

## WHAT IS A SCHOOL BOOK BAN?

A school book ban occurs when access to a book, once accessible to students, is no longer available, diminished, or restricted, because of its content due to parent or community challenges, administrative decisions, or in response to direct or threatened action by lawmakers or other governmental officials. Restrictions may include a requirement for a parent to 'opt in' or 'opt out' to give his/her permission to read a book. One parent's or resident's objection to a book may lead to no child being able to access it, thus denying rights of other parents and children.

## WHAT IS BEING BANNED IN FLORIDA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS?

Books are being removed from school libraries, including classroom libraries that

- include sexually explicit descriptions,
- describe the experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals;
- describe the experiences of communities of color;
- offer dissenting political viewpoints;
- discuss privilege or oppression based on race;
- discuss the true atrocities of slavery.

AND ALSO:

- promote the occult, include objectionable politics, are too violent, have themes considered too mature, or are considered too scary.

## WHY IS THIS HAPPENING?

Some parents, community residents, and legislators have raised objections to what children are reading in school.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO STOP BOOK BANS?

- Learn your rights and decide how much risk you are willing to take as an advocate.
- Learn about the history of book censorship and why it occurs.
- Become familiar with banned books and the objections to them/identify benefits.
- Follow legislation to identify any bills, pro or con, addressing book bans.
- Communicate with sponsors of these bills to lend support/share your concerns.
- Join a banned book club and learn about groups organized to advocate against school bans.
- Attend school/library board meetings to learn the process for challenging books.
- Prepare remarks for board meetings to counter book challenges.
- Use social media, educate others, and build support.
- Find Leaguers and others who share your concerns and begin planning your work.
- Support organizations such as the League of Women Voters that are fighting bans.
- Check organization websites to locate advocacy tools.
- Participate in anti-censorship protest rallies.
- Run for school and library boards.

# BOOK BANS IN FLORIDA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS



**FLORIDA LEADS THE  
NATION IN BOOK BANS IN  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS!**

## WHAT'S THE HARM WHEN BOOKS ARE BANNED IN SCHOOLS?

### Harm to Students:

- Violation of students' rights to choose what they read
- Decreased enthusiasm for learning to read
- Less access to texts illustrating different opinions/appearances/lifestyles
- Inability to relate to anyone unlike themselves
- Limited opportunities to do critical thinking
- Promotion of untruths/misinformation
- Decreased readiness for workplace or college

### Harm to Teachers:

- Fear of fines/loss of license for violations
- Loss of respect as knowledgeable educators
- Distrust of administrators, parents, students
- Excessive self-censorship
- Fewer opportunities to teach critical thinking
- Less enjoyable, less creative workplace
- Decreased ability to connect with students
- Lower job satisfaction; increased stress

### Harm to Schools:

- Increased tension and confusion
- Loss of place in community life
- Increased divisiveness
- Fewer resources
- Loss of local control
- Weakened national reputation

### Harm to the State of Florida:

- More teacher vacancies
- Poorly educated, less employable students
- Exodus of best students and faculty
- Loss of businesses
- Reduced property values

## WHO IS ADVOCATING FOR THE FREEDOM TO READ WHAT WE CHOOSE TO READ?

### National Organizations

- PEN America
- American Library Association
- FIRE
- ACLU
- Unite Against Book Bans.org
- Children's Book Council
- BannedBooksUSA.org
- EveryLibrary
- and others

### Statewide Organizations

- Florida Freedom to Read Project
- Foundation 451
- League of Women Voters of Florida

### Local Organizations and Individuals

- African-American Research Library and Cultural Center (Fort Lauderdale)
- Moms for Libros – Miami Dade
- Awake Brevard Action Alliance
- Broward County Dream Defenders
- Booksellers throughout the state
- Banned Book Clubs (Many are being organized by students.)
- Little Free Libraries
- Local Libraries

## HOW IS THIS HAPPENING?

- **Legislation:** Several bills were passed by Florida's legislature and signed by the Governor that restrict what students in public schools can read and discuss. The laws are vague and confusing, but if teachers violate them, they can be fined and lose their teaching license. [See HB 7, HB 1467, HB 1557 (2022); HB 1069 (2023)].
- **Self-censorship:** Because laws are vague and confusing, teachers are deciding for themselves what is permitted, and some are banning more than is required. They want to avoid penalties.
- **Administrative fiat:** Districts can also be penalized; school administrators are being extra cautious. Blocking by publishers. Rather than risk being rejected by a district, some publishers are simply not offering any books that might be questionable.

## WHAT IS THE LEAGUE'S POSITION ON SCHOOL BOOK BANS?

While we don't believe every single book should be in school or classroom libraries, we do not agree with banning these books. Our view is that all children need to have access to books they can relate to, history that is truthful, and stories with characters like themselves.

These books should not be completely banned from school/classroom libraries. Each parent should be able to decide what their own child can read, but one parent should not be able to make that decision for every parent or every child.

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*"I have learned a lot more about the world around me through books than I have through my own eyes."*

- Riley Kellogg, High School Junior