

## Bringing Diversity to Your Collection: The Secular School Library

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**Description:** In a private school library, it is important to be sure your collection reflects not only the curriculum of your school but also the interests of your students and faculty. Additionally, librarians must be sure collections reflect the broad diversity of the many cultures, literatures and points of view that make up our global society. It is our responsibility to provide our patrons with the ability to discover new ideas, celebrate differences, and critically analyze the choices laid before them. This program will present ideas for providing a balance when considering these issues.

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A Diverse Collection is Grounded in Curriculum-Related Materials:

- Ask teachers for copies of their syllabi and assignments. You will have a record of what subject matter is being covered and will also be prepared for students coming in for help.
  - Attend department meetings when possible. You will be aware of changes to curriculum.
  - Ask to observe a class.
  - Obtain copies of textbooks. Scan the bibliography lists in these books for ideas. Scan your collection to see if you have material to support the major topic areas in the textbooks.
- Scan your collection for coverage on hot debate topics, i.e. environment, censorship, drugs, civil rights. Do you have materials to support the unpopular side of these issues? Students are often asked to write essays on these topics.

A Diverse Collection Reflects the Interests of the Students:

- Ask kids what they're reading. Ask kids what things you should buy for the library. Purchase what they've asked for.
- Check out a book to a student you know well and ask them for feedback on it.
- Where are your kids surfing to on the Internet? Are there interesting print materials on those topics?
- What magazines do they bring into the library?
- Be aware of student clubs and their missions. Purchase materials related to the causes kids care about and let them know. Make book displays for these clubs, i.e. Amnesty International, Students Against Drunk Driving, community service.

A Diverse Collection Reflects the Interests of Faculty and Staff:

- Forward copies of book reviews to department heads with a note asking for suggestions.
- Invite a teacher to help weed your collection in their subject area and make suggestions for purchases.
- Familiarize yourself with the professional reading resources of your faculty.

- Check out a book to a teacher and ask them for feedback on it.
- Start a small collection of professional resources for faculty and advertise it.
- Don't forget the performing arts teachers and the athletic department.

#### Promoting Diversity in the Library

- Does your collection support the mission statement of your school's community?
- Does your school have an organized effort towards diversity? Become involved.
- Pick areas of the collection to display with a certain theme (Americans with Disabilities Act, women's history, black history).
- Send out a newsletter of all your new titles. Email the list and tell teachers they can reserve titles by replying to you.
- Weed the collection with a "diverse" eye. Put yourself in the shoes of someone from another population as you look through the collection.