Learning Resources Policy Clarification

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Under the provincial Educational Program Guide Order and the Learning Resources Policy, boards of education are responsible for local policies and/or procedures for the approval and selection of learning resources in their district. The implementation of the board's direction about learning resources may be delegated to senior staff in a school district and carried out through administrative procedures.

Introduction

The selection and use of learning resources is an important component of effective teaching and learning. High quality learning resources can help teachers provide important background information, explain difficult concepts, support perspective taking and engage students' imagination and creativity.

The selection of learning resources requires educators to think carefully and ensure that the resources they use enhance student learning. In classrooms, this may mean ensuring alignment with the curriculum or promoting critical thinking and communication competencies. In school libraries and school library learning commons, this can mean fostering a love of reading or expanding student knowledge about an area of personal interest. In addition to these important educational goals, teachers should consider how learning resources may impact their students and whether resources may contain offensive language or harmful stereotypes that impede effective learning.

Purpose: This document clarifies roles and responsibilities for learning resources to ensure that educators, students, parents/caregivers and the broader community have clarity and confidence in how and why decisions about learning resources are made in B.C. schools.

Policy Foundations

As stated in the [Learning Resources Policy](#), educators may only use educational resource materials (i.e., learning resources) that their board of education considers appropriate, specified in an educational program guide, or are recommended by the Minister of Education and Child Care from time to time.

As defined in the School Regulation, learning resources, or educational resource materials, include:

a. information, represented or stored in a variety of media and formats, that is used for instruction in an educational program

b. materials and equipment necessary to meet the learning outcomes or assessment requirements of an educational program provided by a board

As defined in the [School Act,](#) an "educational program" means an organized set of learning activities that is designed to enable learners to become literate, to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy, democratic and pluralistic society and a prosperous and sustainable economy.

The [School Regulation](#) also outlines that additional educational programs provided by a board can include:

a. work study and work experience programs

b. examinations, and

c. other learning activities provided by the board

These definitions collectively mean that in virtually all cases, anything used in a school which provides information to students falls under the definition of a learning resource. While this is typically thought of in terms of things like textbooks or movies, many other items could also fall under the definition of learning resources. For example, websites, AI tools and bringing in a guest speaker to deliver information to students can also meet the definition of a learning resource. Resources found in a school library are considered a learning resource, as a student is developing literacy skills or engaging in other learning activities as part of their educational program. This includes a student selecting a resource independently out of personal interest.

Roles and Responsibilities

Since the implementation of the redesigned provincial curriculum, educational program guides have not included lists of ministry-approved learning resources. This means that learning resources used by educators should have been approved for use in accordance with policies and procedures established by their board of education. The primary responsibility for policies and procedures used by teachers for resource review and approval rests with local boards of education.

Under the provincial Educational Program Guide Order and the Learning Resources Policy, boards of education are responsible for local policies and/or procedures for the approval and selection of learning resources in their district. The implementation of the board's direction about learning resources may be delegated to senior staff in a school district and carried out through administrative procedures.

The Ministry of Education and Child Care may recommend resources from time to time. Resources developed by the Ministry of Education and Child Care are considered recommended by the Minister and may be used in any school district in B.C.

All boards must have policies and procedures for learning resources in their districts. These policies and procedures must include several elements, including:

