



BOARD POLICY MANUAL	
Approval Date November 2011	Replacing All previous documents
Review Date	Page 1 of 11
Policy Section School	Identification SCH-1025

LIBRARY GUIDELINES

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Vision Statement

Trinity Christian School Library is committed to providing excellent resources to support the School's vision of "equipping children to live and serve in God's world". The Library aims to provide quality material that compliments the school's curriculum and encourages and fosters the enjoyment of reading.

Goals

- Maintain a quality non-fiction book collection that is current, age appropriate, appealing, and supports the school's curriculum.
- Provide a comprehensive collection of Christian fiction which appeals to all reading levels and interests.
- Provide a collection of quality secular fiction to encourage the joy of reading and use of imagination.
- Encourage students to develop evaluation skills when selecting materials for both research and pleasure reading.

Guidelines

Creating a list of appropriate criteria for the selection of books for a Library is a difficult task. What makes a book a good read? Is content alone important? How important is style? Is it appropriate for books for children to contain rough language and contain examples of wrong behaviour? Must children's books only present the wholesome and praiseworthy? How much can one rely on the judgment of children to select books at their level, and to evaluate the content of books? These are just a few difficult questions this book selection process.

There are no simple rules. Full agreement on every point and every book is impossible. However, from a Biblical understanding of the child, there are a number of broad guidelines that can be established. These can be divided into two categories: (1) style and (2) content.

I. **Style**

Books chosen must possess high literary quality. Children tend to unconsciously assimilate many of the modes of expression and thought patterns which they read. This is especially reinforced by many readings of a particular kind of style. Repeated exposure to great pieces of literature can be a powerful tool to mold and sharpen children's expression. For example, the King James Bible, with its beautiful use of the English language was used for many years as a textbook in schools. The elegant use of style in this Bible proved to shape the English language as we know it today.

Selecting only well-written books means that some books, although desirable with respect to content, will not be accepted because of an inherent poor style of writing.

Also, with regard to style, attention must be paid to books that will be difficult enough to challenge children. Sir Walter Scott said that children hate books that are written down to their capacity, both in vocabulary and in imaginative and moral content.

Under "style", one of the current trends in children's novels necessitates some comment. The realism in contemporary children's' novels appeal to the younger reader and many books are now written in a very casual style, complete with the relevant vocabulary children use. This is not a new trend...consider Mark Twain's classics.

Sometimes an author uses realism as a gimmick designed to attract readers without broadening the outlook of the child, or providing new insights. In these cases, the realistic novel would not be good literature. However, a realistic novel can be excellent (e.g., Harriet the Spy). When a novel leads children to a better understanding of him or herself, it can be considered a worthwhile book.

2. Content

- (a) The books selected must treat the child as a child.

The Biblical picture of a child is that of a person who is born into sin and darkness and must be led and instructed in the Way of Life. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 speaks very clearly of this. The child is a learner, listening closely to what is being taught and slowly takes on more responsibility as maturity develops. Authors and their literature also must treat children in this way.

Contrary to this idea, however, is the tendency today to treat children as little adults – to make them fully aware of all things, to lay upon them many of the concerns and heavy burdens of adulthood. This premature awareness can be harmful to the child. The child must be treated as a child! Children's books, therefore, must be appropriate and written for the child's developmental level.

In the Christian school library, many books should be happy, lighthearted books – for childhood itself should be a joyful, carefree time. The concerns and pressures of adult life, the greater responsibilities, the fuller struggle of the Christian life, these will come soon enough. Fantasy books, adventure stories and fairy tales have a real place in the library, for they not only appeal strongly to the imagination of the children, but also are part of this lighter side of childhood.

At the same time, however, while we try to make this carefree aspect of childhood a very real thing, we are called to lead and prepare our children for mature servanthood to their Lord in this world.

