



## SCHOOLS Ohio

Hillsboro High School and Hudson High School both canceled productions of the play *She Kills Monsters* because of implications that one of the characters might be gay.

*She Kills Monsters* was written by Qui Nguyen and is set in Athens, Ohio, and tells the story of a young woman whose sister dies in a car crash. While attempting to learn more about her sister, she discovers the Dungeons & Dragons campaign she was playing in and that she may have been gay.

After the play's 2011 debut, it has become one of the most widely produced plays at high schools and on college campuses.

Hillsboro High School's administrators shut down their production on October 21, less than a month before it was scheduled to premiere. The superintendent issued a statement proclaiming "the fall play has been canceled this year because [it] was not appropriate for our K-12 audience."

The cancellation at Hillsboro came one week after pastor Jeff Lyle and some parents met with the play's directors.

Jon Polstra, a graduate of Hillsboro High who had both a son and daughter in the play said it was inappropriate "for the school to have allowed that influence to cause them to make their decision to cancel the show."

Students of Hudson High found out their production was canceled when they arrived for their first rehearsal on September 20. The play had been approved, auditions had occurred, and roles were already cast.

For months prior to the play's cancellation, Hudson school board meetings were dominated by debates about critical race theory.

At the September 27 meeting of the Hudson Board of Education,

resident Cara Wright attributed the play's cancellation to the influence of this group, which she said "is disabling our community and our Board from creating a well-rounded experience for our children."

"By not running that play that exposes and thoughtfully delivers different experiences and perspectives, our children are being implicitly told that these different experiences don't matter," said Wright. "Our children deserve better than this."

Hudson's fall production was replaced with Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, a fictionalized account of the Salem Witch Trials which serves as an allegory for McCarthyism.

**Reported in: *Cleveland Scene*, October 26, 2022; *WKRC*, October 22, 2021.**

## South Carolina

At the November 2 board meeting of the Fort Mill School District, parent Ellen Abramo said three books at the school contained pornography and critical race theory: *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe, *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison, and *All Boys Aren't Blue* by George M. Johnson.

On November 3, Fort Mill School District superintendent James Epps Jr. instructed all three books be removed from all district libraries, despite a board-approved reconsideration policy requiring books to remain in circulation while under review.

On November 10, Governor Henry McMaster sent a letter to the South Carolina Department of Education calling for a "comprehensive investigation and a detailed explanation" of how inappropriate books with "obscene and pornographic depictions" entered school library collections.

In the letter, McMaster specifically cited the removal of *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe from the Fort Mill School District, which he claims

"contains sexually explicit and pornographic depictions, which easily meet or exceed the statutory definition of obscenity."

McMaster also sent a copy of the letter to the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division Chief Mark Keel under the belief that "it is likely illegal under South Carolina law" to have materials like *Gender Queer* "in our state's public schools."

McMaster's letter precipitated a statewide spate of swift reviews and removals of school library material.

According to State Department of Education Chief Communications Officer Ryan Brown, a statewide meeting of district superintendents was held during the week before McMaster sent his letters, alerting them to what was to come.

Brown said that at the meeting, every superintendent was provided with the title of Kobabe's memoir and the name of its publisher and told to review their library materials for "appropriateness."

On November 11, Greenville County Schools (GCS) announced they would evaluate all illustrated novels in district libraries in accordance with McMaster's letter.

GCS director of media relations Tim Waller said the one copy of *Gender Queer* that was in the system was withdrawn from Riverside High School on the night of November 10 and was not approved for future purchase.

Also on November 11, the principal of Northwestern High School, under order of the school superintendent Tommy Schmolze, removed *Gender Queer* from the school library. The same day, the librarian for Rock Hill Schools was instructed not to purchase *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison, which was on her order list.

On November 15, the Fort Mill School District announced the



permanent removal of *Gender Queer* from all high school libraries.

A district administrator checked Maia Kobabe's *Gender Queer: A Memoir* out from a district library for review after learning McMaster had called it "pornographic."

A school district administrator for Lexington-Richland District Five checked Maia Kobabe's *Gender Queer: A Memoir* out from a district library for review after learning McMaster had called it "pornographic."

On January 24, parents raised concerns about additional books available at school libraries in Lexington-Richland District Five. Passages were read from *Monday's Not Coming* by Tiffany Jackson and *Gr2grl* by Julie Ann Peters.

While board members typically refrain from responding to public comments, in this instance, board chair Jan Hammond interjected, "I need to find out what teacher is assigning these books."

**Reported in: *Greenville News*, November 11, 2021; *The Hill*, November 12, 2021; *NEWS19*, January 25, 2022; *The Island Packet*, November 16, 2021; *WMBF*, November 11, 2021; *WLTX*, November 10, 2021.**

## Texas

On November 19, the Texas State Board of Education Agency (SBOE) rejected all but one of the middle school health textbooks submitted for approval.

The inclusion of sections on sexual health; consent; LGBTQIA+ issues; and abortion were the reasons the overwhelming majority of textbooks were denied approval.

This decision comes not long after the announcement of initiatives from Governor Greg Abbott and state representative Matt Krause to remove books on sex education, abortion, and

those with LGBTQIA+ themes, characters, or authors from school libraries. Democrats allege the decision is part of a larger effort to quell discussion around sexual orientation and gender identity.

Goodheart-Wilcox publishes the only book approved for use in Texas schools by the SBOE. Its approval came only after they removed references to HIV-prevention practices and to emphasize the effectiveness of abstinence in preventing pregnancy and sexually-transmitted infections above all other methods.

Goodheart-Wilcox also changed every recommendation of talking to a doctor, school nurse, teacher, counselor, or other trusted adult to recommendations to talk to a parent. No mention of gender identity, sexual identity, or LGBTQIA+ individuals exists in the textbook. However, a section discouraging talking about "identity" with teachers and classmates was added.

Board member Rebecca Bell-Metereau advocated for the adoption of more accurate and inclusive textbooks, but her opinions ran contrary to the majority of the board.

"The idea that mentioning anything to do with sex will harm our students is simply not validated by scientific research. The more students know about their bodies, the more likely they are to make wise decisions about their bodies," said Bell-Metereau.

In Texas, parents must opt-in for their children to receive sex education in public schools. In 2020, the SBOE voted to allow teaching about birth control methods other than abstinence for the first time since 1997. Those rules went into effect in August 2022. This was the first slate of health textbooks considered under the new rules.

According to Karen Rayne, a professor at the University of Texas who

researches the success of sex education programs, decisions made by the SBOE impact education at a national level.

"Textbook companies look to Texas to set their standards for the rest of the country because we are such a large textbook purchaser," said Rayne.

(See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy*, v.6 iss.4: For the Record: Texas).

**Reported in: *San Antonio Express-News*, November 19, 2021; *The New York Times*, November 20, 2020.**

## Anchorage, Alaska

On November 11, Anchorage School District superintendent Deena Bishop instructed that all copies of *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe should be removed from district school libraries after a complaint from resident Pete Brown.

There was one copy of the book in the district. According to Bishop, it was moved to the public library.

Brown emailed a complaint to School Board President Margo Bellamy at the end of October. Bellamy forwarded the complaint to Bishop. A committee was formed to review the book. The review process was conducted between November 1 and 10.

Kobabe's graphic memoir is a 2020 American Library Association Alex Award winner and a Stonewall Award Honoree. *School Library Journal* called it "a great resource for those who identify as nonbinary or asexual, as well as for those who know someone who identifies that way and wish to better understand."

*School Library Journal* recommended it for grades 9 and up and called it "a book to be savored rather than devoured, this memoir will resonate with teens. . . . It's also a great resource for those who identify as nonbinary or asexual as well as



those who know someone who identifies that way and wish to better understand.”

Bishop said “the review process determined the book contained adult material,” and instructed that it be removed the day after the review concluded.

Bellamy said that she could not recall any other book being challenged in the Anchorage School District in the last 10 years. However, last year a reading list from the district’s Office of Equity and Compliance was removed from their website in response to a community member’s protests that it constituted critical race theory.

(See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy*, v.6 iss.4: Censorship Dateline: Schools: Anchorage, Alaska).

**Reported in: *Anchorage Daily News*, November 18, 2021; *Must Read Alaska*, November 13, 2021.**

### Soldotna, Alaska

On October 16, Kenai Peninsula Education Association (KPEA) President Nathan Erfurth wrote that “a pattern of bullying and exclusion is developing in our school district.”

Erfurth’s comment was in response to five instances of “bullying and exclusion” targeting LGBTQIA+ students of the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District during the current school year.

Incidents include the removal of pride flags from Homer High School, the recall of numerous LGBTQIA+ titles from the Seward High School library, and the principal of the Kalifornsky Beach Elementary School apologizing to parents after *Flight of the Puffin* was read to students in multiple classrooms.

*Flight of the Puffin* is a children’s book about acceptance that includes non-gender-conforming characters.

Assistant Superintendent Kari Dendurent recalled books ordered for

Seward High School after receiving a forwarded email from a warehouse worker reporting “many LGBTQ books and a CRT [critical race theory] book that was received last week.” The email was forwarded on by Kevin Lyon, the district’s Planning and Operations Director.

The books Dendurent recalled from the school library were:

- *Being Jazz: My Life as a Transgender Teen* by Jazz Jennings
- *The Gay Liberation Movement: Before and After Stonewall* by Sean Heather K. McGraw
- *Everything You Need to Know About Bisexuality* by Greg Baldino
- *I Am a Feminist: Claiming the F-Word in Turbulent Times* by Monique Polak
- *We Are Not Yet Equal: Understanding Our Racial Divide* by Carol Anderson
- *Gay-Straight Alliances: Networking with Other Teens and Allies* by Kristina Lyn Heitkamp
- *The Road to Marriage Equality* by John Mazurek
- *The New Queer Conscience* by Adam Eli
- *Everything You Need to Know About Nonbinary Gender Identities* by Anita Louise McCormick
- *LGBTQ: The Survival Guide for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Teens* by Kelly Madrone

Dendurent asked the school secretary to “get the books back from students” if they were checked out. She also asked Follett for a refund for the titles, stating that they did not align with “our health curriculum and district policy.”

KPEA alleges Dendurent violated two district policies when recalling the titles: the board’s policy governing handling of “Public Complaints

Concerning Instructional Materials” and their administrative rule regarding “Challenges to Instructional Materials.”

District Superintendent Clayton Holland said that after two months in the district office, the books were returned to the library on October 11 after Soldotna High School Librarian Tamra Wear sent a letter to Holland, Dendurent, and members of the school board condemning Dendurent’s actions and calling for a “full disclosure” of the incident.

**Reported in: *Juneau Empire*, November 1, 2021; *KTOO*, October 28, 2021.**

### Scottsdale, Arizona

On December 2, Paradise Valley Unified School District’s governing board voted to terminate the contract of Linda Ihnat, principal of Horizon High School, citing that Ihnat failed to follow procedure requiring her to inform parents about sensitive content in an optional book.

*So You’ve Been Publicly Shamed* by Jon Ronson was on last summer’s Advanced Placement English reading list. Ihnat was put on leave in November after parents complained of references to orgies and bestiality in the book.

Ronson is a Welsh journalist and his book focuses on the fallout from high-profile instances of shaming on social media, schadenfreude, and how shame functions as a form of social control. One section of the book quotes from a 2008 News of the World article about a “Nazi-style orgy in a torture dungeon.”

On November 16, Superintendent Troy Bales sent an apology letter to district parents in which he stated the book was not on a district-approved literature list and was not appropriate for high school-age readers.



Ronson's book was withdrawn from the Horizon High School's library.

**Reported in: *Associated Press*, December 3, 2021; *Channel 12 News*, November 23, 2021.**

### Jonesboro, Arkansas

On October 15, the Craighead County Jonesboro Public Library announced that it would be moving several titles from the children's section to the parents and teachers section of the library.

Library director David Eckert said this section "contains education resources for caregivers to help with school work, learning disabilities, and those who homeschool their children."

The titles moved were primarily sex education materials written for children ages 3 through 8. *Understanding Gender Dysphoria*, a book intended for middle school-aged children, was also moved.

In a related turn of events, on November 8, the Craighead County Jonesboro Public Library board voted 4 to 2 against a proposal that would have required the library director to receive board approval for the purchase of any "sensitive material." This was the third time since August that the board has voted on this issue. The Sensitive Materials Subcommittee also voted against recommending the change on November 1.

Former library board member Amanda Escue, who initially proposed the policy before resigning from the board, said "I don't know what makes y'all think that this is going away because you voted against [it]."

Following controversy around the a Pride Month display the library put up, "sensitive materials" is the term the library board has used to refer to books pertaining to sex education or

which have LGBTQIA+ characters, themes, or authors.

On November 11, Eckert announced his resignation, effective January 1, 2022.

These are the books relocated from the children's section to the parents and teachers section:

- *You Be You! The Kid's Guide to Gender, Sexuality, and Family* by Jonathan Branfinan
- *Where Do Babies Come From? Boys ages 6-8* by Ruth Hummel
- *The Baby Tree* by Sophie Blackall
- *Changing You: A Guide to Body Changes and Sexuality* by Gail Saltz
- *Who Has What? All About Girls' Bodies and Boys' Bodies* by Robie H. Harris
- *It's So Amazing! A Book About Eggs, Sperm, Birth, Babies, and Families* by Robie H. Harris
- *Understanding Gender Dysphoria* by Tammy Gagne
- *What's in There? All About Before You Were Born* by Robie H. Harris
- *It's Not the Stork! A Book about Girls, Boys, Babies, Bodies, Families, and Friends* by Robie H. Harris
- *It's Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex and Sexual Health* by Robie H. Harris
- *Sex is a Funny Word: A Book About Bodies, Feelings, and You* by Cory Silverberg
- *Why Boys and Girls are Different: For Girls Ages 3-5* by Carol Greene
- *Why Boys and Girls are Different: For Boys Ages 3-5* by Carol Greene

(See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy*, v.6 iss.4: For the Record: Jonesboro, Arkansas and *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy*, v.6 iss.3: Censorship Dateline: Libraries: Jonesboro, Arkansas)

**Reported in: KAIT8, October 15, 2021, October 22, 2021,**

**November 1, 2021, November 8, 2021, and November 11, 2021.**

### Siloam Springs, Arkansas

On January 6, the Siloam Springs School District's board voted 3-2 to remove a book about transgender teens from the high school library.

*Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens Speak Out*, by Susan Kuklin, compiles a series of interviews with transgender and non-binary youth.

The book was formally challenged by three parents who believed the book was inappropriate. One of them has a child in the school, two have children in middle schools in the district. According to superintendent Jody Wiggins, the book has not circulated since 2016, so it was never checked out by one of their children.

A committee was convened on December 17 to hear the parents' complaints and consider the book in its entirety. They determined that the book met the school's criteria and submitted a report recommending that it be retained in the library.

The parents appealed this decision to the school board, ultimately resulting in its withdrawal from the collection.

Board member Misti Stephens argued that the book was professionally done and that the excerpts the parents took issue with were not graphic.

"School is about getting different points of view, different perspectives, so that the kids will think through some of the things they have concerns and issues with," Stephens said. "We know there are kids dealing with these issues, so I believe they should have access to [this book]."

Stephens also pointed out that the book's presence on a library shelf does not indicate that the school's administration agrees with the views expressed in it.





Stephens and Board Vice President Audra Farrell voted to retain the book. Grant Loyd, Brian Lamb, and Travis Jackson voted to withdraw it from the school library.

**Reported in: *Siloam Springs Herald Leader*, January 9, 2022.**

### Shelton, Connecticut

At their December 15 board meeting, Amy Romano, a member of the Shelton Board of Education, called on her fellow board members to review *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls, which she considers inappropriate for ninth grade students.

