

Selection Policy Analysis

New York City Library Media Centers

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the “New York City Collection Development Policy” by reflecting on key characteristics of a successful collection development policy. Key characteristics are identified from course readings (Bishop, K., 2013), recent research, and guidelines provided by *Information Power* (American Association of School Librarians (AASL) & Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT), 1998).

Reflections will consider whether the Policy enables support of teaching best practice, technology integration, and intellectual freedom. The analysis will examine whether key factors are included including collaborative leadership, legal responsibility, analysis of learners, evaluative tools, policies on access and delivery, weeding and deselecting, and issues related to electronic resources like acceptable use and web filtering. The analysis will look for statements recognizing diversity, flexibility of instruction through Universal Design for learning, and inclusion of assistive technologies.

References to the NYC Collection Development Policy have been taken an unpagged section 3.1.3 (2006). Other supporting information is taken from the larger, unpagged, *New York City School Library Handbook* (NYCSLS, 2008) and from an online website provided by the New York State Education Department (NYSED, 2015). Location of any referenced material within these resources will be recorded in section and subdivision for clarity. After its initial introduction, the New York City Collection Development policy will be referred to as the NYCCD policy or the Policy. The New York City School Library System Handbook will be referred to as the NYCSLS Handbook or the Handbook. There are a number of professional names for the qualified professional who use the collection development policy; here the job title will be “library specialist.

Key Characteristics

There are key characteristics of a successful school library collection development policy. The policy should offer clear steps and supports for assessing, evaluating, and maintaining a collection of resources in a variety of formats. Biblarz, Tarin, Vickery, and Bakker (2001, p.2) write that the collection development policy should contain a mission statement with a description of the purpose of the library collection and designated responsibilities for the collection. *Information Power* supports a policy which includes considerations for access and delivery: user physical access, appropriate library climate, commitment to intellectual freedom, knowledge of legal guidelines and demonstration of professional ethics. (AASL & AECT, 1998, pp.83-99). The school library media center must offer a collection of resources that enable “all students to meet their curriculum goals” (AASL & AECT, 1998, p.90) by including procedures which enable collaborative leadership, analysis of learners, and representation of diversity. The policy should reflect various legal responsibilities by “understanding of current legislation and regulations regarding access, [and] copyright,” and by its compliance with other “relevant laws” (AASL & AECT, 1998, p.93-94; New York City School Library System (NYCSLS), 2008). Consideration of physical and intellectual barriers should provide a place for UDL provisions and use, permissions, and filtering of electronic resources.

The Policy

The “New York City Collection Development Policy” is section 3.1.3 of the *New York City School Library Handbook*. It has characteristics of a comprehensive collection development policy. It contains a mission statement, developed by the New York City School Library System (NYCSLS), a committee of library professionals charged to support library specialists within New York City Public Schools. Between the mission and goals statements, the Policy imbeds the American Library Association (ALA) publication, *Access to Resources and Services in the*

School Library Media Program: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights (A.L.A, 2014).

The Policy goals respond to the latter document which supports barrier-free intellectual and physical access to resources. The Policy outlines responsibility for collection, criteria and procedure for selection and evaluation, and weeding the collection. But its criteria and procedures are thoughtful rather than specific. Procedures for handling challenged materials requests are very specific and support the ALA's *Access to Resources and Services* which encourages the Library Specialist to "resist efforts by individuals and groups to define what is appropriate for all students or teachers to read" (A.L.A., 2014, Paragraph 5). Throughout the Policy, the library specialist must look for detailed procedures within Section 3: "Access and Delivery," in the Handbook. In addition there is a helpful "List of Librarian responsibilities" within Section 1 of the Handbook (NYCSLS, 2006, 1.6). The library specialist may also consult the *New York City School Librarian Guidebook* online (NYCSLS, 2016).

