

WePAC Book Selection Policy

(approved by Board on 9/12/2023)

Our Vision:

In our vision, every Philadelphia student will be empowered with the literacy skills vital to the success of the child and the prosperity of our community.

Our Mission:

WePAC's mission is to promote childhood literacy by engaging volunteers in Philadelphia public schools through re-opening and staffing libraries.

Library Objectives for Selection:

- To provide the teachers, staff and students at WePAC partner schools with access to books and materials that enrich and support literacy and learning across 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 in all formats, including up-to-date, high quality, varied literature to develop and strengthen a love of reading.

Selection Responsibility:

The WePAC Board of Directors delegates the selection of the library's resources to WePAC staff and partners with whom WePAC has an established Memorandum of Agreement (MOU), such as **Penn Libraries Communities Engagement (PLCE)**, with formal input from school administrators, teachers, students and WePAC volunteers. Selection of materials may be influenced by recommended reading lists, book reviews, professional journals, teacher and student consultations, and professional and popular websites, blogs, and social media; however, materials may be selected without the aid of these sources, or with the aid of other resources. The actual resource will be examined whenever possible.

Selection Criteria:

It is the goal of a WePAC supported school library to house materials based on the following 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 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 the cultures and beliefs both within the school community and beyond
- Prioritize diversity in both stories and authorship. We pull from We Need Diverse Books' definition of diversity: "We recognize all diverse experiences, including (but not limited to) LGBTQIA, Native, people of color, gender diversity, people with disabilities, and ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities" (2020), and we adhere to the following principles:
 - **Addressing Diversity Means Addressing History:** We see diversity as a historical issue that can only be achieved by understanding the roots of institutionalized racism and other forms of discrimination.
 - **Non-Reductive Notions of Representation:** We pledge to seek authentic and diverse portrayals of all people.
 - **Anti-Censorship:** We are committed to challenging our own perspectives and biases.
 - **To Represent is to Invite Into Conversation:** We resolve to open our hearts and minds to discussion about diversity and representation.
- Demonstrate physical format, appearance, and durability suitable to their intended use
- Balance cost with need

Gifts:

Gifts and donations to the school library are accepted with the understanding that the decision for use and disposition of the materials and/or funds will be determined using the same selection criteria and weeding criteria as purchased materials. All materials should support the curriculum and needs of library users. Gifts and donations, like purchased resources, will be removed from the collection at the end of their useful life.

Weeding:

The WePAC staff in coordination with the school administration and other relevant MOU partners, such as PLCE, is responsible for the maintenance and preservation of the library collection. Worn out materials will be rebound if desirable; otherwise, materials will be removed from the collection based on one or more of the following criteria:

- Poor physical condition
- Poor circulation record – materials not circulated for 10 years
- Duplicates of titles no longer in demand
- Inappropriate reading level
- Does not support the curricula and/or foster a love of reading
- Not a high-quality text
- Outdated and/or inaccurate content or messaging (fiction and non-fiction)
- Biased or stereotypical portrayals (words or images)
- Does not reflect a diverse population/equitable global view
- Subject matter unsuitable for users
- Religious messaging beyond educational purpose

Weeded materials will be removed from the collection. The bar codes and identifying markers will be removed, and the items will be deleted from the circulation system. Materials that still hold educational value will be dispersed to classroom teachers or donated. Items that are outdated and lack educational value will be discarded.

Parental /Caregiver/Guardian Restrictions on Reading Material:

At home reading: Library books have been carefully vetted, and inclusion in our library collection indicates our approval. However, if your child checks out a book you do not approve of for at-home reading, you may use the form in Appendix A to formally request that your child does not bring home specific book titles or books with a particular content. Form accessibility is determined by school administration. The completed form must be returned to the Principal and WePAC Program Manager who will then relay the information to the library volunteers. The WePAC Program Manager will take responsibility for ensuring that the Destiny system properly notes the at-home reading restriction on the student.

