



# Guidelines for Selecting Texts Across Content Areas

*Reading materials provide important mirrors and windows for all students (Sims Bishop, 1990).<sup>1</sup>*

Please review the guidelines for selecting texts across content areas and grade levels. The guidelines that follow pertain to both mentor texts and those texts used in physical (e.g., school and classroom) and virtual (e.g., NB School eLibrary) libraries.

## Introduction

No single resource can provide sufficient material to nurture the development of any one learner or group of learners for any extended period of time. The range of resources in any school must:

- acknowledge and affirm diverse identities and perspectives;
- engage diverse interests, needs, abilities and experiences;
- support the achievement of the curriculum outcomes; and
- be available to all learners.

## Criteria for Selecting Resources

While not all resources will meet all the selection criteria, please take into consideration the following guidelines. Texts selected will:

- provide motivating and challenging experiences suitable for the learner's age, ability and social maturity;
- provide authentic representations of topics under discussion;
- elicit personal, thoughtful and critical responses;
- represent a range of styles and structures;
- offer a variety of experiences and values which reflect the diversity of learners' interests, needs and competencies;
- broaden students' understanding of social, historical, geo political and cultural context; and
- reflect and affirm diverse identities (e.g., LGBTQ2SI, neurodiversity, family context, age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, class and political/social values).

## The Range of Resources

The range of available resources should support students' diverse needs, interests, and abilities.

Appropriate resources include the following:

- multimodal texts such as textbooks, webpages, audiobooks, books, magazines, instructions, menus, brochures and posters;
- texts at differing levels of difficulty, genres and perspectives; and
- student-created texts (e.g., writing and media productions).

## Encouraging Unique Interaction With Texts

Respect for students and concern for their rights, needs, and feelings are paramount in text selection. Educators are sometimes challenged regarding the texts they and/or their students select for study. Potential challenge may arise from ideas in the text, the maturity required for understanding them, or the language used to express those ideas. Educators will ensure that content or language that challenges human rights by presenting racist, homophobic or transphobic language will be deconstructed critically and used with caution, as per Policy 703. Exceptions may include texts that are intended for critical use such as historical texts and texts related to current events. Educators will deconstruct these texts for specific purposes, with sensitivity and respect for the identities

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<sup>1</sup>Sim Bishop, R. (1990). Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. *Perspectives*, 1(3), 4-6.

of all students. By accessing their own abilities, growing awareness and sensitivity, teachers shape the presentation of potentially controversial material to promote critical awareness, further understanding and empathy.

Based on their values, experiences, and knowledge, each reader will experience texts differently. Through their unique lenses, readers interact with text and construct meaning. When selecting texts as part of scaffolded instruction, or when including texts in the classroom library for independent use, please consider the role the text plays in influencing students' cultural/ social/personal experiences within and outside the classroom.

Consult the following explanations when questions or concerns arise regarding texts that address issues and themes or contains content that may be controversial.

- The text may demonstrate that society has evolved in understanding and acceptance over the years since it was written/produced.
- Attitudes and opinions that were both current and socially acceptable in the writer/ producer's day may now be unacceptable and vice versa.
- Opinions expressed by a character are not necessarily those of the text as a whole and therefore do not necessarily detract from the value of the text. Some objectionable opinions are intended to illustrate the character's lack of understanding around diversity and are not intended to elicit support or approval from the reader/viewer/listener.
- It is important that students understand the value systems of their own culture and time and of other cultures and other times. Perspectives that were present in different times and places are legitimate subjects for study and discussion, as are alternative readings of contemporary culture.
- In a globally competent learning environment, important issues must be addressed and brought into the open for discussion. It is important to recognize that an individual's thinking has been shaped by their unique experiences, family, community, economics, politics and the media.

When the teacher's selection of a text is challenged by a parent, the teacher must acknowledge every parent's right to frame their own child's reading/viewing/listening. An alternative text should be identified and obtained as an acceptable replacement for the student. However, the rights of other parents to have the selected resource available to their children should also be respected.

## Supporting Resources

- [Policy 703: Positive Learning and Working Environment](#)
- [Annotated List of Culturally Inclusive Books](#)
- [Teaching for Change: Guide for Selecting Anti-Bias Books](#)

