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Document No. _____
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
CHAPTER 43
Statutory Authority: 1976 Code Sections 59-5-60 and 60-9-30

R.43-170. Uniform Procedure for Selection or Reconsideration of Instructional Materials

Preamble:

The State Board of Education (“State Board”) proposes this regulation which establishes consistent definitions and a two-prong threshold test for local educators and boards to determine if materials available to students in public schools are (1) age and developmentally appropriate and (2) educationally suitable and aligned with the purpose of South Carolina’s instructional program. It furthermore creates a uniform process for local school boards to review and hold public hearings on complaints raised within its district and establishes an appellate process to the State Board of Education.

Section-by-Section Discussion:

The Notice of Drafting was published in the *State Register* on September 22, 2023.

Notice of Public Hearing and Opportunity for Public Comment:

A public hearing will be held on February 13, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. in the Rutledge Conference Center, 1429 Senate Street, Columbia, SC 29201. The proposed new regulation will be posted on the State Board website for review and comment. To review the regulation, click on the attached link 2022-23 Regulations Under Review By The State Board of Education.

Written comments should be submitted to Lisa Widener, Assistant Director of Governmental Affairs, 1429 Senate Street, Columbia, SC 29201 or by email to scleg@ed.sc.gov, on or before January 22, 2024.

Preliminary Fiscal Impact Statement:

The South Carolina Department of Education (“SCDE”) anticipates no costs incurred by the State and its political subdivisions in complying with the proposed regulation.

Statement of Need and Reasonableness:

DESCRIPTION OF REGULATION: Uniform Procedure for Selection or Reconsideration of Instructional Materials

Purpose: The proposed regulation establishes consistent definitions and a two-prong threshold test for local educators and boards to determine if materials available to students in public schools are (1) age and developmentally appropriate and (2) educationally suitable and aligned with the purpose of South Carolina’s instructional program. It furthermore creates a uniform process for local school boards to review and hold public hearings on complaints raised within its district and establishes an appellate process to the State Board of Education.

Legal Authority: 1976 Code Sections 59-5-60 and 60-9-30

Plan for Implementation: The proposed new regulation would establish R.43-170 upon publication in the State Register as a final regulation.

DETERMINATION OF NEED AND REASONABLENESS OF THE PROPOSED REGULATION BASED ON ALL FACTORS HEREIN AND EXPECTED BENEFITS:

Across the state, parents, educators, administrators, and communities are grappling with questions and concerns about the selection and use of age-appropriate, educationally suitable materials for K-12 students in public schools. In South Carolina, educators seek to make responsible choices, use common sense, and be responsive to parent and community stakeholder concerns. Increasingly, however, disagreements have arisen regarding the appropriateness and suitability of various materials.

At present, those discussion and decisions lack consistent definitions, clear standards, and a statewide uniform process. The proposed regulation will establish a uniform, transparent manner for these decisions to be made while establishing definitions of (1) age and developmentally appropriate and (2) educationally suitable and aligned with the purpose of South Carolina’s instructional program. The proposed regulation creates a uniform process for local school boards to review and hold public hearings on complaints raised within its district and established an appellate process to the State Board of Education.

DETERMINATION OF COSTS AND BENEFITS:

There are no uncertainties of estimates in cost to the State or its political subdivisions. The new regulation is not anticipated to result in any increased cost to the school districts. The proposed regulation will benefit students, schools, districts, and the State.

UNCERTAINTIES OF ESTIMATES:

There are no uncertainties of estimates relative to the cost to the State or its political subdivisions.

EFFECT ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC HEALTH:

The proposed regulation has no effect on the environment or on public health.

DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC HEALTH IF THE REGULATION IS NOT IMPLEMENTED:

There will be no detrimental effect on the environment or public health if the regulation is not implemented.

Statement of Rationale:

School districts are required to provide instructional material that is age and developmentally appropriate, educationally suitable, and aligned with the purpose of South Carolina’s instructional program. Therefore, South Carolina must establish a clear, transparent, and uniform process that provides certainty for local educators, respects the legitimate prerogative of the parents, and protects students from materials that are not age or developmentally appropriate.

