

School Library Procedures for Handling Formal Complaints

The following procedures should be followed if, after discussing the questioned resource, no resolution is made.

1. The complainant should be referred to the principal.
2. A concerned citizen who is dissatisfied with earlier informal discussions will be offered a packet of materials which includes the library's mission statement, selection policy, request for reconsideration of instructional resources form, and the Library Bill of Rights.
3. The complainant is required to complete and submit the reconsideration form to the principal within ten business days.
4. If a completed reconsideration form is not submitted within ten business days, the matter is considered closed.
5. Upon receipt of the form, the principal should notify and provide a copy of the reconsideration form with the following individuals:
 1. Superintendent
 2. School Library Advisory Committee/Reconsideration Committee
 3. School librarian
 4. School library department director
6. The work in question will remain on library shelves and in circulation until a formal decision is made.
7. The Reconsideration Committee will be appointed by the principal and consist of a teacher, a building level administrator, a school librarian, a reading specialist or language arts teacher, and a member of the community. Makeup of the committee varies depending on the school district.
8. The school librarian will secure copies of the resource for the committee to review.
9. The school librarian will provide the reviewing committee with a short formal Intellectual Freedom training that explains a packet of materials, which includes the library's mission statement, selection policy, the Library Bill of Rights, the completed reconsideration form, reviews of the resource being reconsidered, and a list of awards or honors, if any. This packet should be created with assistance from the state department of public instruction and the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom.
10. Through interlibrary loan or other means, the school librarian will obtain copies of the material in question for review by the Reconsideration Committee.
11. The Reconsideration Committee (which should include the school librarian) should schedule a formal reconsideration meeting within 10 school days after the principal receives the written request for reconsideration. The principal should notify the superintendent and the school library department director as to this schedule.
12. The school level Reconsideration Committee should follow the procedures listed below:
 1. At the initial meeting, the principal and committee will review reconsideration committee guidelines and procedures. A school administrator should fully participate in the reconsideration process.
 2. A member of the committee should keep minutes.
 3. All committee members should fully review the resource (read or view the entire work) before voting.

4. The committee reserves the right to use outside expertise if necessary to help in its decision-making process.
 5. The complainant may make an initial verbal presentation about the resource under reconsideration or may choose to share the written form. The complainant is asked to provide sources for quotes used during this presentation.
 6. The complainant may not participate in or observe the committee's deliberations unless invited to do so by the committee. The committee chair may choose to give committee members time to ask questions.
 7. During the initial or subsequent meetings, the committee will make its decision determined by the simple majority to retain, move the resources to a different level, or remove the resource. This will be a secret ballot vote.
 8. The committee's written decision (including a minority report if needed) shall be presented to the complainant, the superintendent of schools, and the school library department director within five school days after the decision is made.
 9. If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision at the school level, a written appeal can be made within 10 school days to a system-level Educational Resource Reconsideration Committee. This request should be delivered to the superintendent of schools.
13. The District-Level Reconsideration Committee will consider any appeals from the school level. The committee will be appointed by the Superintendent or his/her designee as follows:
1. Director of school library services
 2. Director of elementary, middle, or secondary education, as appropriate
 3. Curriculum coordinator specializing in reading from the appropriate level
 4. District-level library services staff
 5. School librarian from the appropriate level
 6. Other district-level instructional directors
 7. A student from the level in which the challenged material resides (middle or high school level only)
14. The organization of the District-Level Reconsideration Committee will be as follows:
1. Policy, committee guidelines, and procedures should be reviewed at each meeting.
 2. The chairperson will be the school library coordinator (or other appropriate central office supervisor of school libraries). The secretary of the committee will be elected at each meeting.
 3. The chairperson will be the spokesperson for the committee at all meetings and before the Board of Education when decisions are made.
 4. The secretary will record the minutes and decisions of the meetings.
 5. These should be filed with the chairperson, who will communicate decisions in writing to the superintendent. Meetings will be called at the discretion of the chairperson or when an appeal is requested by a complainant.
15. The procedures for the District-Level Reconsideration Committee will be as follows:

1. The chairperson will call the meeting within 10 school days after the written appeal is filed with the superintendent.
2. The committee shall read and/or examine the challenged resource, read the written reconsideration form, and read copies of the professionally prepared reviews and list of awards provided by the school librarian on the committee. The chairperson should forward these materials to the committee members at least three days prior to the meeting. The procedures for these meeting are the same as those for the school-level meeting.

16. The procedures for an appeal to the Board of Education will be as follows:

1. An appeal of the decision made by the District-Level Reconsideration Committee must be made in writing to the superintendent within 10 days of the system-level committee decision.
2. A decision on the complaint will be made at the next regular meeting or special meeting within 30 days of the written request to the superintendent.
3. The board reserves the right to use outside expertise if necessary to help in its decision making.
4. The chairperson for the District-Level Reconsideration Committee will present the committee's decision to the board.
5. The complainant or designee will present the petitioner's position.
6. The board decision will be final, and the superintendent will implement the decision.
7. Decisions on reconsidered materials will stand for five years before new requests for reconsideration of those items will be entertained.