Mission Statement

The successful school library collection development policy values its school mission and shared stakeholders, activates collaborative leadership, and works in consideration of existing policies; the school library collection reflects its individual school's mission and goals while "providing [necessary] access to information in and outside of school building" (Bishop, p.3). The NYCCD policy contains a mission statement that charges the library specialist to "support and provoke intellectual, social and personal development of all students" in three ways: First by providing "physical and intellectual access," next by providing "instruction, learning strategies, and practice," and third by "integrating the library program throughout every student's education through collaboration and advocacy." The statement continues as it describes that the library "enriches and supports the educational program of the school through its well-planned and

maintained collection.” The Policy then adopts the statement of philosophy of the ALA’s interpretation of the *Library Bill of Rights* (1996) and its interpretation of that publication.

Goals within the mission statement provide guidelines for direction of resource evaluation, selection, growth, and re-evaluation by qualified personnel with professional standards. Although it can be inferred that professional standards include collaboration with other professionals, administrators, and teachers and reading review material, this is not specifically described in the document. The mission statement says that library media specialists will maintain professional standards in collection development but this phrase is not used again in the document. Clarity of the phrase should be included in the document.

Legal Responsibility

The author has discerned the hierarchy of library service roles within the New York State Education Department from the NYSED.gov webpage which describes selected sections of 8NYCRR and the rules and regulations of the state of New York (NYSED, 2015). Each school’s library specialist is guided by the New York City Office of Library Services and the Handbook of the New York City School Library System. A Library Council represented by the School Library System (SLS) (NYSED, 2015, 11.5) reports to the Commissioner of the city’s school system (NYSED, 2015, 11.1 and 13.1), who reports to the Board of Regents of the State Education Department (NYSED, 3.20). The Office of Library Services and the School Library System may be interconnected. The NYCCD policy states that the city school system is responsible “for all matters relating to the operation of the libraries in New York City public schools.” The selection of instructional materials remains with the “professionally trained personal employed in the library by the school system.”

Collaborative Leadership

The successful school library collection development policy activates collaborative leadership (Bishop, p.3). The NYCCD policy considers collaboration in its mission statement, recognizing necessity of collaboration and advocacy. The library specialist must consult with “many people” including administrators, teachers, other librarians, students and their families, “where applicable” (3.1.3.II). The library specialist evaluates the existing collection and consults “reputable, unbiased, and professionally prepared selection aids,” department specialists and students or other school community members (3.1.3.IV).

The School Library System SLS, brings shared resource and professional development opportunities to all school libraries and their library specialists. In addition, a Cooperative Collection Development (CCD) program supports efforts for library specialists to increase accessibility to shared resources from the New York Public Library and a state digital library (Ellis, L. & Israel, M.J., 2015). School librarians in collaboration with classroom teachers need to “ensure that the resources needed to prepare students for assessments are available” (Bishop, p.181). The NYCCD policy does not take assessment resources into consideration.

In addition the NYCSLS “maintains a Cooperative Collection Development (CCD) program promoting resource sharing opportunities among member libraries.” The CCD “is funded by the New York State Education Department.” Its goal is “to support curricular and instructional processes of school by promoting cooperative planning, selection, evaluation and sharing of specialized library media resources. (New York City School Library System (NYCSLS), 2016). Within the NYCCD policy collaboration is encouraged and general guidelines allow room for the flexibility necessary to consult with the best sources is enabled. Information about this is not in the Policy but in the introduction portion of Section 3 of the Handbook (3.1.2) are suggested steps for such collaboration. The Policy could use references to

resources within the Handbook and online to provide more information about opportunities for collaboration.

Best Practice. A successful collection development policy allows a positive attitude and perception of the climate of the Library Media Center. The NYCCD policy encourages acquisition and integration of knowledge by its policy of bias free and diverse evaluation and selection of materials. The Policy quotes the A.L.A. *Access to Resources and Services* when it says that the school library collection serves as a “point of voluntary access to information and ideas” and a “learning laboratory for students as they acquire critical thinking and problem-solving skills” (A.L.A., 2014, Paragraph 1). The Policy alludes to best practice where library specialist is charged to provide materials which support curriculum and to make selections with “knowledge of the curriculum.” The Policy describes that the school library collection provides resources to allow instruction, learning strategies, and practice to enable use of “ideas and information for effective learning” (3.1.3.I). The successful collection development policy takes into account access to resources that support ongoing changes in assessment standards. “Librarians need to work collaboratively with classroom teachers to ensure that resources needed to prepare students for assessment are available” (Bishop, p.181). Support of assessment with materials, tools, and services is not specifically included in the policy. This consideration is present in the larger Handbook (3.8.5) in relation to library space and collaboration but should be referenced within the Policy. Mention should be made in the Policy to include consideration of materials to support assessment.

