Council of Teachers of English. See Appendix (in this policy) for the Library Bill of Rights, “Access to Resources and Services in the School Library Program,” and The Students’ Right to Read statement.

School Library Reconsideration

School libraries could receive complaints about their library resources. It is important for school librarians to be prepared for both oral complaints and the possibility of informal concerns becoming requests for formal reconsideration. Part of being prepared is having a current board-approved selection policy with both informal and formal reconsideration procedures and having library staff, administrators, and school board members be familiar with the document. Additionally, having annual conversations with the principal about the selection policy, including reviewing the reconsideration process, ensures that administrators are familiar with and able to respond to library resource complaints. In determining who should have the right to bring forth an informal or formal request for reconsideration, districts should consider the ramifications of limiting or expanding who can request reconsideration. Too limiting may result in individuals seeking means to challenge materials outside of the formal procedures for reconsideration. Too

broad may result in outside pressure groups utilizing the reconsideration procedures to bring multiple challenges to force their perspectives.

School Library Reconsideration Policy

Despite the careful selection of library resources and the qualification of those involved in the selection process, objections to library resources that are deemed offensive or inappropriate may occur. Any resident, employee, or student of the school district may express an informal concern or formal request for reconsideration of a library resource.

Informal Complaints

In the Bloomfield Hills School District, the complainant may voice the objection to the school librarian, a teacher, or the principal. In some cases, the individuals simply want their objections heard and have their concerns acknowledged; while in other situations, the person making the complaint asks public, academic, or school staff to restrict or remove the library resource. One important part of the informal complaint process is listening respectfully to the complainant's concerns. Although listening to a person's complaint is sometimes as far as an oral complaint goes, it is necessary for every library to have a process for handling informal patron concerns. A formal complaint process often follows a verbal discussion with a library staff member, library director, teacher, or school principal and acknowledges the right of the individual to express a concern and have their objections formally reviewed.

BHS Library Procedures for Handling Informal Complaints

Persons with a complaint about library print or digital resources should state their concerns to the school librarian or principal. The librarian or principal will listen attentively to the concerns and attempt to resolve the issue informally. As part of the discussion, the school employee will explain the library's selection policy, selection criteria, diversity of the collection with resources from many points of view, and the selection process. Additionally, each parent/guardian has the right to determine the appropriateness of library resources for their children and should accord the same right to other families.

If the complaint is not resolved informally, the librarian or principal will explain the formal reconsideration process and provide the individual with a copy of the school district's library selection policy with reconsideration procedures and a request for reconsideration of library resources form. If there is concern about multiple items, a separate form must be completed for each item. All complaints to staff members shall be reported to the building principal, whether received by telephone, letter, or in personal conversation. No library resources should be removed or restricted from use as a result of the informal complaint.

If the completed and signed formal request for reconsideration form has not been received by the principal within two weeks, the matter shall be considered closed.

Formal Complaints

Persons who are concerned about the appropriateness of library resources or are unsatisfied with the response from an informal discussion about a title may choose to make a formal request for reconsideration of the work in question. A formal reconsideration request is a written document that is usually reviewed by an assigned library staff member or committee. In order to provide a standard method for receiving patron input, every library should have a written process for handling formal complaints as part of the reconsideration policy. This will serve as a guideline when reviewing, evaluating, and processing formal reconsideration requests. Adding timeline requirements to the reconsideration process ensures that complainants' concerns will be addressed in a timely fashion.

BHS Library Procedures for Handling Formal Complaints

The following procedures should be followed if, after discussing the questioned resource, no resolution is made.

