

Department of Multicultural Curriculum Request for Purchase Overview

Overview:

This justification form outlines the necessity of purchasing additional extended and supplemental multicultural books for all TUSD libraries in SY 2015-2016. It further outlines why such texts are essential for the continued development and implementation of a K-12 curriculum that is multicultural.

Mandate:

The Multicultural Curriculum Department is responding to the mandates of both, the Unitary Status Plan and Tucson Unified School District's Strategic Plan, to develop and implement a K-12 curriculum that is multicultural. The exact language included in these mandates is as follows:

USP Language—The District shall continue to develop and implement a multicultural curriculum for District courses, which integrates racially and ethnically diverse perspectives and experiences. The multicultural curriculum shall provide students with a range of opportunities to conduct research and improve critical thinking and learning skills, create a positive and inclusive climate in classes and schools that builds respect and understanding among students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds, and promote and develop a sense of civic responsibility among all students. All courses shall be developed using the District's curricular review process and shall meet District and state standards for academic rigor. The courses shall be offered commencing in the 2013-2014 school year." [V.E.6.a.i]

Strategic Priority #1: Curriculum – TUSD will design an aligned, articulated and well administered curriculum that supports academically high standards of learning for all children, integrates college and career ready skills, incorporates fine and performing arts, and is culturally relevant for our diverse student population. It will be reviewed and revisited regularly to meet the changing demands of our students and community.

Strategic Priority #2: Instruction – TUSD will ensure that teachers deliver challenging and engaging instruction that is driven by a high quality curriculum and based on meeting the individual needs of every child.

Strategic Priority #1: Reflective Curriculum – TUSD will have classroom curricula, instruction, and professional development that integrate diversity and high expectations for all students.

Rationale:

Given the mandates outlined above, the Multicultural Curriculum Department has developed a model for multicultural curriculum integration, which relies upon contemporary, well-crafted, multicultural books that are rich in ideas and invite a number of interpretations. Moreover, this literature has been carefully selected to be authentic, to avoid stereotypes and to promote intercultural understanding (see Selection and Evaluation criteria in Appendix A).

Research and Framework:

For Diverse Learners: Several scholars (Short, 2009; Sleeter, 2005; Banks, 1993; and Ognibene, 1989) have created frameworks that outline ways to transform the curriculum in both content and instructional practice in order to address the needs of students who have been historically marginalized or underrepresented. These scholars have found that multicultural literature is proven to be an effective support to classroom instruction with diverse learners. Hence, a significant component of the framework developed by the Director of Multicultural Curriculum for integrating diverse perspectives into TUSD's broader curriculum, is multicultural literature.

For All Students: Access to contemporary multicultural literature allows for the kind of inquiry-based teaching that refines and extends students' skills in reading comprehension, critical thinking, and oral and written communication. With the direct support of Dr. Kathy Short, University of Arizona, the multicultural curriculum team has developed an inquiry model of questioning and discussion that increases students' critical thinking and learning skills and promotes a positive and inclusive classroom environment, utilizing contemporary multicultural literature (Short, 2009; Banks, 1993).

Current Circumstances in TUSD:

There is currently a dearth of contemporary multicultural literature in TUSD classrooms and libraries. The average publication date of these books, district-wide, ranges between 1997 and 2000. Additionally, the literature that is available in many schools contributes to maintaining negative cultural stereotypes and over-simplifying the teaching of diverse cultures. Therefore, teachers in TUSD have difficulty accessing quality multicultural books and engaging students from both mainstream and non-mainstream backgrounds in critical inquiry. Hence, the purchase of contemporary literature from diverse perspectives will allow for a thorough revision of the broader curriculum and sufficiently support teachers in their efforts to engage all students in critical discussions without focusing on cultural differences and exoticism.

Evaluating Authenticity

Evaluating authenticity involves considering complex issues, not making a simple yes or no decision about a book. These issues and questions can be useful in thinking about the complexity of cultural authenticity.

- **Literary Qualities**
How well does the author tell the story? Is it quality literature?
- **Origin of book**
What is the origin of the book? Who was the original publisher and in what country? Who is the author? illustrator? translator? What are their backgrounds?
- **Authorship**
How do the author's experiences connect to the setting and characters in this book? What are the experiences and/or research on which the book is based? Why might the author have chosen this story to tell?
- **Believability**
Is this story believable? Could it happen? In what ways does it feel real? Are the characters larger than stereotypes but less than "perfect" heroes?
- **Accuracy of details and authenticity of values**
What are the inaccuracies within the details of the book? What values are at the heart of the book? How do these values connect to the actual lives of people within the culture? Does this book reflect a specific cultural experience or could it happen anywhere?
- **Perspectives**
Whose perspectives and experiences are portrayed? Who tells the story? What is the range of insider perspectives?
- **Power Relationships**
Which characters are in roles of power or significance within the book? Who takes action? How is the story resolved? Where does the story go and how does it get there? Who takes it there? Why?
- **Audience**
Who is the intended audience? Is the book written for children from that culture or to inform children from other cultural backgrounds about that culture?
- **Relationship to other books**
How does this book connect with other books about this cultural experience? Do the books reflect a range of perspectives and experiences within the culture?
- **Response by insiders**

How have insiders responded to this book?

*** Connections for your readers**

What are the possible connections for students? Is the book accessible?