In-school reading: In accordance with the School Library Bill of Rights, it is WePAC’s policy to allow students access to all book titles during library time and independent reading. Therefore, during school hours, students will be allowed full access to reading material according to the discretion of the school faculty (not WePAC staff or volunteers).

Reconsideration of Materials:

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 school community member may express an informal concern or formal request for reconsideration of a library resource.

Persons with a complaint about library print resources should state their concerns to the School Principal & the WePAC Program Manager, via in-person meeting, email or phone, both of whom will listen attentively to the concerns and attempt to resolve the issue informally. If the complaint is not resolved informally, the WePAC Program Manager & Principal will provide the individual with the WePAC Book Selection Policy 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 shall be reported to the Principal and the WePAC Program Manager, whether received by telephone, e-mail, or in personal conversation. No library resources should be removed or restricted from use as a result of the informal complaint. School administration will be responsible for communicating with the school community about the existence of this formal reconsideration process.

Policies on Intellectual Freedom:

WePAC partner school libraries 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, as well as by the ALA’s Freedom to Read Statement. See Appendix C for these documents.

Appendix A

AT HOME READING RESTRICTIONS FORM

WePAC partner library books have been carefully vetted. However, if your child checks out a book you do not approve of for at-home reading, you may use this form to request that your child does not bring home specific book titles. Please submit this form directly to the Principal and WePAC Program Manager.

Name _____

Date _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

I would like to request that my child not bring home the book/s entitled:

Have you read the book in its entirety? (Select One) ___ Yes ___ No

What brought the resource/s to your attention?

Appendix B

REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION OF SCHOOL LIBRARY MATERIALS FORM

WePAC and its Board of Directors, delegates the selection of the library's resources to its professional staff and MOU partners, with formal input from school administrators, 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 library resources, please return the completed form to the School Principal and WePAC Program Manager. Reconsideration does not ensure removal of the resource from the collection.

Name _____

Date _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Title of contested resource: _____

What brought this resource to your attention?

Have you examined the entire resource? If not, which sections did you review?

To what in the book do you object? Please be specific and cite page numbers:

What do you think might be the result of reading this book?

Are you aware of the literary critics' judgements of this book and the author's reputation? If so, write what you know of these opinions:

What action are you requesting the committee consider?

Appendix C

Reconsideration of Materials

Guiding Principles:

Whether during an informal complaint or a formal reconsideration of a library resource, WePAC personnel, designated by the WePAC Board of Directors, along with the School Principal and MOU partners such as PLCE 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.

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 WePAC Program Manager and School Principal.
2. The complainant will be offered a copy of the WePAC Book Selection Policy, as well as a Request for Reconsideration of Material form.
3. The complainant is required to complete and submit the reconsideration form to the WePAC Program Manager and School Principal within ten business days. If a completed reconsideration form is not submitted within ten business days, the matter is considered closed.
4. Upon receipt of the form, the School Principal and WePAC Program Manager should notify and provide a copy of the reconsideration form to the WePAC Executive Director and the Reconsideration Committee.
5. The work in question will remain on library shelves and in circulation until a formal decision is made.
6. The Reconsideration Committee will be appointed by the School Principal. Makeup of the committee should include varied stakeholders such as a literacy specialist, teacher, parent/caregiver, WePAC volunteer. In order to prevent a tie vote, the School Principal should recruit an odd number of members for the committee. The personal identification of each member should remain anonymous to protect the objectivity of the deliberation.

7. The WePAC Program Manager will obtain copies of the material in question for review by the Reconsideration Committee.
8. The WePAC Program Manager will provide the reviewing committee with a short formal Intellectual Freedom training that explains a packet of materials, which includes the WePAC's mission statement, selection criteria, the Library Bill of Rights, the School 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 may be created with assistance from the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom.
9. The Reconsideration Committee should schedule a formal reconsideration meeting within 10 school days after the Principal and WePAC Program Manager receives the written request for reconsideration.
10. The Reconsideration Committee should follow the procedures listed below:
 - a. All committee members should fully review the resource (read or view the entire work) before voting.
 - b. The committee reserves the right to use outside expertise if necessary, to help in its decision-making process.
 - c. 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. The committee chair may choose to give committee members time to ask questions.