Considerations for Selection

The NYCSLS Handbook suggests that the collection development policy should include selection guidelines and weeding and deselection guidelines as well as challenged materials guidelines (3.1.2). The Policy allows for the library media specialist to take into consideration

the school community when building the collection, considering needs of the faculty and students, student individual interests and needs, and parent needs. Also considered are curriculum needs and knowledge of existing collection. The policy lists criteria for selection which include overall purpose, alignment with curriculum, student needs and interests, timeliness or permanence, importance of subject matter, quality of writing or production, and readability and popular appeal, reputation of the publisher or producer, accuracy of the information, reputation of the author/artist or composer, and format and price. Supports that exist to enable this daunting task are missing from the policy. The SLS website provides sites for selection suggestions and suggested amount of titles per each student. The Policy should refer to resources that can provide steps to evaluation of the collection and selection of resources. Criteria for selection of instructional materials is located in section 1.6 of the Handbook (NYCSLS, 2006).

Evaluative tools are generally described in the NYCCD policy. Materials are available online to the library specialist at a site designed by a retired library media specialist. (Berland, L. (2016); NYSED.gov (2015)). The library specialist must build a collection of resources that support the school curriculum, with consideration for needs, interests, abilities, language, socioeconomic background and maturity levels of students. An online source, the School Library Media Program Evaluation (SLMPE) Rubric provides some guidelines for Library specialists (NYSED.gov, 2010). This rubric is also available in the Handbook (1.10).

In conversation with Miriam Pope (2016), teacher and library specialist at William Alexander Public School #321 in New York City, the teacher/librarian specialist does a lot of reading to select books and materials. She relies on reviews from the *School Library Journal* and the *Wilson Review* to support selection. Class visits for circulation help inform her about students' and teachers' informational needs and reading interests. Within the school, teachers are more

likely to be providing assistive technology for exceptional students; they are also able to support some of individual student's reading needs with resources within the classroom library. The school budget funds participation in MyLibraryNYC which works with New York public library to provide supportive materials for instruction and multiple copies of titles that the school library might not be able to purchase and control. An IT person on site handles technology supply and issues. Technology integration is not a consideration. Only within the last 10 years has the school library been digitized; it uses Destiny software for circulation and cataloging control. Pope does not consider purchasing materials that may specifically support local and state assessment content. This library specialist works to select materials through availability of resources through at least 3 vendor choices, need for curriculum and interest support gleaned from teacher and student formal and informal means, and recommendation by reviews. Pope is aware of assessment considerations, but does not specifically address these in her collection development choices. And the school administration and individual teacher share some of the responsibility for providing materials that offer multiple means of engagement and representation.

Deselection

The policy has a specific section for weeding which calls for a periodical assessment of the collection to discard materials that are "no longer appropriate" (3.1.3.V). The procedure specifies worn or missing standard items, or out of date or no longer useful materials. The Policy should refer to sections within the Handbook (3.1, 3.5) or online resources (Bertland, 2016) for more specific guidelines to deselection.

Analysis of Learners

The successful school library collection development policy seeks to create barrier-free access to information resources for all its students, faculty and staff. The collection development

policy must also consider academic program; a “major part of the collection is to support the school curriculum” (Bishop, p.175).

The NYCCD policy supports selection of materials that will “encourage growth in knowledge, independent learning skills, and personal and aesthetic development, and social responsibility.” The Library specialist in collaboration with stakeholders tries to build a collection which reflects its users and to appreciate the “contribution [of individual unique groups] to the American and world heritage and culture.” The outcome of a collection which includes resources that reflect the school and family community enables “students to develop an intellectual integrity in forming judgements.”