1. The complainant should be referred to the principal.
2. A concerned citizen who is dissatisfied with earlier informal discussions will be offered a packet of materials which includes the library's mission statement, selection policy, request for reconsideration of instructional resources form, and the Library Bill of Rights.
3. The complainant is required to complete and submit the reconsideration form to the principal within ten business days.
4. Only 1 book may be challenged at a time.
5. If a completed reconsideration form is not submitted within ten business days, the matter is considered closed.
6. Upon receipt of the form, the principal should notify and provide a copy of the reconsideration form with the following individuals:
 - i. Superintendent
 - ii. School Library Advisory Committee/Reconsideration Committee
 - iii. School librarian
7. The work in question will remain on library shelves and in circulation until a formal decision is made.
8. The Reconsideration Committee will be appointed by the principal and consist of a teacher, a building level administrator, a school librarian, a reading specialist or language arts teacher, and parent/student representation (unaffiliated with the complaint). Makeup of the committee varies depending on the school district.

9. The school librarian will secure copies of the resource for the committee to review.
10. The school librarian will provide the reviewing committee with a short formal Intellectual Freedom training that explains a packet of materials, which includes the library's mission statement, selection policy, the Library Bill of Rights, the completed reconsideration form, reviews of the resource being reconsidered, and a list of awards or honors, if any. This packet should be created with assistance from the state department of public instruction and the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom.
11. The school will obtain copies of the material in question for review by the Reconsideration Committee.
12. The Reconsideration Committee (which should include the school librarian) should schedule a formal reconsideration meeting within 10 school days after the principal receives the written request for reconsideration. The principal should notify the superintendent as to this schedule.
13. The school level Reconsideration Committee should follow the procedures listed below:
 - i. At the initial meeting, the principal and committee will review reconsideration committee guidelines and procedures. A school administrator should fully participate in the reconsideration process.
 - ii. A member of the committee should keep minutes.
 - iii. All committee members should fully review the resource (read or view the entire work) before voting.
 - iv. The committee reserves the right to use outside expertise if necessary to help in its decision-making process.
 - v. The complainant may make an initial verbal presentation about the resource under reconsideration or may choose to share the written form. The complainant is asked to provide sources for quotes used during this presentation.
 - vi. The complainant may not participate in or observe the committee's deliberations unless invited to do so by the committee. The committee chair may choose to give committee members time to ask questions.
 - vii. During the initial or subsequent meetings, the committee will make its decision determined by the simple majority to retain, move the resources to a different level, or remove the resource. This will be a secret ballot vote.
 - viii. The committee's written decision (including a minority report if needed) shall be presented to the complainant and the superintendent of school within five school days after the decision is made.
 - ix. If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision at the school level, a written appeal can be made within 10 school days to the superintendent of schools.

14. The District-Level Reconsideration Committee will consider any appeals from the school level. The committee will be appointed by the Superintendent or his/her designee. The committee could include any of the individuals as follows:
 - i. Director of school library services
 - ii. Director of elementary, middle, or secondary education, as appropriate
 - iii. Curriculum coordinator specializing in reading from the appropriate level
 - iv. District-level library services staff
 - v. School librarian from the appropriate level
 - vi. Other district-level instructional directors
 - vii. A student from the level in which the challenged material resides (middle or high school level only)
 - viii. Other appropriate educational professionals
15. The organization of the District-Level Reconsideration Committee will be as follows:
 - i. Policy, committee guidelines, and procedures should be reviewed at each meeting.
 - ii. The chairperson will be the school librarian. The secretary of the committee will be elected at each meeting.
 - iii. The chairperson will be the spokesperson for the committee at all meetings and before the Board of Education when decisions are made.
 - iv. The secretary will record the minutes and decisions of the meetings.
 - v. These should be filed with the chairperson, who will communicate decisions in writing to the superintendent. Meetings will be called at the discretion of the chairperson or when an appeal is requested by a complainant.
16. The procedures for the District-Level Reconsideration Committee will be as follows:
 - i. The chairperson will call the meeting within 10 school days after the written appeal is filed with the superintendent.
 - ii. The committee shall read and examine the challenged resource, read the written reconsideration form, and read copies of the professionally prepared reviews and list of awards provided by the school librarian on the committee. The chairperson should forward these materials to the committee members at least three days prior to the meeting. The procedures for these meetings are the same as those for the school-level meeting.
17. The procedures for an appeal to the Board of Education will be as follows:
 - i. An appeal of the decision made by the District-Level Reconsideration Committee must be made in writing to the superintendent within 10 days of the system-level committee decision.
 - ii. A decision on the complaint will be made at the next regular meeting or special meeting within 30 days of the written request to the superintendent.
 - iii. The board reserves the right to use outside expertise if necessary to help in its decision making.

