



STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

ELLEN E. WEAVER
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

August 25, 2023

Ms. Michelle Spires
President South Carolina Association of School Librarians
P. O. Box 2442
Columbia, SC 29202

Dear Ms. Spires:

School libraries have historically served an important purpose of providing access to much needed educational resources. The state of South Carolina's effort to support and expand school libraries in all areas of our state dates to at least the early 1900s.

Long running efforts to provide funding and appropriate materials to school libraries demonstrate the important role they play: to provide a collection of resources aligned with the school's curriculum to support the instructional program of the school and district. A long-held standard is that these resources be age and developmentally appropriate for the students served.

A key priority of all educators and especially librarians should be to foster strong cooperative relationships with parents to leverage their resources with a goal of maximizing student achievement. A cooperative approach among parents, administrators, teachers, school staff, businesses, and faith and community organizations is the only way we will achieve the ambitious goals we have for the students of this state.

Whether or not existing library selection and purchasing policies have properly ensured that library materials sufficiently support the instructional program of the school and are age and developmentally appropriate are valid questions for parents and all community members to ask.

District and school-level administrators as well as librarians and classroom teachers should be continually asking those questions as well. Questions, concerns, or even challenges to materials that may not meet those standards should be handled transparently, responsively, and in a way that reinforces the necessary partnership between parents and educators and builds trust in our system of public education.

Regrettably, a number of SCASL's recent communications [via its website](#) (such as the American Library Association's Advocacy Toolkit), in [testimony](#) regarding library "censorship" before

members of the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Taskforce, and most recently in a letter sent to local school board members undermine that vital objective.

Parents are entirely justified in seeking to ensure educational materials presented to their children are age-appropriate and aligned with the overall purpose of South Carolina's instructional program and standards. When SCASL labels those efforts as bans, censorship, or a violation of educators' intellectual freedom, the result is a more hostile environment which does not serve the needs of students.

SCASL's decision to send a letter to South Carolina school board members which extensively quoted politicized rhetoric from a New York school district employee who states that, "districts and boards should probably place more consideration on the emotional wellbeing of students rather than on attempts to pacify parents" actively erodes the trust and partnership we must build between parents and educators.

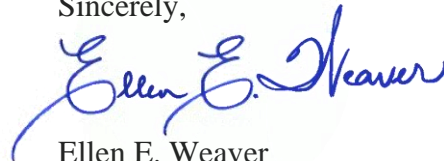
In South Carolina, student well-being and parental satisfaction are not opposing interests.

As a result of SCASL's continued lack of discernment on this foundational issue, the South Carolina Department of Education will formally discontinue any partnerships with SCASL as an organization, effective immediately.

Let me stress, however, that the Department deeply values the role of school librarians and media specialists. We will therefore plan to continue to communicate with them directly, as we seek to provide ongoing professional development and support to foster an atmosphere of cooperation between our schools, parents, and the broader community.

It is my sincere hope that in the future, SCASL will come to recognize and value the role of parents in directing the content of their children's education and cease the use of hyperbolic rhetoric that politicizes these important issues.

Sincerely,



Ellen E. Weaver
State Superintendent of Education

Cc: Governor Henry McMaster
President Thomas Alexander, SC Senate
Speaker Murrell Smith, SC House of Representatives
Senator Greg Hembree, SC Senate Education Chair
Representative Shannon Erickson, SC House Education Chair