Walls's memoir recounts the poverty, hunger, and abuse she experienced while coming-of-age in a deeply dysfunctional yet loving family. It spent more than eight years on the New York Times bestseller list, was nominated for the Lincoln Award, received the American Library Association (ALA)'s Alex Award as well as the Christopher Award, and was named an ALA Outstanding Books for the College Bound and Lifelong Learners.

*The Glass Castle* is required reading for freshmen enrolled in honors English at Shelton High School.

At the January 11 meeting of the board's Teaching and Learning Committee, ten people submitted testimony, all in support of retaining the book as part of the curriculum.

One of them, high school student Florian Hurlbert, recalled reading the book as a freshman. "This book informs about poverty, abuse, constant moving, real challenges that people go through in this life that you may never know about just by looking at them or talking to them."

Hurlbert said these issues need to be discussed, not removed from the curriculum.

"The job of the BOE is to set policy," Teaching and Learning

Committee Chair Kate Kutash stated. "We trust our educational professionals to select and set required curriculum to carry out our policies."

Kutash cited several portions of the board's policy book indicating that the board has no control over district curriculum. She said setting curriculum and banning books are "not within our governance."

Superintendent Ken Saranich said Romano would have to adhere to the district's reconsideration policy as a parent if she wanted them to entertain removing the book from the curriculum, instead of attempting to use her position on the board to exert undue influence.

"The micromanaging of curriculums, while both students and teachers are living through one of the hardest times in history, is hard for me to wrap my head around," read a statement from the Shelton Education Association. "My colleagues and I have spent years in our education . . . to become professionals in the classroom. I ask that you respect this and our judgment when it comes to what is put forward to our student body."

**Reported in: *Shelton Herald*, December 18, 2022, and January 14, 2022.**

### Flagler, Florida

On November 9, Flagler County School (FCS) Board member Jill Woolbright filed a criminal complaint that *All Boys Aren't Blue* by George M. Johnson was available from the Palm Coast High School, Matanzas High School, and Buddy Taylor Middle School libraries.

Woolbright met with superintendent Cathy Mittelstadt and school board attorney Kristy Gavin on November 3 to discuss the book. She filed her criminal complaint after they did not bring her concerns to the rest of the board.

*All Boys Aren't Blue* is a memoir about Johnson's experiences growing up as a queer Black man which Kirkus referred to as a "captivating merciful mirror for growing up Black and queer today."

Publishers Weekly called it "a balm and testimony to young readers as allies in the fight for equality" and said "in a publishing landscape in need of queer Black voices, readers who are sorting through similar concepts will be grateful to join him on the journey."

*All Boys Aren't Blue* received numerous accolades including being the American Library Association's 2021 Rainbow List selection for Young Adult Nonfiction, one of the Young Adult Library Services Association 2021 Teens' Top 10, one of the 2019 Outstanding Books for the College Bound, and a selection for the Goodreads Choice Award.

Woolbright told the Flagler County Sheriff's Office that "It's a crime to have [that] book in the media centers." Her complaint cited state statute chapter 1006.40 requiring school materials to be "free of pornography" and 847, which prohibits distribution of obscene materials to minors.

In Woolbright's criminal complaint, she notes that she did not read the whole book. "I don't think it matters what the whole story is if those parts are, under our state statute, obscene."

Woolbright submitted the copy of *All Boys Aren't Blue* she checked out from the Palm Coast High Library to a deputy as evidence.

"My book is not what is doing your child harm," said Johnson. "It is you who will do your child harm by not allowing them to one: learn that other people exist in this world who have a different lived experience than them and, two: not allowing them to have the language or this particular



resource to deal with the problems that will come to them in this world when they arise.”

The Flagler County Sheriff’s Office agreed with Johnson and found that no employee of FCS had committed criminal wrongdoing by having *All Boys Aren’t Blue* in libraries or by circulating it to students.

Sheriff Rick Staly’s statement also said that “the determination of whether the book is appropriate for school libraries rests on the shoulders of the Flagler County School District leadership. This matter should have been addressed by the school board . . . before being submitted to the Flagler County Sheriff’s Office as a criminal complaint.”

At the November 16 meeting of the FCS board, 79 public comments spurred by the news of Woolbright’s criminal complaint dragged the meeting out to nearly six hours. Three additional titles were contested during the meeting: *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson; *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You* by Jason Reynolds; and *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas.

A small group of mostly student protestors formed outside the meeting to demonstrate against book-banning and defend the rights of LGBTQIA+ students.

A counter-protest group also showed up carrying white power banners, Christian flags, and anti-LGBTQIA+ posters. They shouted obscenity-laden accusations of pedophilia at the protestors, alongside body shaming and other insults.

“Initially the counter-protest, while ugly and rife with homophobic slurs, . . . was still just a counter-protest,” said a teacher who attended the protest. “As the night wore on, however, the counter-protestors were replaced by men and women dressed in flak jackets, walkie-talkies, and full face and head masks or helmets.”

“The language was uglier, more intimidating,” said the teacher. “They kept shouting violently sexual threats toward a young man with a pride flag. As a result, it seemed less about a message against a book and more about intimidating those with whom they disagree.”

On December 2, the review committees submitted their reports to superintendent Mittelstadt. The committees determined that all four books were appropriate for use and should be retained in all libraries.

On December 7, Mittelstadt announced that *All Boys Aren’t Blue* would be removed from all district libraries, contrary to the review committee’s recommendation. *Speak*, *Stamped*, and *The Hate U Give* were retained.

At the January 18 school board meeting, a three-tiered structure introducing substantial parental restriction of students’ library access was announced. Tier one allows open access for students. Tier two gives parents the option to prohibit their children from accessing up to five titles they specify. Tier three only allows a student to check out titles that their parents have pre-approved.

Parents are required to have a meeting with administrators and school library media specialists before imposing tier two or tier three restrictions.

At the meeting it was also announced that *All Boys Aren’t Blue* would return to library shelves, now that parents had been provided additional tools to prevent their children from reading it.

**Reported in: *FlaglerLive*, November 13, 2021, November 14, 2021, November 16, 2021, November 17, 2021, December 7, 2021, and January 18, 2022; *WFLA*, November 14, 2021; *CNN*, November 18, 2021; *Yahoo!***

***News*, November 19, 2021; *The Daytona Beach News-Journal*, January 19, 2022, and November 19, 2021; *Ask Flagler*, November 19, 2021, and January 21, 2022; *Palm Coast Observer*, November 11, 2021, and December 8, 2021;**

### Indian River County, Florida

On November 16, the local chapter of Moms for Liberty showed up at the Indian River County School District’s board meeting to demanding the removal of a list of 216 books they considered to be “pornographic” from school libraries.

“Once you get into these books again, what you’ll see [is] they’ll have a sex act in them, or they’ll have the critical race theory [CRT],” said Moms for Liberty member Jennifer Pippin. “We’re following state statutes that were written to protect children.”

Teaching CRT was prohibited in Florida by the State Board of Education on June 10, 2021. Legislation strengthening and extending that prohibition has been championed by Governor Ron DeSantis.

The books challenged by Moms for Liberty primarily consist of titles with LGBTQIA+ characters, themes, and authors; books with Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) characters and authors; and books about race and racism. A few sex education titles were also targeted.

Superintendent David Moore said that the challenged books were removed from circulation while undergoing review.

*All Boys Aren’t Blue*; *Blankets: An Illustrated Novel*; *Triangles*; *Grl2grl*; *Deogratias: A Tale of Rwanda*; and *Gone Girl* were withdrawn from all school district libraries.

Before any of the other books are returned, they’ll have to be approved by both the district’s library media



center specialist and the school principal.

These are the titles challenged by Moms for Liberty at the Indian River County School District:

- *#BlackLivesMatter: Protesting Racism* by Rachael L. Thomas
- *A Bad Boy Can Be Good For a Girl* by Tanya Lee Stone
- *A Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley
- *A Certain Slant of Light* by Laura Whitcomb
- *A Court of Mist and Fury* by Sarah J. Maas
- *A Day in the Life of Marlon Bundo* by Jill Twiss
- *A Love Hate Thing* by Whitney D. Grandison
- *A Quick Easy Guide to Queer & Trans Identities* by Mady G
- *ABC: A Family Alphabet Book* by Bobbie Combs, Desiree Keane, and Brian Rappa
- *Ace of Spades* by Faridah Abike-Iyimide
- *Adam* by Ariel Schrag
- *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely
- *All Boys Aren't Blue* by George M. Johnson
- *Almost Perfect* by Brian Katcher
- *And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson, Peter Parnell
- *Another Day* by David Levithan
- *AntiRacist Baby* by Ibram X. Kendi
- *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* by Benjamin Alire Saenz
- *Ask a Queer Chick: A Guide to Sex, Love, and Life for Girls Who Dig Girls* by Lindsay King-Miller
- *Ask Me How I Got Here* by Christine Heppermann
- *Autoboyography* by Christina Lauren
- *Bait* by Alex Sanchez
- *Baseball Saved Us* by Ken Mochizuki and Dom Lee
- *Beautiful* by Amy Reed
- *Beautiful Bastard* by Christina Lauren
- *Being Jazz: My Life as a (Transgender Teen)* by Jazz Jennings
- *Beloved* by Toni Morrison
- *Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens Speak Out* by Susan Kuklin
- *Beyond the Gender Binary* by Alok Vaid-Menon
- *Black Enough: Stories of Being Young & Black in America* by Ibi Zoboi
- *Black Girl Unlimited: The Remarkable Story of a Teenage Wizard* by Echo Brown
- *Black Lives Matter: From a Moment to a Movement* by Laurie Collier Hillstrom
- *Black Software: The Internet and Racial Justice, from the AfroNet to Black Lives Matter* by Charlton D. McIlwain
- *Blankets: An Illustrated Novel* by Craig Thompson
- *Blended* by Sharon Draper
- *Blood Water Paint* by Joy McCullough
- *Bowery Girl* by Kim Taylor Blakemore
- *Boy2Girl* by Terence Blacker
- *Brave Face* by Shaun David Hutchinson
- *Brave Leaders and Activists* by J. P. Miller
- *Breathless* by Jennifer Niven
- *Cemetery Boys* by Aiden Thomas
- *Charmed* by Carrie Mac
- *City of Heavenly Fire* by Cassandra Clare
- *Coming Out and Seeking Support* by Robert Rodi, Laura Ross
- *Crank* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Cross My Heart* by Sasha Gould
- *Dead End* by Jason Myers
- *Dear Martin* by Nic Stone
- *Deogratias, A Tale of Rwanda* by Jean-Philippe Stassen and Beata Umubyeyi Mairesse
- *Did I Mention I Need You?* by Estelle Maskame
- *Dime* by E.R. Frank
- *Doin' It* by Ayshia Monroe
- *Drama* by Raina Telgemeier
- *Draw Me a Star* by Eric Carle
- *Dreaming In Cuban* by Cristina Garcia
- *Dumplin': Go Big or Go Home* by Julie Murphy
- *Eleanor & Park* by Rainbow Rowell
- *Embrace* by Jessica Shirvington
- *Empty* by K. M. Walton
- *Everywhere Babies* by Susan Meyers and Marla Frazee
- *Exit Here* by Jason Myers
- *Exit, Pursued by a Bear* by E. K. Johnston
- *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer
- *Facts Speak for Themselves* by Brock Cole
- *Family Fletcher Takes Rock Island* by Dana Alison Levy
- *Feed* by M.T. Anderson
- *Fifty Shades of Grey* by E. L. James
- *Fly on the Wall: How One Girl Saw Everything* by E. Lockhart
- *Forever* by Judy Blume
- *Full Disclosure* by Camryn Garrett
- *Gender Identity: Beyond Pronouns and Bathrooms* by Maria Cook and Alexis Cornell
- *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe
- *Ghost Boys* by Jewell Parker Rhodes
- *Girls Like Us* by Gail Giles
- *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn
- *Gossip Girl* (series) by Cecily von Ziegesar
- *Graceling* by Kristin Cashore
- *Grasshopper Jungle* by Andrew Smith
- *Grl2grl: Short Fictions* by Julie Anne Peters
- *Hear These Voices: Youth at the Edge of the Millennium* by Anthony Allison
- *Home at Last* by Vera B Williams
- *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi



- *House of Night* (series) by P.C. Cast
- *House of the Spirits* by Isabel Allende
- *How I Paid for College: A Novel of Sex, Theft, Friendship & Musical Theater* by Marc Acito
- *How to be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi
- *Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body* by Roxane Gay
- *I am Alfonso Jones* by Tony Medina
- *I Am Jazz* by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings
- *I am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* by Erika Sanchez
- *I Think I Love You* by Auriane Desombre
- *I'll be the One* by Lyla Lee
- *Imbeciles: The Supreme Court, American Eugenics, and the Sterilization of Carrie Buck* by Adam Cohen
- *It Feels Good To Be Yourself: A Book About Gender Identity* by Theresa Thorn
- *It's Perfectly Normal* by Robie H. Harris
- *Jesus Land: A Memoir* by Julia Scheeres
- *Joshua and the City* by Joseph F. Girzone
- *Julian is a Mermaid* by Jessica Love
- *Killing Mr. Griffin* by Lois Duncan
- *King & King* by Linda de Haan
- *King and the Dragonflies* by Kacen Callender
- *L8r, G8r* by Lauren Myracle
- *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison
- *Leah On the Offbeat* by Becky Albertalli
- *Let's Talk About Love* by Claire Kann
- *Lexicon* by Max Barry
- *Little & Lion* by Brandy Colbert
- *Looking for Alaska* by John Green
- *Lucky* by Alice Sebold
- *Lucy Peale* by Colby Rodowsky
- *Lush* by Natasha Friend
- *Marriage of a Thousand Lies* by S.J. Sindu
- *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* by Art Spiegelman
- *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* by Jesse Andrews
- *Melissa* (previously published as *George*) by Alex Gino
- *Mexican Whiteboy* by Matt De la Peña
- *Mommy, Mama, and Me* by Lesléa Newman and Carol Thompson
- *Monday's Not Coming* by Tiffany Jackson
- *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers
- *More Happy Than Not* by Adam Silvera
- *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* by Christine Baldacchino
- *My Book of Life* by Angel by Martine Leavitt
- *My Sister's Keeper* by Jodi Picoult
- *Nineteen Minutes* by Jodi Picoult
- *Odd One Out* by Nic Stone
- *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck
- *Our Class is a Family* by Shannon Olsen
- *Our Own Private Universe* by Robin Talley
- *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Pérez
- *Out of the Easy* by Ruta Sepetys
- *Peacock Among Pigeons* by Tyler Curry
- *Perfect* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Perfect Chemistry* by Simone Elkeles
- *Purim Superhero* by Elisabeth Kushner and Mike Byrne
- *Rainbow Boys* by Alex Sanchez
- *Rape on Campus* by Bruno Leone
- *Ready or Not* by Meg Cabot
- *Real Live Boyfriends: Yes. Boyfriends, Plural. If My Life Weren't Complicated, I Wouldn't be Ruby Oliver* by E. Lockhart
- *Rick* by Alex Gino
- *Rift* by Andrea R. Cremer
- *Safe* by Susan Shaw
- *Seeing Gender: An Illustrated Guide to Identity and Expression* by Iris Gottlieb
- *Sex: A Book for Teens: An Uncensored Guide to Your Body, Sex, and Safety* by Nikol Hasler
- *Sex is a Funny Word* by Cory Silverberg
- *Sissy: A Coming-of-Gender Story* by Jacob Tobia
- *Sisters = Hermanas* by Gary Paulsen and Gloria Andújar
- *Sloppy Firsts* by Megan McCafferty
- *Sold* by Patricia McCormick
- *Someone I Used to Know* by Patty Blount
- *Sorted: Growing Up, Coming Out, and Finding My Place: A Transgender Memoir* by Jackson Bird
- *Speak* by Laurie R. King
- *Spinning* by Tillie Walden
- *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You* by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi
- *Strange Fruit: Why Both Sides are Wrong in the Race Debate* by Kenan Malik
- *Tenth Circle* by Jodi Picoult
- *Thanks a Lot, Universe* by Chad Lucas
- *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie
- *The Berlin Boxing Club* by Rob Sharenow
- *The Best at It* by Maulik Pancholy
- *The Black Flamingo* by Dean Atta
- *The Black Friend: On Being a Better White Person* by Frederick Joseph
- *The Black Kids* by Christina Hammonds Reed
- *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison
- *The Breakaways* by Cathy G. Johnson
- *The Carnival at Bray* by Jessie Ann Foley
- *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker
- *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls
- *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood
- *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas
- *The Haters* by Jesse Andrews
- *The Infinite Moment of Us* by





