



U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights Resolves Investigation of the Removal of Library Books in Forsyth County Schools in Georgia

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The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) today announced a resolution agreement with Forsyth County Schools (district) in Georgia concerning whether the removal of books from its school libraries created a hostile environment for students based on sex, race, color, or national origin under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The district received complaints from some parents and community members about the district providing students access to library books that parents deemed inappropriate because they contained sexually explicit content. One parent group asked the district to shelve LGBTQI+ books separately in school libraries. In addition, communications at the district school board meetings conveyed the impression that books were being screened to exclude diverse authors and characters, including people who are LGBTQI+ and authors who are not white, causing students to express concerns about the impact of the book removals.

OCR received a complaint challenging this district's library book removal as having created a racially and sexually hostile environment for students. OCR investigates every complaint over which it has jurisdiction and resolved this investigation on the specific facts in this district. School and other libraries routinely operate policies to determine which books to offer their members; this district's policy not only did not raise Title VI or Title IX concerns but specifically was designed to ensure diverse and inclusive offerings to students in the district.

Although the district limited its library book screening process to sexually explicit material and posted a statement that it provides resources "that reflect all students within each school community," OCR's investigation identified concerns that:

- Communications at the board meetings provided the district notice that its library book screening process may have created a hostile environment for students. And,
- The district's responsive steps related to the library book screening process were not sufficient to ameliorate any resultant racially and sexually hostile environment.

To resolve OCR's concerns, the district committed to:

- Issue a statement to students in the district explaining the library book removal process and offer supportive measures to students who may have been impacted by that process.
- Administer a climate survey of the student bodies at each of the district's middle and high schools to assess whether additional steps need to be taken. And,
- Implement ongoing monitoring until OCR is satisfied that the federal laws at issue are satisfied.

"I thank Forsyth County Schools for assessing and responding to the needs of the students who may have felt subjected to a hostile environment as a result of the library book screening process and for ensuring that, going forward, it will take appropriate action regarding acts of harassment that create a hostile environment based on sex, race, color or national origin," said Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights Catherine E. Lhamon.

The letter to Forsyth County Schools is available [here](#) and the resolution agreement is available [here](#).

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