

School Libraries and Book Challenges

General Information

Public school libraries serve a diverse population. Best practices call for certified school librarians, who have training in material selection and library policies, to develop a collection of library materials. This collection should meet curricular needs as well as provide materials for free choice reading, personal learning, and representation of all voices in their communities. School librarians select library materials based on school board approved library material selection policies which are separate from curriculum or instructional materials selection policies.

Michigan is a local control state and each school district develops policies about specific curriculum and materials to serve their local communities.

Students have many choices of books in a school library. If there is a book that does not meet the interests or values of a particular student and their family, the student does not have to check it out. There will be many other books for them to choose from.

Parents have the right to guide their own children's reading, but not to limit or prevent other children's reading. Parents have the right to ask for alternative selections for their children. Parents have the right to ask for reconsideration of materials based on the school board's policies.

Michigan law (MCL Act 33, Section 722.674) requires that a work must be considered as a whole and meet other conditions to be deemed harmful to minors.

Best Practices

School districts in Michigan can look to the [SL 21 Measurement Benchmarks for Michigan School Libraries for 21st Century Schools](#) for best practices for school libraries.

A summary of the best practices that apply to selection of library materials include:

- Policies should call for access for all learners and educators to a school library and a certified school librarian.
- School districts should have board approved policies, that are developed with input from the certified school librarian, that detail the criteria for selection and reconsideration of library materials. This includes a process for handling challenges.
- School librarians develop and maintain a diverse collection of resources that support curriculum, reading for enjoyment, and personal interest. They provide access to information representing diverse points of view.

Parental Involvement

Administrators and teachers, including school librarians, want parents to be partners in their children's education. Studies show that when parents are involved in their student's education; those students are more successful.

School board approved material selection and reconsideration policies should be available for parents to review.

School librarians are willing to speak with parents about their child's selection of library materials and to guide students and suggest titles that meet the student's and family's needs. School librarians are also willing to put notes into a student's record if there are specific titles that parents do not want their child to read.

If parents are not satisfied, they can challenge materials following the school board approved reconsideration process. This process typically requires parents to read the entire work and consider the work as a whole. The parent then must submit a form to initiate the challenge process. A reconsideration committee is then formed to review the reconsideration request. Most reconsideration policies state that at least one parent will be included on the reconsideration committee.

A note about parents. Recent surveys ([Gandernews](#), [CBS News Poll](#), [ALA Survey: Voters Oppose Book Bans in Libraries](#)) show that most parents **do** trust their school librarians and do want their children to have access to diverse books and don't approve of banning books.

Resources

Michigan Association for Media in Education (MAME), Michigan Council of Teachers of English (MCTE), and the Michigan Reading Association (MRA) Joint Statement "The Freedom to Read in Michigan": bit.ly/Mlrightread

SL 21 Measurement Benchmarks for Michigan School Libraries for 21st Century Schools.
https://www.michigan.gov/libraryofmichigan/-/media/Project/Websites/libraryofmichigan/For-Libraries/School-Libraries/lm_school_libraries_SL_21_measures_2018.pdf

Michigan Department of Education "Library Media Placements":
<https://www.michigan.gov/mde/Services/ed-serv/ed-cert/permits-placement/courses-that-can-be-taught/library-media>

American Library Association (ALA) Selection & Reconsideration Policy Toolkit for Public, School, & Academic Libraries: <https://www.ala.org/tools/challengesupport/selectionpolicytoolkit>

American Library Association (ALA) Library Bill of Rights and Freedom to Read Statements
https://www.ala.org/aboutala/sites/ala.org/aboutala/files/content/LBOR_FTR%20statement_print%20ready_NEW_0.pdf

Articles about Surveys of Voter/Parents Opinions on Book Challenges
><https://gandernewsroom.com/2022/03/04/78-of-michiganders-believe-its-un-american-for-politicians-to-ban-books-in-schools-so-why-are-republicans-trying-to-do-it/>
><https://www.cbsnews.com/news/book-bans-opinion-poll-2022-02-22/>
><https://www.ala.org/advocacy/voters-oppose-book-bans-libraries>