- Lauren Myracle
- *The Kingdom of Little Wounds* by Susann Cokal
- *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini
- *The Magic Fish* by Trung Le Nguyen
- *The Music of What Happens* by Bill Konigsberg
- *The New Queer Conscience* by Adam Eli
- *The Nowhere Girls* by Amy Reed
- *The Opposite of Innocent* by Sonya Sones
- *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky
- *The Poet X* by Elizabeth Acevedo
- *The Rape of Nanking* by Iris Chang
- *The Stars and the Blackness Between Them* by Junauda Petrus
- *The Temptation of Adam* by Dave Connis
- *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien
- *The Truth about Alice* by Jennifer Mathieu
- *The Witch Boy* by Molly Ostertag
- *The You I've Never Known* by Ellen Hopkins
- *They Called Me Red* by Christina Kilbourne
- *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher
- *This Book is Anti-Racist* by Tiffany Jewell
- *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson (formerly James Dawson)
- *This Day in June* by Gayle E. Pitman
- *This is My America* by Kim Johnson
- *This One Summer* by Mariko Tamaki and Jillian Tamaki
- *Traffick* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Trail of Crumbs* by Lisa Lawrence
- *Triangles* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Tricks* by Ellen Hopkins
- *TTFN (Ta-ta for now)* by Lauren Myracle
- *Two Boys Kissing* by David Levithan

- *Vampire Academy* by Richelle Mead
- *Vincent Boys* by Abbi Glines
- *Water for Elephants* by Sara Gruen
- *Weird Girl and What's His Name* by Meagan Brothers
- *What Girls Are Made Of* by Elana K. Arnold
- *What is the Black Lives Matter Movement?* by Hedreich Nichols
- *What My Mother Doesn't Know* by Sonya Sones
- *What We Saw* by Aaron Hartzler
- *Who am I Without Him?* by Sharon Flake
- *Wide Awake* by David Levithan
- *Wishtree* by Katherine Applegate, Charles Santoso
- *Woke: A Guide to Social Justice* by Titania McGrath
- *Worm Loves Worm* by J.J. Austrian and Mike Curato
- *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick your Ass* by Meg Medina
- *You Against Me* by Jenny Downham

**Reported in: WPTV, November 16, 2021; CBS12, November 17, 2021; Treasure Coast Palm, November 11, 2021.**

### Orlando, Florida

Orange County Public Schools removed Maia Kobabe's *Gender Queer: A Memoir* from library shelves after receiving a complaint. The district did not follow their policies governing challenged materials.

A couple with five children in the district complained about the book during the October 26 school board meeting. Alicia Farrant said, "There should be no pornography allowed in schools."

*Gender Queer* is a nonbinary coming-of-age graphic novel. Kobabe wrote and illustrated it in part to explain what it means to be nonbinary and asexual. It received an Alex

Award, a Stonewall Book Award, was nominated for an Ignatz Award, and was included on the Young Adult Library Services Association's 2020 list of Great Graphic Novels for Teens.

Before the meeting, Farrant spoke with Jacob Engels, a far-right blogger, protege of Roger Stone, and associate of the Proud Boys. At the meeting Engels read from the book during the public comments section.

The book was part of the libraries of the Boone, Dr. Phillips, and Lake Buena Vista high schools. After the board meeting, Shari Bobinski, a spokesperson for the district, sent an email stating that "Leadership determined it is not appropriate for the targeted age group and have removed it from circulation.

On October 28, Boone principal Dusty Johns apologized to parents in a Facebook post.

On November 17, the National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) sent a letter to the board of Orange County Public Schools urging them to ensure that "all challenges are addressed pursuant to District regulations."

NCAC noted that by deviating from standard procedures, "the District raises the suspicion that the removal of the book was motivated by hostility to the book's position on gender nonconformity," which would be a First Amendment violation.

**Reported in: National Coalition Against Censorship, November 17, 2021; Orlando Sentinel, November 3, 2021.**

### Polk County, Florida

Polk County Public Schools (PCPS) Regional Assistant Superintendent John Hill and several of his colleagues drove to every school in the district to remove every copy of books from a list of 19 titles identified



in a complaint emailed by County Citizens Defending Freedom.

The conservative pressure group alleged the books were in violation of Florida Statute 847.012, dealing with distributing obscene or harmful materials to children.

Superintendent Frederick Heid sent an email to all middle and high school principals and media center librarians stating that “While it is not the role of my office to approve/evaluate instructional or resource materials . . . I do have an obligation to review any allegation that a crime is being or has been committed.”

District spokesperson Jason Geary said that the books were placed “in quarantine.” Geary said the books had not been banned, but rather “removed so a thorough, thoughtful review of their content can take place.”

Geary said the process in place requires establishing a review committee of curriculum and literacy staff, media specialists, parents, and other community members and since copies of some of the titles were held at multiple locations, the review was being conducted at the district instead of the school level.

Stephanie Yocum, representing PCPS librarians, said they were alarmed by the book removal as books typically remain available during a challenge. Yocum also said that based on the titles targeted, the challenges seemed to be about oppressing minority voices.

“If you don’t want to have your child read them, you can choose that. Out of one side of their mouth they want all this ‘parent choice,’” said Yocum. “But with this, they’re choosing for all kids, not just their own.”

Yocum said the books in question depict the mistreatment of people. She wondered if autobiographies about life during the Nazi occupation or in

concentration camps would be next. “Is that the road we’re going down? It sounds like it.

A timeline for the review process has not been disclosed.

Titles challenged:

- *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas
- *Two Boys Kissing* by David Levithan
- *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini
- *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer
- *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher
- *Vincent Boys* by Abbi Glines
- *It’s Perfectly Normal* by Robie Harris
- *Real Live Boyfriends* by E. Lockhart
- *Melissa* (previously published as *George*) by Alex Gino
- *I am Jazz* by Jazz Jennings
- *Drama* by Raina Telgemeier
- *Nineteen Minutes* by Jodi Picoult
- *More Happy Than Not* by Adam Silvera
- *Beloved* by Toni Morrison
- *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison
- *Tricks* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Almost Perfect* by Brian Katcher
- *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe
- *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison

**Reported in:** *The Ledger*, January 26, 2022; *Lakeland Now*, January 26, 2022.

### Ridgeview, Florida

On December 8, Clay County Schools announced they were withdrawing George M. Johnson’s coming-of-age memoir *All Boys Aren’t Blue* from its libraries.

*All Boys Aren’t Blue* is a series of essays about Johnson’s experience growing up as a queer Black man. Publishers Weekly said the book’s “Be yourself” message remains a radical stance for doubly marginalized

individuals” and is “a balm and testimony to young readers as allies in the fight for equality.”

Kirkus named *All Boys Aren’t Blue* one of the best young adult biographies of 2020, it made the American Library Association’s “2021 Rainbow List Top 10 Titles for Teen Readers” and the Young Adult Library Services Association’s “2021 Teens’ Top Ten,” and was a nominee for the Goodreads Choice Award.

Johnson said attempts to silence Black and queer voices were entirely too commonplace. “I knew it was going to rattle the nerves of people who have always suppressed strokes like mine.”

The book was removed from the school district after a group of parents complained to the school board about its existence.

Spokesperson Laura Christmas said the decision was made after a review process and was “based on board policy and state statute.”

Clay County Education Association President Vicki Kidwell expressed concerns over the district’s decision and the emerging trend of censorship. “I think we owe it to our students to give them those viewpoints where they can see themselves,” Kidwell said. “Our librarians are tasked with resisting censorship.”

**Reported in:** *WCJT News*, December 16, 2021; *WPTV*, November 16, 2021; *Treasure Coast Palm*, March 3, 2022.

### St. Petersburg, Florida

The Pinellas County School District instructed high schools to withdraw Maia Kobabe’s *Gender Queer: A Memoir* from circulation at their libraries.

The district did not receive a formal complaint regarding the book and did not follow the procedures laid out in its “Controversial Material” policy when it removed the titles.



Kobabe's graphic memoir is a 2020 American Library Association Alex Award winner and a Stonewall Award Honoree. School Library Journal called it "a great resource for those who identify as nonbinary or asexual, as well as for those who know someone who identifies that way and wish to better understand."

District spokesperson Isabel Mascareñas said in a statement that the book was removed from the shelves of the Lakewood High School and the Dunedin High school libraries "due to the graphic illustrated sexual nature of some of the content." She noted that it "is still available to district staff," however.

Mascareñas said the district reviewed the book after hearing concerns about it from a parent. No formal request for reconsideration was ever received. The district's integrated library system has the ability to prevent circulation of a title to a child upon parental request, however no explanation was given as to why that wasn't done in this case.

Nora Pelizari, spokesperson for the National Coalition Against Censorship, said "When you pull a book off the library shelf, you're dictating what other peoples' kids are allowed to read. That can't be allowed to happen."

Mara Rish, editor-in-chief of Lakewood High's student newspaper, Spartan News Network, said students were "really shocked" to learn the book had been withdrawn from circulation.

Pinellas School Board member Nicole Carr said the district had reviewed the "Controversial Material" policy with their media specialist the week before *Gender Queer* was withdrawn from circulation.

"We do not want to get in the habit of banning books," said Carr. "We want to make sure our process

is well-defined, uniform, and consistently followed."

According to Lakewood High School media specialist Heather Robinson, that process was not followed in this case.

Pinellas Park High media specialist Ginger Brengle said, "I'm extremely disappointed in our district for not following the policy it just instructed us to use."

Angela Dubach, president of the Moms for Liberty Pinellas chapter, has questioned the availability of other books from district libraries, including *All Boys Aren't Blue*.

**Reported in: *Tampa Bay Times*, November 19, 2021; *Spartan News Network*, November 18, 2021.**

### Post Falls, Idaho

On December 18, police arrested a man armed with a loaded handgun and a knife who allegedly trespassed on Hayden Library property while protesting Rainbow Squad, a program for LGBTQIA+ youth.

Rainbow Squad is a monthly Community Library Network (CLN) program for LGBTQIA+ youth and allies where attendees participate in crafts, games, and other activities. They also have sessions for parents, where they can meet other parents, ask questions, and support their children.

CLN Director Amy Rodda said LGBTQIA+ topics aren't generally discussed at the Rainbow Squad teen meetings. "These teens are in a supportive environment where they do crafts and games," Rodda said. "It's just teens being teens."

At the November 20 meeting, attendees were met by a crowd of protestors holding anti-LGBTQIA+ signs. The protestors yelled at youth as they entered the library for Rainbow Squad.

"There were some people who felt intimidated from entering the

building [and] others left because they were feeling so terrible," said North Idaho Pride Alliance Outreach Coordinator Jessica Mahuron, who attended the event. "For some, this is nothing new to them, so they stood strong."

Mahuron believes the picketing stems from nonpartisan library trustee positions being filled by partisan candidates.

"There was an individual who ran blatantly on a campaign wanting to remove Rainbow Squad . . . and also targeting books in the library," said Mahuron. Once elected, this person began "rallying people to library board meetings to speak against programming or books." (See: Journal for Intellectual Freedom and Privacy v.6, iss.2: Is it Legal?: Libraries)

The December meeting of Rainbow Squad was a private event held outside of the library's operating hours. Advance registration was required to attend. A presence from the Kootenai County Sheriff's Office was requested at the meeting after Post Falls police were needed to prevent protesters at the November meeting from obstructing library use.

The protests were organized by Steven Hemming, a pastor at Family Worship Center in Hayden. Police said they "clearly conveyed" the restrictions against blocking the fire lane, parking lot access, and the entryway to Hemming in advance of the meeting.

According to court documents, Thomas Meyer, 67, left the demarcated protest area and refused to return when instructed to by police. While he did eventually return to the designated area, he then left again and approached the library's entrance. After refusing multiple orders from law enforcement, he was arrested for trespassing and obstructing officers.



**Reported in: *Coeur d'Alene/Post Falls Press*, December 1, 2021, and December 21, 2021; *KREM*, December 17, 2021.**

### Downers Grove, Illinois

On November 15, members of the far-right neo-fascist group the Proud Boys attended a Downers Grove school board meeting to demand that Maia Kobabe's memoir *Gender Queer* be banned from school libraries.

Both Edgar Delatorre, who participated in the January 6 insurrection and was caught on video pummeling a protestor at an Anti-Biden rally he organized, and Brain Kraemer, who was charged with brandishing a hunting knife in a threatening manner after driving into a crowd of people at a Black Lives Matter demonstration in Joliet, were in attendance at the school board meeting.

Members of the Proud Boys who attended held signs saying "No Porn" and jeered at board members, parents, and students.

While 18-year-old senior Josiah Poynter addressed the board supporting *Gender Queer's* place in the library, Kraemer shouted "You're a pedophile. You promote pedophilia." According to Poynter, Kraemer drove up to him in the parking lot after the meeting and again shouted "Pedophile" at him.

"The last thing we need is some 30- or 40-year-old man who lives in the middle of nowhere to be calling . . . some kid a 'pedophile,'" said Poynter. "That's not OK."

Lauren Pierret, a senior at Downers Grove North, said "it made me very uncomfortable" to have "men in the back yelling things out for no reason" while she and her friends addressed the board.

Tabitha Irvin, a Downers Grove North junior, said "It kind of fell apart after the board meeting." She

said she's begun seeing students wearing Trump garb to class and starting arguments against the book.

"Students are now getting caught up in the political controversy . . . and that's exactly what fuels groups like the Proud Boys," Irvin said. "We can't stoop down to their level and engage with them, because it only strengthens them."

**Reported in: *Chicago Sun-Times*, November 21, 2021.**

### La Grange, Illinois

At both the November 15 and December 20 board meetings of the Lyons Township High School board of education, Laura Tussing read passages from the books *All Boys Aren't Blue* and *Monday's Not Coming*, which she described as "pornographic."

*All Boys Aren't Blue* is a series of essays about Johnson's experience growing up as a queer Black man. Publishers Weekly said the book's "Be yourself" message remains a radical stance for doubly marginalized individuals" and is "a balm and testimony to young readers as allies in the fight for equality."

Kirkus named *All Boys Aren't Blue* one of the best young adult biographies of 2020, it made the American Library Association's "2021 Rainbow List Top 10 Titles for Teen Readers" and the Young Adult Library Services Association's (YALSA) "2021 Teens' Top Ten," and was a nominee for the Goodreads Choice Award.

*Monday's Not Coming* received the Coretta Scott King-John Steptoe Award for New Talent and was a School Library Journal "Best Book," a 2019 YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults "top ten" selection, and a Walter Dean Myers Award for Outstanding Children's Literature Honor Book, among other accolades.

Jackson's novel deals with issues of gentrification, race, poverty, mental

illness, and cultural biases about the value of missing children. School Library Journal recommended it for grades 9 and up and called it "a spell-binding, profoundly moving choice for YA collections."

Both books are available from the high school library and *Monday's Not Coming* was on last year's summer reading list.

"Salty language. Is this what qualifies as quality literature today?" Tussing asked. She also stated that the books were "less than well-written."

La Grange Trustee Beth Augustine gently pushed back against Tussing's repeated calls for the books' withdrawal from the two high school campus libraries.

