Ventura Unified School District

Middle School Library Book Selection Policy (Grades 6–8)

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear guidelines for the selection, evaluation, and maintenance of library materials in Ventura Unified School District (VUSD) middle school libraries serving grades 6–8.

The middle school library program supports the district's educational mission by providing equitable access to diverse, high-quality resources that enrich the curriculum, support adolescent literacy development, and promote inquiry, curiosity, and responsible use of information.

This policy is adopted in accordance with applicable provisions of the California Education Code and VUSD Board Policies and Administrative Regulations governing instructional materials and library services.[1]

II. Legal Authority

This policy is governed by, and shall be implemented consistent with:

- California Education Code §§ 60000–60005
- California Education Code §§ 60040–60044
- California Education Code § 51210
- VUSD BP 6163.1 / AR 6163.1 – Library Media Centers
- VUSD BP 6161.1 / AR 6161.1 – Instructional Materials
- VUSD BP 1312.2 / AR 1312.2 – Complaints
- VUSD BP 0410 – Nondiscrimination

III. Objectives

The middle school library collection shall:

- Support and enrich the district-adopted curriculum for grades 6–8
- Foster reading engagement and the transition to independent reading

- Reflect diverse perspectives in age-appropriate ways
- Support digital literacy and responsible information use
- Promote social-emotional and intellectual development

IV. Responsibility for Selection

The credentialed teacher librarian shall have primary responsibility for selection.

Input may include:

- Teachers
- Students
- Site administrators
- Parents/guardians (as part of transparency practices)

Final decisions rest with the teacher librarian in alignment with BP/AR 6161.1.

V. Selection Criteria

All materials shall be evaluated as a whole and in context:

A. Content and Quality

- Accuracy, currency, reliability
- Alignment with curriculum
- Literary and educational merit
- Readability appropriate, but not limited, to grades 6–8

B. Developmental Appropriateness (Enhanced with Age-Banding)

Materials shall reflect the developmental range of middle school students:

- **Grade 6 (approx. ages 11–12):**
  Emphasis on transitional content from elementary to middle school; generally limited exposure to mature themes; focus on foundational literacy and guided exploration
- **Grades 7–8 (approx. ages 12–14):**
  Increasing complexity of themes, including exposure to more advanced social issues presented in an age-appropriate and contextualized manner
- Material outside these age bands is curated at the discretion of the credentialed teacher librarian.

Selection shall consider:

- Emotional maturity variability
- Sensitivity of themes (violence, language, relationships, etc.)
- Intended audience of the material (publisher/industry age ratings where applicable)

C. Compliance with Law

Materials must meet California Education Code §60040 requirements:

- Accurate representation of diversity
- No adverse reflection on protected groups
- Age-appropriate content[2]

D. Relevance

- Student interest and engagement
- Curricular and recreational value
- Balanced collection

E. Authority

- Author/publisher credibility
- Professional reviews

F. Format and Accessibility

- Multiple formats where applicable and feasible
- Accessibility for diverse learners

G. Balance of Perspectives

- Diverse viewpoints presented responsibly
- Inclusion of classic and contemporary works

VI. Intellectual Freedom (Strengthened for Legal Defensibility)

The district affirms students' right to access a broad range of ideas and information consistent with constitutional protections and California law.

Selection decisions shall:

- Be based on **educational suitability and professional standards**, not personal approval or disapproval
- Consider materials **as a whole**, not isolated passages
- Reflect **legitimate pedagogical concerns**, including developmental appropriateness

Materials shall not be excluded solely due to:

- Political, religious, or ideological viewpoints
- Controversial subject matter
- Author identity or background

Nothing in this policy shall be interpreted to permit the removal or restriction of materials in a manner inconsistent with:

- California Education Code §60044
- Established First Amendment principles
- District nondiscrimination obligations (BP 0410)

VII. Collection Maintenance (Weeding)

Materials may be removed based on:

- Obsolescence
- Condition
- Lack of relevance or circulation
- Availability of more appropriate materials

VIII. Gifts and Donations

Donations must meet all selection criteria, including developmental appropriateness.

IX. Reconsideration of Materials (Enhanced Legal Process)

Any individual may file a complaint per BP/AR 1312.2.

Process includes:

1. Informal conference with librarian
2. Submission of a formal reconsideration form
3. Review by a district committee including:
    - Teacher Librarian
    - Administrator
    - Teacher(s)
    - Optional community representative
4. Evaluation using:

    - Full work (not excerpts)
    - Policy criteria
    - Educational context
5. Written decision with rationale

Legal Safeguards:

- Materials remain available during review unless legally required otherwise
- Decisions must be **content-neutral and viewpoint-neutral**
- No material shall be removed solely due to disagreement with the ideas presented

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X. Parent/Guardian Transparency (NEW SECTION)

The district supports transparency and family engagement in student reading:

- Library catalogs shall be accessible to parents/guardians where feasible
- Parents/guardians are encouraged to discuss reading choices with their children
- The district recognizes that **parents/guardians have the right to guide their own child's reading**, but not to restrict access for other students

Optional site-level practices may include:

- Reading guidance tools or recommendations
- Opportunities for parent communication regarding library use

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XI. Policy Review

Reviewed every three (3) years or as needed.

XII. Adoption

[Same as before]

Footnotes

1. California Education Code §§ 60000–60005; VUSD BP 6161.1, 6163.1
2. California Education Code §60040(a)–(d)
3. ALA Library Bill of Rights; NCTE Students' Right to Read

Appendix A: Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials (NEW)

Ventura Unified School District
Request for Reconsideration of Library Materials

Complainant Information
Name: _____
Address: _____
Email/Phone: _____
Relationship to District: ☐ Parent ☐ Student ☐ Staff ☐ Community Member

Material Information
Title: _____
Author: _____
Format: ☐ Book ☐ Digital ☐ Other

Review Request

1. Have you read/viewed the entire work? ☐ Yes ☐ No
2. What concerns you about this material?

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3. Please cite specific passages (with page numbers if possible):

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4. What do you believe is the intended age group?

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5. What action are you requesting?
   ☐ Retain without restriction
   ☐ Restrict to certain grades
   ☐ Remove from library
6. What alternative would you suggest (if any)?

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7. Additional comments:

Signature: _____Date: _____