Text:

43-170. Uniform Procedure for Selection or Reconsideration of Instructional Materials

I. Definitions

A. For purposes of this regulation, “Instruction Materials” means materials used in the classroom, made available in a school library/media center, or included on a reading list, whether adopted and/or purchased

from the state-adopted instruction materials list, adopted and or purchased through a district instructional materials program, or otherwise purchased, donated to the school, or made available to students through other means, including but not limited to digital platforms. See S.C. Code Ann. Section 59-19-10. The term “Instructional Materials” as used herein includes any collection of books or materials purchased, acquired, or kept on public school grounds by any teacher or other public-school employee and made available to students, regardless of how or by whom such materials are acquired or purchased.

B. For purposes of this regulation, “Instructional Program” means the courses, activities and programs that are offered, supported, or sponsored by a public school, including but not limited to the sequence of courses or activities leading to a degree, diploma, or completion of a grade level as defined and required by the Code, Regulations, or the State Standards promulgated by the State Board of Education (“State Board”). See Sections 59-1-50 and 59-18-100; State Board Regs. R.43-231, R. 43-232, R. 43-234.

C. For purposes of this regulation, “Age and Developmentally Appropriate” means topics, messages, and teaching methods suitable to particular ages or age groups of children and adolescents, based on developing cognitive, emotion, and behavioral capacity typical for the age or age group. Instruction Material is not “Age and Developmentally Appropriate” for any age or age group of children if it includes descriptions or visual depictions of “sexual conduct,” as that term is defined by Section 16-15-305(C)(1). Furthermore, Instructional Materials is not “Age and Developmentally Appropriate” if it includes descriptions or visual depictions that would be considered “obscene” or “indecent” under federal statutes, regulations, and interpretive precedent, and which could not be portrayed or read aloud on broadcast television or radio during daytime hours. See 18 U.S.C. Section 1464; 47 C.F.R. Sections 73.3999, 73.4165, and 73.4170.

II. Responsibility of District School Boards for Instructional Materials; Transparency

The selection, acquisition, use, curation, or removal of public school’s materials—including materials used in classroom instruction, stocked in the schools’ libraries, made available in media centers, used in school-sponsors extracurricular activities, or promoted as optional, supplemental instruction material—constitutes government speech and involves the exercise of governmental judgment by public officials and employees who are administering a government program financed by public funds. The State Board of Education is statutorily authorized to regulate the selection, acquisition, use, curation, and removal of such materials, and public school district boards are constitutionally permitted and statutorily required to implement such regulations as they exercise their judgment and discretion when deciding what textbooks, library books, and other materials are (and are not) Age and Developmentally Appropriate, academically robust, and educationally suitable, and most useful, enlightening, and interesting to their students.

Each district board shall maintain at all times on its website a complete, current list or catalogue of all books and other materials that are available to students through any of a district’s libraries or media centers. This list or catalogue shall be regularly updated and prominently displayed on each district’s website to ensure that this information is current, complete, and readily accessible to students, their families, and other interested parties.

Separate from the list of catalogue required by the preceding paragraph, a complete list of the Instructional Materials that are used in or available to students in any given class, course, or program that is offered, supported, or sponsored by a public school, or that are otherwise made available by any public school employee to a student on school premises, shall be available upon reasonable request by any parent or other interested party.

III. Criteria for a District’s Selection or Review of New or Existing Instructional Materials

A. Each district board is responsible for ensuring that New and Existing instructional materials are educationally suitable for use in the State’s public schools, including by ensuring the materials are age and developmentally appropriate, as that term is defined herein, for the students served, and are consistent with the State’s defined instructional program requirements.

B. Upon the effective date of this regulation, a district board may selection New instructional materials or allow Existing instructional material to be provided to or remain available to students only if the instructional material is (a) Age and Developmentally Appropriate, as the term is defined herein, for students in each school based on grade and age level; and (b) aligned with and supportive of the instructional program of the school and district, including consistency with the then-current Profile of a South Carolina Graduate. Any materials that do not satisfy both of the foregoing requirements shall not be acquired, retained, or used by a public school district in this State.