"I am concerned not that people have different opinions about literature, but [that] people think that banning books essentially is the way to go," said Augustine. "While we all might not be comfortable with that content, where do we start or where do we end if we begin banning books again? There's an internet full of things that our kids can easily get a handle on."

The district's library collection development policy has procedures covering the reconsideration of material. These require receipt of a written complaint form to initiate the process. Unless Tussing submits a formal request for reconsideration, a committee will not be formed to review the materials to which she has raised verbal objections.

**Reported in: *Patch*, November 24, 2021, and December 23, 2021.**

### Oneida, Illinois

On November 15, after receiving parent complaints, the ROWVA District 208 Board of Education directed the principal to suspend teaching of Angie Thomas's *The Hate U Give*. A freshman English class was halfway





through reading it at the time. No date was set for when the temporary suspension would end.

The complaints about the book were that it contained strong language and portrayed police in a negative light.

*The Hate U Give* is a young adult novel narrated by a Black teenager who witnesses a White police officer shoot and kill an unarmed Black man during a traffic stop. It won the Michael L. Printz Award, the William C. Morris Award for best debut book for teens, and was a Coretta Scott King Book Award Honor Book.

The board's decision to suspend teaching of *The Hate U Give* was made during a closed session which was not on the agenda. Following backlash against this maneuver, they opened up discussion of the book for public comment at their January board meeting.

On January 18, the ROWVA District 208 Board of Education announced that *The Hate U Give* would remain suspended from classrooms until it has been reviewed by a curriculum committee. However, it will continue to be available for circulation from the school library.

Board member Missie Shepherd cautioned that "I think as a board we're walking a thin line between critiquing our teachers to the point where they feel that we don't value their expertise."

District Superintendent Joe Sornberger argued that the book should neither be banned nor suspended. "When you deny the author the right of free expression, you in turn deny everyone else the right to see a different perspective," said Sornberger. He noted the district already has a policy in place allowing parents to opt their children out of reading assignments to which they object.

Board member Ryan West made a motion to remove *The Hate U Give* from the curriculum but retain it in the library. The motion died on the floor, failing to find a second.

A motion was made by Matthew Johnson to postpone any further action on the book until the board has approved "the core values of the ROWVA school district," a curriculum committee has been established, and the book has been reviewed by them. The motion carried 4-2, leaving the fate of the book indefinitely in limbo.

**Reported in: WQAD8, January 19, 2022; *The Register-Mail*, January 19, 2022.**

### Muncie, Indiana

On November 15, Muncie Central High School (MCS) students protested the school's handling of student artwork related to police brutality and the Black Lives Matter movement in the wake of complaints from school resource officers.

The posters were created by students as part of a class assignment to reflect on Alan Moore's graphic novel *V for Vendetta* and issues in America today. The posters were displayed outside of the classroom. The school resource officers complained that the posters negatively portrayed law enforcement.

All three of the school's resource officers confronted Emma Martin, a Junior, about her poster, and got into a heated debate with her.

School resource officers are members of law enforcement. They are armed with tasers and batons and have the authority to arrest school children.

According to MCS Chief Communications Officer Andy Klotz, "The display created a disruptive discussion between a student and school resource officers that the student and other observers found offensive."

One of those offended by the officers' actions was teacher Melissa Zimmerman. "The things revealed to me that day broke my heart. I'm one of the only Black teachers in the school. They felt comfortable and emboldened to say the things they did. I was told 'police brutality is not a thing,'" said Zimmerman.

Katy O'Connor, the teacher who assigned the project, was asked to move the posters inside her classroom to reduce their visibility.

Students from O'Connor's class then organized and staged a peaceful protest in the main atrium of the school, demanding the posters' return to the hallway and accountability for the school resource officers.

Klotz said, "The students voiced their concerns and engaged in civil discussion with school and district officials."

Despite their civil response, MCS sent the students home and switched to online classes for the following three days in an effort to quell further protests.

The school board sent an email to parents informing them that the return to in-person instruction was done "in order to ensure school safety for all and to permit the educational process to move forward, there will be no more in-school protests allowed."

School Board President Jim Williams wrote, "We are listening to their voices with the goal to address constructive concerns and to get our students back into class as soon as practicable."

Muncie Human Rights Commission organized a peaceful protest on November 23, including a March from the school to City Hall.

**Reported in: *Liberation*, November 30, 2021; *Motherboard*, November 18, 2021; *Muncie Star Press*, November 16, 2021.**



## Carmel Clay, Indiana

Parents attending the July 26 Carmel Clay Schools Board meeting complained about several books offered at school libraries because they included transgender characters or had sexually explicit content.

Superintendent Michael Beresford said the district would examine all of the books mentioned during the meeting.

On their Facebook page, Unify Carmel states they are targeting any book they can find through the search terms “transgender” and “gender identity.” Unify Carmel is a local conservative group opposed to wearing masks, teaching “critical race theory,” and to diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

After the meeting, Unify Carmel member Michelle Ball added Yaa Gyasi’s *Homegoing* to the list of books they were challenging. Ball sent an email to Carmel Clay Schools’s attorney calling for the immediate removal of the book based on the belief it was violating Indiana code 35-49-3-3 regarding dissemination of matter harmful to minors.

In response, *Homegoing* was collected from students and removed from the classroom and the curriculum.

The disposition of the other challenged titles has not been reported on or documented in school board meeting minutes.

Additional titles challenged by Unify Carmel:

- *Call me Max* by Kyle Lukoff
- *Introducing Teddy: A Gentle Story About Gender and Friendship* by Jessica Walton
- *It’s Perfectly Normal* by Robie Harris
- *Doing it Right: Making Smart, Safe, and Satisfying Choices About Sex* by Bronwen Pardes

- *L8r, G8r* by Lauren Myracle
- *Crank* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Phoenix Goes to School: A Story to Support Transgender and Gender Variant Children* by Phoenix Finch
- *Sparkle Boy* by Leslea Newman
- *The Infinite Moment of Us* by Lauren Myracle
- *Jesus Land* by Julia Scheeres
- *Water for Elephants* by Sara Gruen
- *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* by Christine Baldacchino
- *Woke: A Guide to Social Justice* by Titania McGrath
- *Julian is a Mermaid* by Jessica Love
- *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas
- *Seeing Gender: An Illustrated Guide to Identity and Expression* by Iris Gottlieb

(See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy*, v.6 iss.4: For the Record: Carmel, Indiana).

**Reported in: FOX 59, July 27, 2021; Unify Carmel, August 27, 2021.**

## Westfield, Indiana

A group called Unify Westfield started an online petition calling for the removal of all books dealing with gender identity or sexual orientation from Westfield Washington elementary schools.

At their February 9, 2021 meeting, Parent Veronica Winkleman spoke to the school board regarding her concerns with the books on the petition as well as the title *Sometimes People March* by Tessa Allen.

Winkleman said she felt it was inappropriate for elementary students to learn about reproductive rights. She also said she “does not like people choosing their pronouns.”

At the March 9 board meeting, six people expressed concerns about the availability of books about gender identity at the school library. At the

April 20 meeting, nearly 90 people addressed the board about the books.

All of the books challenged were moved behind the counter at the library, out of students’ reach.

The Westfield Washington School District has a materials challenge process that requires review by a committee following the submission of a request for reconsideration form. It does not appear the policy was followed in this instance.

Brooke Watkins, district director of secondary curriculum instruction and talent development, told the board that the district has only received four requests for reconsideration in the past four years.

Books targeted:

- *I am Jazz* by Jazz Jennings
- *It Feels Good to Be Yourself* by Theresa Thorn
- *Julian is a Mermaid* by Jessica Love
- *Melissa* (previously published as *George*) by Alex Gino
- *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* by Christine Baldacchino
- *One of a Kind Like Me* by Laurin Mayeno
- *They, She, He, Me. Free to Be* by Maya Christina Gonzalez

**Reported in: Indianapolis Star, April 2, 2021, August 30, 2021.**

## Ankeny, Iowa

On November 24, Ankeny school district removed Maia Kobabe’s memoir *Gender Queer* from all district libraries, following the recommendation of a committee convened to review it.

Kobabe’s graphic memoir is a 2020 American Library Association Alex Award winner and a Stonewall Award Honoree. *School Library Journal* called it “a great resource for those who identify as nonbinary or asexual, as well as for those who know



someone who identifies that way and wish to better understand.”

School Library Journal recommended it for grades 9 and up and called it “a book to be savored rather than devoured, this memoir will resonate with teens. . . . It’s also a great resource for those who identify as nonbinary or asexual as well as those who know someone who identifies that way and wish to better understand.”

The committee determined that while *Gender Queer* met the criteria of the district’s selection policy and was “in no way pornographic, the explicit visual and graphic nature of the graphic novel overshadowed the message to the reader.”

The committee recommended that three other books be retained by district libraries: *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie, *All Boys Aren’t Blue* by George M. Johnson, and *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* by Jesse Andrews.

According to the librarian, parents have also challenged *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison and *Queer, There, and Everywhere* by Sarah Prager, but the fates of these titles were not delineated in the school district’s press release.

**Reported in: Ames Tribune, December 7, 2021; Ankeny Community School District News, November 24, 2021.**

### Johnston, Iowa

Parents Mandy and Rodney Gilbert submitted formal reconsideration requests to remove the books *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas and *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie from the curriculum of the Johnston Community School District.

The Gilberts objected to the themes the books contain and the profane language they include. Rodney Gilbert

went so far as to claim that the school was violating the law by making the books available. “It’s about the law and giving obscene things to children. If I gave this to my 15-year-old neighbor, I would be arrested,” he said.

The first meeting of the reconsideration committee took place on November 3 at a fraught time for both Iowa politics and the school board. Brad Zaun, president of the state Senate Judiciary Committee, attended the meeting and said he supports charging teachers with felonies for having “obscene” books in school and classroom libraries.

Earlier this year, Governor Kim Reynolds signed a law barring the teaching of critical race theory (CRT) and other concepts from government training and classroom curricula.

On the day before the meeting, three candidates who signed the 1776 Action Pledge to “defeat toxic, CRT-inspired curriculum and restore honest, patriotic education” were elected to the board.

Former school board president Justin Allen, who was not re-elected, expressed concerns about these candidates’ actions before the election. “If you sign a pledge to an outside organization, you’re no longer thinking independently [about] what’s best for the district.”

Allen wasn’t alone in holding these sentiments. A protest against the board members who signed the 1776 Action Pledge was organized by community members and held outside the library on November 22.

*The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* is a semi-autobiographical novel about Junior’s life on the Spokane Indian Reservation and attending a nearly all-White public high school. It explores themes of poverty, racism, alcoholism, and bullying.

Alexie’s book won numerous awards including the National Book

Award for Young People’s Literature, the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award, and the Odyssey Award for the best audiobook for children or young adults.

*The Hate U Give* is a young adult novel narrated by a Black teenager who witnesses a White police officer shoot and kill an unarmed Black man during a traffic stop.

Thomas’s book has also won numerous awards, including a 2018 Michael L. Printz Award, three Goodreads Choice Awards, the 2018 William C. Morris Award for best debut book for teens, the 2018 Indies Choice Award for Young Adult Book of the Year, and it was a 2018 Coretta Scott King Book Award honoree.

Jake Chapman, president of the Iowa State Senate, attended the second meeting of the reconsideration committee on November 18. He said he would work to make providing youth with such books a felony and would see that teachers are charged.

“I don’t know why the school thinks that they’re above the law, but I intend to do something about it,” said Chapman.

Numerous Johnston High School students in attendance spoke out in defense of the books. Regarding *The Hate U Give*, Sofia Bristow said “This book should not be censored to make lessons of racial injustice palatable to White audiences.”

“I experienced my first act of racism at six years old,” said freshman Kaylee Jones. “All that *The Hate U Give* is doing is drawing attention to the problem and I’m asking you to hear me out.”

The reconsideration committee issued a recommendation to keep the books in the curriculum, provided that detailed notice about the books would be given to parents going forwards. Superintendent Laura Kacer endorsed their recommendation.



The Gilberts appealed the committee's decision, requiring a determination from the school board.

At their regular December 13 meeting, the school board voted 4-3 to uphold the recommendation that had been made by the reconsideration committee and endorsed by Superintendent Laura Kacer.

The three board members who voted against the motion were Deb Davis, Clint Evans, and Derek Tidball, the newly elected members who signed the 1776 Action Pledge.

**Reported in: WHO13, November 18, 2021; KCCI, November 22, 2021; Des Moines Register, November 19, 2021.**

### Muscatine, Iowa

Numerous residents voiced their opinions about banning books during the public comments section of the November 15 meeting of the Muscatine school board.

While there was no related item on the agenda and while the parent of a high school student had complained about the book *All Boys Aren't Blue* by George M. Johnson, no formal request for reconsideration was received until January.

*All Boys Aren't Blue* is a memoir about Johnson's experiences growing up as a queer Black man which Kirkus referred to as a "captivating merciful mirror for growing up Black and queer today."

Publishers Weekly called it "a balm and testimony to young readers as allies in the fight for equality" and said "in a publishing landscape in need of queer Black voices, readers who are sorting through similar concepts will be grateful to join him on the journey."

*All Boys Aren't Blue* received numerous accolades including being the American Library Association's 2021 Rainbow List selection for

Young Adult Nonfiction, one of the Young Adult Library Services Association 2021 Teens' Top 10, one of the 2019 Outstanding Books for the College Bound, and a selection for the Goodreads Choice Award.

During the school board meeting, most residents spoke out in opposition to book bans of any kind.

Resident Tom Emerick said "Our students need an unrestricted library, and in this critical time we can't afford to have students without critical thinking skills."

Boy Scouts of America troop leader Frantz Silberger spoke about the requirement for new scouts to learn about diversity, equity, and inclusion in order to earn their Citizenship in Society merit badge.

"If we want people to live in Muscatine, I personally believe we need to educate people—and that includes our children—on the importance of welcoming all people, regardless of their differences," said Silberger. "As you move forward, I hope you consider who we are and who we want to be before you ban educational materials for youth."

Deb Hagy spoke on behalf of Faith United Church of Christ's Open and Affirming Committee. "As citizens of Muscatine and people of faith, we respectfully ask you to consider the banning of books as both divisive and undemocratic."

"We believe the school library should reflect and respect the diversity of the community. We also believe that school libraries should honor and support the freedom of speech and the freedom to learn about the world from multiple perspectives," Hagy said.

"I have some experience with being abused as a child," said Shelly Servadio Elias. "The library was my refuge." She said reading about women overcoming similar experiences gave her hope.

"Banning books, education, and those safe spaces and places where children can read about different experiences and backgrounds cuts off lifelines to the outside world . . . If you take that away from them because you want to ban a book because of your own ideology or narrow world view, that's about you, not about what's best for your child."

*All Boys Aren't Blue* is currently under committee review in accordance with the district's reconsideration policy for books and instructional materials.

**Reported in: Muscatine Journal, November 19, 2021.**

### Greenville, Michigan

During the December 13 meeting of the Greenville Public Schools Board of Education, two residents raised concerns about books available from school libraries.

Jon Behrends did not specify any titles he was concerned about, but lamented that the district was a place where "vulgar pornographic content" was available for students to check out. Behrends asked, "Does the board support 13-year-old children reading vulgar material?"

Behrends requested that the board tender a list of every book within district libraries, a list of every book ordered in the last four years, and a breakdown of the district's social-emotional learning curriculum.

Resident Jennifer Gunderson focused her comments on *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* by Jesse Andrews, which is available at the high school library.

*Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* is a coming-of-age novel about two high school friends who make films together and a classmate with leukemia. It explores themes of friendship, jealousy, and loss. It was selected as one of the Young Adult Library





Services Association “2013 Top Ten Best Fiction for Young Adults” titles.

“This book is full of disgusting language,” Gunderson lamented. “Why are our students reading this type of stuff?”

Superintendent Linda Van Houten said that the district has an established process for reconsidering materials, which Gunderson and Behrends were welcome to utilize.