- iv. The chairperson for the District-Level Reconsideration Committee will present the committee's decision to the board.
 - v. The complainant or designee will present the petitioner's position.
 - vi. The board decision will be final, and the superintendent will implement the decision.
 - vii. Decisions on reconsidered materials will stand for five years before new requests for reconsideration of those items will be entertained.
-

Bloomfield Hills Schools Library Request for Reconsideration of Material Form

The Administration of Bloomfield Hills Schools has delegated the responsibility for selection and evaluation of library/educational resources to the school library professional staff/curriculum committee, and has established reconsideration procedures to address concerns about those resources. Completion of this form is the first step in those procedures. If you wish to request reconsideration of school or library resources, please return the completed form to the coordinator of library media resources (or principal).

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State/Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Do you represent self? _____ Organization? _____ Name of Organization _____

School Referenced: _____ BHHS _____ IA _____ EHMS _____ WHMS _____ BHMS
_____ Conant _____ Lone Pine _____ Way _____ Eastover

1. Resource on which you are commenting:

_____ Book (e-book) _____ Movie _____ Magazine _____ Database

_____ Audio Book _____ Newspaper _____ Game _____ Other

*Only one book may be challenged at a time.

Title _____

Author/Producer _____

2. Is the resource part of the curriculum, library collection, or other?

3. What brought this resource to your attention?

4. Have you examined the entire resource? If not, what sections did you review?

5. What concerns you about the resource?

6. Are there resource(s) you suggest to provide additional information and/or other viewpoints on this topic?

7. What action are you requesting the committee consider?

School Library Letter to Person Requesting Reconsideration

Dear _____:

We appreciate your concern over the use of _____ in our school. The district has a policy for selecting materials, but realizes that not everyone will agree with every selection made.

To help you understand the selection process, we are sending copies of the district's:

1. Instructional goals and objectives
2. Materials Selection Policy statement
3. Procedure for Handling Formal Complaints
4. Request for Reconsideration of Material form

If you are still concerned after you review this material, please complete the enclosed Request for Reconsideration of Material form and return it to me. You may be assured of prompt attention to your request. If I have not heard from you within ten business days, we will assume you no longer wish to file a formal complaint.

Sincerely,

Principal

Date

Appendix

Library Bill of Rights

The American Library Association affirms that all libraries are forums for information and ideas, and that the following basic policies should guide their services.

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

II. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

III. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

IV. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

V. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VI. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of individuals or groups requesting their use.

VII. All people, regardless of origin, age, background, or views, possess a right to privacy and confidentiality in their library use. Libraries should advocate for, educate about, and protect people's privacy, safeguarding all library use data, including personally identifiable information.

Adopted June 19, 1939, by the ALA Council; amended October 14, 1944; June 18, 1948; February 2, 1961; June 27, 1967; January 23, 1980; January 29, 2019.

Inclusion of "age" reaffirmed January 23, 1996.

The Freedom to Read Statement

The freedom to read is essential to our democracy. It is continuously under attack. Private groups and public authorities in various parts of the country are working to remove or limit access to reading materials, to censor content in schools, to label "controversial" views, to distribute lists of "objectionable" books or authors, and to purge libraries. These actions apparently rise from a view that our national tradition of free expression is no longer valid; that censorship and suppression are needed to counter threats to safety or national security, as well as to avoid the subversion of politics and the corruption of morals. We, as individuals devoted to reading and as librarians and publishers responsible for disseminating ideas, wish to assert the public interest in the preservation of the freedom to read.

