

Banning Books Does not Protect Students - It Hurts Them

Every time I hear about another book being pulled from a school library, I think about the one that changed something for me. It was not flashy, and it was not even very popular. But it said something I did not know I needed to hear, and when I finished it, I felt less alone. That is what books can do, and that is what we lose when we take them away.

There is this growing belief that certain books do not belong in schools. Maybe they discuss race, mental health, or sexuality. Maybe they include difficult moments or truths that make people uncomfortable. The reason is usually the same: 'It is too much. Children should not be reading this.' But pretending something does not exist has never made it disappear. In fact, it only makes it harder to understand.

Students already live in a complicated world. They see violence on the news, hear tension at the dinner table, and scroll through all kinds of confusion online. Books do not introduce those problems. They help make sense of them. When we ban stories, we are not protecting anyone. We are taking away a tool that could help a young person find language for what they are feeling.

It is not random which books get removed. It is usually the ones by authors of color, LGBTQ+ writers, and people who write about things that are often ignored. These voices matter because they speak to experiences that have been pushed aside. When we pull those books from shelves, we send a message that those lives do not belong in the conversation.

Banning books also assumes students are not ready to think for themselves. But they are. They ask questions. They notice more than we think. A thoughtful story does not force beliefs—it gives room to explore them. It helps students grow in how they reflect, disagree, and care. What they need is not safety from tough topics. They need space to sit with them.

Not every book belongs in every classroom. But that is why we have teachers and librarians, not to avoid hard conversations, but to guide them. It is better for a student to read something challenging and talk through it than to be left wondering in silence.

And honestly, banning books often makes them more appealing. But the real problem is deeper. It teaches students that feeling uncomfortable means something is wrong. Those difficult things should be avoided. But real growth starts in those moments. Books can offer that space safely. A place to feel, to question, and to realize you are not alone.



So, let them read, wrestle with big questions, and feel unsure sometimes. That is part of learning and growing up, and books can help. That is why they matter, and that is why we should keep them within reach, not push them away.

