

LAS Libraries Frequently Asked Questions

How do libraries impact children?

Children's libraries equip children with lifelong learning and literacy skills, enabling them to participate and contribute to the community. The links between literacy and social and economic outcomes cannot be overemphasized. Diverse storytimes, access to books, art activities, family areas with opportunities to role play, build and discover – all of these things foster brain development and early literacy and math skills. One of the most important experiences that libraries provide is an opportunity to develop a love of books and reading.

While most adults agree that libraries play a critical role in our children's literacy skill development and the love of reading, we will never all agree on the specific books and themes that are appropriate for which audience. It is certainly a parent's right to revoke their child's access to a title; however, it is beyond their reach to expect the district to pull the title from shelves based on only that parent's opinion. Parents should not regulate what is appropriate for other readers or other parents. From experience, we know that books can help readers explore and deal with circumstances from a fictional standpoint that they might be encountering in their own lives.

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● Does the LAS School Board have a policy guiding the purchasing of library books?

- Yes, the LAS School Board policies guide the purchasing of all classroom materials. The library is considered a classroom within each school and follows all LAS School Board policies. The specific LAS School Board policies that address library books include:
 - 2210 - **CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT - APPROVED COURSES** The Board directs that the curriculum of this District allows for the development of individual talents and interests as well as recognizes that learning styles of students may differ; utilizes a variety of learning resources

to accomplish the educational goals; provides for multicultural education by including, at each level, courses or units which help students understand the culture and contributions of various ethnic groups comprising American society, including, but not limited to Euro-Americans, African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, and Native-Americans.

- **2240 - CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES** The Board of Education believes that the consideration of controversial issues has a legitimate place in the instructional program of the schools. Properly introduced and conducted, the consideration of such issues can help students learn to identify important issues, explore fully and fairly all sides of an issue, weigh carefully the values and factors involved, and develop techniques for formulating and evaluating positions. For purposes of this policy, a controversial issue is a topic on which opposing points of view have been promulgated by responsible opinion or is likely to arouse both support and opposition in the community. The Board will permit the introduction and proper educational use of controversial issues provided that their use in the instructional program: is related to the instructional goals of the course of study and level of maturity of the students; does not tend to indoctrinate or persuade students to a particular point of view; encourages open-mindedness and is conducted in a spirit of scholarly inquiry. The Board recognizes that a course of study or certain instructional materials may contain content and/or activities that some parents find objectionable. If after careful, personal review of the program lessons and/or materials, a parent indicates to the school that either content or activities conflicts with his/her religious beliefs or value system, the school will honor a written request for his/her child to be excused from particular classes for specific reasons.
- **2260 - NONDISCRIMINATION AND ACCESS TO EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY** Any form of discrimination or harassment can be devastating to an individual's academic progress, social relationship and/or personal sense of self-worth. As such, the Board of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation or gender identity), disability, age (except as authorized by law), religion, military status, ancestry, or genetic information (collectively, "Protected Classes") in its educational programs or activities. Equal educational opportunities shall be available to all students, without regard to the Protected Classes, age (unless age is a factor necessary to the normal operation or the achievement of any legitimate objective of the program/activity), place of residence within the boundaries of the District, or social or economic background, to learn through the curriculum offered in this District. Educational programs shall be designed to meet the varying needs of all students. In order to achieve the aforesaid goal, the Superintendent shall: Curriculum Content- review current and proposed courses of study and textbooks to detect any bias based upon Protected Classes, ascertaining whether or not supplemental materials, singly or taken as a whole, fairly depict the contribution of both genders, various races, ethnic groups, etc. toward the development of human society.
- **2266 - DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT STUDENT POLICY** Student Discrimination and Harassment. The District is committed to maintaining a learning environment in which all individuals are treated with dignity and respect, free from discrimination and harassment. The District shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or sexual identity, age, religion, height, weight, marital or family status, disability, military status, genetic information, or any other legally protected category in its programs and activities, including employment.
- **2270 - RELIGION IN THE CURRICULUM** Based on the First Amendment protection against the establishment of religion in the schools, no Board employee will promote religion in the classroom or in the District's curriculum. The Board acknowledges the degree to which a religious consciousness has permeated the arts, literature, music, and issues of morality. The instructional and resource materials approved for use in the District's schools frequently contain religious references or concern moral issues that have traditionally been the focus of religious concern. That such materials may be religious in nature shall not, by itself, bar their use by the District. The Board directs that professional staff members employing such materials be neutral in their approach and avoid using them to advance or inhibit religion in any way. Students should receive unbiased instruction in the schools, so they may privately accept or reject the knowledge thus gained, in accordance with their own religious tenets. The Board acknowledges

that it may not adopt any policy or rule respecting or promoting an establishment of religion or prohibiting any student from the free, individual, and voluntary exercise or expression of the student's religious beliefs. However, such exercise or expression may be limited to lunch periods or other non instructional time periods when students are free to associate.