Van Houten said that the district has a request for reconsideration form “that allows individuals to submit their concerns to be reviewed. This form is reviewed by the professionals in the field, administration, and a committee representative of our district, before decisions are made. We must balance the interests of all students and families within our district with the opinions of some.”

In January, the district received requests for reconsideration for *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* as well as for *Looking for Alaska* by John Green.

**Reported in: *The Daily News*, December 30, 2021.**

### Kirkwood, Missouri

During the public comments section of the November 29 meeting of the Kirkwood School District Board of Education, a parent claimed that school libraries had 21 “pornography-related books.”

Another speaker raised objections to *Stamped from the Beginning* by Jason Reynolds on the grounds that it promoted critical race theory (CRT).

Other parents praised the work of the district’s equity task force and spoke about the importance of avoiding censorship and allowing children access to a wide range of ideas, books, and authors.

“Apparently, I’m supposed to be outraged by the books in our school libraries. I am not,” said parent Sarah Pitt Kaplan. “I can’t deem what is

appropriate for another person’s child, nor should I have them dictate what my children can read.”

The spate of community members who came prepared to speak either for or against the banning of books from school libraries was apparently spurred by an event at the October 25 board meeting. During that meeting, Jessica Crandell left the podium and approached the board members with a copy of Maia Kobabe’s *Gender Queer*.

The book was not in any district library and Crandell was barred from school board meetings for a year for failing to follow the policy governing

The district confirmed that all but one of the titles mentioned were in school libraries and available for circulation to students.

Formal requests for reconsideration have not been filled out and submitted regarding these books.

At the board’s January 10 work session, the district’s policy governing the reconsideration of library materials was updated.

The policy now requires that principals receive all book reconsideration requests; that committees reviewing materials for reconsideration consist of two teachers, the principal or designee, a librarian from the school, two parents of students at the school, a district patron, and an additional administrator.

Committee members are required to read challenged materials in their entirety. Decisions made by a reconsideration committee apply to all schools in the district and the same items cannot be challenged again for 36 months.

The titles challenged during the public comments section of the November 29 board meeting were:

- *Fences* by August Wilson
- *#MurderTrending* by Gretchen McNeil

- *All Boys Aren’t Blue* by George M. Johnson
- *Black Girl Unlimited* by Echo Brown
- *Breathless* by Jennifer Niven
- *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* by Alison Bechdel
- *Flamer* by Mike Curato
- *Heavy: An American Memoir* by Kiese Laymon
- *Living Dead Girl* by Elizabeth Scott
- *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Perez
- *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie
- *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison
- *The Girl Who Fell From the Sky* by Heidi W. Durrow
- *Haters* by Jesse Andrews
- *Crank* by Ellen Hopkins
- *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky
- *The Handmaid’s Tale* by Margaret Atwood
- *Testaments* by Margaret Atwood
- *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas
- *This One Summer* by Mariko Tamaki
- *Looking for Alaska* by John Green
- *Stamped from the Beginning* by Ibram X. Kendi

**Reported in: *Webster-Kirkwood Times*, December 6, 2021, and January 17, 2022.**

### Lindbergh, Missouri

In October, a group of parents submitted forms requesting reconsideration of 16 titles held by libraries in the Lindbergh Schools District.

The books were not read in their entirety, but the parents listed a litany of complaints, including “college-level novel,” “consensual sexual encounters,” “drug use,” “drinking blood,” “abortion,” “rape scene,” and the strange claim that presenting a book including sexual content to a minor constituted pedophilia.



The review committee recommended retaining *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe, *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson, *The Testaments* by Margaret Atwood, and *All Boys Aren't Blue* by George M. Johnson.

The parent group appealed this decision to the school board. At their December 16 meeting, the board voted 6-1 to retain *The Handmaid's Tale* for library use and for use in the curriculum. They also voted 6-1 to retain *Gender Queer* in libraries.

On February 24, the board voted 6-1 to retain *All Boys Aren't Blue* and *The Testaments*. The board voted unanimously to retain *This Book is Gay* but with a the label "mature for high school" added to the online catalog and inside the cover.

The disposition of the additional titles is yet to be determined.

Titles challenged:

- *Living Dead Girl* by Elizabeth Scott
- *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson
- *Crank* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Perez
- *Black Girl Unlimited* by Echo Brown
- *Flamer* by Mike Curato
- *Fences* by August Wilson
- *Anger is a Gift* by Mark Oshiro
- *Heavy: An American Memoir* by Kiese Laymon
- *The Handmaid's Tale: The Graphic Novel* by Margaret Atwood and Renee Nault
- *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood
- *Testaments* by Margaret Atwood
- *The Girl Who Fell from the Sky* by Heidi W. Durrow
- *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe
- *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison
- *All Boys Aren't Blue* by George M. Johnson

**Reported in: FOX 2, November 4, 2021, and December 22, 2021; ; Call Newspapers, March 3, 2022.**

### Monett, Missouri

In response to complaints from parents, Monett High School removed Nic Stone's *Dear Martin* from the curriculum.

*Dear Martin* is about Justyce McAllister, a Black student attending a predominantly White Preparatory high school in Atlanta. After being thrown to the ground and handcuffed by a White police officer, he attempts to make sense of life as a Black teenager today by writing letters to the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

*Dear Martin* was nominated for numerous awards and was included on the American Library Association's 2018 Top Ten Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers lists.

Suzy Gonzalez was disturbed by the decision to remove the book from the curriculum, as her son felt a personal connection to it.

"His peers in his class started telling him that racism didn't exist," Gonzalez said. "To me, it is important for the community to know that this is a problem in their own backyard."

Superintendent Mark Drake said that the book wasn't pulled because of its content, but because it wasn't properly approved for use in the curriculum.

Principal Stephanie Heman wrote to parents that "Selecting books for students to read in the classroom will undergo strict review to avoid similar situations."

An updated process that will use a committee of teachers, administrators, and parents to review all reading materials is expected to be in place for the 2022-2023 school year.

Drake said that *Dear Martin* "would be a book that would go through the

committee if the teacher still wanted to teach that or even if we wanted to have it on the shelf of the library."

Director of communications Ana Espinoza said that the district has copies of the book which parents can check out if they want to read it.

Andy Brandt, who has three children in the district, expressed concerns over the proposed plan to pre-screen new reading material.

"They don't need to be banning any more books because of a small, vocal minority," Brandt said. "If they think this book is wrong, I question their ability to filter the other books."

Students who had been assigned to read *Dear Martin* will be reading *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, instead.

**Reported in: Associated Press, January 14, 2022; Springfield News-Leader, January 13, 2022.**

### North Kansas City, Missouri

During the October 26 board meeting of the North Kansas City School District, members of the Northland Parent Association (NPA) lobbied for the removal of *All Boys Aren't Blue*, *Out of Darkness*, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic*, and *Lawn Boy*.

A Google Sheet called "MO State Public School Books List" was shared by NPA prior to the meeting. It identified a total of 32 books, the number of copies of each held by every high school in two school districts, whether they were digital or hard copies, and the "offensive pages" in each title.

The sheet was riddled with typos and three of the five tabs—the ones for middle and elementary school library holdings—remained unused by NPA. The tabs for high school materials contained numerous empty columns labeled "[School Name] (School District)." The formatting and lacuna suggest that some manner of book



banning template was utilized by the association.

All the challenged books were by or about Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), and/or had LGBTQIA+ authors, characters, and themes.

Following the October board meeting, superintendent Dan Clemens instructed librarians to remove *Fun Home* and *All Boys Aren't Blue* from the libraries of the North Kansas City, Oak Park, Staley, and Winnetonka high schools in violation of district policy.

Upon learning of this, the National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) sent a letter to the board pointing out that “it is obviously improper for the District to ignore duly adopted Board rules and regulations.”

NCAC pointed out that the books which were improperly removed from district libraries both serve to support the district’s mission statement to “inspire lifelong learning” and “embrace inclusion.”

*Fun Home* is a graphic memoir exploring themes of sexual orientation, gender roles, suicide, emotional abuse, and family dysfunction. It received numerous accolades including the Eisner Award for Best Reality-Based Work and a nomination for the National Book Critics Circle Award. Publishers Weekly named it the best comic book of 2006 and The New York Times, Amazon.com, and The Times of London all named it one of the best books of 2006.

*All Boys Aren't Blue* is a memoir about Johnson’s experiences growing up as a queer Black man which Kirkus referred to as a “captivating merciful mirror for growing up Black and queer today.”

Publishers Weekly called it “a balm and testimony to young readers as allies in the fight for equality”

and said “in a publishing landscape in need of queer Black voices, readers who are sorting through similar concepts will be grateful to join him on the journey.”

*All Boys Aren't Blue* received numerous accolades including being the American Library Association’s 2021 Rainbow List selection for Young Adult Nonfiction, one of the Young Adult Library Services Association 2021 Teens’ Top 10, one of the 2019 Outstanding Books for the College Bound, and a selection for the Goodreads Choice Award.

On November 2, a group of students started an online petition against banning books from the North Kansas City school district. It garnered over 1,100 signatures.

On November 19, the school district sent a letter to parents announcing that *Fun Home* and *All Boys Aren't Blue* would be returned to library shelves in the district as their earlier removal had violated students’ First Amendment rights.

Prior to this reversal being reported, but after it took place, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Missouri sent an email to school board president Jan Kauk stating that “The Constitution prohibits community members or school officials from imposing their own personal views and concerns upon an entire school community.”

“The Board has no basis for denying student access to a specific book based on the disagreement and discomfort of certain parents with the book’s content,” wrote Anthony Rothert, Director of Integrated Advocacy for ACLU of Missouri. “Removing a book from library shelves constitutes unconstitutional viewpoint discrimination while also impermissibly stigmatizing students who would choose to read the book.”

The ACLU email called for the return of *Fun Home* and *All Boys Aren't Blue* to the shelves; for books to remain continuously available to students while titles or district policies are under review; to deny further requests to ban books; to review policies and practices related to library book selection to ensure “conformity with constitutional law”; and “for student advocates to have an opportunity to be heard on this issue.”

This is the full list of titles targeted by NPA:

- *#MurderTrending* by Gretchen McNeil
- *All Boys Aren't Blue* by George M. Johnson
- *Anger is a Gift* by Mark Oshiro
- *Black Girl Unlimited: The Remarkable Story of a Teenage Wizard* by Echo Brown
- *Blended* by Sharon Draper
- *Breathless* by Jennifer Niven
- *Crank* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Dead End* by Jason Myers
- *Fences* by August Wilson
- *Flamer* by Mike Curato
- *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* by Alison Bechdel
- *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe
- *Heavy: An American Memoir* by Kiese Laymon
- *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison
- *Lily and Dunkin* by Donna Ge-phart
- *Living Dead Girl* by Elizabeth Scott
- *Looking for Alaska* by John Green
- *Monday's Not Coming* by Tiffany Jackson
- *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Pérez
- *Testaments* by Margaret Atwood
- *The 57 Bus: A True Story of Two Teenagers and the Crime that Changed Their Lives* by Dashka Slater



- *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie
- *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison
- *The Girl Who Fell From the Sky* by Heidi W. Durrow
- *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood
- *The Handmaid's Tale (The Graphic Novel)* by Margaret Atwood
- *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas
- *The Haters* by Jesse Andrews
- *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky
- *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson (formerly James Dawson)
- *This One Summer* by Mariko Tamaki and Jillian Tamaki
- *Trans Mission: My Quest to a Beard* by Alex Bertie

**Reported in:** *ACLU Missouri, November 22, 2021; The Hill, November 22, 2021; National Coalition Against Censorship, November 23, 2021; NewsOne, November 23, 2021; KSHB, November 22, 2021, Northtown News, November 4, 2021.*

## Rockwood, Missouri

Three parents came to the October 21 meeting of the Rockwood School District Board of Education to voice objections to books that were available through district libraries.

They distributed flyers with passages and illustrations from five of the books they were challenging: *Crank*, *Gender Queer: A Memoir*, *The Haters*, *Looking for Alaska*, and *This One Summer*. The fliers also listed which school libraries the books were available at.

Janet Deidrick called the books “pornography” and said they include drinking, foul language, teen pregnancy, oral sex, and a rape scene.

Assistant superintendent Shelley Willott said Rockwood had policies in place to allow parents to place restrictions on what their children

are allowed to check out from district libraries. The district also has a policy governing how requests for the reconsideration of materials are handled.

“It’s important to remember that for every person that doesn’t want their child to read a certain book, there’s somebody who does want their child to read those books,” said Willott.

Willott noted that no formal challenges had been received for any of the books parents objected to at the meeting.

Two books for which formal requests for reconsideration had been received were on the official agenda, however.

The board voted unanimously to retain *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas in the district’s middle school libraries.

*The Hate U Give* had previously been used in an 8th grade “critical literacy unit” and the review committee recommended retaining the book as the unit was now called “analyzing contemporary literature” and it no longer included Thomas’s book.

The board also voted unanimously to retain *Batman: The Brave and the Bold—Clobbered by Clayface* in the Chesterfield Elementary School library.

After the October 21 meeting, nine formal requests for reconsideration were received from the district.

Language Arts Department Chair Lisa Donovan expressed her belief that people at the board meetings have taken elements of the books out of context and represented the material in an inaccurate fashion.

“I think some of the accusations have been a bit exaggerated. I think teachers and librarians give thoughtful time to choose books that will help kids in any way possible,” said Donovan.

At the December 16 board meeting, it was announced that a review committee of two teachers, two librarians, a curriculum coordinator, a school board member, four parents, and two high school students decided to retain *All Boys Aren’t Blue*, *Crank*, *Gender Queer: A Memoir*, *Looking for Alaska*, *The Haters*, and *Where I End and You Begin* without restriction.

Willott says that the person who challenged the book shares their concerns with the committee and then is dismissed so the committee can “have authentic conversation without interruption and without fear of their conversation ending up on social media.”

“We did have an instance where we did have a challenger take pictures of the committee in one of our sessions, so there was concern from them,” noted Willott.

The three other books under review are *This One Summer*, *Heroine*, and *The Breakaways*.

Additional titles which were objected to during board meetings or on social media but which were not formally challenged are:

- *Breathless* by Jennifer Niven
- *Dead End* by Jason Myers
- *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison
- *Monday’s Not Coming* by Tiffany Jackson
- *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie

**Reported in:** *The Lancer Feed, January 4, 2022; Leader, November 1, 2021; St. Louis Public Radio, November 18, 2021; FOX2 Now, December 29, 2021.*

## Wentzville, Missouri

On January 27, the Wentzville R-IV School District’s board voted 4-3 to withdraw Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* from its library, despite the





review committee's recommendation to retain it.

A formal request for reconsideration of the book was received last October, citing a scene of rape and incest. Six members of the committee voted to retain the book, two voted to retain it with restrictions, and one voted to withdraw the title.

Keri Skeeters, Assistant Superintendent of Teaching & Learning, sent the committee's recommendation and comments to the board on January 13 and asked the board to approve their recommendation and retain *The Bluest Eye*.

Emboldened by the board's willingness to ban books, requests for reconsideration were then submitted for the following:

- *All Boys Aren't Blue* by George M. Johnson
- *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* by Alison Bechdel
- *Gabi, a Girl in Pieces* by Isabel Quintero
- *Heavy: An American Memoir* by Kiese Laymon
- *Invisible Girl* by Lisa Jewell
- *Lawn Boy* by Jonathon Evison
- *Modern Romance* by Aziz Ansari

The board voted to remove all of them, despite the fact that *Heavy*, *Fun Home*, and *All Boys Aren't Blue* were never reviewed by a committee, as required by the district's "Challenged Materials" policy.

On February 15, the ACLU of Missouri filed a lawsuit in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri "to stop the removal of books that are by and about communities of color, LGBTQ people, and other marginalized groups."

