

MEDIA CENTER/LIBRARY

The district's media centers shall contain a wide range of materials on all levels of difficulty, appealing to diverse tastes, and presenting different points of view. Every student shall have access to a media collection containing materials appropriate to age level, interests and courses of study. Library/media services connected to classroom studies shall be provided in each school. These services shall include access to computers, approved instructional software, appropriate books including novels, anthologies and other reference materials, and supplemental materials that motivate students to read in and out of school and to conduct research. Library/media services shall be provided under the direction of a certified school library media specialist. School libraries play a unique role in promoting intellectual freedom, providing equitable access to learning resources, and promoting democracy by providing service to all regardless of race, ethnicity, creed, age, ability, gender, or socio-economic status. School library staff members and librarians are essential members of the community; as trained professionals, they help young people of all backgrounds find and interpret the information they need to succeed in school and prepare for college, careers, and life. A board of education shall allow a student to reserve or check out any developmentally appropriate library material, including diverse and inclusive material.

Curation of Library/Media Center Materials

This policy provides standards for the curation of library material, establishes criteria for the removal of existing school library material or library material selected for inclusion in the school library, and provides protection against attempts to censor library material.

When curating library materials, school library staff members shall adhere to the following principles:

- (1) Recognize that library material should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all students and should present diverse points of view in the collection as a whole;
- (2) Acknowledge that library material shall not be removed from a school library because of the origin, background, or views of the library material or those contributing to its creation;
- (3) Recognize the importance of school libraries as centers for voluntary inquiry and the dissemination of information and ideas;
- (4) Promote the free expression and free access to ideas by students by prohibiting the censorship of library material;
- (5) Acknowledge that a school library media specialist is professionally trained to curate and develop the school library collection that provides students with access to the widest array of developmentally appropriate library material available to schools.

The chief school administrator shall establish a procedure for a school library staff member to review library material within a school library on an ongoing basis, which shall include, but not be limited to: the library material's relevance, the condition of the library material, the availability of duplicates, the availability of more recent developmentally appropriate material, and the continued demand for the library material.

A board of education, including its chief school administrator, following consultation with school library staff members, shall have discretion in selecting, purchasing, or acquiring library material for inclusion in the school library or libraries.

In selecting materials to recommend for purchase, the school library media specialist shall evaluate the existing collection and consult reputable, unbiased, professionally prepared selection aids, and specialists from all departments and/or all grade levels.

In addition to standard book materials, the board shall provide for the use of a wide variety of audiovisual

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materials and equipment to enhance the curriculum.

The school libraries/media centers shall offer a continuous program of instruction in library and study skills, preparing students for independent use of learning resources and for development of reading, listening and viewing abilities and tastes.

The chief school administrator shall develop and present for board approval a media center/library program to provide necessary space, personnel and material to implement this policy.

Nothing in this policy shall be construed to restrict a board of education's authority to select textbooks and school supplies related to the curriculum.

Removal Request Procedure

If an individual with a vested interest, defined as any teaching staff member currently employed by the board of education, any parent or guardian of a student enrolled in the school district at the time the removal form required is filed, and any student enrolled in the district at the time the removal form is filed, seeks the removal of library material they must file with the school principal or their designee a "request for removal" form (see exhibit attached to this policy). When completing the form, the section(s) of the library material that the individual finds objectionable, along with an explanation of the reasons for the objection, must be specified. Upon receipt of the completed form, the principal or their designee will promptly forward the completed form to the chief school administrator. If multiple requests are received challenging the same library material, the chief school administrator may consolidate the requests for removal.

The chief school administrator or their designee shall appoint a committee to review the submitted form. The committee shall consist of:

- The chief school administrator or their designee;
- The school principal or their designee from the school housing the challenged library material;
- The school library media specialist or school library staff member from the school housing the challenged library material;
- A representative selected by the board of education;
- At least one grade-appropriate teacher familiar with the challenged library material(s), provided that the teacher selected is not also the individual who submitted the form;
- A parent/guardian of a student enrolled in the district, provided that they are neither the parent/guardian who submitted the form, nor are they the parent/guardian of the student who submitted the form;
- An enrolled student in grades 9-12 who did not file the removal form, may volunteer to serve on the committee where another student in grades 9-12 has submitted the form. The student volunteer shall serve on the committee only if deemed appropriate by the chief school administrator. The chief school administrator shall consult with principal of the school housing the challenged material when determining whether to place a student volunteer on the committee;

The chief school administrator shall appoint additional members that the chief school administrator deems necessary (if any).

The review committee shall meet to evaluate the completed request for removal form, and to review the challenged library material. The review committee shall complete a written report containing its recommendation to the board of education on whether the challenged material should be removed from circulation, be retained, or limited in use. The review committee shall provide its written report to the board of education no later than 60 school days from the date of the next regularly scheduled board of education meeting after receipt of the completed form. A copy of the review committee's written report and recommendation shall be provided to the school principal housing the challenged material and to the vested individual who filed the original challenge.

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The board shall review the committee's report and make a final determination on whether the challenged material should be removed from circulation, retained, or limited in use. The board shall provide a written statement of reasons for: (a) the removal, limitation, or non-removal of library material; and (b) any final determination that is contrary to the recommendations of the review committee. The written statement of reasons shall be posted on the board's Internet website in a prominent and easily accessible location within 30 days of the determination by the board. In making its determination, the board of education shall not remove library material from a school library in the district because of the origin, background, or views of the library material or those contributing to its creation, and shall not engage in censorship of library material.

Library material that has been challenged shall not be subject to a subsequent challenge for at least one year from the date of the board's previous determination concerning that library material. Challenged library materials must remain within the school library available for students to reserve, check out or access pending the final decision by the board of education.

Appeal of Removal Requests

A board of education determination denying a request for removal is not appealable. However, a person with a vested interest may appeal the removal of library material to the commissioner of education through the Office of Controversies and Disputes in accordance with law, and the procedures set forth in State Board of Education regulations.

For more information, a person with a vested interest may contact the:

Office of Controversies and Disputes
New Jersey State Department of Education
P.O. Box 500
Trenton, NJ 08625
(p) 609-376-9079
ControversiesDisputes@doe.nj.gov

Nothing in this policy shall be construed as creating a separate legal cause of action regarding any determination issued pursuant to the law concerning the removal of library materials

School Library Staff Protections

A school library staff member who engages in activities as required by the laws concerning the curation and and/or removal of school library materials, N.J.S.A. 18A:34A-4 through 6, shall be immune from civil and criminal liability arising from good faith actions performed pursuant to those laws.

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Key Words

Library, Media Center, Audiovisual Materials

Other Reasons:

Adequate media/library facilities and a library skills program are basic to a thorough and efficient system of education. Other media resources and in particular the use of internet resources are essential to college and career readiness.

N.J.A.C. 6A:13-2.1 requires all school districts to provide library-media services that are connected to classroom studies in each school building, including access to computers, district-approved instructional software, appropriate books including novels, anthologies and other reference materials, and supplemental materials that motivate students to read in and out of school and to conduct research. Each school district shall provide these library-media services under the direction of a certified school library media specialist.

Legal References: N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-14.14 School library media specialist
N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-14.15 Associate school library media specialist
N.J.A.C. 6A:13-2.1 Standards-based instructional priorities
Board of Education Island Trees U.F.S.D. v. Pico, 457 U.S. 853 (1982)

Cross References: *1312 Community complaints and inquiries
*6161.1 Guidelines for evaluation and selection of instructional materials
*6161.2 Complaints regarding instructional materials

*Indicates policy is included in the Critical Policy.