- Are library books the same as teachers' classroom books?
 - No, library books are purchased through the library program or donated through the library program and not the same as teachers' classroom libraries. Questions regarding teachers' classroom libraries should be directed to the teacher.
- Who chooses which books are added to the school libraries?
 - There are numerous people/organizations involved in choosing books for our school libraries. Student requests, teacher requests, curriculum needs, best seller lists, literary award winners, local authors, Michigan books, professional book reviews, kent county school librarians, school library assistants and numerous "top reads" websites (some examples include Barnes and Noble, Good Reads, School Library Journal, Scholastic, Booklist, Common Sense Media & Amazon) all work together to create a balance of all library book purchases and suggestions. All book recommendations are considered and almost always ordered, particularly student and teacher suggestions.
- What resources are used to help find age appropriate books for the school libraries?
 - All of the resources noted in the previous question are resources used to find new book titles to order for our school libraries. The basic guidelines are generally to have books rated by professional reviewers and publishing companies for the grade levels and ages for which each book is appropriate. Because it is impossible to read every book before we purchase it for our school libraries, we rely heavily on these recommendations.
- What age levels are books divided into and for which grade levels are they appropriate?
 - Books are generally divided by grade levels and ages for which they are appropriate. Before we order each book, we will check both of these numbers. Books are typically recommended for grades K-3, 3-5, 4-6, 5-8, or 9 and up. Books are often also rated by Juvenile or Young Adult (YA). At LAS, Juvenile is generally K-7/8 and YA is typically found at the high school. Please note that there are exceptions to these guidelines based on the book contents. It is impossible to have a foolproof method for each book because students' maturity levels, interest levels, and background knowledge differs greatly even within the same ages and grades.
 - Consider that each school library must provide books for all ages, interests, and maturity levels within that school. For example, when looking at Alto or Murray Lake elementary schools, the library must have books for lower maturity PreK aged students while also providing material for high reading and maturity level 5th grades. That is well over 10 different reading grade ranges alone. It is a very complicated balancing act that requires all involved to help students choose the best books for them.
 - While it is important for parents to be involved and help choose what their child reads, it is also important to remember that parents would not know what is best for other students to read.

- As a parent or guardian, how can I monitor what my child is reading from the LAS libraries?
 - The best way to monitor what your child is reading is to take an active role in their education and book choices. For younger children, read their library books with them. Know what kinds of books your child likes and what he/she is learning in their current curriculum. Have thoughtful conversations about the literature your child is reading and encourage them to find challenging, yet interesting books at their reading level to continue to learn and grow. For older children, ask what book they are currently reading and have discussions about their library books. Encourage your child to read about topics that interest them and suggest books you feel they may enjoy. Read some books together as a family and have book circles to sharpen their listening and conversation skills, spark their imagination, and expand your child's knowledge of the world around him/her. The intimate experience of reading together can yield important lessons about behavior, feelings, and strengthening your relationships.
 - Parents may also login to their child's Destiny or Sora library accounts any time and see what library books/materials are currently checked out and also see a complete history of library checkouts.
- If I have a concern regarding a library book my child is reading, what should I do?
 - If you have a concern about a library book your child is currently reading, please contact your child's teacher. He/she may be able to give some depth into how the book was assigned or chosen.
- If I would like to prohibit my child from reading a specific library book, author or subject, what should I do?
 - If a parent would like specific book titles restricted from their child's access, please send an email to Christine Beachler, Director of Library Media Service for Lowell Area Schools. Her email address is cbeachler@lowellschools.com. Please include your child's name, school building he/she attends, classroom teacher name and the specific book title(s), author(s) and/or topic(s) requesting restrictions.
- If I would like a specific library book to be reconsidered by the LAS Reconsideration Committee, what should I do?
 - An **informal** request for reconsideration of a library book should be directed to Christine Beachler, Library Media Director, Lowell Area Schools. This can be done via email or written correspondence; her email address is cbeacher@lowellschools.com. An informal request will be reviewed by Mrs. Beachler, the building principal and various resources will be researched including (but not limited to): Common Sense Media, other Kent County school libraries, KDL, LAS curriculum guides, professional book reviewer recommendations, and any other relevant resources with information on the specific book title. After the informal review is conducted, Mrs. Beachler or the school principal will respond to the requester.
 - A **formal** request for reconsideration of a library book should be requested through the district Library Media Specialist following LAS School Board policy 9130.

If the request, suggestion, complaint, or grievance relates to instructional materials such as textbooks, library books, reference works, and other instructional aids used in the District, the following procedure shall be followed:

- A. The criticism is to be addressed to the media specialist, in writing, and shall include:
1. author;
 2. title;
 3. publisher;
 4. the complainant's familiarity with the material objected to;
 5. sections objected to by page and item;
 6. reasons for objection.
- B. Upon receipt of the information, the media specialist shall, after advising the principal of the complaint, and upon the Superintendent approval, appoint a review committee which may consist of:
1. one (1) or more professional staff members;
 2. one (1) or more lay persons knowledgeable in the area.
- C. The Superintendent shall be an ex officio member of the committee.
- D. The committee, in evaluating the questioned material, shall be guided by the following criteria:
1. the appropriateness of the material for the age and maturity level of the students with whom it is being used
 2. the accuracy of the material
 3. the objectivity of the material
 4. the use being made of the material
- E. The material in question may not be withdrawn from use pending the committee's recommendation to the Superintendent.
- F. The committee's recommendation shall be reported to the Superintendent in writing within ten (10) business days following the formation of the committee. The Superintendent will advise the complainant, in writing, of the committee's recommendation and advise the Board of the action taken or recommended.

No challenged material may be removed from the curriculum or from a collection of resource materials except by action of the Board, and no challenged material may be removed solely because it presents ideas that may be unpopular or offensive to some. Any Board action to remove material will be accompanied by the Board's statement of its reasons for the removal.

- If I have questions or concerns regarding the school library program, who should I contact?
 - All questions and concerns regarding the library media program should be made to Christine Beachler, Library Media Director, Lowell Area Schools. Her email address is cbeachler@lowellschool.com.