This calling means that we must, in a slowly increasing measure as the children grow, make them aware of their responsibilities, make them aware of the struggle of the Christian life, work to make them sensitive to the needs of their neighbours, of society, and of the world around them. At all times, this must be carefully geared to their emotional and spiritual age level. Christ's words are most applicable, "Whoever causes one of these little ones to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matt. 18:6) An author can touch upon the horrors and frightfulness of war in a restrained, sensitive way. An author can touch upon the ugly, festering sores of life around us and within us and yet honour the tender age of the child. The author should not dwell upon such things excessively or be overly explicit. There must not be an overabundance of such "awareness" developing books in the library – the light side of childhood must be kept in mind.

- (b) "Whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." Phil.4:8.

God calls those of us who have been called out of darkness into His marvelous light, to have His light illuminate our minds. He directs us, therefore, to think about lovely, wholesome, honourable things. As God's instruments in leading our children to the Light and in the Light, we must surround them with the true, pure and honourable so that they, too, will have thoughts of such things fill their minds and shape their attitudes and character. This principle also helps to determine what kind of books we choose for our children to read. There must be a strong presence of books in the library which have as a main part of their content the wholesome, the happy, the lovely. Books such as Little House on the Prairie are in this category – books in which praiseworthy attitudes, habits and actions are predominant.

- (c) "Do not participate in the fruitless doings of the darkness, but rather expose them..." (Eph.5:11)

Training our children in the way of the Lord means not only leading them in the Way of Life, but also imparts for us to point out to them the way of death. Books which have as part of their stories examples of wrong behaviour, disobedience of God's laws, can and do have a place in the school library. The real, sin-cursed world of good and evil must also be presented. Taking into account the nature of the child, these books must be chosen carefully so as to match the maturity of level of the child.

It would be wonderful if the majority of the books for our libraries would be written from a thoroughly Christian perspective, with both the central thrust of the Gospel and the wide implications of the gospel message (as wide as life itself) ringing clear. However, it is not all that easy to find many quality children's books written from a clearly Christian perspective. The word quality should be stressed – there are a number of 'Christian' books obtainable

which are either poorly written or which present a totally or partially unrealistic view of life. (For example, Grace Livingstone Hill books and other such books, in which a commitment to Christ means the end of all problems, rather than the beginning of the struggle-filled [albeit victorious] Christian life.)

Due to a limited number of quality Christian books, the majority of books that we choose will be written by unbelievers. The influences of the Biblical message, the influences of Christian culture and heritage are seen in the works of many unbelievers. There are many books written by apostate people, which can develop character, form Christian attitudes, and encourage a fuller awareness of life.

Selecting both from secular and some Christian authors the issue of appropriate language arises. Are books with rough language desirable? Can books contain swearing? Do we want books in which the author does not in some way show its disapproval of all things contrary to God's law (For example, dishonouring the Lord's Day and the worshipping of idols)?

With regards to rough language, books which contain large amounts of rough language should not have a place in the library, however laudable the rest of the content. Just as children are influenced much by the speech of their playmates, so their reading influences their habit of speech. If, however, there is sparse rough language in a book of otherwise excellent quality such a book might be selected.

Profanity in books is also an issue. In our society today, we must say to our shame that our ears are almost callous to the profanity of God's name, so common and constant is such speech. Profanity and blasphemy must always shock, offend and grieve Christians. However, there are some excellent books, from a literary point of view, which contain some profanity. We must recognize that we are in the world but not of the world. There are occasions when we as adults hear swearing – regrettably so. To exclude all swearing from our library shelves is impossible because we live in the world. Our selection of literature will depict the fallen state of our world and need for redemption.

We make every attempt to keep our children sensitive to God's name by excluding books containing excessive profanity. In addition, where two books of equal literary value can be chosen, the one without profanity selected.

The issue of sexuality also must be addressed. Books should acknowledge and value sexuality in all human beings. Sexuality is a part of healthy living.

Criticism has been directed at Judy Blume's realistic novel when dealing with girls or boys maturing. These books can provide opportunities for meaningful dialogue between parents and children, or teachers and students and therefore have a place in the Library.

