

Monday, March 17, 2025

To: North Dakota Legislators

Hello, my name is Patty Steele. I have been an educator since 2003 – 17 years as a middle school language arts teacher. Since moving to Williston in 2019, I began teaching in the school library. I am writing to help you understand why I and many other educators oppose SB 2307.

One of the greatest rewards in being a teacher is seeing students succeed. And for that to happen, teachers sometimes have to see the classroom through a student's eyes and try to understand their perspective. The most effective way to do this is through books. I often tell students that claim to hate reading that "you just haven't found the right book yet." And I try my darndest to connect those students to topics of interest, different genres, and different ways of consuming books. Sometimes I fail at that, but when I succeed, and then that student comes back wanting something similar or the next book in the series, we all succeed. Reading for pleasure can increase self-esteem, decrease anxiety and stress, and help build positive relationships with others.

To practice reading in any form is to offer background knowledge on unfamiliar topics. Historical fiction stories often help their understanding when discussing the parts of a government in U.S. History class. That science fiction book might help them understand the genes and DNA lessons in life science. The possibilities are endless...until we take those possibilities away.

This bill will detract from our ability to connect students with what they need. Librarians believe that parents – and only parents – should have the right to restrict their child's access to library resources. Our students need to see themselves represented, even though some may consider it unreasonable. This decision should only be made by their parents.

Please consider how valuable access to books is to so many. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Patty Steele, M.Ed.

Library Media Specialist

Williston Basin School Dist. #7