

LIBRARY POLICY

- A. **Selection of Resources** – Each school’s library media specialist shall have primary responsibility for evaluating a school’s existing library collections and developing a list of recommendations for additions to the collection.

The library media specialist is encouraged to consult reputable, professional journals or lists when determining what resources should be considered for inclusion in the school’s library collection. Teachers may request that specific resources be considered for inclusion in the collection at their assigned school by submitting a request in writing to the library media specialist.

Resources selected for inclusion in each school’s library collection should (1) support and complement the schools’ curriculum; (2) address the developmental, cultural, social, and linguistic needs of all learners; (3) be age-appropriate for the grade and interest level of the students the library serves; (4) appeal to the various interests of the students and faculty at the school; and (5) have aesthetic, cultural, literary, social, artistic, or historic value.

The Superintendent or designee is authorized to develop more specific procedures governing the selection and purchase of resources for school libraries, which may be contained in a Library Media Handbook. All purchases of library resources must also be made in accordance with any applicable financial policies and procedures and the applicable budget.

Gifts and donations to the school library may be accepted, but gifted or donated resources will only be included in the library’s collection if they are determined to be appropriate for inclusion in accordance with the same selection criteria applied to resources purchased by the school system.

- B. **Deselection of Resources** – The library media specialist is primarily responsible for identifying resources that should be removed from the library collection. A material should be removed from the library’s collection if it:

- contains misleading, factually inaccurate, or dated information;
- is in poor physical condition;
- is determined to be of no real discernable value;
- does not meet the current criteria for selection; or
- is no longer relevant to the needs and interests of the school community.

The Superintendent or designee is authorized to develop more specific procedures governing the deselection and disposal of resources from a school library collection, which may be contained in a Library Media Handbook. The disposal of “deselected” resources must be done in accordance with any other applicable policies and procedures governing the disposal of Board-owned property.

C. **Reconsideration** – A student (or parent or guardian of a student) may present a formal request to the Board for removal of a resource from a library’s collection at the student’s assigned school.

1. **Filing of Formal Complaint:** The complainant must complete and submit the approved formal reconsideration form for each resource being challenged to the Superintendent. The complaint form must be completed in full and signed by the complainant, including a statement acknowledging that he or she has read the subject resource.

2. **Preliminary Review of Formal Complaint:** The Superintendent or designee will review the complaint:

- If the Superintendent or designee determines that informal resolution of the complaint should be attempted, the formal reconsideration process may be suspended for that purpose for up to thirty (30) school days. However, the challenged material may not be permanently removed from the library collection during the informal resolution process. If an informal resolution is not reached, the formal complaint will move forward.
- If the complainant has not provided all the information required by the complaint form, the Superintendent or designee will provide the complainant with the opportunity to amend the form. If the complainant does not provide the information within ten (10) calendar days, the matter will be considered closed.
- If the resource has been previously challenged within the last five (5) years, the complaint will be dismissed.

3. **Formal Reconsideration Process:** After the completion of any informal resolution process and a determination that the complainant has provided all the information required by the complaint form, the formal reconsideration process outlined below will begin.

- a. *Committee:* A Reconsideration Committee (Committee) will be appointed by the Superintendent or designee and will consist of a teacher, a principal, and a school librarian. Any other school-level employee or member of the Central Office staff who has expertise in curriculum, student development, or another area implicated by the request for reconsideration in question

may be appointed to serve on the Committee. The Superintendent or designee should also identify who will serve as Chairperson of the Committee. The Superintendent or designee may serve on the Committee and/or as Chairperson if he or she determines that it is appropriate.

- b. *Information Provided to Committee:* The Superintendent or designee will work with school system staff to obtain copies of the challenged resource and will make a copy available to the Committee to review.

The Superintendent or designee will also provide the Committee with any information or training he or she considers necessary for the Committee to make an informed decision and may convene a meeting with the Committee for that purpose. The information provided to the Committee may include the library's mission statement, if any; the pertinent selection policy and procedure; the completed reconsideration form; reviews of the resource being reconsidered; and any relevant legal parameters for review.

- c. *Meeting:* The Chairperson should strive to convene an initial reconsideration meeting within thirty (30) school days after the formal reconsideration process begins. The Chairperson is also authorized to convene any additional meetings he or she considers necessary for the Committee to reach a decision.

- d. *Procedures for Determination by Committee:* The following standards and procedures govern the reconsideration process:

- All Committee members should review the resource (read or view the entire work) before attending initial meeting.
- The complainant, the school librarian, or both may be asked to make a verbal presentation about the resource under consideration.
- The Committee may request that either the complainant, school librarian, or both answer questions in person or in writing regarding the resource.
- The complainant may not participate in or observe the Committee's deliberations unless invited to do so by the Committee.
- The Committee may seek outside expertise if necessary to help in its decision-making process.

When making its decision, the Committee's primary consideration should be whether the resource would qualify for inclusion in a school library collection under the school system's current selection policies and procedures.

The Committee will determine by majority vote whether to retain the challenged resource, move it to a different level or section, or remove it altogether. The Chairperson will present the Committee's written decision to the complainant and the Superintendent (within five (5) school days, absent unusual circumstances) after the decision is made.

4. Appeal: An appeal may be filed by either (1) a complainant whose request for removal has been denied; or (2) a student (or student's parent or guardian) who objects to the Committee's decision to remove material from the library at the student's assigned school.
 - a. *Filing an Appeal*: An appeal must be in writing and delivered to the Superintendent within ten (10) calendar days of the date of the written decision from the Committee.
 - b. *Transmittal of Record*. Upon receipt of a timely appeal, the Superintendent shall transmit to Board Members for their review a copy of the written appeal, the Committee's decision letter, and all statements, recommendations, documents, recordings, transcripts, or other written or tangible evidence filed, submitted, or considered at any stage of the reconsideration process.
 - c. *Appeal Procedures*: The procedures for an appeal to the Board of Education will be as follows:
 1. Not later than sixty (60) calendar days following receipt of the notice of appeal by the Superintendent, absent extenuating circumstances, the appeal shall be placed on the Board meeting agenda for consideration. Upon consideration of the appeal and record, the Board may, by majority vote:
 - a) Affirm the decision of the Committee;
 - b) Reverse the Committee's decision; or
 - c) Defer final action until a Board hearing is held on the appeal.
 - d. *Hearing Process*: If a hearing is requested by a majority of the Board, the hearing shall be set within thirty (30) school days (absent extenuating circumstances). Written notice of the hearing date shall be provided to the original complainant and the person who filed the appeal.

The appropriate hearing procedures shall be determined by the Board. The hearing shall be open to the public unless the Board has the option to enter executive session and does so using the procedures dictated by the Open Meetings Act.

A final Board decision on the grievance shall be issued within ten (10) school days after the hearing ends (absent extenuating circumstances). The Board shall give written notice of its final decision to the original complainant and the person who filed the appeal. The Board's decision will be final and the Superintendent will implement the decision.

5. Effect of Decision: A decision regarding whether to remove a challenged resource will stand for five (5) years before new requests for reconsideration of that item will be entertained.
6. Other Procedure: The procedure set forth above will apply, in lieu of any other board policy/procedure, to any request for the removal of a resource from a school library.

SOURCE: Athens City Board of Education, Athens, AL
ADOPTED: April 27, 1995; REVISED: November 20, 2008;
REVISED: August 17, 2017; April 18, 2024
LEGAL REF: Ala. Code §16-11-9 (1975); Ala. Code §16-21-2 (1975).