There is the worry that younger readers will read books whose content may not be appropriate for their developmental level...things too "adult" for them. Children will not read what is too difficult for them to understand, and if they don't understand the book, they will lose interest. Parents and teachers do have to be aware of what our children are reading in order to discuss any of the issues raised in these books.

What do we do with books in which there are some practices contrary to God's law and which are not condemned or indicated as wrong by the author/ this question can be answered by determining how large a place such wrong practices have in the books. If they are constantly, obviously present in the story, or if they form part of the central thrust, we can reject such books. If, however, such actions are infrequent or incidental in a story that is an up building one, we can include such a book. We can leave some place for children's judgment and discernment to enter in.

(d) Parent Supervision

Parents have a responsibility to oversee their children's' reading habits and diet. Parents, better than anyone else, know the emotional and spiritual maturity of their child. Together with the librarian and teacher, parents can guide their child to choose appropriate books. In addition, they can explain difficulties or answer questions that arise in the child's mind as he reads.

Questions, suggestions and criticisms parents offer with regard to material in a library are important and must be welcomed by those responsible for the library. Agreement will not always be reached, but there must be open dialogue.

3. Specifics

In conclusion then, a number of specific rules for the selection of books can be listed. Again, these can be divided into style and content.

- 1) Style:
 - (a) Books to be chosen must be of a high literary quality.

- 2) Content:
 - (a) There must be a balanced and wide range of books (history, fiction, biographies, Science) to appeal to and encourage the broad interests in children. Fantasy books, adventure stories, fairy tales have an important place in the library.
 - (b) An effort should be made to provide quality, Christian literature.
 - (c) The books chosen should help to develop Christian attitudes, praiseworthy thoughts and actions.
 - (d) Books on any subject must honour the age of the child. Children should read age appropriate content regardless of their reading level.
 - (e) Books emphasizing negative, evil, and the bizarre, should not be included. Books with much swearing, rough language and/or degradation of the Bible (subtle or otherwise) should be excluded.
 - (f) Any books which parents or teachers question should be brought to the attention of the Library Committee.
 - (g) Parents are encouraged to read and enjoy children's books.
 - (h) Any suggested author or books by parents, will be looked into by the Library Committee.

Collection Development Guideline

The aim of a collection development guideline is to provide a clear plan of what library materials should be acquired as well as what materials should be removed from the library. The goal of the library is to provide quality, current, and age appropriate materials, and as such, the collection must be continually assessed.

Selection Criteria

Two important factors contribute to the decision making in acquiring books in the Christian school library setting. The first, being a Christian school, means the library needs to provide a strong Christian fiction collection and provide non-fiction with a Christian perspective. The second factor, the wide range of ages, interests, and learning abilities of students, means both fiction and non-fiction must reflect that range. The size of the collection should be approximately 35 books per student (adding one book per student each year) and 50% of the collection should be non-fiction.

Christian Fiction

- Consider the expert opinions from Christian book retailers.
- Ensure materials are age appropriate.
- Select materials from different types of Christian fiction (mystery, fantasy, science fiction, romance).
- Consider the recommendations of students.
- Do not duplicate materials (unless it is deemed appropriate to have 2-3 copies)

Christian Non-Fiction

- Select materials with a Christian perspective on non-fiction subjects.
- Select materials published within the last five years.
- Select materials which support curriculum.

Secular Fiction

Select materials representing many different genres: science fiction, mystery, fantasy, romance, westerns, historical fiction, classics, action, and adventure.

Select materials that are suitable for the wide range of age of the readers.

Select materials with content that promote praiseworthy attitudes, actions, and habits.

Select materials with content that promotes an understanding of different cultures, sensitivity to others, and provides insights into personal relationship and feelings.

Consider the recommendations of students.

Do not duplicate (except when multiple copies are needed for extracurricular programs e.g. Battle of the Books and Forest of Reading).