Most attempts at suppression rest on a denial of the fundamental premise of democracy: that the ordinary individual, by exercising critical judgment, will select the good and reject the bad. We trust Americans to recognize propaganda and misinformation, and to make their own decisions about what they read and believe. We do not believe they are prepared to sacrifice their heritage of a free press in order to be "protected" against what others think may be bad for them. We believe they still favor free enterprise in ideas and expression.

These efforts at suppression are related to a larger pattern of pressures being brought against education, the press, art and images, films, broadcast media, and the Internet. The problem is not only one of actual censorship. The shadow of fear cast by these pressures leads, we suspect, to an even larger voluntary curtailment of expression by those who seek to avoid controversy or unwelcome scrutiny by government officials.

Such pressure toward conformity is perhaps natural to a time of accelerated change. And yet suppression is never more dangerous than in such a time of social tension. Freedom has given the United States the elasticity to endure strain. Freedom keeps open the path of novel and creative solutions, and enables change to come by choice. Every silencing of a heresy, every enforcement of an orthodoxy, diminishes the toughness and resilience of our society and leaves it less able to deal with controversy and difference.

Now as always in our history, reading is among our greatest freedoms. The freedom to read and write is almost the only means for making generally available ideas or manners of expression that can initially command only a small audience. The written word is the natural medium for the new idea and the untried voice from which come the original contributions to social growth. It is essential to the extended discussion that serious thought requires, and to the accumulation of knowledge and ideas into organized collections.

We believe that free communication is essential to the preservation of a free society and a creative culture. We believe that these pressures toward conformity present the danger of limiting the range and variety of inquiry and expression on which our democracy and our culture depend. We believe that every American community must jealously guard the freedom to publish and to circulate, in order to preserve its own freedom to read. We believe that publishers

and librarians have a profound responsibility to give validity to that freedom to read by making it possible for the readers to choose freely from a variety of offerings.

The freedom to read is guaranteed by the Constitution. Those with faith in free people will stand firm on these constitutional guarantees of essential rights and will exercise the responsibilities that accompany these rights.

We therefore affirm these propositions:

1. *It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions, including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority.*

Creative thought is by definition new, and what is new is different. The bearer of every new thought is a rebel until that idea is refined and tested. Totalitarian systems attempt to maintain themselves in power by the ruthless suppression of any concept that challenges the established orthodoxy. The power of a democratic system to adapt to change is vastly strengthened by the freedom of its citizens to choose widely from among conflicting opinions offered freely to them. To stifle every nonconformist idea at birth would mark the end of the democratic process. Furthermore, only through the constant activity of weighing and selecting can the democratic mind attain the strength demanded by times like these. We need to know not only what we believe but why we believe it.

2. *Publishers, librarians, and booksellers do not need to endorse every idea or presentation they make available. It would conflict with the public interest for them to establish their own political, moral, or aesthetic views as a standard for determining what should be published or circulated.*

Publishers and librarians serve the educational process by helping to make available knowledge and ideas required for the growth of the mind and the increase of learning. They do not foster education by imposing as mentors the patterns of their own thought. The people should have the freedom to read and consider a broader range of ideas than those that may be held by any single librarian or publisher or government or church. It is wrong that what one can read should be confined to what another thinks proper.

3. *It is contrary to the public interest for publishers or librarians to bar access to writings on the basis of the personal history or political affiliations of the author.*

No art or literature can flourish if it is to be measured by the political views or private lives of its creators. No society of free people can flourish that draws up lists of writers to whom it will not listen, whatever they may have to say.

