



# Hudsonville Public Schools Libraries

## Frequently Asked Questions (July, 2023)

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## Does the Hudsonville Public Schools Board of Education have a policy guiding the purchasing of library books?

HPS School Board policies guide the purchasing of all classroom materials. The specific HPS School Board policies that address library books include:

**2210 - CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT - APPROVED COURSES** The Board of Education recognizes its responsibility for the quality of the educational program of the schools. To this end, the curriculum shall be developed, evaluated, and adopted on a continuing basis and in accordance with a plan for curriculum growth established by the Superintendent. For purposes of this policy and consistent communication throughout the District, curriculum shall be defined as learning activities approved by the Board for individuals or groups of students and expressed in terms of specific instructional objectives or class periods.

The Board directs that the curriculum of this District: provide grade-appropriate instruction on career development in each grade level from kindergarten through 12th; provides instruction in courses required by statute and State Department of Education regulations; ensures, to the extent feasible, that special learning needs of students are provided for in the context of the regular program or classroom and provides for effective coordination with programs or agencies that are needed to meet those needs that cannot be dealt with in the regular program or classroom; be consistent with the District's philosophy and goals and ensure the possibility of their achievement; incorporate State-recommended performance standards for students as the basis for determining how well each student is achieving the academic outcomes for each area of the District's core curriculum; at the high school level, consider alternatives to the Carnegie Unit as a method for determining student progress toward receiving course credit; allows for the development of individual talents and interests as well as recognizes that learning styles of students may differ; provides a strategy for continuous and cumulative learning through effective articulation at all levels, particularly of those skills identified as essential and life-role skills; utilizes a variety of learning resources to accomplish the educational goals; encourages students to utilize guidance and counseling services in their academic and career planning; provides for multi-cultural education by including, at each level, courses or units which help students understand the culture and contributions of various ethnic groups comprising American society, including, but not limited to Euro-Americans, African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, and Native-Americans.

**2240 - CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES** - The Board of Education believes that the consideration of controversial issues has a legitimate place in the instructional program of the schools. Properly introduced and conducted, the consideration of such issues can help students learn to identify important issues, explore fully and fairly all sides of an issue, weigh carefully the values and factors involved, and develop techniques for formulating and evaluating positions. For purposes of this policy, a controversial issue is a topic on which opposing points of view have been promulgated by responsible opinion or is likely to arouse both support and opposition in the community. The Board will permit the introduction and proper educational use of controversial issues provided that their use in the instructional program: is related to the instructional goals of the course of study and level of maturity of the students; does not tend to indoctrinate or persuade students to a particular point of view; encourages open-mindedness and is conducted in a spirit of scholarly inquiry. Controversial issues related to the program may be initiated by the students themselves provided they are presented in the ordinary course of classroom instruction and it is not substantially disruptive to the educational setting. Controversial issues may not be initiated by a source outside the schools unless prior approval has been given by the principal. When controversial issues have not been specified in the course of study, the Board will permit the instructional use of only those issues which have been approved by the principal who shall report periodically such approval to the Superintendent and Board for their review. The Board recognizes that a course of study or certain instructional materials may contain content and/or activities that some parents find objectionable. If after careful, personal review of the program lessons and/or materials, a parent indicates to the school that either content or activities conflict with his/her religious beliefs or value system, the school will honor a written request for his/her child to be excused from particular classes for specific reasons. The student, however, will not be excused from participating in the course or activities mandated by the State and will be provided alternative learning activities during times of parent requested absences.

**2260 - NONDISCRIMINATION AND ACCESS TO EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY** Any form of discrimination or harassment can be devastating to an individual's academic progress, social relationship and/or personal sense of self-worth. As such, the Board of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation or gender identity), disability, age (except as authorized by law), religion, military status, ancestry, or genetic information (collectively, "Protected Classes") in its educational programs or activities. The Board also does not discriminate on the basis of Protected Classes in its employment policies and practices as they relate to students, and does not tolerate harassment of any kind. Equal educational opportunities shall be available to all students, without regard to the Protected Classes, age (unless age is a factor necessary to the normal operation or the achievement of any legitimate objective of the program/activity), place of residence within the boundaries of the District, or social or economic background, to learn through the curriculum offered in this District. Educational programs shall be designed to meet the varying needs of all students. In order to achieve the aforesaid goal, the Superintendent shall: Curriculum Content- review current and proposed courses of study and textbooks to detect any bias based upon Protected Classes, ascertaining whether or not supplemental materials, singly or taken as a whole, fairly depict the contribution of both genders, various races, ethnic groups, etc. toward the development of human society. Staff Training- develop an ongoing program of in-service training for school personnel designed to identify and solve problems of bias based upon Protected Classes in all aspects of the program; Student Access - review current and proposed programs, activities, facilities, and practices to ensure that all students have equal access thereto and are not segregated on the basis of the Protected Classes in any duty, work, play, classroom, or school practice, except as may be permitted under State regulations; verify that facilities are made available, in accordance with Board Policy 7510 - Use of School Facilities, for non-curricular student activities that are initiated by parents or other members of the community, including but not limited to any group affiliated with the Boy Scouts of America or any other youth group listed in Title 36 of the United States Code as a patriotic society; This language does not prohibit the District from establishing and maintaining a single-gender school, class, or program within a school if a comparable school, class, or program is made available to students of each gender. District Support - verify that like aspects of the District program receive like support as to staff size and compensation, purchase and maintenance of facilities and equipment, access to such facilities and equipment, and related matters; Student Evaluation-verify that tests, procedures, or guidance and counseling materials, which are designed to evaluate student progress, rate aptitudes, analyze personality, or in any manner establish or tend to establish a category by which a student may be judged, are not differentiated or stereotyped on the basis of Protected Classes. More details of this policy can be read in the above link