- d. The complainant may not participate in or observe the committee's deliberations unless invited to do so by the committee.
- e. During the initial or subsequent meetings, the committee will make its decision determined by the simple majority to retain or remove the resource. This will be a secret ballot vote.
- f. The committee's written decision (including a minority report if needed) shall be presented to the complainant within five school days after the decision is made. The committee's decision will be final.
- g. Decisions on reconsidered materials will stand for five years before new requests for reconsideration of those items will be entertained.

Appendix D

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, age, 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.

**Access to Resources and Services in the School Library:
An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights**

While acknowledging that WePAC volunteers are not school librarians, WePAC's Board of Directors, staff, and volunteers affirm our support of this interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights and the Library Bill of Rights itself.

The school library plays a unique role in promoting, protecting, and educating about intellectual freedom. It serves as a point of voluntary access to information and ideas and as a learning laboratory for students as they acquire critical thinking and problem-solving skills needed in a pluralistic society. Although the educational level and program of the school necessarily shape the resources and services of a school library, the principles of the American Library Association's *Library Bill of Rights* apply equally to all libraries, including school libraries. Under these principles, all students have equitable access to library facilities, resources, and instructional programs.

School librarians assume a leadership role in promoting the principles of intellectual freedom within the school by providing resources and services that create and sustain an atmosphere of free inquiry. School librarians work closely with teachers to integrate instructional activities in classroom units designed to equip students to locate, evaluate, and use a broad range of ideas effectively. Intellectual freedom is fostered by educating students in the use of critical thinking skills to empower them to pursue free inquiry responsibly and independently. Through resources, programming, and educational processes, students and teachers experience the free and robust debate characteristic of a democratic society.

School librarians cooperate with other individuals in building collections of resources that meet the needs as well as the developmental and maturity levels of students. These collections

provide resources that support the mission of the school district and are consistent with its philosophy, goals, and objectives. Resources in school library collections are an integral component of the curriculum and represent diverse points of view on both current and historical issues. These resources include materials that support the intellectual growth, personal development, individual interests, and recreational needs of students.

While English is, by history and tradition, the customary language of the United States, the languages in use in any given community may vary. Schools serving communities in which other languages are used make efforts to accommodate the needs of students for whom English is a second language. To support these efforts, and to ensure equitable access to resources and services, the school library provides resources that reflect the linguistic pluralism of the community.

Members of the school community involved in the collection development process employ educational criteria to select resources unfettered by their personal, political, social, or religious views. Students and educators served by the school library have access to resources and services free of constraints resulting from personal, partisan, or doctrinal disapproval. School librarians resist efforts by individuals or groups to define what is appropriate for all students or teachers to read, view, hear, or access regardless of technology, formats or method of delivery.

Major barriers between students and resources include but are not limited: to imposing age, grade-level, or reading-level restrictions on the use of resources; limiting the use of interlibrary loan and access to electronic information; charging fees for information in specific formats; requiring permission from parents or teachers; establishing restricted shelves or closed

collections; and labeling. Policies, procedures, and rules related to the use of resources and services support free and open access to information.

It is the responsibility of the governing board to adopt policies that guarantee students access to a broad range of ideas. These include policies on collection development and procedures for the review of resources about which concerns have been raised. Such policies, developed by persons in the school community, provide for a timely and fair hearing and assure that procedures are applied equitably to all expressions of concern. It is the responsibility of school librarians to implement district policies and procedures in the school to ensure equitable access to resources and services for all students.

Adopted July 2, 1986, by the ALA Council; amended January 10, 1990; July 12, 2000; January 19, 2005; July 2, 2008; and July 1, 2014.

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 the 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.

Adopted June 25, 1953, by the ALA Council and the AAP Freedom to Read Committee; amended January 28, 1972; January 16, 1991; July 12, 2000; June 30, 2004.