Anthony Rothert, Director of Integrated Advocacy of ACLU of Missouri said, "The First Amendment

protects the right to share ideas, including the right of people to receive information and knowledge. We must protect this right, including educators' and students' rights to talk and learn about race and gender in schools."

**Reported in: *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 26, 2022; *ACLU Missouri*, February 15, 2022.**

### Hillsborough, New Jersey

On November 8, a student's artwork was removed from the Hillsborough Middle School on orders from a board member, despite objections from principal Joseph Trybulski.

"What happened today dishonored the work of those who defend our communities and our Constitution. What happened today was an affront to critical thinking, academic freedom, and the freedom of expression of our young people," says Trybulski.

The student's poster was part of a display of African American history, literature, album covers, and icons, which included social commentary and pieces on social justice. The removed poster depicted a raised fist labeled "Black Lives Matter" superimposed over the names of individuals who were victims of police violence along with the caption "Stop Police Brutality Now."

"It is abhorrent to me that any public official, including a member of this board of education, would use his or her authority to advance an agenda in censoring the views of others in an academic or any other setting."

John Oliver, the board member who ordered the removal of a student's artwork, said he took issue with the student's decision not to show the other side of police brutality. "We need to give both opposing views and let our young students and let our children make the decisions for themselves."

As the National Coalition Against Censorship pointed out in their November 18 letter to the Hillsborough Township Board of Education, "our courts have time and again reaffirmed that the First Amendment prohibits public school officials from censoring student speech, including artistic expression, merely because they find it offensive or provocative."

Disagreement with an opinion expressed in a student's artwork does not meet the standard established by the Supreme Court in *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, 393 U.S. 503 (1969), that "students have the right to speak on school grounds as long as they do not substantially disrupt the activities of the school."

**Reported in: *National Coalition Against Censorship*, November 19, 2021; *Patch*, November 10, 2021.**

### Haywood, North Carolina

At the January 10 board meeting for Haywood County Schools, Superintendent Bill Nolte said Nic Stone's *Dear Martin* would be removed from the tenth grade English curriculum after a parent complained that it contained strong language.

*Dear Martin* is about Justyce McAllister, a Black student attending a predominantly White Preparatory high school in Atlanta. After being thrown to the ground and handcuffed by a White police officer, he attempts to make sense of life by writing letters to the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Nic Stone said the shooting deaths of Jordan Davis and Michael Brown inspired and informed her writing.

*Dear Martin* was nominated for numerous awards and was included on the American Library Association's 2018 Top Ten Amazing Audiobooks for Young Adults and Top Ten Quick Picks for Reluctant Young Adult Readers lists.



The district has a policy governing “parental inspection of and objection to instructional materials.” While the policy does not require review by a committee, it does state “the board believes professional educators are in the best position to determine whether a particular instructional material is appropriate for the age and maturity of the students and for the subject matter being taught.”

The policy also states that “books and other instructional materials may be removed from the school media collection only for legitimate educational reasons and subject to the limitations of the First Amendment.”

According to Smoky Mountain News, “when a parent takes issue with an assigned reading, the course of action in Haywood County Schools is for the parent, teacher, and principal to discuss the issue and then provide the student with an alternative reading assignment.”

Nolte’s actions in this case do not align with either district policy or past practice.

No copies of *Dear Martin* are available from the school library, so with its removal from the curriculum, students can no longer access the book at school.

**Reported in: *Smoky Mountain News*, January 26, 2022.**

### Hillsborough, North Carolina

Lieutenant Governor Mark Robinson posted a Facebook video on October 9 calling for the removal of *Melissa* (previously published as *George*) by Alex Gino, *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison, and *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe from all schools in North Carolina.

Robinson has repeatedly called on parents to report schools to law enforcement if these and other books

with LGBTQIA+ themes are available in their libraries.

In the video he referred to homosexuality and transgenderism as “filth” and “garbage” and condemned school districts for pushing “an LGBTQ agenda.”

On October 11, droves of protesters showed up at the Orange County Board of Education meeting—some supporting Robinson’s crusade, others opposing it.

“The idea that I, as an educator, brainwashed children into being trans or bisexual or queer is absurd,” said teacher Jayme Carr. “If I could brainwash, my kids would be doing better in school.”

After the meeting, a parent filed a formal complaint about *Gender Queer*, *Lawn Boy*, and *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Pérez in a letter to Orange County High School principal Carlos Ramirez.

The school review committee, consisting of the principal, media coordinator, and teachers, read the books and recommended they be retained in the library based on their educational value and age-appropriateness.

The parent appealed the decision to school district administrators. The district review committee reached the same conclusions as the school review committee.

Board member Sarah Smylie said “I do not agree with pandering to these attempts to limit students’ access to voices of people of color and LGBTQ perspectives.”

The parent then appealed their decision to the Orange County Board of Education.

Board chair Carrie Doyle said that students who met with board members were unanimous in wanting to retain access to the books.

“They needed these books. It was already hard enough being LGBTQ+

in our schools,” said Doyle. “These books were a comfort to them, these books helped develop empathy. These books helped them understand their peers. These books speak to the stories of racial minorities.”

Board vice chair Brenda Stephens said, “As a librarian, I don’t ban books. I try to get books in the hands of as many people as possible because we need to learn from them.”

On January 31, the board voted to retain the books indefinitely.

(See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy*, v.6 iss.4: For the Record: North Carolina).

**Reported in: WRAL, October 10, 2021, and October 11, 2021; *The News & Observer* February 1, 2022; WCHL, February 2, 2022.**

### Wake County, North Carolina

On December 2, nine criminal complaints were filed with the Wake County Sheriff’s Office against the largest school system in North Carolina. The complaints alleged that the Wake County Schools district was distributing obscene and pornographic material to minors through their libraries.

The complaints listed the following books:

- *All Boys Aren’t Blue* by George M. Johnson
- *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe
- *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison
- *Melissa* (previously published as *George*) by Alex Gino
- *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Pérez
- *Red, White & Royal Blue* by Casey McQuiston

All of the titles included have LGBTQIA+ characters, themes, and/or authors.



Separately, Wendy Runyon, one of the parents who filed a criminal complaint, said that she and other parents had found 144 different titles at the 188 schools in the district. She said they were motivated to seek them out by Lieutenant Governor Mark Robinson's complaints about the existence of sexually explicit books in the state's public schools. (See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy*, v.6 iss.4: For the Record: North Carolina).

Runyon said she didn't expect charges would be filed as a result of the complaints, but hoped her actions would draw attention to the issue and serve as a warning to other parents.

Wake County District Attorney Lorrin Freeman elected not to file any criminal charges, having determined that the circulation of these library books was not a criminal matter.

A request for reconsideration of *Lawn Boy* was also submitted to Wake County Schools. The review committee recommended that it be retained on December 16 and the parent appealed that decision from the school level to the district.

*Lawn Boy* is a semiautobiographical coming-of-age novel exploring themes of poverty, racism, and sexual identity. It won a 2019 Alex Award, given by the Young Adult Library Services Association to adult books that have special appeal to young adults.

The district supported the school's decision to retain the item, and the parent then appealed to the board to review the book. On March 10, the board upheld the earlier decisions to retain the title.

"I found overall the theme of this book was about perseverance and overcoming trauma and self-sufficiency and hope" said board member Christine Kushner. "I felt this book could help kids who do have trauma in their lives. If it helps one student, then that's enough."

**Reported in: *The Charlotte Observer*, December 3, 2021; *The Raleigh News & Observer*, January 12, 2022; *WRAL*, March 10, 2022.**

### Bristow, Oklahoma

At the January 10 school board meeting for Bristow Public Schools, it was announced that as a result of challenges to 47 books, 8 titles were removed from district libraries, 10 books were relocated (such as moved to the high school library from the middle school library, moved to AP English classrooms, or moved to classrooms for higher grade levels from where they were previously available), and 7 were restricted by being marked 16+.

The books were removed from classroom and school library shelves throughout the district in November when a group of parents first raised objections to them. Assistant superintendent and director of instruction Krista Buden said the district has a review process in place that could have been used, but no parent ever filled out the paperwork to begin the process.

Batschelett, one of the parents who spoke out against the books, said she refused to fill out a request for reconsideration form, because "Once it's been reviewed, it cannot be reviewed again for five years, regardless of the result of the review." In other words, if she followed the official process, there was a chance she would have to accept the outcome if the committee's opinion of the books' appropriateness differed from hers.

Library media specialist Allison Hilburn served on the committee that reviewed the challenged books. She said the eight books that were removed did not meet the district's selection criteria regarding overall purpose and quality.

Burden said that all of the reading materials provided are grade-level appropriate.

"There are varying opinions from parents as to what is appropriate for their child and that's why library media centers are about access and parents making that choice and being involved in the process of what their child is going to read," said Burden.

Bristow schools allow parents to place restrictions on what their children can check out, including barring them from using the school library, classroom libraries, or anything flagged for 16+.

Books challenged (note: 4 of the challenged titles were not disclosed and the titles which were removed or restricted to 16+ were not identified in board records; some of the titles which were relocated were also not identified):

- *A Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley—moved to junior/senior AP classroom libraries
- *A Court of Frost and Starlight* by Sarah Maas
- *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds
- *Bad for You* by Abbi Glines
- *Before I Fall* by Lauren Oliver
- *Between Shades of Gray* by Ruta Sepetys—moved to the high school library
- *Bless Me, Ultima* by Rudolfo Anaya
- *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson
- *Broken Things* by Lauren Oliver
- *Burned* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Crank* by Ellen Hopkins
- *Dear Evan Hansen* by Val Emmich
- *Eclipse* by Stephenie Meyer—moved to the 8th grade English classroom
- *Fairest: Levana's Story* by Marissa Meyer—moved to the high school library
- *For Black Girls Like Me* by Mariama Lockington
- *Hold Me Closer: The Tiny Cooper Story* by David Levithan



- *House of Furies* by Madeleine Roux
- *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou
- *I Was Here* by Gayle Forman
- *Infamous* by Elana Arnold
- *Looking for Alaska* by John Green
- *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding—moved to the 7th grade English classroom
- *Mastiff* by Tamora Pierce
- *Melissa* (previously published as *George*) by Alex Gino
- *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck
- *On Thin Ice* by Julie Cross
- *Other Broken Things* by C. Desir
- *Red, White & Royal Blue* by Casey McQuiston
- *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark* by Alvin Schwartz
- *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson—moved to the high school library
- *Symptoms of Being Human* by Jeff Garvin
- *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie
- *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison—moved to junior/senior AP classroom libraries
- *The Dark Descent of Elizabeth Frankenstein* by Kiersten White—moved to the high school library
- *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas
- *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold
- *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton—moved to the 8th grade English classroom
- *The Prom: A Novel Based on the Hit Broadway Musical* by Saundra Mitchell
- *The Way I Used to Be* by Amber Smith
- *They Called Us Enemy* by George Takei
- *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher
- *Whale Talk* by Chris Crutcher
- *You Should See Me in a Crown* by Leah Johnson

**Reported in: KJRH, January 11, 2022; News 9, December 13, 2021; Sapulpa Times, November 9, 2021.**

### Newberg, Oregon

On November 3 the Newberg Education Association filed a suit over a policy passed by the Newberg school board barring school employees from displaying “political, quasi-political or controversial” signs or images on campus.

The policy started out as a directive to remove signs and posters supporting the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement or expressing LGBTQIA+ Pride.

At the July 13 school board meeting, vice chair Brian Shannon said display of BLM and Pride symbols “equates to indoctrination of students into certain ideological beliefs.”

Some Newberg community members countered that they wanted the district to affirm support for Black students and the district’s LGBTQIA+ community.

After being advised that their initially proposed ban would be blatantly unconstitutional for singling out certain types of speech, they pivoted to the current verbiage of the ban, which passed 4-3 when it was voted on in late September.

Public protests against the board’s actions and in support of BLM and the LGBTQIA+ community followed the policy’s passing.

The ACLU, the State Board of Education, and Democrats in the Oregon legislature have all issued statements against the controversial policy.

The 18-page lawsuit claims the policy violates the First and Fourteenth Amendments. The suit also argues the policy violates Article I, Section 20 of the Oregon

Constitution which protects “against vague laws that confer unbridled discretion.”

(See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy*, v.6 iss.4: For the Record: Newberg, Oregon)

**Reported in: OPB, November 4, 2021.**

### Dubois, Pennsylvania

On November 18, the board voted to restrict access to Angie Thomas’s *The Hate U Give*. Going forwards, students will only be able to check out the book if their parents give permission for them to do so.

*The Hate U Give* is a young adult novel narrated by a Black teenager who witnesses a White police officer shoot and kill an unarmed Black man during a traffic stop.

Thomas’s book has also won numerous awards, including a 2018 Michael L. Printz Award, three Goodreads Choice Awards, the 2018 William C. Morris Award for best debut book for teens, the 2018 Indies Choice Award for Young Adult Book of the Year, and it was a 2018 Coretta Scott King Book Award honoree.

“We, the leadership of the DuBois Area School District, support the freedom to read,” said superintendent Wendy Benton. She went on to stipulate that since Thomas’s book is recommended for individuals that are 13 or older, “and because the majority of students at the middle school are not 13 or older, *The Hate U Give* will be made available to students upon request with parental permission.”

The book was initially challenged during the public comments section of the school board’s October meeting by parent Deidre Brown. Brown criticized the school for purchasing books that had not been approved by every parent in the district and demanded they remove *The Hate U*





Give as she found it “disgusting and unacceptable.”

Justifications she provided included its appearance on the American Library Association’s Banned & Challenged Books List and a list published by Social Justice Books.

“In case you haven’t decoded yet,” Brown said, “We’re talking about books that promote and encourage critical race theory.”

In response, Benton said “I want to apologize that you were offended by the content of that book. I agree with you that it is inappropriate and it should not be on the shelf.”

**Reported in: *Bucks County Courier Express*, October 29, 2021, and November 21, 2021.**

### Perkasie, Pennsylvania

In an email sent to parents in December, the Pennridge School District announced they were removing all “library books with content regarding gender identity from the current elementary student circulation.”

Anthony Rybarczyk, assistant superintendent for elementary education, said the books would be moved to a part of the building accessible to administrators and guidance counselors and that titles would be made available to parents who request them.

A list of the books removed from the district’s school libraries has not been made available and the only title confirmed to have been swept up in the purge of LGBTQIA+ content is *Heather Has Two Mommies* by Leslea Newman.

Melissa Burger, an elementary school librarian for the Central Bucks School District, said the book’s removal seemed to be discriminatory and unconstitutional.

Burger said that *Heather Has Two Mommies* is “a very developmentally appropriate book for that age group

... and there’s no reason why that shouldn’t be in the library.”

The letter the district sent out regarding the books’ removal stated that since “some books referencing gender identity will not show up in a search” of the library catalog, all remaining library books would be subject to challenge using the process for reconsideration in the district’s “Procedures for Selecting Library Books.”

Resident Stacey Smith said the district’s decision to remove LGBTQIA+ titles from their libraries was a discriminatory act.

“The library section should represent the entire student population,” said Smith. “Removing these books from the general student population and sticking them in a counselor’s office only accessible with parental permission not only insinuates that the student interested in this topic is doing something wrong or needs some sort of psychological help, but could also very well be in violation of a student’s First Amendment rights.”

On December 15, Cheri Derr, director of pupil services, also sent guidelines to elementary school guidance counselors, social workers, and nurses stating that “we do not discuss or use terms related to LGBTQ.”

Derr also provided guidelines that name and pronoun changes for students at any grade level can only be made with parental approval.

Witold Walczak, legal director for ACLU Pennsylvania, said the new disclosure requirements detailed in the document for medical professionals, guidance counselors, and social workers “raise very serious concerns about professional confidentiality requirements that they have.”