**2270 - RELIGION IN THE CURRICULUM** Based on the First Amendment protection against the establishment of religion in the schools, no Board employee will promote religion in the classroom or in the District's curriculum, or compel or pressure any student to participate in devotional exercises. Displays of a religious character must conform with Policy 8800. Instructional activities shall not be permitted to advance or inhibit any particular religion or religion generally. An understanding of religions and their effects on civilization is essential to the thorough education of young people and to their appreciation of a pluralistic society. To that end, curriculum may include, as appropriate to the various ages and attainments of the students, instruction about the religions of the world. The Board acknowledges the degree to which a religious consciousness has permeated the arts, literature, music, and issues of morality. The instructional and resource materials approved for use in the District's schools frequently contain religious references or concern moral issues that have traditionally been the focus of religious concern. That such materials may be religious in nature shall not, by itself, bar their use by the District. The Board directs that professional staff members employing such materials be neutral in their approach and avoid using them to advance or inhibit religion in any way. The Board recognizes that religious traditions vary in their perceptions and doctrines regarding the natural world and its processes. The curriculum is chosen for its place in the education of the District's students, not for its conformity to religious principles. Students should receive unbiased instruction in the schools, so they may privately accept or reject the knowledge thus gained, in accordance with their own religious tenets. Accordingly, no student shall be exempted from attendance in a required course of study on the grounds that the instruction therein interferes with the free exercise of his/her religion. However, if after careful, personal review of the program's lessons and/or materials, a parent indicates to the school that either the content or activities conflict with his/her religious beliefs or value system, the school will honor a written request for his/her child to be excused from particular class periods for specified reasons. The student will be provided with alternate learning activities during the times of such parent requested absence. No classroom teacher shall be prohibited from providing reasonable periods of time for activities of a moral, philosophical, or patriotic theme. No student shall be required to participate in such activities if they are contrary to the religious convictions of the student or his/her parents or guardians. The Board acknowledges that it may not adopt any policy or rule respecting or promoting an establishment of religion or prohibiting any student from the free, individual, and voluntary exercise or expression of the student's religious beliefs. However, such exercise or expression may be limited to lunch periods or other noninstructional time periods when students are free to associate. More details of this policy can be read in the above link

## Are classroom libraries part of the school libraries?

Classroom libraries are not part of the school library. Classroom libraries are curated and managed by classroom teachers following a set of guidelines similar to the guidelines used to select books for the school library. Questions regarding classroom libraries should be directed to individual teachers.

## Who chooses which books are added to the school libraries?

Media center staff use a variety of sources to identify books that will be relevant and engaging for our students. These sources may include but are not limited to:

- Recommendations from students and staff.
- Recommended reading lists from literacy organizations such as American Library Association's [Recommended Reading for Children](#) and [Recommended Reading for Young Adults/Teens](#).
- Book award winners such as the [Randolph Caldecott Medal](#), [John Newbery Medal](#), [Michael L. Printz Award](#), [Andrew Carnegie Medals for Excellence](#), [Hugo Award](#), [Nebula Award](#), etc.
- Recommendations from leaders in the field of literacy such as [John Schu](#), [Donalyn Miller](#), [Pernille Ripp](#), [Colby Sharp](#), [Penny Kittle](#), [Kelly Gallagher](#), and others.
- Professional reviews from sources such as [School Library Journal](#), [Kirkus Reviews](#), [Horn Book](#), or [Booklist](#).

- Books that are received as donations are subject to the same guidelines as any books that are purchased. When books are received as donations, each book is reviewed to ensure it is in alignment with the district book guidelines.

## What resources are used to evaluate a book's age appropriateness or age relevance for books added to the school libraries?

- Media center staff consult professional review sources for age or grade range recommendations for specific titles. These sources may include, but are not limited to, [School Library Journal](#), [Kirkus Reviews](#), [Horn Book](#), or [Booklist](#).
- It is important to note that each school library must provide books for all ages, interests, and maturity levels within that school. For example, an elementary building might serve students ranging from PreK through fifth grade. The library collection must meet the needs of students with a wide range of reading ability, maturity and experiences. It is a delicate balance that requires all involved to help students choose the best books for them.

