

**Background:** Currently the state of NJ does not have any statewide guidance on how schools should handle reviewing books or other materials contained in school libraries if a student, parent, or community member find it questionable. Some districts have adopted their own policies, while others have no policy at all.

**Action Item:** Here is a sample email you can send to your local school board and superintendent to find out if your school district has a process in place to review questionable materials. The other goal of sending this email is to educate local boards about what is contained in the “Freedom to Read Act,” passed into law in December 2024.

*Tip- Many schools have a single email address for the board, but it is always best to copy all school board members individually to ensure they all receive your email.*

Subject: Review Process for Questionable Materials/Books

Dear Board of Education Members and Superintendent:

I have some questions about our school district’s policy for reviewing books or other materials contained in our school library if a student or parent feels that it is inappropriate for students.

- What is our district’s procedure to request a removal of books or materials that are age-inappropriate?
- 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 decides the review committee members and are there any requirements on the committee’s make-up?
  - 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 to our school’s library 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?

You may not be aware that the “Freedom to Read Act” was signed into law in December 2024. This law establishes review requirements for library materials in public school libraries, taking the autonomy away from local school boards to set their own policies regarding library materials and places it solely within the purview of the unelected State Department of Education. All school boards would be required to adopt a “model policy” that meets THEIR requirements, not YOURS. 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. The progressive left says that conservative parents are trying to ban books. No matter the media narrative, I ask that you take the time to review what is contained in these books. I encourage you to click this link and see for yourself: <https://theiowastandard.com/shocking-images-from-book-gender-queer-which-is-stocked-in-school-libraries-across-iowa/>

There should be no question that the material in this book is obscene and not appropriate for any child under the age of 18. Sadly there are many people with decision-making authority, such as librarians and school board members who object to the removal of this sexually explicit content, arguing that this constitutes discrimination. Book selection is subjective to the viewpoints of those charged with reviewing questionable material.

Nowhere in this bill are boards of education required to ensure that sexually graphic content is kept off school bookshelves. **However**, this bill does protect library staff members from criminal and civil liability, who knowingly place such material - there is no accountability. The issue of sexual abuse of students in schools is real. We have no business creating immunity for anyone in a school setting for distributing obscene material.

Parents must give their children under 13 permission to watch a PG13 movie and must accompany them to an R-rated movie. We have controls on their school laptops so they don't have unrestricted access to the internet to view pornography. While this bill seeks to protect librarians and library staff, it fails to recognize the fragile and sacred nature of children's innocence.

**This begs the question, how is this law benefiting our children?**

If you would like to find out more about the pros and cons of this law and its implications for schools and children, please click [here](#).