C. When making decisions to select or retain specific Instructional Materials from among those that satisfy the mandatory threshold criteria contained in section (b) above, each district board shall consider the following additional criteria to determine the educational suitability of the material:

- (1.) The material’s academic or educational rigor;
- (2.) The material’s educational significance;
- (3.) The material’s validity, accuracy, objectivity, currency, and appropriateness;
- (4.) The finite availability of library shelf space and whether the space occupied by any particular volume could be better filled by a different volume with greater academic rigor, objectivity, or accuracy, literary or education merit, or quality;
- (5.) The finite availability of instructional time and whether the time occupied teaching or learning any particular material could be better spent on material with greater academic rigor, objectivity, or accuracy, literary or educational merit, or quality.

D. In no event shall a school district board’s decision to remove Existing instructional material or to reject the proposed addition of New instructional materials be based primarily on or motivated by the district board’s disagreement with or opposition to the viewpoints expressed therein.

E. A district board at all times remains ultimately responsible for the obligations described in this section and for ensuring compliance with the requirements of this regulation; however, a district board may delegate to the district superintendent or his designee the task of (i) reviewing existing instructional materials in the first instance and removing any materials that do not satisfy the requirements of this section, and (ii) reviewing potential New instructional material in the first instance and when deemed prudent or when requested by the district board, providing a report and recommendation to the district board regarding the materials education suitability and compliance with this Regulation’s requirements.

IV. Public Participation in a District’s Review of Existing Instructional Material

Beginning August 1, 2024, any person residing within the school district attendance area or a parent or legal guardian of any student who attends a school within the school district shall have the right to file a complaint requesting that specifically identified Existing instructional material be discontinued for any grade level or age group and/or removed by the district board from all district schools pursuant to the following procedures:

A. Complainant shall file a petition with the district board, on a form promulgated by the State Department of Education (“SCDE”) and provided by the SCDE to the district board, which the district or district board may use for purposes of compliance with this regulation. On the form, the Complainant shall identify, with specificity, those Existing instructional materials that the Complainant requests be removed

entirely from district schools, or the use of which Complainant requests should be discontinued for any grade level or age group, or which should be subject to a requirement of parental consent for some or all grade levels or age groups. Complainant's petition shall affirm that Complainant has read or watched or otherwise reviewed the challenged material and shall specify the reason(s) for Complainant's request and why Complainant believes the identified materials should be removed from district schools entirely or should be discontinued for any grade level or age group or which should be subject to a requirement of parental consent for some or all grade levels or age groups. Any complaint filed pursuant to this section must be based solely on the criteria listed above.

B. Within 60 days after a complaint has been received, a quorum of the district board may conduct a public meeting to consider the complaint, and at that public meeting, vote to grant or deny, in whole or in part, the relief requested by the Complainant. This public meeting shall be held in accordance with the requirements of the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act, and the Complainant and other interested parties must be allowed to appear and present information in support of or in opposition to the relief requested in the complaint.

C. If the district board finds that Existing instructional materials identified in a complaint do not satisfy the requirements of this regulation, the district board shall remove entirely or discontinue use of said materials for any grade level or age group for which such use is inappropriate or unsuitable or, shall make such materials available to students only upon receipt of the consent of a student's parent or legal guardian. The district board shall announce its decision in that meeting and shall provide an explanation for its conclusion and decision—either orally at the public meeting (if such meetings are recorded or transcribed) or in writing made publicly available within 15 days thereafter—specifically including an explanation of how the district board applied and complied with the decisional criteria and requirements of this regulation.

D. Any Complainant who is aggrieved by a decision of the district board under this process may file a written appeal to the State Board of Education (State Board) within 30 days after the district board announces its decision in a public meeting. At or before the next regularly scheduled meeting of the State Board after an appeal has been received, a quorum of the State Board or, in the discretion of the State Board, a committee comprised of at least five of the State Board's members, must conduct a public meeting to consider the appeal. If such meeting is conducted by a quorum of the State Board, the State Board shall, at that public meeting, vote to grant or deny, in whole or in part, the relief requested by the Complainant. If such meeting is conducted by a committee of the State Board, the committee shall provide a report and recommendation to the full State Board to be considered and either adopted or rejected by the State Board at its next regularly scheduled meeting. The public meetings contemplated in this subsection shall be held in accordance with the requirements of the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act, and the Complainant and other interested parties must be allowed to appear and present information in support of or in opposition to the relief requested in the complaint. If the State Board finds that existing instructional materials identified in an appeal do not satisfy the requirements of this regulation, the State Board shall instruct the district board to remove entirely or discontinue use of said materials for any grade level or age group for which such use is inappropriate or unsuitable, or to make such materials available to students only upon receipt of the consent of a student's parent or legal guardian. The State Board shall, at the time it communicated its decision to the district board, provide a written explanation for its conclusion and decision that is publicly available and that includes an explanation of how the State Board applied and complied with the decisional criteria and requirements of this regulation.