## As a parent or caregiver, how can I monitor what my child is reading from the HPS libraries?

- We encourage parents or caregivers to remain aware of the books your child is selecting throughout the year, and to assist them in determining appropriateness. We encourage you to talk with your child about your family's standards for selecting reading materials, just as you would about your family's standards about which movies, TV shows, music, apps, and video games are acceptable for them.
- Parents/guardians can log in to their child's Alexandria account at any time to see which books are currently checked out as well as their child's checkout history for the time they have been in their current building.
- Use these [instructions](#) or watch this short [video demonstration](#) to learn more about your child's Alexandria account.

## If I would like to prohibit my child from reading a specific library book, what should I do?

If a parent or guardian would like to restrict their child from checking out a specific book from their school's library, they must complete [this form](#), which will be submitted to the district's library media integration specialist. A list of restricted titles will then be noted in your child's Alexandria account. Please note the following:

- A separate form must be completed for each child.
- Individual titles can be restricted, not general topics or genres.
- Only titles available in the library of the building your child attends can be restricted.
- Each form response is limited to five (5) titles. If you wish to restrict access to more than five (5) titles, additional form(s) must be completed.
- Please allow five (5) business days for restrictions to be in place in your child's account.
- A list of any titles you restrict for your child will be visible to any staff member who might be checking out books to students in the library.
- A list of any titles you restrict for your child will be shared with your child's classroom teacher (elementary) or ELA teacher (secondary); the teacher will share the list with your child and have a conversation around

the student's responsibility to honor their parent/caregiver's expectations regarding their choice of reading materials

## If I have a concern about a specific book that is available in my child's school library what should I do?

- One of our core values around books, in particular, is that each parent knows their child best and has unique insight into their child's maturity, life experiences, values and interests. We therefore value parental input on what their child reads for their choice reading experiences, both during book clubs offered and independent reading time. While it is important for parents to be involved and help choose what their child reads, it is also important to respect that other parents may choose differently for their student.
- We have designed the below guidelines to honor this core value while still operating within legal obligations surrounding removal of books.
  - If a parent objects to the availability of a text that was made available to their child, they should submit their concerns in writing – utilizing the Request For Reconsideration of a Text form, developed by the National Council of Teachers of English. This form can be obtained from your child's building principal. Please carefully read and complete the form in its entirety and return it to your child's building principal. Then, the following steps will be taken:
    - Your Principal and appropriate teacher(s) will review the Request For Reconsideration of a Text form, in conjunction with the legal guidance stating:
      - The District cannot remove books from the library for the purpose of restricting access to differing ideas, such as those related to religion, politics or social issues. (ex. Books may be shifted or removed due to not being age appropriate based on professional reviews but not because they offend one's religious viewpoint.)
    - Your Principal will contact you with further questions and/or next steps if appropriate. (These steps may include, but are not limited to, the book's removal from the library, move to an appropriate grade level or no action being taken.)
    - If a parent is dissatisfied with the building-level decision, they may appeal the decision in writing to the building principal.
    - At that time a District Book Review Committee will convene.
      - This committee should include the following individuals:
        - Teacher(s)
        - Volunteer parent(s)
        - Building administrator(s)
        - A representative from the HPS Curriculum Department
        - The committee should NOT include any individual(s) raising concern(s) about the book. Their written concerns will be discussed in detail by the committee prior to approval or removal of the book.
    - The Book Review Committee will engage in the below process to make a final determination regarding continued access to the text in question.
      - Read the book in its entirety.
      - Discuss the merits and potential concerns relevant to the proposed book as a whole.
      - Give due consideration to the perspectives of a wide range of cultural and personal viewpoints.
      - Review and follow district legal guidance regarding removal of books.

- Books requested for appeal will be reviewed in the order in which they are received. Due to the length of the text being reviewed, the process may take up to 30 days for each text reviewed with consideration for school holidays or other unforeseen circumstances. An estimated timeline for the review of a book will be provided upon receipt of the appeal.
- In the event that the complainant is not satisfied with the decision of the Book Review Committee, the complainant may appeal this decision, within thirty (30) business days, to the Board through a written request to the Superintendent, who shall forward the request and all written material relating to the matter to the Board.
  - The Board shall review the case and advise the complainant, in writing, of its decision within thirty (30) business days.
- The Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction will provide a list of committee reviewed books at a minimum of two times a year to the HPS School Board for review.

## If I have questions or concerns regarding the school library program, who should I contact?

Questions or concerns regarding the district's school library program may be directed to Nicole Ball, Library Media Integration Specialist at [nball@hpseagles.net](mailto:nball@hpseagles.net).