

Steven Sepe

From: Paccione-Dyszlewski, Margaret R, PHD <MPaccione@brownhealth.org>
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579 Phenix Avenue
Cranston, RI 02921
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Steven Sepe
Committee Clerk
House State Government and Elections Committee

Dear Representatives:

May I relay a story to you please.

Years ago, I was working on my doctoral dissertation and I had developed a routine of bring my daughter, Nicole, who was in middle school to work with me in the library. In those days journals were still available on shelves and Nicole was great at locating the articles I needed. In fact, she was better at it than I was!

One day we were working in the Fordham University library in New York and Nicole brought me a book that she had pulled off a shelf in the sociology section.

"Mom, look at this! What is this?"

Nicole was pointing to a picture of a lynching that had taken place in the late 1800s. Trust me, this is not the first book I would have selected for 12 year old reading, but there it was and it promoted a productive, age-appropriate teaching experience.

Social and emotional learning is an integral part of education and human development. According to educators and behavioral health professionals, there are five core competencies of social and emotional learning. They are self-management, relationship building, responsible decision making, social awareness, and self-awareness.

Constructive conversation about complicated topics is the foundation of healthy social and emotional learning and books are the cornerstone of this foundation. Books are a steady supply of complex and often thorny subjects that help us develop empathy, increase understanding of social issues and enhance sound decision making. Furthermore, according to surveys, children who participate in discussion about inclusive topics report feeling safer, missed fewer school days and have higher grades.

Please vote to pass the Freedom to Read Act (H-5726) so we create a safe and productive environment in which librarians, authors, illustrators, and publishers can continue to make books of age-appropriate content available to Rhode Island children.

By the way, Nicole survived her childhood and is now a lawyer and active in social justice issues. I rest my case!

Sincerely,

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and
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Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior
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