Educational Resources Policy
Saplings Nature School
August 2022

Rationale

As the Ministry of Education no longer conducts evaluation processes to recommend learning resources, that responsibility is left to Saplings, the school authority. This policy sets out the guidelines for the development of specific school-based procedures that determine how learning resources are selected, as well as how concerns or challenges will be addressed.

Policy

Learning Resources are texts, videos, software, and instructional materials that teachers and students use to meet learning goals as defined by provincial and local curricula. Saplings may use the services of the Education Resource Acquisition Consortium (ERAC) to assist them in choosing or approving learning resources. Other services may be used upon recommendation by the Program Director and/or Head of School.

Procedure

This policy is specific to learning resources which form the core program collection of resources. Learning resources used in the school will be evaluated and approved only after consideration is given to social considerations, age, and developmental appropriateness, curriculum fit, pedagogy as well as the school authority's philosophical and cultural values. In cases where potentially controversial materials are being considered, at least two members of the school staff, with one being the Head of School or Program Director, shall review the resources in question before any decision about using the resource is made.

The evaluation criteria used in determining appropriate learning resources for Saplings will include, but are not limited to:

- Supports the learning standards and outcomes of the curriculum
- Assists students in making connections between what they learn in school and its practical application in their lives
- Addresses developmental and age appropriateness
- Has or is part of an effective instructional and technical design
- Meets the requirements set by copyright and privacy (PIPA) legislation
- Suitable based on Saplings' social, philosophical, and cultural values

Evaluating resources from the perspective of pedagogical, social, philosophical, and cultural values will:

- encourage understanding and promote positive social attitudes and respect for diversity and individual differences
- help to ensure that students will see themselves and their life experiences within a free, pluralistic, and democratic society and evidenced in the learning materials they use in their classroom
- identify potential controversial or offensive elements that may exist in the content or presentation, and highlight where resources might support positive social attitudes, diversity, and demonstrate tolerance and respect for individual differences.

Learning Resources Approval Process

Saplings Nature School will encourage teachers to utilize educational media that have been formally evaluated before being used in the classroom. The evaluation process involves a minimum of two school authority representatives, one of whom is a practicing teacher with experience, preferably in grade level and subject area for which the resources are to be used.

Resource evaluation will be based on one or more of the following inclusion criteria:
- age
- multiculturalism and diversity
- accessibility
- beliefs and values
- cultural attributes
- socio-economic factors
- humour
- ethical and legal considerations
- language
- course content, skills, and competencies
- respect for individual differences
- violence
- social responsibility
- democratic principles
- service learning
- pedagogical perspectives

Learning resource approval is confirmed by a motion(s) passed by the Saplings' Board of Directors. The Board will approve resources used by Saplings Nature School which then become recommended resources for 2-year periods unless they are withdrawn. The authority may continue to use the learning resources after two years if the authority grants an extension of an additional two-year period.

Withdrawal of a Recommended Learning Resource
Learning Resources can be reviewed at any time, regardless of prior approval, as each context is different. The recommendation to withdraw a learning resource that has been approved at the school level will be made by a committee of at least two people, with at least one being a representative of the Board and at least one being a practicing teacher, preferably with experience and knowledge in the level and subject area for which the resources are intended.

A learning resources withdrawal will be confirmed by a motion passed by the Saplings Board of Directors.

Challenge to the Use of Approved Learning Resources
Challenges to the use of authority recommended learning resources must be made in writing to the Program Director or Head of School, identifying the learning resource and stating the reason why the resource(s) may not be suitable. Challenges will only be accepted from individuals in the school community whose children are directly engaged with the learning resource(s), educators who use the resource(s) or Ministry of Education staff.

Within 14 days of written receipt of a learning resource challenge, the Head of School will convene a meeting of a committee, consisting of a minimum of three representatives of Saplings Nature School, one of whom must be an administrator and another an experienced, practicing teacher. Ideally the practicing teacher will have experience in the grade level(s) and subject area(s) for which the resource is used.

Based on the committee's recommendation, the authority may dismiss the challenge, raise the awareness of the implications of using the resource with the teaching staff, communicate with the publisher and/or withdraw the recommended resource from further use in the school.

The individual issuing the challenge will be notified of the committee's decision in writing within 14 days of the decision.