E. In no event shall the State Board's decision in a matter arising under subsection (d) of this section be based primarily on or motivated primarily by disagreement with or opposition to the viewpoints expressed within the challenged material.

V. District's Selection of New Instructional Materials

A. Any New instructional material must be determined to comply with and satisfy the criteria set out in Section III of this regulation prior to being made available to students in the classroom, school library/media center, or reading list. Once available to students, such materials will be deemed Existing instructional materials that are subject to the challenge, review and appeal process described in Section IV of this regulation.

B. In no event shall a decision in a matter arising under this Section be based primarily on or motivated primarily by disagreement with or opposition to the viewpoints expressed within the challenged material.

VI. Statewide Effect of the State Board of Education's Determination of the Educational Suitability of the Age or Developmental Appropriateness of Specific Instructional Materials

A decision by the State Board sitting in its capacity as an administrative appellant forum described in sections IV(D) and V(c)(3) of this regulation regarding the educational suitability or the Age or Developmental Appropriateness of a specific book or other instructional material pursuant to the criteria and requirements of this regulation shall be deemed conclusive and binding on all public schools, public school districts, and district boards in this State until such time as the State Board alters or revises its determination, At the time the State Board communicates such decision to the district board from which the appeal arose, the State Board shall also communicate its decision to each district board in the State. All district boards shall promptly comply with the State Board's conclusion by, in the case of Existing instructional material found unsuitable or age or developmentally appropriate, removing the material, and in the case of any New instructional material found unsuitable or age or developmentally inappropriate, by not acquiring, obtaining, or purchasing such material in the future.

In addition, the State Board may, but is not required to, of its own volition and on its own initiative, make determinations regarding the educational suitability or the Age or Developmental Appropriateness of specific instructional materials pursuant to the criteria and requirements of this regulation. Such determinations shall be communicated to every district board in the State and shall be conclusive and binding on all public schools, public school districts, and district boards in this State until such time as the State Board alters or revises its determination.

The fact that the State Board of Education has not opined on the educational suitability, or the age or developmental appropriateness of a given book or other instructional material does not give rise to any presumption that the material is or is not educationally suitable or Age and Developmental Appropriate.

VII. Enforcement.

If, after investigation, the State Board determines that a public school district, a district board, or a district employee has violated or failed to comply with or apply the criteria and requirements described in this regulation, the school district or the employee of the school district, as applicable, will be subject to the following:

A. For a first violation or failure, the State Board shall issue a written warning to the district board or to the employee, as applicable.

B. For a second or subsequent violation or failure, if the State Board determines that the violation or failure was knowing or intentional or willful or recklessly disregarded the district's or the employee's actual or constructive knowledge of the criteria and requirements in this regulation, the district Superintendent or the relevant employee or the district's board chairperson may be subject to a hearing conducted by the State Board, and any response that the Board, in its discretion, deems appropriate.

VII. Preemption.

1. This regulation shall, upon its effective date, preempt, supersede, and replace any district, local or school policy or practice to the extent such policy or program is inconsistent with this regulation.

2. The requirements of this regulation apply to and supplement the process by which local district boards select or approves of textbooks; however, nothing in this regulation is intended to alter, diminish, or supersede the requirements and process for the selection and procurement of textbooks under Section59-31-550 and its implementing regulations.

3. Nothing in this regulation is intended to supersede the provisions of the South Carolina Code, including South Carolina’s Comprehensive Health Education Act (Section59-32-5 *et. seq.*), Erin’s Law (Section59-32-20(B)), Gavin’s Law (Section16-15-430), or any other law relating to educating children about how to report sexual abuse.