1. Policy and procedures for challenging the use of a learning resource

2. Local policies and evaluation procedures for selecting learning resources

In addition, boards should also have processes for reviewing previously approved resources to ensure they are current and aligned with the curriculum, including processes for potentially removing outdated resources.
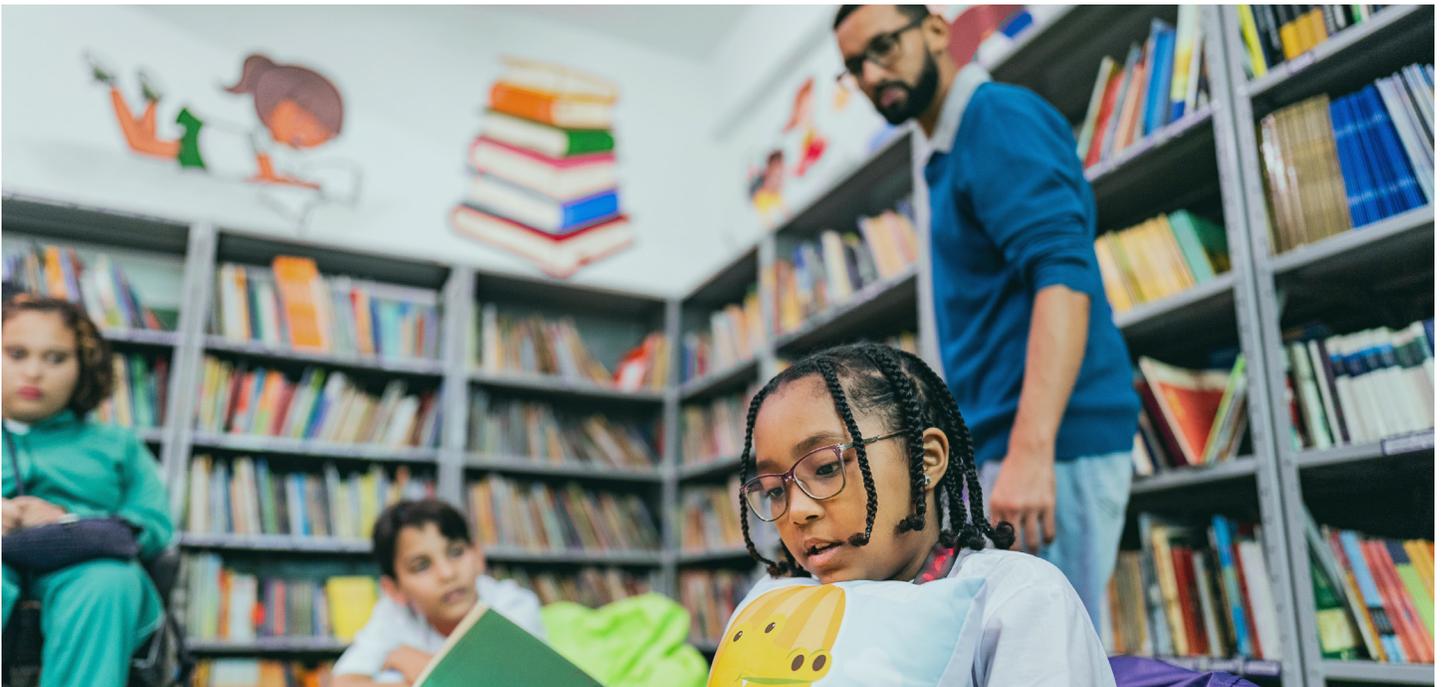
Learning Resource Challenges

A challenge process is important in providing parents and caregivers, students, local First Nations and other members of the school community with opportunities to express concerns and ensure that resources are supporting productive and inclusive learning environments.

Also, it is important to acknowledge that not every resource that is challenged should be removed. Some parents may challenge a resource based on misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the content in a resource. Others may have unrealistic expectations about the extent to which learning resources should align with their specific perspectives or worldviews. In cases where a resource is unsuccessfully challenged, it is important to clearly communicate the rationale behind that decision and build understanding with your school community.

While boards of education must ensure that a challenge process is in place in their districts, the Learning Resources Policy does not set out detailed requirements. For example, as the Learning Resources Policy does not specify who is able to challenge resources, several districts have restricted access to their challenge process to families within the district or limited the number of challenges that can be filed by an individual. While challenge policies and procedures should provide the school community with opportunities for reconsidering the use of resources, they may also set reasonable limits to ensure that staff are not overwhelmed by challenge requests.

