

**NATIONAL  
COALITION  
AGAINST  
CENSORSHIP** **KIDS'  
RIGHT  
TO READ**

January 10, 2025

School Board  
Volusia County Schools  
200 North Clara Avenue  
DeLand, FL 32720

Dear Members of the School Board,

The National Coalition Against Censorship is an alliance of national nonprofit groups dedicated to protecting freedom of expression, including the rights of K-12 students, teachers, and staff. We have almost 50 years of experience advising public institutions in developing best practices for book challenge policies that are consistent with the First Amendment and free expression principles.

We are writing to recommend slight, but important, changes to Board Policy 320 *Media Selection of Print and Non-Print Materials*. We are writing to suggest that you revise your current policy to specify that challenged materials will remain on library shelves pending adjudication. We recommend this policy change to ensure consistency, protect student's access to diverse reading materials, and disincentivize unfounded or bad-faith book challenges that drain district resources.

We are concerned that your current policy is an open invitation to would-be censors to file meritless challenges for the sole purpose of limiting students' access to books they dislike. For example, in Beaufort County Schools in South Carolina, a similar policy led to nearly a hundred books being challenged in October 2022. According to media reports, the review process wasn't completed until March 2024, when most of the books were returned to library shelves. Thus, the district was forced to spend huge amounts of time adjudicating baseless claims while students were deprived of access to valuable books for months. Your policy risks exposing your district - and your students - to a similar fate.

For these reasons, many library policies include an explicit requirement that access to books remain unrestricted during the reconsideration process. We encourage you to adopt a similar policy.

We have created a resource to help school officials address the problem of book challenges, *Material Review and Policy Guidelines and Examples*, which includes sample book challenge procedures from school districts across the country. It is attached.

Please let us know if you have any questions or need any further support.

Thank you for your attention and consideration to this matter.

Sincerely,



Christine Emeran  
Youth Free Expression Program Director  
National Coalition Against Censorship

Co-signed by: American Booksellers for Free Expression  
The Authors Guild  
Children's and Young Adult Books Committee, PEN America  
National Council of Teachers of English  
PEN America  
Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators

A project of the National  
Coalition Against Censorship

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