Be aware that many works of fiction cause controversy. Do not necessarily exclude these works from the collection as they may be beneficial (e.g. reader enjoyment, encouraging a reluctant reader, literary value); however, be prepared to justify the choice. Also, be prepared to direct students to the public library for controversial items. Consider the work itself:

- ✓ are the characters and plot obviously fantastical (e.g. elves and fairies) or realistic (witchcraft practiced by humans)
- ✓ is it written at an age level where the maturity of the reader can decide how it fits in with their Christian beliefs
- ✓ do not select any materials which Biblical teaching clearly indicates is to be avoided e.g. the occult

Do not purchase comic books but do purchase graphic novels. Graphic novels have a complete story and often have a corresponding non-graphic novel.

Non-Fiction

Select materials that support curriculum.

Select materials that have been published in the last five years. Note, in some rapidly changing subject areas (e.g. science), select materials in the last two years.

Be aware that some materials will present information from a non-Christian perspective. When possible, provide balance by selecting similar material from a Christian perspective.

Weeding Criteria

Dispose of any book that is in poor condition.

Dispose non-fiction books that are no longer current. Currency varies with the subject area. For example, subjects of a scientific nature would be retained for a much shorter period of time than history.

Donations

Accept book donations from the school community with the understanding that only materials which fit into the collection will be kept. All other materials will be disposed.

Monetary donations will be accepted with the understanding that materials purchased must fit into the collection. Input from the donor is welcome.

Book Reviewing

Dear Reviewer:

Thanks for volunteering to read some books for Trinity Christian School. Evaluating books can be difficult and, therefore, we will give each reviewer only one book. We're trying this for the first time and we hope all of us will benefit.

The books we have chosen for you to read are one we feel may have some problems for students at a Christian School. We don't know, of course, but we have chosen books that may cause problems.

Here's a list of questions for you to consider when reviewing books:

GENERAL QUESTION:

Is the story believable?

Is the plot realistic? Well developed?

Are the characters convincing?

Is the message substantial? Is it worthy of the reading time? What is the message?

Is the story message matched to the age of the child who will read it? Do we know what age of child will read this book? What is the appropriate age range for this book i.e., Grade 1-3, 4-6 etc.?

Is the vocabulary matched to the age of the child who will read it? Please explain why or why not.

Is the writing style polished? Please comment on the writing style.

Is there value, enjoyment, and/or learning in the book that will encourage healthy mental, emotional and/or spiritual growth in God's children? If yes, what specifically?

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS:

What objections might Christian parents have against this book?

What values are accepted, or are part of, the underlying assumptions of the book? Are these values Christian or are they deliberately against values taught in the Bible?

Is there any objectionable language, profanity or 'dirty' words? If yes, what language?

REVIEW FORMAT:

We would like a written evaluation of the book(s) you are reading. First of all, summarize the plot and then consider the review questions.

Finally, I would like a commitment from you. Do you recommend this book for our library or not? Do not reject a book simply because you don't like reading these particular kinds of books, e.g. historical fiction, fantasy, etc. On the other hand, do not accept a book simply because you think students will like it.

Parent's Request for Review of a Book

Author _____

Hardcover _____

Paperback _____

Publisher (if known) _____

Request initiated by _____

Address: _____

Telephone No. _____

Complainant represents:

Self _____

Name/organization _____

Identify other group _____

1. To what in the book do you object (Please be specific; cite pages.)

2. For what age group would you recommend this book?
3. What is the best thing about this particular book?
4. Did you read the entire book? What parts?
6. Are you aware of the judgment of this book by literary critics? If so, please explain.
7. What do you believe is the theme of this book?
8. What would you like your school to do about this book?

Do not assign it to my child
Withdraw it from all students as well as from my child
Send it back to the Library committee for reevaluation
9. In its place, what materials would you recommend?

Request for Withdrawal of Materials

Name:

Telephone Number:

Email:

Book Information

Title:

Author:

Have you read the entire book? Yes No

If No, which chapters or parts have you read?

What is your objection to the parts that you have read?

What would you like the Library to do with this book?