Processes for Reviewing Resources

Through the ongoing process of acquiring new learning resources, schools and districts can accumulate large collections of resources that have not been reviewed since they were initially acquired. While the Learning Resources Policy is silent on the exact process or frequency of this review process, board policies and procedures should include a process for ensuring any list of recommended learning resources is up to date and aligned with changes to curriculum. This would include adding and removing resources from the list. For example, older learning resources in a science class may contain outdated or inaccurate information that has been superseded by more recent discoveries.

The frequency of any reviews and the specific criteria used as part of these regular reviews is not part of the provincial Learning Resources Policy and is set through local policies and procedures. Also, districts should not necessarily feel compelled to remove resources simply because of their publication date. While some resources may become dated quickly, others may remain relevant regardless of their age.

Processes for Evaluating and Approving Learning Resources

As per the Learning Resources Policy, local policies and evaluation procedures for selecting learning resources should involve practicing educators as they are best suited for determining the resources that are most appropriate for use in their classrooms.

Districts should also ensure that educators are informed of relevant policies, procedures, and criteria for the selection of learning resources, as well as providing any lists of locally reviewed and approved learning resources.

Referring to Focused Education Resources K-12 Evaluated Resource Collection as a tool for resource selection and recommend Focused Education Resources as an expert support for resource selection will help guide educators through the selection of learning resources.

According to the Learning Resources Policy, local evaluation procedures should establish criteria to ensure that learning resources chosen for use in schools:

- Support the learning standards or learning outcomes of the curriculum

- Assist students in making connections between what they learn in school and real-life applications

- Are developmentally and age appropriate

- Have effective instructional and technical design

- Meet the requirements set by copyright and privacy legislation

- Are suitable based on social considerations

Determining factors like age and developmental appropriateness or suitability based on social considerations often requires taking many different factors into consideration. Some of the considerations included in the policy include "approaches to multiculturalism, First Nations learning, gender and gender identity among others." However, these factors are not comprehensive, and local policies can (and likely should) include additional areas of consideration, such as the use of authentic Indigenous resources.

For additional support regarding the evaluation and approval of learning resources, the Ministry of Education and Child Care has produced the Guidance on Learning Resource Selection with suggested criteria that schools and districts may want to use as part of their local processes.

Focused Education Resources provides an online course for educators on Selecting Learning Resources for the Classroom to support educators through this process.

Copyright and Privacy

While copyright legislation often includes fair dealing provisions for educational use, teachers should be aware of the wide range of legal threats and copyright challenges that districts have experienced. This includes things like the usage of copyright music without permission, class projects being posted online that contain copyright images, or teachers showing videos to their class from a streaming service using their personal account.

If teachers have questions or concerns about copyright and privacy policies and procedures, they should review their local district's policies and procedures to ensure they are following the appropriate steps when incorporating resources into their classrooms to mitigate potential risks

To help educators navigate potential copyright issues, The Council of Ministers of Education (CMEC), Canada has produced a helpful guide called Copyright Matters with a series of questions and answers regarding copyright in schools. This resource is available through the CMEC website.

Districts should ensure that all educators are aware of copyright law and provide regular reminders to ensure that these guidelines are being followed.

All public schools in B.C. are governed by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA). While many learning resources have no privacy implications, the increasing use of digital tools for learning may introduce privacy risks related to personal information about students. Prior to using a new app or other digital tool, FIPPA requires that districts conduct a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) to ensure that all collection, use, disclosure, protection, and processing of personal information by the school district is compliant with FIPPA.

A PIA is an in-depth review of any new or significantly revised initiative, project, activity, or program to ensure that it is compliant with the provisions of FIPPA, to identify and mitigate risks arising from the initiative and to ensure that the initiative appropriately protects the privacy of individuals

Educators should first review and follow any local policies and procedures related to privacy. In addition, Focused Education Resources has several PIA tools available on their website.

For more information about privacy legislation in B.C., the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner also has a variety of print and video resources available.

Summary

- A learning resource is anything used in a school which provides information to students as part of a student's overall educational program

- Resources in a school library used as part of an educational program offered by a board of education meet the definition of a learning resource

- While some resources (e.g., novels in a school library) may be independently selected by students, these activities are ultimately under the supervision of a teacher-librarian or other educator as part of the overall educational program provided by a board

- The selection and use of learning resources is guided by the Learning Resources Policy in conjunction with local board policies and district procedures.

