

# **OUR BOOK PHILOSOPHY**

Our Book Philosophy guides our team when selecting books for the children we serve. We understand that every child and community is unique. We strive to choose books that are age-appropriate, of high general interest, and that reflect children's own lives while providing insight into a full range of human experiences.

### **Age Appropriateness + Content**

- Bernie's Book Bank relies on the experience and professionalism of book publishers and professional book reviewers to determine if a book is appropriate for the intended audience.
- Age appropriateness is initially determined by the book publisher and may be modified by the
  selection team to narrow the range to a more accurate level. Multiple sources are used to modify
  appropriateness level when necessary, including professional book reviews, interest and reading
  level, and data sources such as Books in Print.
- The content of books should be appropriate for the intended audience to read without contextualization from an outside resource. When considering if contextualization is required, we determine whether most children at the intended age have awareness of the topic. School curriculum is consulted as needed to determine when topics are typically taught.
- We will not actively source books if professional reviews indicate the need for caution, or the topic is generally considered sensitive, and no professional reviews are available.
- Bernie's Book Bank does not make book decisions based on personal preference or personal beliefs. The content of selected books should be appealing to the child receiving the book, regardless of race, religion, political orientation, community, family composition, gender and/or any other social consideration.

# **OUR BOOK PHILOSOPHY CONT'D**

## Interest + Reading Level

- Interest level refers to the age or grade of the child that would likely have interest in the book.
- Reading level indicates the grade of the child likely to have the skills to read the book.
- All books must be age appropriate, but we recognize there are differences in each child's interests and skill level. Children are given time to trade books in their classroom, so providing books with varied interests and difficulty creates the ideal mix. Therefore, interest and reading level can vary from birth to 8th grade if the content is age-appropriate for the recipient.

#### **Format**

- Infant/toddler books may be of any size, shape, or page count. School-age books should be a minimum of 5 inches wide or tall and must fit in the Bernie's Book Bank distribution bags (approximately 12x15 inches maximum). School-age books should be a minimum of 20 pages.
- Bindings may be board book, paperback, staple bound, hardcover, trade bound, or library bound. Spiral bound and used cloth/bath books should not be used.
- Most formats of books are appropriate for use, including picture books, leveled readers, chapter books, graphic novels, manga, etc. Books should be supplemental reading and not intended to be used as classroom textbooks or reference manuals.
- Activity books that contain supplemental reading are appropriate for use when most materials
  required for the activity are readily available in most US households. Items considered readily
  available: paper, pencil, scissors, crayons, tape, glue, cardboard, and items easily found in nature
  like sticks, stones, leaves, etc. If the activities require more than three items not on this list, the
  book should not be used.
- Books should be printed in English, Spanish, or bilingual with English being one of the languages. If English is the secondary language, the English text should be a type size that is easily read by the intended audience.





# **OUR BOOK PHILOSOPHY CONT'D**

## Copyright

- We strive for the nonfiction we use to be as current and relevant as possible. In general, nonfiction books used should have a copyright date within the last 15 years.
- In the following cases, copyright should generally be within 3-5 years:
  - annual compendiums (i.e. the 2025 Guiness Book of World Records)
  - biographies of living people whose careers are still developing
  - $\circ\hspace{0.4cm}$  have evolving technology, pop culture, or current events as their subject
  - geopolitical books focusing on regularly evolving or changing information
  - contain forward looking statements about events that have since occurred
- The less detailed the information in a nonfiction book, the less likely the copyright date will factor into the decision of useability. As such, books for younger readers are likely to take longer to be considered out-of-date than books for older readers.

## **Bag Composition Targets**

- Each bag contains a variety of fiction and non-fiction titles, formats, and genres. Available inventory affects bag composition, which may vary, but in general bags should contain:
  - A minimum of 4/8 books at grade reading level. A maximum of 3/8 one grade below reading level and 1/8 books one to two grades above reading level.
  - No more than 5/8 books in a bag of the same format.
- Books must be in good condition based on the standard book condition scale. Books should have no visible tears or stains. There should be no writing or drawing added by prior owners on the book's primary text pages. Books should not be missing pieces, stickers, or any other component that is referenced in the books and/or is necessary for reading and enjoyment.
- Density refers to the number of children in a classroom receiving the same title. Book density should not exceed 1/4. Books with content generally considered sensitive should not exceed a density of 1/8.

# BETTER FUTURES BEGIN WITH BOOKS