In an effort to know the users, it is important that the library specialist analyzes the student population. The policy lists general steps to determine needs: requests of faculty and students, knowledge of curriculum, knowledge of students’ needs and interest, knowledge of existing collection, and knowledge of parents’ needs. But the Policy does not specifically detail steps or protocol to acquiring information, nor does it indicate that the school principal should allow the library specialist time to do this research. The Policy does not refer to other sections in the Handbook which give specific examples of ways to assess user needs (1.3.2 and 1.6).

Policies on Access and Delivery

The Policy includes references to access and delivery of information. Major barriers which impede physical or intellectual access to information are addressed in the Policy. Its goals charge the library specialist to “provide maximum accessibility to [instructional] materials,” take into consideration individual need for access including abilities, language, socio-economic backgrounds and maturity level, while meeting challenges of censorship of materials.

Intellectual freedom. The mission statement encourages intellectual access, diversity of appeal, and presentation of different points of view. The policy supports “free and open access to

information” (3.1.3 Goals, paragraph 4). Major barriers are discussed from labeling and closed collections to policies and procedures related to use of electronic resources and services like web filtering, fines and other fees, and parental permission. The policy considers constraints to access.

Policies on Web Filtering. The NYCCD policy states that “school library media specialists resist efforts by individuals or groups to define what is appropriate for all students or teachers to read, view, hear, or access via electronic means.” Goals do support “taking into consideration the individual’s needs and maturity level.” However, there is no reference to acceptable use and filtering within the policy.

Intellectual Freedom Statement/Diversity

The NYCCD policy imbeds an assessment of the Library bill of rights which includes statements which support intellectual freedom. The policy’s mission statement commits to providing a “physical and intellectual access to information in a warm, stimulating, and safe environment.” Within the goals the policy states that the collection should encourage students to develop an intellectual integrity in forming judgments and encourage growth in knowledge, independent learning skills, personal and aesthetic development, and social responsibility.” The bill of rights supports “policies, procedures, and rules related to the use of resources and services [to] support free and open access to information.” In this way the school board or the governing board adopts policies to guarantee students access to a broad range of ideas. Library specialist, Pope says that diversity is on her mind whenever she selects materials for her elementary school library. When asked if she considered her school’s diverse population and that of the community when she selects materials, Pope answered, “This is my consideration at all times. Though our population is not diverse, I consider it even more important to encourage and inform awareness.”

Universal design for learning has been developed to help all learners understand material and reach their potential. The mission of the Policy states that the library program be integrated throughout “every student’s education through collaboration and advocacy.” Within the goals, the principles of UDL are supported when it is stated that the library media specialist should “provide a comprehensive collection of instructional materials ... and to provide maximum accessibility to these materials.

Specifics are not given as to how to accomplish this. Should the Library Media Specialist provide needed materials and services in concern for the learning of the individual student? Or should it suffice that the school request technology, materials and services as needed? It may be that the School Library needs to be prepared to provide access as needed and that a positive result may be that all students are better served.

For the student with special needs “the benefits of library use are not only academic but also attitudinal.” (Blue, E.V. & Pace, D., 2011, p.49). “For students with disabilities, the UDL framework ... can pave the way toward inclusive and independent library experiences for all learners, offering flexible support while students learn academic content and important research skills.” (p.51)

Without UDL the school library might not offer students with special needs access to resources needed to succeed. But with multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression, students can find and use available resources. Blue & Pace describe UDL guidelines (CAST, 2012) when they write that multiple means of expression “are evident when students have options for physical actions, expressive skills, fluency, and executive functions (p. 52).

The Policy does not explicitly address means of promoting physical and intellectual access. However it is implied. Specifics are located in the Handbook and online.

Assistive Technologies can enhance user access and information delivery and the value of such devices and technology will collection development, its access and delivery. Such technologies are not specifically discussed in the policy, but “outstanding and much-in-demand resources” such as multiple copies of a title for discussion group (up to 8) or for a theme or curriculum unit (up to 4) are addressed. However selection and accessing of technology is may be handled by the school library media specialist. The mission statement says that the “library provides physical and intellectual access to information.” And the Library Bill of rights access to resources and services imbedded in the policy states that schools must provide a comprehensive collection of instructional materials ... and “provide maximum accessibility to these materials.”

