

Key Takeaways—Education and School Board Law webinar Vol. 1 (Book Challenges)

The following are general best practices for school board members on the question of book challenges, age-appropriate content, and related decision-making processes. These were shared as part of CALN's Education and School Board webinar on Nov. 1, 2024.

Please note: These summaries can provide you with helpful information, but they do not and are not intended to constitute legal advice or create an attorney-client relationship. Instead, they are for general informational purposes only. You are encouraged to contact your board attorney, or to hire a personal attorney, to obtain advice with respect to legal matters.

Best practices:

- Be sincere and truthful in your reasoning
- Read the whole book and say so on the record
- Be appreciative to both the complainant and the school district staff for their dedication and advocacy
- Determine whether the book is:
 - educationally unsuitable (for the class or program);
 - inappropriate to the age, grade level, maturity-level, and/or developmental level of students; and/or
 - pervasively vulgar
- Limit your statements on the record (and everywhere else) to only those three standards • Understand all your options for maintaining the book or removing/restricting the book

Avoid this:

- Using a pretext (false reason) for removing or restricting a book
- Adopting the language of others who may mischaracterize a book removal or restriction as “book banning”
- Making a decision to maintain, remove, or restrict the book based on whether you like or dislike the ideas or viewpoints in the book
- Making your decision based on your politics, religion, or other personal preferences • Being afraid to remove or restrict access to books that meet the standards for removal or restriction—it’s your job

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