



The Truth About Book Bans

Your school library is most definitely *not* distributing pornography to minors.

Don't fall for this dangerous lie designed to undermine the public's confidence in public schools. It's a common claim amongst pro-voucher and other partisan agenda groups such as Moms For Liberty.

Some of this material is pretty racy. If that's not pornography, then what is?

Context is important! That's why those claiming these books are pornographic will provide quotes taken out of context, or take pictures of a select few pages in a graphic novel to prove their point. But the work must be taken as a whole when considering whether or not it is pornographic. Pornography is defined as material created for the purpose of titillation that an objective or broad community would agree meets that criterion. **The presence of nudity or sexual acts does not make a book pornographic** if the purpose of the book is something other than sexual stimulation.

Tell me more about these partisan agenda groups.

Those attempting to censor school library materials are learning what books to challenge and being told which parts are “pornographic” by outside, partisan political groups. The groups provide guidance on how to protest these books at school board meetings. These book bans are not local and spontaneous in nature; rather, they are designed to stir up outrage, which these groups use as a favorite tool for state-wide and national political mobilization.

Parents in Iowa and across the country are communicating via private Facebook groups such as Mary In The Library to coordinate what books to ban. Unfortunately, groups like Moms For Liberty are trying to ban the books they don't like while sponsoring and donating books that advance their own propaganda--an effort which was successful in Johnston.

BookLook.info is a Moms For Liberty affiliated website that publishes book reports on books the group doesn't like and provides an action plan on how to protest these books at school board meetings. The final step in the BookLook action plan is to vote out school board members that don't ban books. According to a Moms for Liberty founder, it is then that parents are going to get elected and are going to "fire everyone."

Public schools and public school boards are supposed to be non-partisan, but both are being politicized by BookLook, Moms For Liberty, and similar partisan organizations.

Pay attention to who is speaking in favor of removing books from your school libraries. Many do not even have children in those schools. Some of the would-be book banners do not have children currently in the district at all. Some have children in the district, but not in the schools where the books are challenged.

Parents are more empowered than ever to be involved in their child's education.

Parents are frequently reminded that they always have the right to contact a teacher and request an alternate text or assignment, or contact the library and ask for certain titles to be restricted for their child.

You do not, however, have the right to dictate what another child can or should read. Ask yourself why opting out your own child is not enough.

Teachers and librarians are not grooming kids to be LGBTQ or encouraging them to change their gender.

That's not how sexual preference and gender identity work.

Gender ideology is a manufactured crisis created by conservative politicians and activists in an effort to frame advancements in women's and LGBTQ rights as a radical ideology that threatens Christian values and corrupts society.

LGBTQ youth are experiencing the highest suicide rate. Why? The lack of acceptance and instances of bullying. There is a national (and global) attack on LGBTQ populations with a larger goal of denying them their rights.

The would-be book banners claim they have nothing against LGBTQ books, yet 41% of banned and challenged titles involve LGBTQ content. It seems that some books have been challenged only because they contain LGBTQ content or discuss gender issues. Consider that only 26 percent of LGBTQ teenagers say they always feel safe in their classrooms, and only five percent say their teachers are supportive of LGBTQ identities. Having a very vocal group of parents demanding that books written by LGBTQ authors or feature LGBTQ characters be removed from the school will not help these students feel safe.

A book ban by any other name....is still a book ban.

When a book is removed from school library shelves, that is a ban, because some students who previously had access to it now do not. The BookLook guide makes it clear that the overall goal is to get books banned. **Don't believe those who claim that they are challenging the books because they're concerned with the state of our schools.** Some of the books challenged at school libraries are later challenged at the community's public library. Recently a library in Michigan was defunded because it would not remove LGBTQ books. In Virginia, two lawmakers recently attempted to restrict Barnes & Noble from selling books they considered obscene to minors.

The banned and challenged books are not too sexually explicit for their age group.

Like it or not, teens are interested in sex; this is by biological design. Most of the challenged books are written specifically for young adult readers, with age-appropriate content. **Frank discussions of sex and sexuality are not inappropriate for young adults**, who are legitimately interested in relationships and sexuality. When presented with characters who have healthy curiosity or positive experiences around sex, reading can be a safe and reassuring way to consider these topics.

Specially trained professionals such as librarians place books within their library's collections according to the target audience based on the recommendations of publishers, professional organizations, and professional journals.

It is not okay for local school officials to remove books over concerns about the content of those books.

The Supreme Court states that **the right to read is implied by the First Amendment**. The public school cannot restrict speech because it does not agree with the content of that speech. The rulings called libraries places for “voluntary inquiry” and concluded that the school board’s “absolute discretion” over the classroom did not extend to the library for that reason.

If school officials remove books from library shelves, either with or without a formal review, simply because they disagree with the content of those books, they are violating their student’s First Amendment Rights and would be open to legal challenges on those grounds.

About Annie's Foundation

Founded in 2022, Annie's Foundation was created in memory of Ann Lohry-Smith, an Ankeny mom and fierce advocate for public education. Our mission is to ensure members of our community have unhindered access to books with characters and subjects that reflect the diversity and complexity of the world around them. Learn more at www.anniesfoundation.com.