Technology Integration The policy does not explicitly list technology integration in its mission. But within the A.L.A. *Access to Resources* section, paragraph 2, it is written that library media specialists need to “equip students to locate, evaluate and use a broad range of ideas effectively.” Broadly taken, this permits the Library specialist to budget for technology as needed. In the Handbook, section 3, it is described that traditional selection criteria is detailed and valid for evaluating electronic resources ... [and] necessary technology” (3.1.5). In addition, necessary updates, web and intra-school network access may fall under collection development. Included in the Handbook is permission to purchase materials “in a variety of formats with efforts to incorporate emerging technology” (Valenz, J.K. (2004) cited in Handbook (3.1.7)). The NYCCD policy should refer to these resources.

Conclusion

The New York City School Library System has outlined its policy with headings, mission, goals, responsibility for selection, criteria for selection, procedure for selection, weeding, and challenged materials. As a policy statement, this document is far too general for

the time-strapped library specialist. Criteria and procedures are only lists of considerations. The document holds to the 2005 version of the A.L.A. publication, *Access to Resources and Services in the School Library Media Program: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights*. Library specialists will tend to use other parts of the Handbook and may forget about the overall Policy unless references within the Handbook and Policy are added. On the other hand, the presence of the full text of the A.L.A. publication may be better served as a reference and its placement in an appendix.

The NYCCD policy does encourage best practice within its document as it relates to the climate of the school library; it is less clear how the library specialist can support teaching best practice with resources that support required assessments. Technology integration is not specifically mentioned. Again when the library specialist is considering materials in electronic format, the policy should refer to available resources elsewhere in the Handbook and online. The NYCCD policy has a statement designating legal responsibility for the selection and evaluation of the school library collection. References to specific laws like the American Disabilities Act or the Children's Internet Protection Act, which may allow for federal funding, are not included in the policy. The Policy should include references to guidelines within the larger Handbook (3.1.4 and 3.2b.1). The NYCCD policy invites collaboration, encourages library specialists to work with existing policies on site. It is recommended that the Policy include a reference to the MyLibraryNYC community program. The Policy is not specific about how to analyze learners and should include a reference to the Handbook for examples. The NYCCD policy gives little specific direction to the library specialist when evaluating the collection and selecting resources. A reference to the SLMPE rubric would give direction about the number of books per student in the collection and the need for reviews.

Policies are by their nature general guidelines. But without clear procedures within the NYCCD policy, library specialists are much more likely to work with other more specific portions of the Handbook and the online *Guidebook*. Specific practices for access and delivery of information are not always present in the Policy. Handbook section 3 is called “Access and Delivery” and expands the general policy. Use and definition of the terminology “access and delivery” and “basic selection standards” are not defined or repeated within the Policy. For clarity, the Policy should refer to the Handbook sections and use language that is defined in the Handbook. Missing are clear procedures for acceptable use and web filtering. It would be helpful to include reference to locations in the Handbook (3.1.5) which consider evaluating electronic resources, issues related to the necessary technology and “implications for additional services” including updates and a rubric for evaluation (3.1.12). The Handbook covers many considerations of delivery of information like signage, organized and maintained collection, displays, programs, all to enable ready access. (Handbook, 3.1.5).

The Policy is broad when it addresses access and delivery, supporting the A.L.A. Access document. References to sections in the Handbook would expand the Policy’s mission statement from providing access in a “warm” and “stimulating and safe environment” and a “learning laboratory” (Handbook 3.7 and 3.8)

Though the policy contains very specific details for handling challenged information, the presence of procedures for how resources are evaluated and selected would support the re-evaluation process. Statements within the policy provides guidance when supporting collection diversity and intellectual freedom are in sync the A.L.A.’s *Diversity in Collection Development: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights* (A.L.A., 2014).

The Policy should include references to available resources within the larger Handbook like “Selection tools and review sources” (3.1.8) and should refer to resources online offered by the NYC state Department of Education (DOE) and the School Library System.

