

Library Material Objection Procedures and Guidelines

Introduction.

1. This document provides guidelines for objecting to library materials. School Board Rule 4.132 sets forth the statutory requirements governing the District's library materials objection procedures and authorizes the Superintendent to adopt implementing procedures and guidelines. These procedures establish the process for reviewing objections to school or classroom library media materials in conformity with Florida Statute 1006.28 (2)(a)2.b. This statute requires the District to provide a process for review of objections to library materials. More particularly, school districts must provide parents and residents the opportunity to demonstrate that the challenged material is objectionable according to applicable standards. Any material made available in a school or classroom library or included in a reading list is objectionable if the material:
 - a. is pornographic or prohibited under Florida Statute 847.012;
 - b. depicts or describes sexual conduct as defined in Florida Statute 847.001(19), unless such material is for a course required by Florida Statutes 1003.46, 1003.42(2)(n)1.g., or 1003.42(2)(n)3., or identified by State Board of Education rule;
 - c. is not suited to student needs and their ability to comprehend the material presented; or
 - d. is inappropriate for the grade level and age group for which the material is used.
2. **Standing.** Parents or guardians of District public school students and other St. Johns County residents have standing to object to library materials under these procedures.
3. **Time Limits.** For purposes of these procedures, time limits refer to school workdays. All time limits shall be suspended to the extent they fall within the District winter, spring or summer breaks, with the compilation of time resuming on the first day after the break.
4. **First Step – Informal Objection.** A parent or resident ("Objecting Party") who objects to a book or other material in a school or classroom library shall first notify the principal of that school. The notice shall be in writing or emailed. It shall identify the material in question and state the reasons why the material is objectionable. Within ten (10) school workdays after receipt of the notice, the principal shall notify the Objecting Party in writing or by email of the principal's decision on the objection. In preparation, the principal may consult with one or more members of the school's Media Advisory Committee. If the Objecting Party is not satisfied with the principal's resolution, the Objecting Party may file a formal objection as provided below.

If the principal determines that the material should be removed from their school library, the principal will submit the title to the Superintendent for formal review by the District Review Committee.

5. **Formal Objection – Requirements.** The Objecting Party may file a formal objection with the Superintendent if not satisfied with the principal’s resolution. The Objecting Party shall complete and file the library materials objection form provided by the District in accordance with statutory requirements and Florida Board of Education Rules, which may be obtained from the District website. A written argument in support of the complaint shall be filed with the completed form. The written argument must clearly and concisely state the reasons why the material should be removed from the library or otherwise restricted and must be supported by citations to passages from the work or other evidence. The argument should also cite to any supporting statute, rule or case law.
6. **Removal or Restriction Pending Resolution.** Within 5 days after an objection is filed under Paragraph 5, a book challenged on the grounds set forth in Paragraphs 1(a) or (b) shall be removed from the library pending final decision on the objection.
7. **District Library Material Objection Committee.** The Superintendent, in consultation with appropriate staff, shall appoint a Library Material Objection Committee (“Committee”) to review the complaint and recommend its disposition. The Committee meeting will be publicly noticed. The public may attend however there will be no public comments. The Committee shall consist of:
 - a. the Associate Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction (or designee);
 - b. a principal at the appropriate level;
 - c. an appropriate subject area director or specialist;
 - d. a teacher at the appropriate grade level in the appropriate subject area;
 - e. a library media specialist;
 - f. two parent representatives from the school where the objection originated; Parent organizations will seek volunteers for the committee. When necessary, a random draw will finalize the selection;
 - g. two St. Johns County residents, not employed by the District, who are active in the community. Volunteers will be sought. When necessary, a random draw will finalize the selection.

The Associate Superintendent of Curriculum (or designee) will chair the Committee. The Superintendent may assign multiple complaints to the Committee, with different school representatives if different schools are involved. If it becomes necessary, the Superintendent may appoint substitute committee members.

8. **Committee Meeting Procedures.** Committee meetings to consider objections shall be publicly noticed and open to the public. The Objecting Party shall have five (5) minutes to address the Committee.
9. **District Library Material Objection Committee – Standards and Criteria.** The standards and criteria applicable to the selection and retention of school library materials are listed in Florida Statutes 1006.28(2)(a)2.b. (as set forth in Paragraph 1 above), 1006.28(2)(d)2.c., and 1006.40(3)(d), School Board Rules 4.13 and 4.131, and guidance from the Florida Department of Education.
 - a. The material shall be removed if the material is pornographic or prohibited under Florida Statute 847.012;
 - b. Use of the material shall be discontinued for any grade level or age group for which such use is inappropriate or unsuitable if the material:
 - i. depicts or describes sexual conduct as defined in Florida Statute 847.001(19), unless such material is for a course required by Florida Statutes 1003.46, 1003.42(2)(n)1.g., or 1003.42(2)(n)3., or identified by State Board of Education rule;
 - ii. is not suited to student needs and their ability to comprehend the material presented; or
 - iii. is inappropriate for the grade level and age group for which the material is used.
10. **District Library Material Objection Committee – Recommendation.** Within forty-five (45) workdays of the Superintendent's receipt of the complaint, the Committee Chair shall forward the Committee Recommendation to the Superintendent. The recommendation will reflect the majority vote by the committee. In the event of a split decision the recommendation will be no change to the current availability of the material. Titles will be reviewed one at a time in the order received. When more than one objection is received within forty-five (45) workdays, the response timeline will begin when a prior title objection has been completed. The Committee shall determine whether the challenged material is objectionable under the standards and criteria enumerated in Paragraph 1. If the Committee finds the material is objectionable according to those standards, it should recommend removal of the material from the school or classroom library. Even when removal is not warranted, the Committee may recommend the following action where appropriate:
 - a. retain material with restriction(s)
 - b. transfer material to higher level school
 - c. remove the material from collection
11. **Superintendent's Written Decision.** Within ten (10) workdays after receipt of the Committee recommendation, the Superintendent (or designee) shall communicate

his or her decision by regular U.S. mail, email, or delivered in-person to the Objecting Party. The Superintendent's decision to remove or restrict access to a book shall apply consistently throughout the District.

12. **Multiple Objections.** If there are more than one complaint about a material, they may be consolidated by the Superintendent and processed together. However, there shall be only two school parent members under Paragraph 6.(f), selected from the first school where objection originated. If a complaint is filed after an earlier complaint has been processed, the complaint may be denied by the Superintendent without referring it to the Committee unless it states new grounds that were not considered in the initial determination.
13. **Library Material Objection List.** The Library Material Objection List will be posted on each school website and include the status of each title that has received a formal objection.
14. **Appeal.** The Objecting Party may appeal to the School Board the Superintendent's decision to retain, restrict, or transfer a book. The School Board will conduct a hearing on the appeal and may hear multiple appeals in a single hearing.
15. **Request for Appointment of Magistrate.** Pursuant to Florida Statute 1006.28(2)(a)5., a parent who disagrees with the School Board's decision may request the Department of Education to appoint a special magistrate to review the School Board's determination.

ADOPTED this 19TH day of March, 2024.



Tim Forson
Superintendent of Schools