4. *There is no place in our society for efforts to coerce the taste of others, to confine adults to the reading matter deemed suitable for adolescents, or to inhibit the efforts of writers to achieve artistic expression.*

To some, much of modern expression is shocking. But is not much of life itself shocking? We cut off literature at the source if we prevent writers from dealing with the stuff of life. Parents and teachers have a responsibility to prepare the young to meet the diversity of experiences in life to which they will be exposed, as they have a responsibility to help them learn to think critically for themselves. These are affirmative responsibilities, not to

be discharged simply by preventing them from reading works for which they are not yet prepared. In these matters values differ, and values cannot be legislated; nor can machinery be devised that will suit the demands of one group without limiting the freedom of others.

5. *It is not in the public interest to force a reader to accept the prejudgment of a label characterizing any expression or its author as subversive or dangerous.*

The ideal of labeling presupposes the existence of individuals or groups with wisdom to determine by authority what is good or bad for others. It presupposes that individuals must be directed in making up their minds about the ideas they examine. But Americans do not need others to do their thinking for them.

6. *It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians, as guardians of the people's freedom to read, to contest encroachments upon that freedom by individuals or groups seeking to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large; and by the government whenever it seeks to reduce or deny public access to public information.*

It is inevitable in the give and take of the democratic process that the political, the moral, or the aesthetic concepts of an individual or group will occasionally collide with those of another individual or group. In a free society individuals are free to determine for themselves what they wish to read, and each group is free to determine what it will recommend to its freely associated members. But no group has the right to take the law into its own hands, and to impose its own concept of politics or morality upon other members of a democratic society. Freedom is no freedom if it is accorded only to the accepted and the inoffensive. Further, democratic societies are more safe, free, and creative when the free flow of public information is not restricted by governmental prerogative or self-censorship.

7. *It is the responsibility of publishers and librarians to give full meaning to the freedom to read by providing books that enrich the quality and diversity of thought and expression. By the exercise of this affirmative responsibility, they can demonstrate that the answer to a "bad" book is a good one, the answer to a "bad" idea is a good one.*

The freedom to read is of little consequence when the reader cannot obtain matter fit for that reader's purpose. What is needed is not only the absence of restraint, but the positive provision of opportunity for the people to read the best that has been thought and said. Books are the major channel by which the intellectual inheritance is handed down, and the principal means of its testing and growth. The defense of the freedom to read requires of all publishers and librarians the utmost of their faculties, and deserves of all Americans the fullest of their support.

We state these propositions neither lightly nor as easy generalizations. We here stake out a lofty claim for the value of the written word. We do so because we believe that it is possessed of enormous variety and usefulness, worthy of cherishing and keeping free. We realize that the application of these propositions may mean the dissemination of ideas and manners of expression that are repugnant to many persons. We do not state these propositions in the comfortable belief that what people read is unimportant. We believe rather that what people

read is deeply important; that ideas can be dangerous; but that the suppression of ideas is fatal to a democratic society. Freedom itself is a dangerous way of life, but it is ours.

Libraries: An American Value

Libraries in America are cornerstones of the communities they serve. Free access to the books, ideas, resources, and information in America's libraries is imperative for education, employment, enjoyment, and self-government.

Libraries are a legacy to each generation, offering the heritage of the past and the promise of the future. To ensure that libraries flourish and have the freedom to promote and protect the public good in the 21st century, we believe certain principles must be guaranteed.

To that end, we affirm this contract with the people we serve:

- We defend the constitutional rights of all individuals, including children and teenagers, to use the library's resources and services;
- We value our nation's diversity and strive to reflect that diversity by providing a full spectrum of resources and services to the communities we serve;
- We affirm the responsibility and the right of all parents and guardians to guide their own children's use of the library and its resources and services;
- We connect people and ideas by helping each person select from and effectively use the library's resources;
- We protect each individual's privacy and confidentiality in the use of library resources and services;
- We protect the rights of individuals to express their opinions about library resources and services;
- We celebrate and preserve our democratic society by making available the widest possible range of viewpoints, opinions and ideas, so that all individuals have the opportunity to become lifelong learners - informed, literate, educated, and culturally enriched.

