

Subject: Review Process for Questionable Materials/Books

Dear Board of Education Members and Superintendent:

Could you please let me know our school district's policy for reviewing books or other materials contained in our school library if a student, parent, or other community member believe the content of the book is inappropriate for students?

- What is our district's procedure to request a review/removal of a book or materials that they believe is questionable? If we have a review process:
 - Is this procedure covered by a district policy and, if so, what is the policy number?
 - What specific criteria is considered when conducting a review?
 - Is there a time limit for how long the review can take?
 - Who appoints the review committee members and what are the requirements for these members?
 - Do students have access to the questionable material while the review is being conducted?
- What is the selection process for purchasing new books or materials for our school district libraries or classrooms?
- Who decides which books or materials to purchase for the school library?
- Does that purchase need to be approved by anyone else and, if so, who makes the decision?
- Do we have an online catalog of books that are currently in our library? If so, where can I find it?

I am not sure if you are aware, but the NJ Assembly recently passed Bill [A3446 \(ACS\)](#), known as the "Freedom to Read" Act. This bill will go to the State Senate Education Committee before moving forward, so it is not fully approved yet. This bill will establish review requirements for library materials in public school libraries, taking autonomy away from local school boards who currently set their own policies regarding library materials. This bill will strip away the rights of local school districts by forcing school boards to adopt a "model policy" that meets the Department of Education requirements, not the needs of each unique district or their community. This bill also requires the questionable material to stay on school shelves while being reviewed in a potentially long and complex process.

There has been some controversy surrounding questionable materials found in NJ public school libraries. Some people feel that parents are trying to ban books, but have you seen what is

contained in the books? I encourage you to review the three most controversial books currently in school libraries across the country, including in New Jersey:

1. [Gender Queer: A Memoir by Maia Kobabe](#)
2. [All Boys Aren't Blue by George M. Johnson](#)
3. [This Book Is Gay by Juno Dawson](#)

There should be no question that the material in these books is sexually explicit and not appropriate for **ANY** child under the age of 18. Sadly, however, there are many people with decision making authority who feel that this is not obscene and believe that somehow restricting “X” rated material is “banning books.”

Nowhere in this bill are boards of education required to ensure that sexually explicit material is kept off of school bookshelves and out of the hands of children. Moreover, this bill goes out of its way to protect library staff members and teachers from criminal and/or civil liability if sexually explicit material is accessible to minor students.

Given the serious and pervasive issue of sexual abuse of students, in NJ schools and nationally, we must have no tolerance and must not provide immunity for anyone in a school setting that allows sexually explicit and age-inappropriate materials in OUR schools.

Parents rely on the rating system for movies. For example, children under 18 are not allowed to see an R-rated movie in the theater if not accompanied by a parent. Additionally, there are controls on students' school laptops which restrict access to inappropriate material and pornography. Where are the safeguards for school books and other materials?

This bill fails to recognize the fragile and sacred nature of children's innocence. Why does the NJ State Legislature prioritize the protection of librarians over safety and sanctity of OUR children?

Most sincerely,

P.S. If you would like to find out more about the pros and cons of this bill and its implications for schools and children, please click here: [A3446 \(ACS\)](#)