

The Board of Public Education

for the

City of Savannah and the County of Chatham

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SUPERINTENDENT



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A LETTER TO OUR COMMUNITY

Recently, we have heard remarks from individuals who disagree with certain materials found in school library media centers. The District acquires and maintains materials that have literary, artistic, political, or scientific value for students despite the presence of limited or incidental content that some may consider offensive. Materials are vetted and reviewed to adhere to state standards and to ensure the content holds social and intellectual value.

We see great value in the balance of parent choice and the protection of intellectual freedoms. We also understand there will be differing opinions and beliefs. The Board stands committed to the implementation of fair processes that operate within the boundaries of state laws and state board rules. The implementation of broad restrictions that impact the accessibility of information stifles a student's ability to gain understanding and perspective and places limitations on the analytical thought process.

Books are provided based on genre, grade level, age appropriateness, academic and aesthetic merit. Library Media Technology Specialists are highly skilled in screening books, and they seek to provide a wide range of learning resources at varying levels of difficulty with a diversity of appeal and the presentation of different points of view. Taking a well-rounded approach that evaluates the literary piece in its entirety is an important part of the process - content that some deem offensive cannot be taken in isolation. The books that have been mentioned by public speakers are highly recommended by respected apolitical institutions and have been held in high regard earning numerous awards and honors from trusted groups such as the American Library Association or the Young Adult Library Services Association.

We believe that the parent is the child's first teacher, and all families should be deeply engaged in their child's education. To this extent, the parent or guardian has the right to restrict material for their individual child. The Board does not support blanket censorship, but instead endorses the ideals of choice and parent rights to determine what is educationally appropriate for their child.

For many years SCCPSS has maintained a process for parents of a school their child attends to initiate a reconsideration of material they believe to be harmful. While the current narratives by some have dominated conversations, we have seen minimal instances over the years where a book was challenged for removal. Board Policy IFBD and the associated Administrative Regulation IFBD-R govern the materials reconsideration process. The reconsideration process begins at the school level and will be resolved as expeditiously as possible.

Input from our community is vital to our democratic process and we, as a Board, seek to hear all viewpoints. We also recognize that one opinion or viewpoint does not represent the whole. We respect and value each opinion. We work to listen, respond, and ensure fair processes are in place for the betterment of all. Together, we strive to meet all challenges, find common ground, and through fair procedures, protect and preserve one of our most valued commodities – our intellectual freedom.

Sincerely,

Joe Buck