Change is constant, but these principles transcend change and endure in a dynamic technological, social, and political environment.

By embracing these principles, libraries in the United States can contribute to a future that values and protects freedom of speech in a world that celebrates both our similarities and our differences, respects individuals and their beliefs, and holds all persons truly equal and free.

Adopted February 3, 1999, by the

Council of the American Library Association

NCTE Right to Read Statement

An open letter to our country from the National Council of Teachers of English:

The right to read, like all rights guaranteed or implied within our constitutional tradition, can be used wisely or foolishly. In many ways, education is an effort to improve the quality of choices open to all students. But to deny the freedom of choice in fear that it may be unwisely used is to destroy the freedom itself. For this reason, we respect the right of individuals to be selective in their own reading. But for the same reason, we oppose efforts of individuals or groups to limit the freedom of choice of others or to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large.

One of the foundations of a democratic society is the individual's right to read, and also the individual's right to freely choose what they would like to read. This right is based on an assumption that the educated possess judgment and understanding and can be trusted with the determination of their own actions. In effect, the reader is freed from the bonds of chance. The reader is not limited by birth, geographic location, or time, since reading allows meeting people, debating philosophies, and experiencing events far beyond the narrow confines of an individual's own existence.

In selecting texts to read by young people, English teachers consider the contribution each work may make to the education of the reader, its aesthetic value, its honesty, its readability for a particular group of students, and its appeal to young children and adolescents. English teachers, however, may use different texts for different purposes. The criteria for choosing a text to be read by an entire class are somewhat different from the criteria for choosing texts to be read by small groups.

For example, a teacher might select John Knowles's *A Separate Peace* for reading by an entire class, partly because the book has received wide critical recognition, partly because it is relatively short and will keep the attention of many slower readers, and partly because it has proved popular with many students of widely differing skill sets. The same teacher, faced with the responsibility of choosing or recommending books for several small groups of students, might select or recommend books as different as Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch*, Marjane Satrapi [1]'s *Persepolis*, Malcolm X's *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*, Carlos Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart*, or Paul Zindel's *The Pigman*, depending upon the skills and interests of the students in each group.

And the criteria for suggesting books to individuals or for recommending something worth reading for a student who casually stops by after class are different from selecting material for a class or group. As opposed to censoring, the teacher selects texts, and also helps guide students to self-select them. Selection implies that one is free to choose a text, depending upon

the purpose to be achieved and the students or class in question, but a book selected this year may be ignored next year, and the reverse. Censorship implies that certain works are not open to selection, this year or any year.

Wallace Stevens once wrote, "Literature is the better part of life. To this it seems inevitably necessary to add / provided life is the better part of literature" (1957). Students and parents have the right to demand that education today keep students in touch with the reality of the world outside the classroom. Many of our best literary works ask questions as valid and significant today as when the literature first appeared, questions like "What is the nature of humanity?" "Why do people praise individuality and practice conformity?" "What do people need for a good life?" and "What is the nature of a good person?" English teachers must be free to employ books, classic or contemporary, which do not hide, or lie to the young, about the perilous but wondrous times we live in, books which talk of the fears, hopes, joys, and frustrations people experience, books about people not only as they are but as they can be. English teachers forced through the pressures of censorship to use only safe or antiseptic works are placed in the morally and intellectually untenable position of lying to their students about the nature and condition of humanity.

The teacher must exercise care to select or recommend works for class reading and group discussion. One of the most important responsibilities of the English teacher is developing rapport and respect among students. Respect for the uniqueness and potential of the individual, an important facet of the study of literature, should be emphasized in the English class. One way rapport and respect can be developed is through encouraging the students themselves to explore and engage with texts of their own selection. Also, English classes should reflect the cultural contributions of minoritized groups in the United States, just as they should acquaint students with diverse contributions by the many peoples of the world. Finally, the teacher should be prepared to support and defend their classroom and students' process in selecting and engaging with diverse texts against potential censorship and controversy.