

Books in School and Classroom Libraries

WHERE WE CAME FROM

“The current censorship wave represents not only a threat to intellectual freedom, but to civil rights and human rights.” Paul T. Jaeger, University of Maryland.

The Central Bucks library department proposed a book policy in January of 2022. This policy followed national library standards, was unbiased and objective, and included one of the most important library selection criteria: that the book in question demonstrates literary merit as determined by the evaluation of a work as a whole.

This policy allowed for age-appropriate resources for the school library collection that met the academic and literacy needs of all their students. The proposed policy also offered parents ways to address concerns and to restrict books they felt were inappropriate for their own children.

Parents have always helped guide choices for their own children and collaborated with teachers to find books that matched each child’s needs and the teacher’s curricular goals. They worked together in collaboration, on behalf of each parent’s own children.

Librarians, once considered the trusted and safe curators of our libraries, are now being described by terms such as “threat” or “groomers” to foment fear and anger and to normalize calls for censorship.

Claims of books sexualizing children and promoting anti-American material reduce people’s willingness to consider the literary and educational value of targeted books.

School libraries are publicly controlled, governmental institutions that serve all students. As such, they must adhere to educational best practices and not individual demands.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

In short, this policy devalues education and librarian expertise, and subverts previously acceptable norms of complaints over children's books and educational best practice by allowing a few parents to control information and ideas for an entire community of K-12 readers.

- The proposed policy was rejected in January 2022 and replaced in July 2022 with a policy from Texas that prohibits books with sexual content.
- The policy allows for the easy removal of a book because it prohibits reference to implied or explicit nudity or sexual acts, while prohibiting the evaluation of a book in its entirety.
- In November 2022 the policy was reviewed by a conservative Christian law firm, Independence Law Center. The Independence Law Center is the legal arm of the Pennsylvania Family Institute, which is a statewide branch of the national organization Family Research Council, an anti-LGBTQ Christian nationalist group designated as an extremist hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center.
- "Parents Rights" and "Protect from Sexualization" imply dangers that never existed and provide cover for censorship to flourish in our community.
- The recommended tactic that book challengers avoid citing sexual orientation, gender identity, or race, which in fact are the substance of their objection, and to talk instead about sexual content in the books seeks to normalize the removal of good books while avoiding legal scrutiny.
- The policy is unworkably vague and inappropriate for high school students, who are nearly adults.
- The policy places unnecessary, burdensome restrictions on new book acquisitions and will likely disproportionately reduce new book orders about LGBTQ and race.
- The policy allows any parent to pave the way to book removal, dictating the choices of ALL district families.
- Each book challenge costs more than \$1000.

Advocates for Inclusive Education

Position Paper: Books, June 2023

WE BELIEVE

- Reading is a foundational skill, critical to future learning and to exercising our democratic freedoms.
- All students must be able to find books in the library that contain characters to which they can relate: characters that look like them, talk like them, and face issues they have faced.
- Trained, certified school librarians connect students with the right book at the right time. These librarians carefully select age-appropriate resources for the school library collection that meet the academic and literacy needs of all their students.
- Parents have the right to guide their children's reading, but parents should not be making decisions for other parents' children. Specifically, a small group of parents should not dictate what books other people's children are allowed to read.
- Removing and banning books from libraries is a slippery slope to government censorship and the erosion of our country's commitment to freedom of expression.
- Parents are the experts on their own children.
- Teachers can collaborate with parents to guide students to books that will illuminate the world for them.
- The real danger to students is failing to fall in love with reading. Kids are rarely (ever?) corrupted by a book. They are far more likely to see images they're not ready to see on someone's phone than in a book in their school library.

WHERE WE WANT TO GO

- Return to the librarian proposed policy that we had before.
- Rescind the remaining 60+ book challenges.
- Help parents learn the process to restrict books for their own children.
- Inform families that the teachers and librarians are glad to work with them to help their kids find good books to read that accord with their interests, maturity levels, and values.
- Resist normalizing anti-democratic censorship movements.
- Defend intellectual freedom, free expression, and cultural representation

Advocates for Inclusive Education

Position Paper: Books, June 2023

LIST OF BOOKS CHALLENGED IN CENTRAL BUCKS

LGBTQ & RACE

All Boys Aren't Blue by George M. Johnson
Almost Perfect by Brian Katcher
Beyond Magenta by Susan Kuklin: REMAINS
Cool for the Summer by Dahlia Adler
Felix Ever After by Kacen Callender
Flamer by Mike Curato
Gender Queer by Maia Kobabe: BANNED
Last Night at the Telegraph Club by Malinda Lo
Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up with Me
by Mariko Tamaki
Lawn Boy by Jonathan Evison: REMAINS
Lily and Dunkin by Donna Gephart
Melissa by Alex Gino
More Happy Than Not by Adam Silvera
Perfect by Ellen Hopkins
Ramona Blue by Julie Murphy
Rethinking Normal by Katie Rain Hill
The 57 Bus by Dashka Slater
The Perks of Being a Wallflower by Stephen Chobsky
The Poet X by Elizabeth Acevedo
This Book is Gay by Juno Dawson: BANNED
This is Our Rainbow
by Katherine Locke and Nicole Melleby
Two Boys Kissing by David Levithan
Allegedly by Tiffany Jackson
Emergency Contact by Mary H.K. Choi
Girls in Translation by Jean Kwok
Grown by Tiffany Jackson
I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter
by Erika Sanchez
Out of Darkness by Ashely Hope Perez
People Kill People by Ellen Hopkins
Sold by Patricia McCormick
The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison
The Haters by Jesse Andrews

OTHER

After by Amy Efav
A Court of Mist and Fury by Sarah J. Maas
A Court of Wings and Ruin by Sarah J. Maas
All the Bright Places by Jennifer Niven
All the Things We Do in the Dark by Sandra Mitchell
America: A Novel by E.R. Frank
*Angus, Thongs and Full-Frontal Snogging: Confessions
of Georgia Nicolson* by Louise Rennison
Breathless by Jennifer Niven
Burned by Ellen Hopkins
Crank by Ellen Hopkins
Eleanor and Park by Rainbow Rowell
Fade by Lisa McMann
Forever by Judy Blume
Glass by Leen Hopkins
Go Ask Alice by Beatrice Sparks
Identical by Ellen Hopkins
Impulse by Ellen Hopkins
Infamous by Elan Arnold
L8R, G8R by Lauren Myracle
Living Dead Girl by Elizabeth Scott
Looking for Alaska by John Green
Milk and Honey by Rupi Kaur
Nicolson by Louise Rennison
Nineteen Minutes by Jodi Picoult
Normal People by Sally Rooney
Me and Earl and the Dying Girl by Jesse Andrews: REMAINS
Red Hood by Elana Arnold
Shout by Laurie Halse Anderson
The Carnival at Bray by Jessie Ann Foley
The Female of the Species by Mindy McGinnis
The Living Bible
The Truth About Alice by Jennifer Mathieu
Thirteen Reasons Why by Jay Asher
This One Summer by Jillian Tamaki
Tricks by Ellen Hopkins
TTYL by Lauren Miracle
Water for Elephants by Sarah Gruen