“Very often in these kinds of situations, parents are not an option. Sometimes parents are the problem. If you impose this disclosure

requirement, you’re shutting the door to students being able to talk to school professionals,” said Walczak. “From a policy perspective, you’re setting these students up for a situation where there is no adult that they can talk to.”

There is already precedent at Pennridge High School for the harm to students that can result. James Peuplie, a transgender student, said that in 8th grade he asked his teacher to use his proper name and pronouns. The school asked his mother and father to come in to discuss his gender identity.

“A couple of nights later, my dad ended up kicking me out,” said Peuplie. He ended up in the hospital where he was diagnosed with situational depression.

At the December 20 meeting of Pennridge School District’s Community Committee, resident Jane Cramer said her daughters have been bullied in district schools because they have “two mommies.”

“A robust DEI [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion] plan for the district would include training for teachers and other school personnel to support my daughters,” said Cramer. She said it would also “educate all students in an age-appropriate way on LGBTQ families.”

Pennridge currently has no DEI plan, as the board voted to indefinitely pause all DEI activities at their August 23 board meeting.

Numerous attendees of the meeting requested a list of all the LGBTQIA+ titles which the district had removed from circulation.

School board and committee members Megan Banis-Clemens and David Reiss said *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe had been withdrawn from the high school library but they were unable to provide information about any other titles.

Earlier in 2021, the district removed books by two Black authors



from the 9th grade English curriculum, *This is My America* by Kim Johnson and *American Street* by Ibi Zoboi. Local pressure group called “Pennridge for Educational Liberty” posted a message on Facebook on August 22 celebrating that the district made the change they requested.

During the public comments section of the January 25 school board meeting, community member Dave Bedillion applauded the district for reviewing every book in the elementary school libraries in order to restrict access to all LGBTQIA+ content. He thanked the board for keeping books like *Call Me Max* by Kyle Lukoff, which he read from, out of children’s hands.

A group called the Pennridge Improvement Project organized a virtual book drive as a way of resisting the district’s initiatives to remove LGBTQIA+ books and books by Black authors from school libraries. They’re placing the titles in little free libraries in the eight towns which comprise the district.

At the January 3 meeting of the Pennridge Curriculum Committee, a proposal to use Social Studies Alive! for the elementary social studies curriculum was postponed for further review.

The text was used in a pilot program in some district elementary school classes during the 2021-2022 school year and the district’s social studies supervisor Keith Veverka and instructional coach Dana Pivnichny both praised the textbook and advocated for its adoption.

Board and committee member Christine Batycki said she would prefer the district to use the Hillsdale College 1776 curriculum instead. The 1776 curriculum emerged from Donald Trump’s 1776 Commission and was designed to support “patriotic education.” Larry Arnn, president

of Hillsdale College, chaired the commission.

Board and committee member Ricki Chaikin agreed. “America’s past should be celebrated,” she said. Chaikin criticized Social Studies Alive! for saying that “Puritan women could not vote” and for its portrayal of the Second Amendment.

American Historical Association executive director James Grossman called the 1776 commission report that was the seed for the 1776 curriculum “a hack job. It’s not a work of history, it’s a work of contentious politics designed to stoke culture wars.” Others characterized “patriotic education” as a dog whistle for White nationalism.

**Reported in: WHYY, December 26, 2021, January 15, 2022; The Reporter, January 3, 2022, and January 10, 2022; Los Angeles Blade, December 27, 2021; Bucks County Courier Times, August 31, 2021, December 29, 2021.**

### Westerly, Rhode Island

After months of complaining about the book *Gender Queer: A Memoir* during the public comments sections of Westerly Public Schools’ board meetings, resident Robert Chiaradio submitted a formal request for its reconsideration on February 17.

Chiaradio has no children attending district schools. He has also been objecting to “critical race theory” and “white shaming” at the school since the September 22 board meeting. Allegations Chiaradio made against teachers resulted in a weeklong investigation that determined Chiaradio fabricated the story.

*Gender Queer* is a nonbinary coming-of-age graphic novel. Kobabe wrote and illustrated it in part to explain what it means to be nonbinary and asexual. It received an Alex Award, a Stonewall Book Award, was

nominated for an Ignatz Award, and was included on the Young Adult Library Services Association’s 2020 list of Great Graphic Novels for Teens.

*Gender Queer* has been part of the Westerly High School library’s collection for a year. It has only circulated once: to Superintendent of Schools Mark Garceau, who wanted to review it after reading about challenges it has faced in other school districts.

Chiaradio’s supporters brought poster-sized reproductions of a page from the book.

Garceau said individuals typically start to understand their sexual identities between the ages of 12 and 20 and that this book could play a valuable role in the lives of young members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

“I don’t think anyone would seek to access this book unless they were part of the LBQT [sic] community or were interested in learning more about it,” said Garceau. “I think to people who fall into either of those two groups, it could prove to be a very valuable resource.”

No parents have asked that their children not be allowed to borrow the book.

**Reported in: The Westerly Sun, December 18, 2021, September 24, 2021.**

### McMinn County, Tennessee

On January 10, the McMinn County school board voted 10-0 to remove Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic novel *Maus* from the 8th grade language arts curriculum.

Art Spiegelman’s *Maus* is a genre-blending work of non-fiction borne of interviews conducted with his father about his experiences as a Holocaust survivor. It depicts experiences from before World War II, his parents’ liberation from Nazi concentration camps, and his mother’s suicide when he was 20.



Specific objections informing the board's decision to remove Maus from the curriculum were its use of the word "goddamn," an image of female nudity in a depiction of Polish Jews during the holocaust, and its portrayal of violence and suicide.

"It looks like the entire curriculum is developed to normalize sexuality, normalize nudity, and normalize vulgar language," said board member Mike Cochran. "If I was trying to indoctrinate somebody's kids, this is how I would do it."

Board member Tony Allman said, "It shows people hanging. It shows them killing kids. Why does the educational system promote this kind of stuff?"

"I was a history teacher and there is nothing pretty about the Holocaust," rebuffed Assistant principal Julie Goodin. "For me, this was a great way to depict a horrific time in history."

Director of Schools Lee Parkison said that when objections to the book were first raised, he "consulted with our attorney" and they decided the best approach was "to redact it to get rid of the eight curse words and the picture of the woman that was objected to."

Board members expressed concerns that doing so would be a copyright violation so it would be more appropriate to redact the book from the curriculum.

Spiegelman expressed confusion when he learned of his book's removal. "Tennessee is obviously demented," said Spiegelman. "There's something going on very, very haywire there."

On May 24, 2021, Governor Bill Lee signed a measure into law banning the teaching of certain concepts about race and racism. The law went into effect on July 1 and prohibits, among other things, teaching that "an individual, by virtue of

the individual's race or sex, is inherently privileged, racist, sexist, or oppressive, whether consciously or subconsciously."

The law permits only "impartial discussion of controversial aspects of history." Legislation in Tennessee and other states have fueled fears that schools will be forced to alter history lessons to remove content pertaining to racism.

(See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy*, v.6 iss.3: For the Record: Nationwide)

**Reported in: CNBC, January 26, 2022; Newsweek, January 26, 2022; The Washington Post, January 27, 2022.**

### Williamson County, Tennessee

On January 25, Williamson County Schools removed one book from the district's elementary curriculum and set teaching restrictions on seven others.

The action came in response to a lengthy challenge to the Wit and Wisdom curriculum submitted by the Williamson County chapter of Moms for Liberty.

The books they targeted primarily dealt with the civil rights movement, immigrant groups, and indigenous peoples. Their objections included that "we are not sending kids to learn about social justice." Moms for Liberty chair Robin Steenman does not have any children attending district schools.

*Walk Two Moons* by Sharon Creech, an award-winning book about a Native American girl struggling to deal with her mother's disappearance, was removed from the curriculum.

The seven titles that can only be used with "instructional adjustments" are:

- *Feelings* by Aliki

- *George v. George: The American Revolution as Seen from Both Sides* by Rosalyn Schanzer
- *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen
- *The River Between Us* by Richard Peck
- *Sea Horse: The Shyest Fish in the Sea* by Christine Butterworth
- *Separate is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation* by Duncan Tonatiuh

Going forwards, teachers will be required to skip certain pages when reading these books aloud and warn school counselors in advance if any of the books will be read in the classroom.

All challenged titles will remain available through school district libraries. However, the district is currently in the process of reviewing and updating their policy governing reconsideration of instructional materials.

Separately, Moms for Liberty also pursued the removal of *Separate is Never Equal* by Duncan Tonatiuh and three other titles through a complaint with the Tennessee Department of Education that including the books in the curriculum violated the recently-passed legal prohibition on teaching critical race theory.

(See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy*, v.6 iss.4: Censorship Date-line: Williamson County, Tennessee; this issue: Success Stories: Williamson County, Tennessee)

**Reported in: Williamson Herald, January 14, 2022; The Tennessean, January 25, 2022.**

### Granbury, Texas

At the January 25 school board meeting for the Granbury Independent School District (ISD), students spoke out against a recently approved amendment to district policy that expanded grounds for withdrawing



instructional material and allowed books to be removed from circulation prior to undergoing formal review.

A junior said, “I’m simply going to say that no government—and public school is an extension of government—has ever banned books and banned information from its public and been remembered in history as the good guys.”

On January 27, the Granbury ISD announced it had removed 134 titles from school libraries for review by a committee.

Unlike a typical book challenge which occurs when a parent or resident fills out a request for reconsideration form, the reconsideration of these books was initiated by the school board.

The books targeted for removal primarily deal with issues of racism or portray members of the LGBTQIA+ community; others are sex education materials and books about abortion.

Most of the books removed for review appeared on the list of 839 titles targeted by State Representative Matt Krause. A photo of boxes of books labeled “Krause’s List” being carted out of the Granbury High School library on a dolly was shared on social media.

A sophomore who attended the January 25 board meeting said, “So many histories, such as those of LGBTQ+ people, indigeonous people, and that of the true history of our country will be erased if this book ban [goes] through.”

The district confirmed that *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Pérez, *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson, *We Are the Ants* by Shaun David Hutchinson, and five novels by Abbi Glines were permanently withdrawn from school libraries.

Titles challenged:

- *A Love Story Starring My Dead Best Friend: A Novel* by Emily Horner
- *After* by Amy Efav
- *After the Game* by Abbi Glines
- *Afterworlds* by Scott Westerfeld
- *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely
- *All the Things We Do in the Dark* by Sandra Mitchell
- *Almost Perfect* by Brian Katcher
- *Another Kind of Cowboy* by Susan Juby
- *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* by Benjamin Alire Saenz
- *As I Descended* by Robin Talley
- *Ash* by Malinda Lo
- *Ask the Passengers* by A. S. King
- *Bad for You* by Abbi Glines
- *Being Jazz: My Life as a (transgender teen)* by Jazz Jennings
- *Bioethics: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Who Decides?* by Linda Jacobs Altman
- *Black Rabbit Summer* by Kevin Brooks
- *Cemetery Boys* by Aiden Thomas
- *Cinderella is Dead* by Kalynn Bayron
- *Class Act* by Jerry Craft
- *Cradle and All* by James Patterson
- *Darius the Great Deserves Better* by Adib Khorram
- *Daughters Unto Devils* by Amy Lukavics
- *Death Wind* by William Bell
- *Dishes* by Rich Wallace
- *Drama* by Raina Telgemeier
- *Dreadnought: H.I. V.E. Vol. 4* by Mark Walden
- *Equal Rights* by Maureen O’Connor
- *Fans of the Impossible Life* by Kate Scelsa
- *Far From You* by Tess Sharpe
- *Felix Ever After* by Kacen Callender
- *Firestarter* by Tara Sim
- *Gabi, a Girl in Pieces* by Isabel Quintero
- *Geography Club* by Brent Hartinger
- *Gingerbread* by Rachel Cohn
- *Girl Nearly 16, Absolute Torture* by Sue Limb
- *Gone, Gone, Gone* by Hannah Moskowitz
- *Grasshopper Jungle* by Andrew Smith
- *Gravity* by Leanne Lieberman
- *Great* by Sara Benincasa
- *Grl2grl: Short Fictions* by Julie Anne Peters
- *Guardian* by Alex London
- *Her Royal Highness* by Rachel Hawkins
- *History is All You Left Me* by Adam Silvera
- *Hold Me Closer: The Tiny Cooper Story* by David Levithan
- *Hooked* by Catherine Greenman
- *How to Love* by Katie Cotugno
- *I’ll Give You the Sun* by Jandy Nelson
- *In Our Mothers’ House* by Patricia Polacco
- *Infinity Son* by Adam Silvera
- *Jack* by A.M. Homes
- *Last Exit to Normal* by Michael Harmon
- *Let’s Talk About Love* by Claire Kann
- *Like Water* by Rebecca Podos
- *Losing the Field* by Abbi Glines
- *Luciana* by Maggie Wells
- *M or F?* by Lisa Papademetriou
- *Making a Play* by Abbi Glines
- *Masked* by Norah McClintock
- *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* by Jesse Andrews
- *Meet Cute* by Helena Hunting
- *Meg & Linus* by Hanna Nowinski
- *Melissa* (previously published as *George*) by Alex Gino
- *Miles Away From You* by A. B. Rutledge
- *Miseducation of Cameron Post* by Emily M. Danforth
- *More Happy Than Not* by Adam Silvera
- *7 Days at the Hot Corner* by Terry Trueman





- *My Awful Popularity Plan* by Seth Rudetsky
- *My Invented Life* by Lauren Bjorkman
- *My Mixed-Up Berry Blue Summer* by Jennifer Gennari
- *My Most Excellent Year: A Novel of Love, Mary Poppins, & Fenway Park* by Steve Kluger
- *Naomi and Ely's No Kiss List: A Novel* by Rachel Cohn
- *New Kid* by Jerry Craft
- *No Girls Allowed: Tales of Daring Women Dressed as Men for Love, Freedom and Adventure* by Susan Hughes
- *Notes from the Blender* by Trish Cook
- *Odd One Out* by Nic Stone
- *Of Fire and Stars* by Audrey Coulthurst
- *One of Those Hideous Books Where the Mother Dies* by Sonya Sones
- *Openly Straight* by Bill Konigsberg
- *Ordinary Hazards* by Nikki Grimes
- *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Pérez
- *Playing a Part* by Daria Wilke
- *Proxy* by Alex London
- *Queer, There, and Everywhere: 23 People Who Changed the World* by Sarah Prager
- *Rage: A Love Story* by Julie Anne Peters
- *Roe v. Wade: A Woman's Choice* by Susan Dudley Gold
- *Roe v. Wade: Abortion* by Susan Dudley Gold
- *Safe Sex 101: An Overview for Teens* by Margaret O. Hyde
- *Separate Is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation* by Duncan Tonatiuh
- *Sex: If You're Scared of the Truth Don't Read This!* by Carl Sommer
- *She Loves You, She Loves You Not* by Julie Anne Peters
- *Shout* by Laurie Halse Anderson
- *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* by Becky Albertalli
- *Sonny's House of Spies* by George Ella Lyon
- *Stained* by Jennifer Jacobson
- *Stamped From the Beginning: the Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* by Ibram X. Kendi
- *Star-Crossed* by Barbara Dee
- *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes* by Chris Crutcher
- *Symptoms of Being Human* by Jeff Garvin
- *Target* by Kathleen Johnson
- *Tessa Masterson Will Go to Prom* by Emily Franklin
- *The 57 Bus: A True Story of Two Teenagers and the Crime that Changed Their Lives* by Dashka Slater
- *The Baby Tree* by Sophie Blackall
- *The Best Man* by Richard Peck
- *The Boy I Love* by Nina de Gramont
- *The Dateable Rules: A Guide to the Sexes* by Justin Lookadoo
- *The Gravity of Us* by Phil Stamper
- *The Last to Let Go* by Amber Smith
- *The Love Interest* by Cale Dietrich
- *The Midnight Lie* by Marie Rutkoski
- *The Migration North* by James De Medeiros
- *The Past and Other Things that Should Stay Buried* by Shaun David Hutchinson
- *The Red Scrolls of Magic* by Cassandra Clare
- *The Sin-Eater's Confession* by Ilsa J. Bick
- *The Upside of Unrequited* by Becky Albertalli
- *The Vincent Brothers* by Abbi Glines
- *The Whispers* by Greg Howard
- *The You I've Never Known* by Ellen Hopkins
- *They Both Die at the End* by Adam Silvera
- *They Called Themselves the KKK: The Birth of an American Terrorist Group* by Susan Campbell Bartoletti
- *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson (formerly James Dawson)
- *Totally Joe* by James Howe
- *Under the Lights* by Abbi Glines
- *Unpregnant* by Jenni Henriks
- *Until Friday Night* by Abbi Glines
- *Until the End* by Abbi Glines
- *V for Vendetta* by Alan Moore
- *We Are the Ants* by Shaun David Hutchinson
- *What if it's Us* by Becky Albertalli
- *What They Always Tell Us* by Martin Wilson
- *When the Moon Was Ours* by Anna-Marie McLemore
- *Whistle Me Home* by Barbara Wersba
- *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* by David Levithan and John Green
- *You and Me and Him* by Kris Dinnison
- *You Know Me Well* by Nina LaCour

(See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy*, v.6 iss.4: For the Record: Texas)

**Reported in: WFAA, January 27, 2022; Newsweek, January 25, 2022.**

### Katy, Texas

At the November 15 board meeting of the Katy Independent School District (ISD), parents complained about and read from books they felt were too explicit to be on the shelves of high school libraries. The parents called for an audit of every school library in the district.

