

CLAY COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOLS

Book Challenges

2023

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Background:

CCDS has allowed challenges to materials for decades. Such challenges have been few and have typically garnered little attention but recent events have brought increased awareness to this process.



The applicable laws



FS CH.847.012

- Became law in **2018**
- Deals with obscenity, especially relative to preventing harm to minors
- Provides explicit examples as a guideline making review of such material more straightforward



Florida HB 7: Individual Freedom

- Defines individual freedoms that all are equal before the law and have inalienable rights
- Applies to classroom instruction, not individual choice
- Prevents discrimination in the workplace or public school
- Requires state to update standards and curriculum
- Requires state to review district professional development systems for compliance

Florida HB 1467: Selection of Instructional Materials

- Requires meetings relating to the adoption of instructional materials to be noticed and open to the public
- Requires certified media specialists to select public school library books and reading lists*
- Requires annual state training
- Elementary schools to publish list of library books on school website*

Florida HB 1557: Parental Rights in Education

- Reinforces parent's rights to make decisions about their student
- Requires districts to adopt parent notification procedures
- Prohibits classroom instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity in K-3*



Florida HB 7:

- Applies to classroom instruction, not individual choice
- Mainly deal with CRT

Florida HB 1467:

- Elementary schools to publish list of library books on school website*

Florida HB 1557:

- Prohibits classroom instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity in K-3*



Book Challenges to date



Have any books been removed?

- **Weeded:** The process of evaluating individual library materials based on established weeding criteria, deciding whether to retain or discard each item, and implementing that decision. Weeding is as important to a library's functioning as adding new materials.
- **Deselected:** The removal of materials from the library collection that are no longer needed or viable.
- **Removed by committee:** District level committee made up of parents, volunteers, principals, and media specialists



Have inappropriate books been discovered?

- 2 titles have been removed through a committee decision
- 50 have been deselected/weeded by media specialists
- 22 removed explicitly for Ch. 847 violations
- Others likely removed due to poor circulation.



How did such books get brought into the collection?

Historically, media specialists purchased books from trusted publishers. Often, there are incentives to purchase books en masse, typically listed under general descriptions such as “a must read title for all students.” On some of the books that were recently discovered to be inappropriate, the books reviews and publisher’s descriptions include “award-winning,” “a great coming of age story,” etc.



Current list of challenges and their outcomes:

The [District Reconsideration List](#) can be found on the District Library Media page. The list is updated as new challenges are received and accepted as well as the results of Reconsideration meetings.



Challenges by the numbers:

- There have been 4 different authors of book challenges since the new laws passed in the spring of 2022.
- One individual is responsible for 453 of the 492 challenges for 92%
- The other 3 authors of challenges have submitted: 12, 14, & 15. (41)



Challenges by the numbers

Total numbers of titles in CCDS library collections: **190,831**

Total current of titles being held pending reviews: **177 (.00092752%)**

Total number of titles currently available to check out: **190,654**



Parental control options

- Parents can choose for their child to be unable to check out library materials ([Library Book Access Form](#)) (3 parents in the district have completed and returned the forms for this option)
- Parents can choose to be notified with daily emails when their child checks out library materials ([Library Book Access Form](#)) (3 parents in CCDS have selected this option)
- Parents can choose to take no action and therefore their child to freely check out library materials



Barriers to the process



- **Unfunded mandate:** school districts received no additional funding for personnel or other resources to review tens of thousands of book titles (194,000 in CCDS)
- **Time:** Reading books takes time. This is especially true if consideration must be given to state statutes. Coordinating the schedules of committee members to read and meet and discuss, establishing deadlines, and having professional conversations about this serious topic all take time.
- **Personnel:** Book review committees must be comprised of parent volunteers, principals, media specialists and others- most of whom are otherwise engaged in full-time jobs, raising families, etc.



- **Multiple perspectives:** Opinions vary on this topic and many are extremely passionate. One view is that no book should be removed from school shelves. Some believe that taking the books off to even review them is wrong and argue that the process takes too long. Another view is that not enough materials have been removed and that while “banning” books is wrong for a public library, some material is inappropriate for minor children and decisions around what children should read should be left to the parents. These individuals believe that taking the books down until reviewed is erring on the side of caution.



Going forward



- Vetting mechanism:
 - Implementation of guidelines for appropriate materials for elementary, junior high, and senior high schools
- How to manage purchasing requests:
 - Piloting a rolling quarterly window into which the 43 schools will be divided into groups
 - given a limited number of title requests
 - Schools given guidelines for request for approval
 - District approval process to add a final layer of protection
- Pressure on publishers for more transparent reviews of titles