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State Board of Education Proposed Regulation [R. 43-170](#)

- 1. Removal or restriction of books is rarely the appropriate way to address legitimate parent concerns about instructional materials.** Instead, any new regulations should address the rights of individual parents and guardians to work with educators and school staff to make decisions for individual children in their care, and the rights of students to access diverse perspectives and full information.
- 2. We support local control of school districts by local elected officials, working with local community members.** The State Board should create a process that allows local boards to form review committees for challenged books, which include parents, classroom teachers, librarians, and students. School boards should be able to make decisions about materials that align with the needs of local communities, while being able to ask the Board of Education for additional help where needed. School boards should also be required to publicize their existing procedures for opting out of texts and content.
- 3. It is not supportive of parental rights to give a small number of individuals (including non-parents) the ability to challenge/ ban texts for all students.** We support a process for any parent/ guardian/ adult student who doesn't approve of a text for a specific student to opt *that* student out of the text. This preserves the rights of parents who *do* want their children to access these materials.
- 4. The danger of censorship to democracy is at least as serious as the danger of instructional materials to children.** We support a process by which individuals may formally challenge removals and censorship at the district level, which may involve appeals to the State Board. [Polling](#) indicates most South Carolinians do not support government censorship of materials and ideas.
- 5. We support the department providing more information about books that some parents may find objectionable, without removing those books if they do not contain legally obscene or pornographic materials, or if there is not a legitimate academic reason to do so.** The Board should consult with librarians, classroom teachers, and other experts in literacy, and in cataloging and reviewing instructional materials, to create a list, labeling system, or some other logistically feasible and transparent way to inform parents that doesn't involve automatically removing or restricting books.
- 6. Many book challenges in SC and across the country are coming from individuals who have never read the books, and are using questionable online resources to create long lists of books to challenge.** Book challenges should be limited to one or a few materials/ books at a time per complainant, to give districts the capacity to consider these challenges in good faith, and challengers the time to read and consider the materials. The State Board should work with librarians, classroom teachers, and other research experts to compile a list of reliable, credible resources parents and community members can use to learn more about books.

7. **“Text appropriateness” is not a research-supported term; however, educational research shows that [text complexity involves many variables](#) and is particular to individual students, and that having access to diverse texts benefits all students, particularly [students of color](#) and [LGBTQ+ students](#).** While it’s useful to have some general guidelines about which texts are best for different age groups, it is ultimately parents, working with educational experts, who should determine what is best for their individual children to read. For this reason, only parents, school staff, and adult students should be able to formally challenge books, and this should happen only in the unlikely event that students have been denied an alternative instructional material or lesson. If the concern is truly “obscene” materials, then this should be the criteria for challenging books, and community members should use existing review processes to provide input on other materials.
8. **Students have Constitutional rights to [free speech](#) and to [receive information](#).** We are concerned about statements suggesting that student clubs and organizations could be censored in their use of materials, even if those materials are not chosen or funded by public schools, in potential violation of the [Equal Access Act](#) and US Constitution, and by Superintendent Weaver’s statement that “there is not intellectual freedom in K12 schools”. We are also concerned that the rights of students of color, LGBTQ+ students, and other legally-protected groups may be violated by the regulations as written. Regulations as written may result in costly lawsuits.
9. **South Carolina is experiencing a crisis in recruiting and retaining teachers and librarians.** This year, SC is experiencing [1,613 educators vacancies, a 9% increase in vacancies for all educators and a 77% increase for school librarians](#). We should be focused on policies that help communities and schools work together, rather than pitting some “taxpayers” against those same individuals. Testimony from one of the authors of the regulations revealed that no formal process was used for getting input from teachers or librarians in drafting the existing regulations; the Board should reach out to teachers, librarians, and organizations which represent them as it considers and/ or finalizes these regulations, and should allow them to assist in the process of creating workable, reasonable, and pedagogically sound procedures.
10. **Allowing individual “taxpayers” to challenge anything containing “sexual content” will almost certainly result in bans of important literature.** For example, Romeo and Juliet has been restricted in Florida, The Bible has been removed or challenged in Florida, Missouri, Texas, and Utah, and other non-explicit books and materials that are relevant to LGBTQ+ and Black students are among the most frequently-challenged and banned ([see spreadsheet for specific examples](#)). If we are going to ban books for “obscenity” or “pornography,” we need to define those terms as they are defined in state law. The draft regulations cite SC Code Section 16-15-305(C), which defines sexual content; PSTA and other educator groups would like to include (B), from the same section, which includes the consideration of “literary, artistic, political, or scientific value”.

