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ABSTRACT

Minority groups should be accurately presented in educational materials for all school children, especially those with minority backgrounds. Materials should avoid giving the minority child a negative self-image. Life should be portrayed as it is, including harsh realities. Factual material must reflect authoritative, comprehensive, and current research. Minority achievements should be noted. (These guidelines are to be implemented throughout the state of Maryland.) (Author/PF)

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Guidelines for the Evaluation and Selection of Instructional Materials Which Will Insure Proper Recognition of Ethnic and Cultural Minorities



IR 001068



Division of Library Development and Services
Maryland State Department of Education



**GUIDELINES FOR THE EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF
INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS WHICH WILL INSURE
PROPER RECOGNITION OF ETHNIC AND CULTURAL MINORITIES**

**Division of Library Development and Services
Maryland State Department of Education**

1973

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Foreword



“Guidelines for the Evaluation and Selection of Instructional Materials Which Will Insure Proper Recognition of Ethnic and Cultural Minorities” is the outcome of the State mandate: No. 325 (1b) “The State Department of Education shall develop . . . Criteria for use by local boards in evaluating and selecting instructional materials for schools which will insure proper recognition of ethnic and cultural minorities.”

Following this mandate, a committee was organized to formulate guidelines for use by local boards of education and public libraries in evaluating and selecting instructional materials for schools. The Guidelines point out definite characteristics to look for in evaluating print and nonprint materials involving all ethnic groups. This represents a significant step in providing materials for comprehensive evaluation of materials. Therefore, there is a compelling need to provide a climate in which children can be helped to understand themselves and their environment. This information should enable them to understand and evaluate their experiences and the experiences of other persons in relationship to past, present, and future events.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James A. Sensenbaugh". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

JAMES A. SENSENBAUGH
State Superintendent of Schools

GUIDELINES FOR THE EVALUATION AND SELECTION OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS WHICH WILL INSURE PROPER RECOGNITION OF ETHNIC AND CULTURAL MINORITIES

Each school system has the responsibility for providing climates of learning, programs and materials which give all pupils full and accurate information concerning the role of all minority groups in the development of America, of their legitimate place in the history of our nation and the world, of the contribution in the fields of science, social science, literature, art and entertainment, and the intrinsic value of each individual regardless of his race, creed, color, or economic status. Schools with any minorities represented in their populations have the additional responsibility for providing programs and materials which assist these pupils in identifying themselves as worthwhile individuals in a majority-based society.

The purpose of these *Guidelines* is not to describe the climates and the programs, but to provide criteria for the evaluation and selection of materials to support them. The *Guidelines* are general in nature. They apply equally to materials concerning any minority group, e.g., Blacks, migrant workers, American Indians, or any group whose language and cultural backgrounds are different from the majority. However, examples used refer to one minority group – Black Americans. This emphasis on the Black minority group is deliberate as it is felt that this group presents an over-riding problem at the present time. There is a pressing need for full, accurate and unbiased information on the Blacks, who have often been excluded from factual material and depicted as menials or stereotypes in literature and art.

“Instructional materials” mean textbooks, library books, periodicals, pamphlets, programmed materials, tape and disc recordings, art prints, pictures and study prints, films, filmstrips, slides, and transparencies – in other words, material in any format used in any manner which influences the pupil’s learning and the teacher’s teaching.

To be effective, instructional materials must be used by pupils and teachers; and the extent to which they are used is largely dependent upon the climate and the programs provided. Any evaluation of the effectiveness of the materials provided must lean heavily on the use made of them. Other factors must be considered in any evaluation: the scope of the collection of both print and nonprint items, the extent to which biased and out-of-date materials are discarded, and the procedures that promote easy use and accessibility. No collection should be evaluated solely on the basis of recent additions to the print collection.

General Criteria

1. Materials selected should contribute toward developing an attitude of inquiry and a growth in factual knowledge; stimulating literary appreciation, aesthetic values, and ethnical standards; and helping pupils to make intelligent judgments in their daily lives.
2. Materials are sometimes selected which are harmful to young people of minority groups; e.g., not all characters who are Black must of necessity be portrayed as good or exemplary in behavior, but if they are portrayed as bad or cowardly there must be a reason other than the fact that they are Black. The representation of a character in an

unkind or degrading manner may seem inconsequential to a white child, but may contribute toward the failure of a black child to develop a healthy self-image. It may also cause him to reject all other materials available for his use.

