

	Topic:	Selection and Use of Texts in Catholic Schools
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	Policy Area:	Education
	Standing Committee:	Religious Education and Curriculum Committee
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RATIONALE

St Mary's School, as a Catholic school, aims to help students to integrate culture, faith and life. Culture is valued and St Mary's promotes discussion and critical thought. The values and attitudes at St Mary's are founded upon the teaching of Jesus Christ. It is these values and attitudes which inform the selection and use of texts at St Mary's. Therefore, the selection and use of texts is a rigorous and careful process.

DEFINITIONS

1. The term 'text' refers to all forms of written, spoken or visual communication (Curriculum Framework, 1998).
2. The term 'non-print texts' includes but is not limited to: *advertising, artefacts, CD ROMs, documentaries, films, podcasts, radio broadcasts, recorded music, SMS and online material.*
3. The term 'print texts' includes but is not limited to: *advertising, CD ROMs, comics, current affairs cartoons, diaries, encyclopaedias, essays, feature articles, instruction manuals, journals, letters, magazines, newspapers, novels, novellas, picture books, photo essays, plays, poetry, posters, prayers, short stories, signs, SMS, song lyrics, sourcebooks, speeches, story boards, textbooks, transcripts, web pages and any printed fiction or non-fiction material.*

PRINCIPLES

1. Texts are used to:
 - support and develop the desired outcomes of schooling, including the love and appreciation of texts
 - address student diversities in culture, gender, special learning needs and socio-economic background
 - provide students with learning experiences which access a wide, range of knowledge, understandings and skills

2. Texts enable students to:
 - deepen their understanding of the values of Christ including absolute values such as the sacredness of human life and the dignity of the human person
 - develop a critical understanding of the diversity of beliefs and values found in society and in human experiences
 - develop their unique potential – physically, emotionally, creatively, spiritually, intellectually, morally and socially
3. Texts are not studied in isolation and are related to the contexts of their production and reception.
4. Some texts enable students, with assistance, to challenge dominant societal ideas, particularly stereotypes and undesirable models of human behaviour.
5. Texts dealing with controversial topics or challenging situations need to be selected with sensitivity to community expectations.
6. Texts containing gratuitous or extreme violence, or pornographic material, have no place in a Catholic school.

PROCEDURES

1. Texts selected at St Mary’s School are previewed and evaluated prior to their use.
2. The Principal and/or Classroom Teacher are the first people to consult for advice on the selection of texts and the Office of Film and Literature Classification Guidelines for non-print texts.
3. In selecting a documentary, feature film, television program, animated film or short film, for viewing by students, the guidelines set by the Office of Film and Literature Classification apply. This classification relates to all school activities:

G	GENERAL - Suitable for all ages. Suitable for Years K-12.
PG	PARENTAL GUIDANCE - Parental guidance recommended for persons under 15 years. Suitable for Years 8-12.
M	15+and over MATURE - Recommended for mature audiences 15 years and over. Suitable for Years 10-12.
MA 15+	MATURE ACCOMPANIED – Restrictions apply to persons under the age of 15. The MA category is legally restricted. Children under 15 will not be allowed to see MA films or hire them on video unless in the company of a parent or adult guardian. Some may be suitable for Years 11 and 12.
R 18+	RESTRICTED - Restricted to adults 18 years and over. The R category is legally restricted to adults. Material, which is given a restricted classification, is unsuitable for those under 18 years of age. Material classified R deals with issues or contains depictions that require an adult perspective. Not suitable for high school students.
X 18+	RESTRICTED - Restricted to adults 18 years and over. Not suitable for high school students.

4. Professional learning will be provided to ensure that teachers have the knowledge and understanding to use the selected text.
5. Where the class teacher and a member of the Leadership Team consider the text suitable (e.g. a documentary on the Holocaust which may contain graphic footage) but its rating is above the recommended age group, then permission must be sought from the parent or guardian by letter and reply slip. If a parent or guardian declines consent, then where possible the student will be provided with an alternative text covering the same concepts.
6. It is not the policy of St Mary's School to abridge a text and no text will be censored by the removal of pages or editing of footage because this contravenes the Copyright Act; however it may be appropriate to use particular sections of the text.
7. If a parent or guardian makes a complaint about the relevance or suitability of a text, the complaint should be made in writing, to the Principal, outlining the nature of the complaint.
8. Subsequent to a complaint, the relevant staff member and/or member of the Catholic Education Office shall meet the parent or guardian to discuss their concerns.
9. If appropriate, the relevant authorities at the Catholic Education Office (CEO) and the Curriculum Council will be consulted. The Principal will have the final say on the removal of a text. In the case of a text having a number of different complaints brought against it, each complaint will be examined independently.
10. If a member of the general community makes a complaint, the nature of the complaint should be ascertained. The matter should be reported to the Principal.
11. St Mary's School has safeguards to prevent students accessing materials that are of a dubious nature, inappropriate or offensive.