

## **Instruction**

### **Guidelines for Evaluation of Instructional Materials**

#### **Purpose of Guidelines**

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide consistent, systematic standards for evaluating instructional materials proposed for use in Connecticut's public elementary schools to ensure compliance with the Connecticut General Statutes, Board of Education Policy and with the regulations of the State Board of Education.

Children pattern their interests, prejudices, and ideas after what they see and hear. Children dream of and aspire to those goals they are encouraged to attain. Their world can be expansive and filled with exciting and infinite possibilities, or frustrating in its limitations, depending on their exposure. Much of a child's early development takes place in school, and the potentially positive or negative effect of the school experience is well documented.

These guidelines are not intended to supplant the evaluator's judgment, because it would be impossible to do so. They do comprise the minimum standards for acceptability, and they provide criteria by which to judge quality of instructional materials. The guidelines should be used when evaluating both the student material and the teacher material. In no event should instruction in a teacher manual, designed to overcome discriminatory pictures or text in a student edition, be given any consideration in evaluation of the student edition.

In order to portray accurately the culture and racial diversity and the male and female roles in our society, instructional materials should encourage students to understand the historical roles and contributions of women and minorities, the forces which shaped those roles and contributions, and how and why the contemporary roles and contributions of women and minorities are different.

#### **Limitations**

It may be inappropriate to require that a pictorial or textual item conform exactly to these guidelines. For example, reprinting a story by a well-known author or a painting by an artist may make an important contribution to a particular instructional material. In such situations, discussion material should be included indicating why a particular attitude toward women or a minority group was prevalent during a certain period in history, and how and why that attitude has changed.

When examining instructional material for adverse reflection on race, creed, sex, etc., the evaluator should make a qualitative judgment with respect to stories or articles having an historical perspective. Any description, depiction, inference, label or retort found to be, by itself, an adverse reflection should not be judged out of context. Rather, the story or article should be examined for appropriate explanations, discussions or other comments included therein or immediately attached, which may overcome the impact of such offending words or pictures. The instructional material should be rejected only if, on a total basis, the story or article would, in the mind of an average pupil for whom the material is intended, reflect adversely upon a person because of his or her race, color, creed, national origin, ancestry, sex or occupation.

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#### **Purpose of Guidelines (continued)**

These guidelines may be inapplicable to certain instructional materials. For example, materials need not include references to people. Therefore, math problems described solely in abstract terms or stories about animals without human attributes are outside the scope of these guidelines. Additionally, materials which contain references to children need not include references to adults.

#### **Materials in a Series**

When evaluating instructional materials designed as a graded, non-graded or multi-graded series, each component shall be judged individually for compliance and without regard to the content of other components. However, a group or sequence of materials for use exclusively within a particular single grade shall be judged on a total basis for adverse reflections on race, creed, sex, etc. For example, if a package of three different books is designed to be used as fourth grade readers and a student is expected to complete all books in that school year, any portrayal deficiencies found in one book may be balanced against any exemplary portrayal in another book. However, each of the three books must be judged separately for compliance with the adverse reflection prohibitions.

#### **1. Male and Female Roles**

In order to encourage the individual development and self-esteem of each child, regardless of gender, instructional materials, shall portray women and men, girls and boys, in a wide variety of occupational, emotional, and behavioral situations, presenting both sexes in the full range of their human potential. The criteria are:

- a. Descriptions, depictions, inferences, labels or retorts which demean, stereotype, or patronize one gender must not appear.
- b. Instructional materials should reflect contemporary American society accurately, regardless of the subject area and contain references to, or illustrations of, males and females.
- c. Mentally and physically active, creative, problem-solving roles, and success and failure in those roles, should be shared similarly between male and female characters.
- d. Emotions of fear, anger, aggression, excitement, or tenderness should occur among characters regardless of gender.

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#### **1. Male and Female Roles (continued)**

- e. Traditional activities by one sex should be balanced by nontraditional activities for that sex.
- f. If professional or executive roles, or vocations, trades, or other gainful occupations are portrayed, men and women should be represented approximately equally.
- g. Where lifestyle choices are discussed, boys and girls should be offered an equally wide range of such aspirations and choices.
- h. Whenever a material presents developments in history or current events, or achievements in art, science, or any other field, the contributions of women should be included and discussed when historically accurate.
- i. Imbalance or inequality of any kind, when presented for historical accuracy, should, in the student edition of the instructional materials, be interpreted in light of contemporary standards and circumstances.
- j. Sexually neutral language - for example, “people,” “persons,” “men and women,” “pioneers,” “they” - should generally be used.