3. Illustrations in both print and nonprint materials should be carefully evaluated. Many children judge materials by the illustrations. If they portray abnormally proportioned, repulsive characters, children are certain to reject the materials. Children do not expect every character to be beautiful – in fact, they identify more readily if characters look more like people they are likely to meet in everyday life. Sometimes illustrations err in subtle ways; however, they may perpetuate the feelings of inferiority in the Black by portraying all the authority figures as white.
4. Materials selected should provide psychological support for learning by making it possible for Blacks to identify themselves with individuals or groups. Children who may not regularly associate with children different from themselves should have every opportunity to develop respect for the inherent worth and rights of all persons through the use of these materials. No materials which humiliate anyone should be included. No matter how entertaining the material is, one group of children should not be entertained at the expense of another. For example, the evaluator needs to ask himself, “How would I feel, using this material, if I were Black? What attitude might I form if I were white?”
5. Another aspect to be considered by materials for today’s youth is the importance of emphasis on life as it really is; e.g., in assessing materials for their realism, it is vital that ghetto life be depicted accurately. Attention should be focused on the strengths and positive personal values that ghetto residents convey to their children in their efforts to master their environment.
6. In considering the constructive potential of biracial materials for children and young people, one does not ask that they be antiseptic and shrink from portraying harsh realities. Increasingly, authors and producers must use these realities to foster awareness and sensitivity among young users; and, specifically in the case of Blacks, the materials must help them to know better their own strengths and power to bring about change.

Criteria for Factual Material

1. Informational material should be factual and objective. Generalizations, editorializing, and platitudes should be avoided. Whenever opinions are given, they must be clearly identified as such.
2. Political, economic, and social evils should receive frank treatment rather than be defended, minimized, or ignored. Controversial and unpleasant matters should not be avoided.
3. The material should reflect authoritative, comprehensive, and current research. It must seek to remove myths and interpretations which have obscured the proper history, roles, and contributions of various minority groups, particularly Blacks, and their prominent representatives in American life.

4. All aspects of the subject – both negative and positive should be given reasonable attention. Material must treat with historical accuracy and frankness present and past tensions and intergroup relations, as well as the undesirable consequences of withholding rights and freedom from any citizen. It should present effective ways in which such problems are and have been solved through the harmonious interaction of individuals.
5. The material should consider minority participation in all subject disciplines. All historical and present facets of American life covered by the curriculum and by the instructional materials collection must include materials on racial and ethnic minority participation. For example, Benjamin Banneker, the inventor, and Matthew Henson, the explorer, should be included in material on American inventors and on Arctic exploration. Awareness of a multi-ethnic, multi-racial society should be an important factor in the selection and evaluation process.
6. The range of human characteristics should be described so as to eliminate the danger of stereotyping according to race, religion, or national origin or ancestry. Such matters as cultural pluralism and diverse factors affecting groups should be included in print and nonprint materials.

Criteria for Imaginative Materials

Novels, stories, poetry, and non-factual films which by their qualities of style or treatment offer experience of an imaginative nature should increase the social sensitivity of a young person and help him to extend his experiences to gain insights, appreciation, and understanding of himself and others. Creative works should be selected which avoid occupational stereotypes and misleading overgeneralizations concerning the ethnic background, culture, and traditions of minority Americans. For example, books should picture Blacks as holding all sorts of positions and should portray them as people faced with the universal problems of all mankind: earning a living, hating and loving, rejoicing and grieving, experiencing success and failures, learning to find their way through a complex world of ideas, and living with other people. Since dialogue and pictures are very close to characterization, the language used by characters and pictures of them should be honest and convincing. The emotional interpretations attached to pictures and language demand careful analysis and critical review. Words which may strain relations between individuals and groups should be de-emphasized.

Print and nonprint materials for secondary school readers should include many works drawn from the field of literature for adults. These materials should be selected because of their timeliness, their honesty in presenting provocative ideas and factual information, and their appeal to young people who have the intellectual and emotional maturity to appreciate them.

Implementation

These guidelines constitute the basic criteria to be utilized in the selection of all instructional media for schools in the State. They are to be disseminated, interpreted, and discussed with the entire educational community, lay groups, and students throughout the State.

Each local educational agency will report annually, as part of the Status of Ethnic/Cultural Instructional Programs and Integration in Maryland Public Schools, on the extent to which specific steps have been taken to effect implementation of the guidelines.

1. The State Superintendent of Schools will present the guidelines to the entire professional staff of the State Department of Education and to the superintendents of local school systems.
2. Professional staff members of the State Department of Education will be alerted to the importance of the criteria in the selection of all instructional materials and the use made of them.
3. A staff member of the Division of Library Development and Services will be assigned the responsibility for assisting the local education agencies in the implementation of the guidelines.
4. The regional coordinators will have a full discussion of the guidelines at regional meetings.
5. A portion of any funds available to the State for the development of school library/media collections will be used to provide materials which promote improved understanding of cultural and ethnic minorities.
6. Superintendents of schools will develop plans and procedures for implementation of the guidelines which will insure the involvement of school boards, school personnel, lay groups and students; will assign responsibility for implementation, evaluation and reporting to one staff member; and will develop library/media collections in the individual schools in accordance with the guidelines.