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ADMINISTRATIVE MEMORANDUM NUMBER FIFTY-SEVEN
SELECTION OF NOVELS

A. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Novels are an important part of teaching the core standards. They carry powerful and important educational opportunities, provide students access to works of significant literary importance, and offer students the chance to explore challenging content representing a variety of literary genres.

The use of novels should adhere to core curriculum standards and reflect community standards. Therefore, novels should be reviewed, and thereafter approved (or not approved) as supplementary material for use in the classroom. Novels shall be selected in accordance with this memorandum and comport with state laws with respect to age and developmental appropriateness (*see* Utah Code §53G-10-103 Sensitive Instructional Materials).

B. STATEMENT OF POLICY

Any lengthy or substantial work of fiction, or non-fiction, used in whole group or small group instruction (such as during class-wide projects or literary circles) must be selected from the District's approved novels list. Short stories, articles, poetry, and picture books are not subject to this process. Teachers must use their best judgment (consider Lexile levels, interest levels, state core standards, individual community standards, student needs, and backgrounds) in choosing materials for their classes. Teachers are encouraged to select novels that add depth, complexity, and relevance to teaching the core curriculum based on articulated goals and educational rationale.

Novels on the approved list are marked for gifted and talented and honors "reach up" options. Gifted and honors teachers may reach up one grade level for novels, excluding any novels specifically approved for "advanced students only" or those marked "not available for reach up." The College of William and Mary Gifted and Talented curriculum recommended novels are listed separately and are only for use with gifted and honors students at the grade level indicated; no reaching up is allowed.

C. COMMITTEES

Committees include three District Novel Committees (High School, Junior High, and Elementary), School Novel Committees, a Red Flag Committee, and an Appeals Committee. Descriptions of committees and tasks are delineated by section.

1. District Novel Committees
 - a. District Novel Committees oversee the review of novels nominated by teachers for use in the curriculum by 1) supervising and maintaining the school novels committee, 2) determining whether nominated novels are to be adopted and placed on the Approved Novels List (found on the Curriculum and Instruction website), and 3) identifying what if any annotations are required.
 - b. The District Curriculum Specialist is assigned to oversee the District Novel Committees and provides regular training to all committee members on the approval process.
 - c. The High School Novels Committee reviews novels nominated for grades 9-12, the Junior High Novels Committee review novels nominated for grades 6-8, and the Elementary School Novels Committee reviews novels for grades 4-5(6).
 - d. Each of the three District Novel Committees consist of one teacher representative per school, two parent representatives nominated by the PTA Board, and the District Curriculum Specialist.
2. School Novel Committees
 - a. Each junior high and high school convenes a School Novel Committee. The School Novel Committees from all schools shall review nominations and the associated novels submitted by teachers from schools other than their own for potential use in the classroom. (Elementary schools shall submit nominations to the District Elementary Novel Committee).
 - b. Schools shall offer parents, teachers, and students an opportunity to serve as members of the School Novel Committee. Volunteers are trained by the District Curriculum Specialist or the school's teacher representative using the training materials provided by the District Curriculum Specialist.
 - c. Members of the School Novel Committee may rotate with each novel review to give as many volunteers the opportunity to participate as possible and to provide a variety of perspectives and expertise as needed. The School Novel Committee must include at least two parents, two students (from the grade of the intended audience), two teachers, and an administrator of the school.
3. Red Flag Committee
 - a. The Red Flag Committee shall convene to review novels that have been escalated from the District Novel Committee due to 1) only receiving 50-69% of committee "yes" votes or 2) two or more parent member concerns with adopting the novel.
 - b. The Red Flag Committee shall be formed ad-hoc from standing members of the other committees, GEA representatives, and members of the PTA Regional Board. The Red Flag Committee shall have one more parent representative than school representatives. Additionally, any member(s) of the School Novel

Committee who expressed concern about the novel being reviewed may join the Red Flag Committee.

4. Appeals Committee
 - a. The Appeals Committee meets at least twice a year to review requests to remove a novel from the approved list, change the grade level of a current adoption, change a novel's annotations, or to review a teacher request to adopt a novel which was previously reviewed but not adopted.
 - b. Three parents selected by the PTA Regional Board, three teachers selected by the District Curriculum Specialist, and the District Curriculum Specialist sit on the committee. The composition of the Appeals Committee should represent diverse points of view. Membership should rotate a new member onto the committee to replace one committee member annually.

