SCHOOL LIBRARY SYSTEMS ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK STATE

INNOVATION, COLLABORATION, EDUCATION & ADVOCACY

Statement on Intellectual Freedom in School Libraries

The School Library Systems Association of New York State (SLSA) endorses and affirms the New York Library Association *Position Statement on The Defense of Intellectual Freedom* and the American Library Association *Freedom to Read Statement* in response to the increase in book challenges around the state.

The NY State Board of Regents *Policy on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion* "expects that all school districts...will develop and implement policies and practices that advance diversity, equity and inclusion...with fidelity and urgency" including through "books and instructional materials" (pp. 1-2). SLSA encourages school communities to recognize the essential role of school libraries in the comprehensive implementation of these policies.

School library collections are developed according to School Board policies by certified school librarians who use their professional expertise to research, evaluate, and select high-quality materials, often with input from students and teachers. These collections are carefully curated to both support district goals and curricula, and meet the various needs of the school community.

School libraries provide the opportunity for students to explore information safely and independently according to their First Amendment rights. The removal of library books on social, political, or moral grounds violates students' First Amendment right to pursue "voluntary inquiry" in a school library, as determined in the Supreme Court case *Board of Education v. Pico, 457 U.S. 853, 868-69 (1982)*. Therefore, materials that a school board may exclude for classroom use are still allowed a place in the school library. Any challenges to library materials must be handled through a School Board's existing reconsideration policy and/or procedures.

SLSA recognizes that while collections are developed to meet the needs of all users, individual items within them may not be a match for every child. SLSA supports each parent's/guardian's right to determine what is best for their child. However, this does not give a parent/guardian the right to restrict others' access to materials.

The School Library Systems Association of New York State supports students' right to access information and ideas through their school library and opposes limiting intellectual freedom by restricting or removing school library materials.

American Library Association. (2006). *The Freedom to Read Statement.* http://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/freedomreadstatement

Brennan, W. J. & Supreme Court Of The United States. (1981) *U.S. Reports: Board of Education v. Pico, 457 U.S. 853*. [Periodical] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/usrep457853

New York Library Association. (2021). *Position Statement on The Defense of Intellectual Freedom.* https://www.nyla.org/nyla-position-statement-on-the-defense-of-intellectual-freedom

University of the State of New York. (2021.) *The New York State Board of Regents Policy on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*. Albany, NY: New York State Education Department. https://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/521bra7.pdf