

What you need to know about the MatSu School District Challenge Committee

and how to take action!

In 2008, the MatSu School District adopted a [Library Collection Development](#) policy that ensures that individual parents continue to have the right to determine what their children read. It includes guidelines on how library materials should be selected and a process for parents and community members to bring forth a complaint about a specific title. That policy has served the district well.

Now...

On April 13 2023, the MatSu Borough School District announced that they have set aside that policy. In its place they are forming a “[district wide library committee](#).” According to an FAQ that the district released, the committee will “evaluate the book's educational or literary value using [Alaska Statute 11.61.128](#) [distribution of indecent material to minors] as the criteria.” This policy will allow a small group of people to make decisions for the district as a whole.

You can read more about this in the [Anchorage Daily News](#).

Why does this matter?

- *The makeup and selection of the new committee is not transparent.* There is no place on the application form for students or certified educators who are not librarians to participate in the committee. There is no information on how committee members will be selected or the composition of the board.
- *There is no clarity on how the committee will review books or what books will be reviewed.* What books will the committee review and how does a book get in front of the committee? Will a book be removed based on one word, phrase, or section? Will the entirety of the book be examined?
- *A book's literary or educational value cannot be determined based solely on whether it contains materials that are “indecent” per Alaska Statute 11.61.128.* However, the district has listed this as the only criteria that will be considered.

What can you do?

Please tell the MatSu Borough School District that the current library collection development policy has served the district well. A new policy is not needed. Parents should have the choice to decide what books their children read; a small group of parents should not be allowed to make that choice for the entire district.

To let your voice be heard, you can:

- Apply to join the [district-wide library committee](#)
- Write to the [MSBSD school board](#)
- Testify at a [MSBSD school board meeting](#); the next one will be May 3 at 6pm in the central office
- Send a letter to the editor to the *Frontiersman* (news@frontiersman.com) or [Anchorage Daily News](#)

Produced by the Alaska Library Association, 2023, akla.org.

Your Voice Matters!