- Boards of education are responsible for ensuring that there is a process for resources in their district to be regularly reviewed and approved.

- Boards of education must ensure that a challenge process is in place for their district and the process provides opportunities for reconsidering the use of resources.

- Additional support regarding the evaluation and approval of learning resources is available from the Ministry of Education and Child Care guidelines document which includes suggested criteria that schools and districts may want to use as part of their local processes

- School districts should ensure that their educators are informed of board policies, district procedures, and criteria for the selection of learning resources, the process for having resources approved, any lists of locally reviewed and approved learning resources, and referring to Focused Education Resources' K-12 Evaluated Resource Collection as a tool for resource selection

- School districts should also ensure that all educators are aware of copyright law and provide regular reminders to ensure that these guidelines are followed

Learning Resources Policy Clarification FAQs

Who can access a school district resource challenge process?

The Learning Resources Policy requires boards/authorities to develop local policies and procedures to allow for challenging the use of a learning resource at the school/district level but is silent on the specific details of the challenge process. Therefore, boards/authorities may have polices which specify that challenge processes are limited to specific members of the school community (e.g., parents/caregivers, students, First Nations) to ensure the challenge process remains locally relevant and cannot be used by outside individuals/ groups.

What responsibilities related to the approval of a learning resource can be delegated from the board to a school/school leader?

The Learning Resources Policy does not specify what responsibilities can be delegated to local schools or school leaders. Boards/authorities may develop local policies and direct staff to develop procedures regarding learning resources, such as selecting and approving specific resources for use.

Should boards of education be directly involved in the review and approval of learning resources?

Boards of education, through policy, set out the principles, expectations, and rules guiding how a school district is governed and operates. Under the Educational Program Guide Order and Learning Resources Policy, boards of education are responsible for local policies for the approval and selection of learning resources in their district.

While boards may provide high-level policy guidance for the selection of learning resources, it is suggested that they delegate responsibility to senior district staff for the day-to-day decision-making regarding learning resources, in alignment with board policy. Teachers and teacher-librarians make decisions about hundreds or thousands of learning resources every year, as they work to capitalize on student interests and meet the unique needs found in their classrooms.

When should a school leader elevate a specific concern regarding a learning resource to a board/authority?

There are no set guidelines in the Learning Resources Policy regarding when a school leader should elevate concerns regarding a learning resource used in their school to a board/authority. Elevating a concern should be treated on a case-by-case basis as it will depend on each specific situation.

Wherever possible, it is preferable that concerns are resolved at the school level to foster collaborative discussions that work towards a solution and shared understanding between the teacher or school leader and the parent/caregiver or student. Elevating a learning resource concern to the board level should be considered when all school level options (e.g., discussions with teacher, teacher-librarian, school vice-principal, or principal) have been pursued.

Can the results of a learning resource challenge process be shared throughout the school or district?

Yes. The Learning Resources Policy does not prohibit the results of a challenge process from being shared in a school community or district. It is important that if any decisions regarding a challenge process are made public that privacy is considered and no personal information is made public regarding the challenge. Schools/districts may also want to consider keeping a record of resources that have been challenged and any results, especially where a resource has been challenged but may still be available at other schools within the district.

Can a learning resource be challenged more than once?

The Learning Resources Policy does not specify the frequency or regularity in which a learning resource may be challenged. In general, it is understandable that districts may want to prevent repeated challenges. However, it is also important to consider how decisions could be reconsidered if new information comes to light or if there are changes to local or provincial standards for learning resources.

Are resources found in a school library or library learning commons considered a learning resource?

Yes. Resources in a school library or library learning commons used as part of an educational program offered by a board of education meet the definition of a learning resource and are included within the Learning Resources Policy.

The library books available for independent selection by students are also subject to the challenge process should a parent or caregiver have concerns.