#### **2. Ethnic and Cultural Groups**

Instructional materials shall portray cultural diversity of our society to instill in each child a sense of pride in his or her heritage, eradicate the seeds of prejudice, and encourage individual development. Instructional materials, when portraying people (or animals having identifiable human attributes), shall include a fair representation of majority and minority group characters portrayed in a wide variety of occupational and behavioral roles, and present the contributions of ethnic and cultural groups. The criteria are:

- a. Descriptions, depictions, inferences or labels which tend to demean, stereotype, or patronize minority groups must not appear.
- b. Portrayals of diverse ethnic or cultural groups should not depict differences in customs or lifestyle as undesirable and should avoid adverse value judgments of such differences.

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#### **2. Ethnic and Cultural Groups (continued)**

- c. Instructional materials which reflect contemporary American society, should contain references to, or illustrations of, a fair proportion of diverse ethnic groups.
- d. Mentally active, creative, and problem-solving roles, and success and failure in those roles, should be divided in fair proportion between majority and minority groups.
- e. The portrayal of minority characters in traditionally restricted roles should be balanced by the presentation of nontraditional activities for those characters.
- f. Minority persons should be depicted in the same range of socioeconomic settings as persons of the majority group.
- g. Depiction of diverse ethnic and cultural groups should not be limited to the original culture, but expanded to include such groups within the mainstream of American life.
- h. If professional or executive roles, or vocations, trades or other gainful occupations are portrayed, majority and minority groups should be presented in fair proportion.
- i. The contributions of minority peoples, and particularly prominent minority persons should be included and discussed in history or current events, achievements in art, science, or any other field presented.
- j. Imbalance or inequality of any kind, presented for historical accuracy, should, in the student edition of the instructional materials, be interpreted in light of contemporary standards of circumstances.

#### **3. Entrepreneur and Labor**

- a. References or labels which demean, stereotype, or patronize an occupation, vocation, or livelihood should not appear.
- b. Where appropriate, accurate acknowledgements should be made to roles and contributions of entrepreneurs in the history of Connecticut and the United States.
- c. Accurate references should be made to roles and contributions of labor in the history of Connecticut and the United States.

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#### **Purpose of Guidelines (continued)**

#### **4. Ecology and Environment**

- a. Human responsibilities for creating and maintaining a clean, healthy, environment are appropriately portrayed.
- b. Wise use of resources, both human and physical, is encouraged.
- c. Interdependence of people and their environment is made clear.
- d. Effects of environmental problems are identified as are the effects of solving them.
- e. Appropriate means of protecting the environment are suggested.

#### **5. Dangerous Substances**

- a. Hazards of using tobacco, alcohol, narcotics, and restricted dangerous drugs are depicted in illustrations or discussions where references to these substances are included in instructional materials.
- b. The use of tobacco, alcohol, narcotics, or restricted dangerous drugs is not glamorized or encouraged by illustrations or discussion references.

#### **6. Religion**

- a. No religious belief or practice shall be held up to ridicule nor any religious group portrayed as inferior or superior.
- b. Portrayals of contemporary American society should, where religion is discussed or depicted, reflect its religious diversity. Except where material deals with a particular historical era, materials in art and music must, where religious aspects thereof are depicted, reflect the religious diversity of contemporary American society.
- c. Any explanation or description of religious beliefs or practices shall be presented neutrally and shall not indoctrinate students in any particular religious belief, nor instruct students in religious principles.

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##### **7. Brand Names**

Instructional materials shall not contain illustrations of identifiable commercial brand names, representations or corporate logos unless such illustrations are necessary to the educational purpose of the instructional material and that purpose cannot be achieved without using such illustrations, or unless such illustrations are incidental to a scene of a general nature. If, under these exceptions, a brand name representation or corporate logo is illustrated, prominence shall not be given to any one brand or corporation unless, in turn, such illustration is necessary to the educational purpose of the instructional material and that purpose cannot be achieved without using such illustration.

##### **8. Food**

When instructional materials contain illustrations of foods, there shall be an emphasis on foods of high nutritional value.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes

10-18a Contents of textbooks and other general instructional materials.