

Top Recommendations for Creation/Updating Policies for:

Academic Libraries

No participant representing this group

Public Libraries

- Make it clear that those challenging books need to live in your county (or, define “Patron” as it applies to your policy in terms of who can submit a book challenge)
- Outline specific procedures for how requests for reconsiderations will be handled
- Since you may get Public Records Requests, you may want to indicate in writing that Request for Reconsideration documents are public documents
- Be specific on the timeline of a challenge—for example, provide a deadline for appealing a reconsideration decision to the library board
- Review or create a Public Comment protocol for board meetings (on the chance that the public starts showing up to meetings to comment on, complain about, or support matters pertaining to challenges).
- Consider including a statement about the library’s role in regard to children – responsibility for materials selected and read by children/adolescents belongs to parents, not the library (policies: youth library card policy; intellectual freedom policy)

School Libraries

- Ensure that your district has clear [policies](#) in place regarding curriculum and library materials reconsiderations and challenges.
- Communicate with stakeholders proactively (School Board members, administrators and staff, families of students) See ideas for [proactive communication](#) from Jennifer LaGarde
- Strengthen policies by:
 - Specifying *who* can submit a request for reconsideration
 - Specifying a timeline for requests
 - Strengthen requirements for submitting a request for reconsideration: A form that requires the complainant to read the entirety of the work and consult professional reviews (such as [this](#) from Fairfax, VA), as well as identify specific passages that violate selection criteria and state requirements (such as [this](#) from South Orange-Maplewood, NJ)
 - State that if a book has gone through an evaluation process and been retained, it will not be reconsidered again for at least 3 years (include provision similar to that stipulated by the Lexington (MA) Public Schools (LPS): “... the District will not convene a Review Committee relative to the same complaint for a period of [three] years.”)
 - Ensure that the reconsideration committee includes appropriate staff members and will be balanced in their process

>> Other Tips & Resources?

- Patrons may be confused about what should be presented in an appeal to the public library board—namely that the focus of the appeal is to make an argument that the challenged material does not comply with the collection development policy

- Consider what qualifies for an item to be submitted for reconsideration, and ensure this information is clear in your policy/on your Request for Reconsideration form:
 - Will you require that the challenged item be read/viewed/heard before it can be challenged?
 - Do you want the form to indicate if the individual represents himself/herself or an organization? If an organization, get the name of the organization.
 - What specific action does the patron want?
 - How long will it take for the library to respond? In the unlikely chance you get A LOT of challenges or experience unexpected delays, leave room for additional time (e.g., A decision will be provided in writing within 30 days of receiving the Request for Reconsideration (exceptions may apply).)

Helpful Resources for School Librarians

- [A Proactive Approach to Book Challenges](#) by Jennifer LaGarde, aka LibraryGirl
- [fREADom to READ Padlet](#) created by Sue Kowalski & modified by Jennifer LaGarde
- [What's It Like to Be the Target of A Book Banning Effort? School Librarian Martha Hickson Tells Her Story.](#) By Martha Hickson in School Library Journal

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