[Find your State Board member here.](#)

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SELECTING SCHOOL LIBRARY BOOKS

Librarian

- Master's degree in library & Information science
- K-12 teaching certification
- Ongoing professional development training
- Specialized tools for collection development
- Knowledge of authors, publishers & student interests

Collection

Development Policies

- Materials to support and enrich instruction
- Materials to encourage independent reading
- Materials that possess artistic, historic, literary quality
- Relevant to age and reading level of users

Process

- Gather input from staff & students
- Analyze collection to show usage, age & gaps
- Read professional book reviews
- Consider award winners, award lists, & best sellers
- Orders approved by school administrator

Adapted from original by Martha Hickson

ISSUES TO CONSIDER ABOUT PROPOSED REGULATIONS ON SCHOOL MATERIALS

The SC State Board of Education meets [Tuesday, November 14, at 1PM](#) to discuss [proposed regulations on classroom and school libraries \(read them here\)](#). Please attend the meeting and/or [contact your board member](#).

It is impossible to support literacy for ALL students without supporting student access to diverse texts.

While few argue that every book is appropriate for every student at every age, current bans and challenges are taking books out of the hands of students who desperately need relevant, high-interest material to grow as readers and as human beings. Policies that broadly restrict texts also broadly restrict literacy. Many studies ([including this one](#) and [this one](#)) support the connection between culturally relevant texts and literacy skills like reading comprehension.

Books should be appropriate to individual students, and broad regulations will make it harder to ensure this.

“Developmentally and/ or age appropriate” and profanity are too broadly defined in the regulations, which state that “Instruction Material [sic] is not ‘Age and Developmentally Appropriate’ for any age or age group of children if it includes descriptions or visual depictions of ‘sexual conduct’”. This would eliminate a broad range of texts from use even by older students. Books challenged under similar laws and regulations include [religious texts](#), commonly-appearing books [from AP exams](#), anti-totalitarian classics (*The Handmaid’s Tale*, 1984) *The Fixer* (a novel about antisemitism) and many popular YA titles (*The Hate U Give*, *Twilight*) which encourage some of our most reluctant readers to pick up a book. Likely bans under this rule include classics like *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Odyssey*, and *The Scarlet Letter*, and *Of Mice and Men*..

Classroom libraries are important.

Ideally, classroom libraries match student interests, needs, and development. The draft regulations require districts to provide lists of all materials available in these collections. This will make it likely that many districts will simply prohibit individualized classroom libraries, to the detriment of our students. (See one of many discussions here, [from NCTE](#)). Independent reading is a requirement of the SC ELA Standards and [Read to Succeed](#), yet [NAEP reports](#) that “reading for fun every day” was at an all-time low for 13-year-olds in 2023. Meanwhile, students who read for pleasure reported more independent reading than other groups. [Many challenged titles so far have been high-interest Young Adult literature](#).

Our students have rights.

The Supreme Court repeatedly affirmed that students’ “first amendment rights don’t end at the schoolhouse gate”. In [Pico v Island Trees](#), the Court found that school boards do not have the right to censor texts for partisan political reasons. Students have a Constitutional “right to receive information”.

Our LGBTQIA+ students have rights.

A [district court consent decree](#) prohibits South Carolina from implementing instruction about gender and/ or sexuality that discriminates against LGBTQIA+ students. The court, as well as the attorney general, found that existing law violated the Equal Protection clause for these students, who are also [protected under Title IX](#). Books like *Heartstopper* [have already been challenged for “language.”](#) despite having similar levels of profanity to other books for teens.

Our students of color have rights.

