



Does Your School or Division Have a Reconsideration Policy?

**This is a living document, subject to updates.*

Manitoba School libraries serve as inclusive spaces where students can explore a variety of ideas and perspectives through books and resources. However, there may be occasions when a book in the collection is challenged or questioned by students, parents, or community members. In such cases, having well-defined and effective book reconsideration procedures becomes essential. [The Canadian School Libraries Collection Diversity Toolkit](#) and the [ALA Selection & Reconsideration Policy Toolkit for Public, School, & Academic Libraries](#) provides valuable guidelines, tips and examples for schools and teacher-librarians to handle book reconsideration requests in a fair and transparent manner. The information below summarizes these recommendations.

Create a clear school library mission statement and selection guidelines. The mission statement and guidelines should attend to the principles of intellectual freedom, the role the resource will play in learning, literacy development, representation and diversity. Clear and well thought out selection guidelines can both prevent challenges and serve as a robust defense for the inclusion of a resource in the collection should a challenge come forward. Challenges can then be focused on a requirement to demonstrate how the resource fails to meet the school's selection policies rather than on a values based conversation. Manitoba schools should check if the school division has a policy to follow. Any policy created should align with the province's [Safe and Caring Schools legislation](#), more specifically, the [Respect for Human Diversity policies](#).

Pressure for material inclusion or exclusion from individuals or groups should not be factored into material selection, but instead the professional judgment of a trained library professional should be applied, supported by guideline documents that defend universal principles of protecting intellectual freedom, and put collection diversity within the context of the rights and freedoms of all Canadians.

Canadian School Libraries, Guidelines and Procedures

Resolve issues informally if possible. [Responding to challenges and concerns](#) often happens informally. Sometimes explaining that materials can be returned and that the student has freedom of choice to pick another item will diffuse the situation. Encourage parents to speak with their own children about what they are reading and to provide guidance to make reading choices that align with their family values. When informal discussions do not resolve the situation, a formal request for reconsideration can be made.

Establish Clear Reconsideration Policies. To effectively handle book reconsideration requests, it is crucial to have well-defined policies in place. These policies should outline the [process for submitting a reconsideration request](#), the responsibilities of the parties involved (e.g., the teacher-librarian, the reconsideration committee), and the timeline for review and decision-making. The policies should also emphasize the importance of [intellectual freedom](#) and the principles of diversity and inclusion.

Ensure Transparency and Communication. Open and transparent communication is key throughout the reconsideration process. When a request is received, acknowledge it promptly and inform the requester about the steps that will be followed. Keep all parties involved informed about the progress of the review, and provide opportunities for them to express their opinions or concerns. It is essential to maintain a respectful and non-confrontational dialogue.

Form a Reconsideration Committee. [Assemble a diverse committee](#) consisting of professionals such as teacher-librarians, teachers, administrators, and community members. This committee should reflect the school's demographics and include individuals with knowledge and understanding of intellectual freedom, censorship issues, and the principles of diversity. The committee should review the challenged material impartially, examining it within the context of the school's collection development policies and guidelines.

Conduct a Thorough Review. When evaluating a challenged book, consider its literary and educational merits, relevance to the curriculum, and appropriateness for the intended age group. Consult reviews, professional recommendations, and educational standards to inform the decision-making process. It is important to base decisions on sound educational principles rather than personal preferences, biases or values. The item should remain in circulation while the review is being conducted.

Document the Process. Maintain accurate and detailed records of all aspects of the reconsideration process, including dates, correspondences, committee discussions, and decisions made. Documenting the process ensures transparency and provides a historical record that can guide future decisions and potentially serve as a reference for similar cases.

Effective book reconsideration procedures are vital for maintaining intellectual freedom, promoting diversity, and fostering a respectful learning environment in Canadian school libraries. By following the guidelines provided in the [Canadian School Libraries Collection Diversity Toolkit](#) and the [ALA Selection & Reconsideration Policy Toolkit for Public, School, & Academic Libraries](#), administrators and teacher-librarians can navigate these challenging situations with fairness and transparency. Both these websites have example forms, policies and procedures that can be drawn from to create a set of policies and procedures that will work for your school community.

Additional Sources of Information:

- [Pembina Trails School Division Library Resources Selection Policy](#)
- [Pembina Trails School Division Teaching Controversial/Sensitive Issues Policy](#)
- [Pembina Trails School Division Instructional Resources and Materials Policy](#)
- [River East Transcona School Division Learning Resources Selection](#)
- [River East Transcona School Division Reconsideration of Learning Resources Policy](#)
- [River East Transcona School Division Principles of Learning Resource Selection](#)