D. PROCEDURES

1. Approval Procedure
 - a. Teachers who seek approval for a novel shall submit a nomination form (found on Curriculum and Instruction website) to the District Curriculum Specialist for approval of a novel identifying the title, author, Lexile Level, intended grade level, alignment with educational goals and core standards, a plot or content summary, and an educational rationale.
 - b. If the nominated novel has not been reviewed for classroom use in the last three years, it is assigned to two School Novel Committees (other than the nominating school) consistent with the intended grade level. The District Curriculum Specialist shall provide copies of the novel, the nomination form, and the deadline for completion to the teacher representatives of the School Novel Committees.
 - c. The teacher representatives at the school shall manage the review of the book by enlisting appropriate membership, distributing materials and review forms, reviewing expectations, and collecting the review forms submitted by each member within the timeline.
 - d. After the School Novel Committee review, the District Novel Committee shall invite the teacher representatives of the two assigned schools to report on the written responses of their School Novel Committee giving a plot or content summary, general and specific reactions and concerns of members, and any considerations that should be addressed. The District Novel Committee members may ask questions and provide feedback during the discussion of each book.
 - e. If two or more parents have concerns with adopting the novel, an impasse in discussion occurs, or the two schools' evaluations conflict, the novel automatically moves to the Red Flag Committee procedure.
 - f. Barring concerns or conflict, a quorum of the District Novel Committee shall take a vote after the discussion. A quorum consists of at least 2/3 of the committee members, including at least one parent. The District Curriculum Specialist tallies votes of written responses from both schools (four parents, four students, four teachers, and two administrators) and District Novel Committee members who

were **not** part of the school committee review. Each vote is either “yes,” the novel is adopted, or “no,” the novel is not adopted.

- g. Novels must receive 75% or higher “yes” votes to be approved with annotations as needed. For 70-74% “yes” votes, the District Novel Committee shall conduct further discussion and take a second vote. If the second vote does not obtain 75% or higher “yes” votes, the novel shall be moved to the Red Flag Committee procedure. If the novel received 50-69% “yes” votes in the first round of voting, the novel shall be moved directly to the Red Flag Committee procedure. For a vote of less than 50%, the novel is not adopted for classroom use.
- h. Adopted novels are placed on the Approved Novels List for use by the approved grade level or band or according to the limited use described in annotations.

2. Red Flag Committee Procedure

- a. All members of the Red Flag Committee shall read the novel and complete a written evaluation prior to meeting. The novel is subsequently discussed to determine if it is an appropriate tool for the goals and educational rationale presented by the requesting teacher. Each committee member in attendance has one vote and is not bound by any previous vote.
- b. Adoption of the novel requires 75% or higher “yes” votes, with annotations as needed. If the novel receives 70-74% “yes” votes, the novel shall be adopted with “strong warning” annotations. If the novel receives less than 70% “yes” votes, it is not adopted for classroom use.
- c. Novels adopted through the Red Flag Committee procedure are to be identified as such on the approved novel list, so that teachers are aware of the depth of discussion the novel received prior to approval.

3. Appeal Procedure

- a. When a parent has a concern about a novel being used in their student’s classroom, the parent is encouraged to talk to the teacher to discuss concerns, goals, and educational rationale, or to request an alternate novel for the student. If a parent is uncomfortable approaching the teacher, the parent may contact a PTA representative, the school principal, or the school’s teacher representative to act as an intermediary between the teacher and the parent.
- b. If the parent’s concerns are not resolved at the school, the parent may contact the District Curriculum Specialist for general assistance or to file an appeal.
- c. After reading the novel in its entirety, with the intended student audience in mind, the parent shall submit an official written appeal to the District Curriculum Specialist.
- d. The Appeals Committee members shall read the novel and complete a written evaluation prior to meeting to discuss the appeal.
- e. After discussion, the Appeals Committee shall take a vote of each member. 75% or higher “yes” votes are required to adopt the appeal action that was requested. The action is not adopted for any percentage less than 75%.
- f. Committee decisions may be revisited if requested by the Appeals Committee’s majority vote after three years.

E. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Teachers are encouraged to use a variety of texts, including novels and novel excerpts, to teach the core standards. Teachers shall list novels to be used during instruction on disclosure statements. Novels shall be introduced at the beginning of the course and teachers shall provide an explanation of the goals and educational rationale for use of the novel.
2. If novel use changes during the year, teachers shall notify parents and explain the goals and educational rationale for adding the novel, including an explanation of how it complements and enhances the required curriculum. Novels with limiting annotations on the Approved Novels List require specific notification to parents prior to use in the classroom.
3. Parents are encouraged to discuss any concerns with the teacher or the school principal regarding the use of a novel. By law, schools must provide a reasonable alternative to the novel for students.
4. For content areas outside of ELA, each content area convenes a committee, chaired by the content specialist, and co-chaired by the District Curriculum Specialist to determine criteria for appropriate materials within the content.
5. Teachers may “reach down” to works on a lower grade level for differentiation and to scaffold material for students according to their Lexile needs.
6. Networks and grade levels/departments must negotiate horizontally and vertically to determine placement of novels for schools. Decisions are to be guided by the parameters set in the District Approved Novels List.
7. Text complexity should be understood and considered when selecting novels for instruction. Information about text complexity can be found at
<https://schools.utah.gov/file/0cc8b6cb-c787-484e-973a-4cf0052366cf>

/s/ Dr. Richard K. Nye
Superintendent