Pickens Schools’ decision to ban *Stamped* without appropriate academic justification provoked an [NAACP lawsuit](#), for violating students’ First Amendment rights. Students of color are also explicitly protected in educational settings by [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act](#). However, [throughout the state, the trend is for book challenges to target texts, like the children’s book “Black is a Rainbow Color.”](#) which empower students of color.

The intent of the proposed regulation is not as important as the likely impact.

We have already seen that [Proviso 1.193](#), a statewide prohibition on specific “divisive” concepts, has created [a widespread justification for arbitrary book challenges, mostly directed at books that are representative of the experiences of LGBTQIA+ students and students of color](#). The regulations will not help our students, librarians, and teachers, but acknowledging students’ right to access texts that represent diverse perspectives will. Books challenged or banned in SC under similar language include [Beloved](#), [Stamped](#), [Between the World in Me](#), and [I’m Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter](#), and [Dear Martin](#) (all of which deal with the issues and experiences of people of color in America).

Public schools exist for ALL students.

While Superintendent Weaver and others have suggested that removing books from school classrooms and libraries is not a “ban” because students can access these texts [“on Amazon or in public libraries,”](#) many of South Carolina’s 800,000 public school students and their families cannot afford to order books online. They may not have access to public libraries, and where they do, many of the same special interests seeking book challenges and bans are seeking to restrict their access to books in their local public libraries as well.

The state has a role in overseeing content, but should not remove control from local boards.

Local district taxpayers contribute roughly as much as the state does to their public schools, and they elect board members to make decisions about how to spend those funds. However, draft regulations apply to all instructional materials, “regardless of how or by whom such materials are acquired or purchased.” **Draft regulations also prevent local review committees.**

Bottom line: [librarians and teachers are trained experts in level appropriateness, and should be empowered to help students select books, supported by policies from local elected boards. Proposed regulations will likely result in wide-ranging challenges to books, taking power away from experts and handing it over to unelected individuals, who often are motivated by politics, not the best interests of children.](#)

Government restriction of speech and ideas is fundamentally antidemocratic.

While the courts have allowed limited restrictions on “obscene” materials, allowing critics of books to claim that any given text with sexual or controversial content is “pornography” gives book-banners far too much power over our public discourse. [As the SC ACLU has pointed out](#), “S.C. Code of Laws Section 16-15-385) only applies to materials that lack ‘literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.’ The law also specifically excludes teachers and librarians from enforcement.”

Censorship and bans do not represent the will of the people.

A recent [CBS News poll](#) found that “Americans overwhelmingly reject the idea of banning books about history or race”. [South Carolina polls have shown similar findings.](#)

Deputizing unelected individuals to make formal challenges against books is a recipe for disaster.

Proposed regulations allow **any person in the district** to bring **any number of book challenges**. [Countless national examples, and a large number of South Carolina-specific examples](#), show that creating this type of process for book challenges results in frivolous challenges of large numbers of texts by individuals or political groups. Such challenges tie up valuable resources and staff and result in exactly the kind of political, viewpoint-based discrimination which the regulations forbid school districts from enacting. Anyone in a district would be able to require a local board to review books, and could appeal to the state board, as well. Districts and the state board could be required [by individuals](#) to read and review huge numbers of books. **Meanwhile, the word “librarian” never appears in the draft regulations.**

School Library Selection Curriculum

School librarians earn a MLIS with a minimum of 36 hours of graduate coursework. 6 of those hours are dedicated to the study and selection of children's and young adult materials. They are certified educators.

School librarians with an MLIS take coursework that trains them to:

- Recognize and understand the social, emotional, and physical development of children and young adults and how it relates to their informational, cultural, and recreational reading needs.
- Articulate the instructional program and curricular support role of school librarians and provide a wide variety of instructional materials to support curricular units of study
- Understand the components of quality children's and young adult materials, including literary quality, connection to curriculum, and their popular appeal (in order to encourage recreational reading).
- Use systematic evaluative criteria when selecting books and materials to be added to the school library collection based on multiple professional review sources, selection tools, and professional organizations' award lists.
- Anticipate and prepare for book challenges by creating and consulting robust and clear collection development and reconsideration policies.
- Respond to book challenges in a professional manner that respects opposing viewpoints and takes into account the diversity of students and families served in public schools.