The New York City Collection Development Policy contains most of the features of a successful collection development policy. Its larger Handbook section 3, expands the Policy to be a workable collection development resource for the Library specialist. See the Appendix for a table of Collection Development Policy Criteria Table for specific suggestions for improvement.

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Appendix A

Collection Development Policy Criteria Table

Criteria	Included in Policy	Not Included in Policy	Suggestions
Mission statement	X		Include reference to the Access to Resources and Services in the School Library Media Program and include text in appendix, not between the mission and goals statement.
Best Practice	X		Include a reference to Handbook resource regarding assessment (3.8.5). Include reference to best practice supports by NYC DOE and SLS and found online. Include procedure reference related to assessment resources support.
Technology integration		X	The Policy needs a clear statement related to use of technology for instructional use and sensitivity to issues for child protection and guidelines for acceptable use.
Intellectual Freedom statements/ Diversity	X		
Collaborative Leadership	X	Community collaboration is not discussed in the Policy statement.	Reference within the policy to programs which encourage community cooperation and which share materials like the CCD or MyLibraryNYC is recommended.
Legal Responsibility	X General information about who is responsible (3.1.3.II)	Lacking information about state and federal laws and guidelines	Include a statement that qualifies that the Library specialist considers guidelines of ADA Public Law 101-336 and CIPA to increase physical and intellectual access and delivery of resources. Should also include stipulation for number of books a library should have in the collection per student. Recommend including reference to NY state regulations for library collections in Handbook (3.1.4)
Analysis of Learners	X Mission supports a collection that will provide a “wide range of materials on all level of difficulty, in appropriate languages , with diversity of appeal, and presentation of different points of view. Goals include providing materials that take into consideration the individual’s “needs, ... interests, abilities, languages, socio-economic background, and maturity level” but also reflect “ideas and beliefs of religious, social political, historical, and ethnic groups,” their contributions to American and world heritage,		In the policy statement, include a specific resource for analyzing student population and an indicator of importance through a procedure with a general checklist. With a concern for broadening each student by presenting differing points of view, considerations should be made for balancing the collection to show varying perspectives, global views, and diverse cultures.
Evaluative Tools	X “Basic selection standards” are mentioned but not explicitly stated, although communication with stakeholders and consulting “professionally prepared selection aids” gives direction. Tools for evaluation are not specifically given within the policy.	Specific expectations for evaluation of the collection and selection of materials	“Basic selection standards” may be reworded to refer back to headings for “criteria” and “procedures” for selection (III and IV). Reference in the policy to the SLMPE rubric online and in the Handbook (1.10) is recommended. Recommend including reference to Handbook for Collection Development Process (3.1.5) and for selection resources (3.1.2)

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Criteria	Included in Policy	Not Included in Policy	Suggestions
Policies on Access and Delivery	X The specific policies on access and delivery are not specific to the NYCCD policy. Terminology is in place but unclear.		The policy statement could include terminology from the SLMPE rubric to encompass shared and electronic resources and accommodations to library environment which allow better information retrieval and use. It is recommended that the Policy also include references back to the Handbook which includes sections on specific considerations for Physical and Environmental Facilities (3.7) and Flexible, Open, and Extended Equitable Access (3.8)
Policies on Web Filtering	X The Policy contains a general statement that electronic access should not be prevented, but may be seen as a barrier to intellectual freedom. This is clarified in the goals, which provide flexibility for maturity level of students served.	No acceptable use policy or mention of CIPA constraints.	The very general policy may prove difficult to uphold. A description that limiting use of electronic information and requiring permission from parents may be considered barriers to intellectual access may differ from constraints imposed by CIPA to qualify for funding. It is recommended that reference to the Handbook can provide a rubric for evaluating electronic resources (3.1.12 and reference to a resource for consideration of additional services and general considerations (3.1.5)
Weeding/Deselection	X		The Policy should include a reference to weeding guidelines and process, with table considering copyright date vs. type of material, in the Handbook (3.5.1 and 3.5.2).
UDL	X Tenets of UDL are found in the policy: accommodate[s] the needs of students for whom English is a second language; advocacy		
Assistive Technologies	X Within the mission: providing physical and intellectual access to information in a warm, stimulating, and safe environment.		