This spate of challenges at Katy ISD came shortly after challenges to *New Kid* and *Class Act*, two award-winning graphic novels by Jerry Craft. Craft's speaking engagement was also canceled at the district on the grounds that he was promoting "critical race theory" and "Marxism." (See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom*



*& Privacy*, v.6 iss.4: Success Stories: Schools: Katy, Texas).

Parent Karen Perez argued that the books brought up during the meeting and others like them should only be accessible with parental permission. “They have the worst porn you’ve ever seen,” she said.

On November 16, Katy ISD released a statement that six books mentioned during the meeting would be made “unavailable for student access” while undergoing review.

On December 7, superintendent Ken Gregorski sent a letter to parents informing them that five of the books objected to at the November 15 board meeting were being permanently removed from district libraries and classrooms for “pervasively vulgar content.”

The books removed were *Jack of Hearts (and Other Parts)* by L. C. Rosen, *Forever for a Year* by B. T. Gottfred, *The Nerdy and the Dirty* by B. T. Gottfred, *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* by Jesse Andrews, and *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison.

In the letter, Gregorski also stated that Katy ISD would re-evaluate their book selection process and add an online portal for parent book complaints. He encouraged parents to send their feedback through the portal.

At the December 13 school board meeting, parents and students alike complained that websites providing resources and support for LGBTQIA+ individuals were being blocked by the school district.

The sites blocked included the Trevor Project, a suicide prevention nonprofit; The Montrose Center, a Houston nonprofit to empower LGBTQIA+ youths through services and support groups; and The Human Rights Campaign (HRC), an organization dedicated to ensuring that LGBTQIA+ people are treated as full and equal citizens.

Cameron Samuels, a senior at Seven Lakes High school, said having access to “a suicide prevention life-line like the Trevor Project is a matter of life or death. The same applies to resources like the Montrose Center, and it is undoubtedly discriminatory that an internet filter category like this had existed in the first place.”

This online censorship was compounded by the fact that many of the books challenged and banned at Katy ISD had LGBTQIA+ authors, characters, and themes.

In January, Katy ISD unblocked access to four LGBTQIA+ websites: Montrose Center; Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG); Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN); and HRC.

Other sites, such as *The Advocate*, a national magazine focused on news, politics, art, and entertainment of interest to the LGBTQIA+ community; and *Out Smart*, Houston’s LGBTQ magazine remain blocked.

The additional books challenged at Katy ISD during events covered by this story were:

- *All Boys Aren’t Blue* by George M. Johnson
- *Losing the Girl* by Mari Naomi
- *Marcelo in the Real World* by Francisco X Stork
- *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Pérez
- *Scary Stories for Young Foxes* by Christian McKay Heidicker
- *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson
- *The Breakaways* by Cathy G. Johnson
- *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher
- *White Bird* by R. J. Palacio

**Reported in: ABC13, November 16, 2021, and December 16, 2021; KHOU11, November 15,**

**2021, and November 16, 2021; Houston Chronicle, December 7, 2021, and December 14, 2021; The Texan, December 9, 2021; Out Smart, January 24, 2022.**

### Keller, Texas

During the November 16 board meeting of the Keller Independent School District (ISD), parents called for the removal of 27 different titles from every school library in the district. Almost all of the books listed had characters or authors who were members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

One parent called on the school board to immediately remove all such material or resign.

The review of library material at Tyler ISD began shortly after Governor Greg Abbott called for an investigation into “pornography” in public schools and state Representative Matt Krause distributed a list of 839 books of interest to every school district in the state. Krause requested that audits be made of which schools have each of the titles, how many copies are held, and how much was spent to obtain them.

Most of the books on Krause’s list had LGBTQIA+ characters; are by authors who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC), or discuss race and racism. Also included on his list were sex education materials and books about the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision.

One parent expressed concern that the book challenges were focused on LGBTQIA+ titles and beseeched the district to consider the impact their removal would have on students who identify as part of that community.

“I ask that you think of having to raise my boys in what amounts to be a homophobic suburb. I ask that you really think of the students before you start pulling books off the bookshelves,” said the parent.



In late November, The Texas Education Agency (TEA) opened a state investigation into the Keller ISD for allowing students to have access to “sexually explicit content.” This is the first such investigation to have occurred in response to Governor Abbott’s call for TEA to prevent the “availability of pornography and other obscene content” in schools.

Abbott called for “prosecution to the fullest extent of the law” for anyone involved.

After Governor Abbott threatened educators with the possibility of criminal penalties for making school library materials available, Keller ISD began holding their challenge committee meetings privately and withholding the identities of committee members from the public. Keller ISD attorneys cited Abbott’s threats as justification for these measures.

On December 2, the National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) sent a letter to the Keller ISD school board in response to the withdrawal of numerous titles from district collections in a fashion that did not adhere to the board’s policies.

NCAC urged the district to return the titles to school libraries and to ensure that books remain accessible to students while undergoing review, in accordance with district policy.

NCAC’s letter also states that by violating their policies to remove LGBTQIA+ titles like *Gender Queer*, the district “raises the suspicion that the removal of the book was motivated by hostility to the book’s position on gender nonconformity.”

District administrators said they placed a moratorium on the purchase of adult fiction until between ten and fifteen thousand books have been reviewed by district librarians.

Books challenges and outcomes:

- *47* by Walter Mosley—Withdrawn

from classroom libraries, retained in school libraries

- *A Court of Mist and Fury* by Sara J. Maas—Withdrawn
- *A Court of Thorns and Roses* by Sara J. Maas—Pending review
- *Afterward* by Jennifer Mathieu—Retained
- *All Boys Aren’t Blue* by George M. Johnson—Retained
- *Anne Frank’s Diary: The Graphic Novel* by Ari Folman and David Polonsky—Pending review
- *Empire of the Storms* by Sara J. Maas—Pending review
- *Flamer* by Mike Curato—Withdrawn
- *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* by Alison Bechdel—Challenged, but not held
- *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe—Withdrawn
- *Girls Like Us* by Gail Giles—Withdrawn from middle school classroom libraries
- *Go With the Flow* by Karen Schneemann—Retained
- *I Am Jazz* by Jessica Herthel and Jazz Jennings—Retained
- *If You Could Be Mine* by Sara Farihan—Withdrawn
- *Infinity Reaper* by Adam Silvera—Withdrawn
- *Jack of Hearts* by L.C. Rosen—Withdrawn
- *Keeping You a Secret* by Julie Anne Peters—Withdrawn
- *King and the Dragonflies* by Kacen Callender—Retained
- *L8r, G8r* by Lauren Myracle—Withdrawn
- *Last Night at the Telegraph Club* by Malinda Lo—Retained
- *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* by Jesse Andrews—Retained
- *Melissa* (previously published as *George*) by Alex Gino—Retained
- *Milk and Honey* by Rupi Kaur—Pending Review
- *More Happy Than Not* by Adam

Silvera—Withdrawn from middle school libraries; retained in high school libraries

- *Moxie* by Jennifer Mathieu—Retained
- *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Pérez—Restricted to high school students with parental consent
- *Panic* by Sharon Draper—Withdrawn
- *So You’ve Been Publicly Shamed* by Jon Ronson—Withdrawn
- *Storm in the Barn* by Matt Phelan—Retained
- *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison—Retained
- *The Breakaways* by Cathy G. Johnson—Retained
- *The Holy Bible*—Pending review
- *This One Summer* by Mariko Tamaki and Jillian Tamaki—Retained
- *We Are the Ants* by Shaun David Hutchinson—Withdrawn from middle school libraries; retained in high school libraries
- *Weird Girl and What’s His Name* by Meagan Brothers—Retained
- *What Girls Are Made Of* by Elana K. Arnold—Retained

(See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy*, v.6 iss.4: For the Record: Texas).

**Reported in:** *The Dallas Morning News*, December 9, 2021, and December 29, 2021; CBS DFW, November 15, 2021; NBC DFW, January 10, 2022; *National Coalition Against Censorship*, December 3, 2021; WFAA, November 16, 2021; KUT 90.5, November 10, 2021.

## Lamar, Texas

During the November 16 meeting of the Lamar Consolidated Independent School District (LCISD), Rebecca Clark voiced concerns about sexual content and profanity in library books. “I think that we can all agree



that children should not be exposed to or have access to pornography, vulgarity, or illegality . . . yet, this is what is happening in LCISD.”

LCISD Chief Communications Officer Sonya Cole-Hamilton said in an email that a stakeholder had provided a list of books “of noted concern” prior to the board meeting and that the district “immediately” checked to see if they were available to students and pulled those that were for review.

On November 19, 2021, LCISD sent an email to parents announcing they had “proactively removed any books” believed to “contain sexually explicit material.” “Librarians are in the process of pulling additional literature that may contain . . . inappropriate language from our campus libraries for review.”

These actions by the district came shortly after Governor Abbott tasked the Texas Education Agency to come up with standards to keep “pornography or other inappropriate content” out of public schools and State Representative Matt Krause sent his list of 839 targeted books to all school districts in the state (see: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy*, v.6 iss.4: For the Record: Texas).

On January 3, 2022, it was reported that seven books had been temporarily removed while undergoing review for permanent removal.

These are the titles under review:

- *All Boys Aren't Blue* by George M. Johnson
- *Forever for a Year* by B. T. Gottfred
- *Jack of Hearts (and Other Parts)* by L. C. Rosen
- *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison
- *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* by Jesse Andrews
- *The Breakaways* by Cathy Johnson
- *The Nerdy and the Dirty* by B. T. Gottfred

**Reported in: *Houston Chronicle*, November 18, 2021; *The Fort Bend Star*, January 3, 2022.**

### Leander and Round Rock, Texas

On December 14, the Williamson County Court of Commissioners (WCOC) voted 4-1 to delay allocating \$8.7 million in federal CARES Act money to the Round Rock and Leander school districts over concerns with school library books and the belief that they’re teaching critical race theory (CRT).

“I’m not okay with giving money to school districts that teach critical race theory or allow books in libraries, especially classroom libraries, where there’s no supervision,” said Commissioner Valerie Covey.

Any CARES Act money that is unallocated by December 31 must be returned to the federal government.

Round Rock Independent School District (ISD) spokesperson Jenny LaCoste-Caputo said “All parents and members of the public in Round Rock ISD have complete access to the entirety of our school library catalog.” She added that if parents are concerned about a book, they can contact staff directly to have it reviewed by a reconsideration committee.

Leander ISD reviewed numerous titles throughout 2021 in response to parental requests for reconsideration, including 140 optional book club titles primarily written by Black and LGBTQIA+ authors. Police reports were also filed against the district for making Jonathan Evison’s *Lawn Boy* available for circulation.

To date, 11 book club kits with eight copies of each title were withdrawn and 13 were approved for use. (See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy*, v.6 iss.2: Censorship Dateline: Schools: Leander, Texas; *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy*, v.6. Iss.4:

Censorship Dateline: Schools: Leander, Texas).

Commissioner Cynthia Long felt the books also needed to be removed from school and classroom libraries. “I checked and some of those books you talked about are still in classrooms in Leander ISD.”

“We had a dad come not too long ago and read us excerpts from some books that were allowed in the Leander school district,” said Covey. “It was appalling. It was embarrassing to hear him read it. It was not right.”

Three books have also been challenged at Round Rock ISD: *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe, *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison, and *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Pérez.

Members of the public have been speaking out against library books and CRT during the public comments sections of board meetings for both the Round Rock and Leander ISDs.

Parents at the meeting voiced frustration with the commissioners’ decision to withhold funding unless students lose access to certain library books. One said censorship “harms society, and that often censorship has to do with fear from people that don’t like what’s being said.”

Joe Vasquez, a junior at Leander High School, said “I think either way, kids are going to read those books. I hope [the commissioners] realize just taking some money over some books is not going to benefit anybody.”

Vasquez also suggested a novel solution: the districts should withdraw the books and then buy new copies once they get the money.

Terry Cook was the only commissioner to vote against withholding funding from the school districts. “I think we are outside our lane if we try to micromanage the ISDs,” said Cook. “Ultimately, school board[s] and administrations make those decisions.”





On December 17, Long sent an email to Leander ISD superintendent Bruce Gearing stating she would “support ranting” the district their CARES Act funding if they remove 11 books from school and classroom libraries which had previously been removed as book club titles. Gearing invited the commissioner to submit requests for their reconsideration using the district’s established process.

On December 20, a handful of democratic state representatives sent a letter to WCOC. “As representatives of these communities, their taxpayers, and their children, we find it unconscionable that our public schools, teachers, and students would be punished through no fault of their own, but because of political disputes,” read the letter.

On December 21, WCOC voted to approve release of the CARES Act funds to both districts, though they stipulated that Leander ISD would have to withdraw *Brave Face*, *The Handmaid’s Tale: The Graphic Novel*, *In the Dream House*, *None of the Above*, *The Nowhere Girls*, *Out of Darkness*, *Red at the Bone*, *Shirley Jackson’s “The Lottery”*: *The Authorized Graphic Adaptation*, *Shout*, *V for Vendetta*, and *Y: The Last Man: Book One* from all school and classroom libraries in order to receive it.

**Reported in: *Austin American-Statesman*, December 15, 2021; *Community Impact*, December 21, 2021; *FOX 7 Austin*, December 14, 2021, December 21, 2021; *KVUE*, December 16, 2021, and December 20, 2021; *KXAN*, December 7, 2021.**

### San Antonio, Texas

On December 2, the North East Independent School District (NEISD), which serves roughly 60,000 students, removed 431 unique titles from their 68 schools for review.

The titles pulled were ones which state representative Matt Krause included on a list of 839 books sent to every school district in the state along with a request to audit which schools have each of the titles, how many copies are held, and how much was spent to obtain them.

The books were removed from circulation not long after Governor Greg Abbott called for an investigation into “pornography” in public schools. (See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy*, v.6 iss.4: For the Record: Texas).

Most of the books on Krause’s list had LGBTQIA+ characters; are by authors who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC), or discuss race and racism.

Superintendent Sean Maika wrote to families to inform them of the mass book review to remove “obscene or vulgar material” on December 7.

After the district’s compliance with state-directed censorship became public, Mariajose Llama created an online petition requesting NEISD to stop its review of titles from the Krause list. “Many Black and LGBT students in NEISD are appalled and hurt by NEISD’s decision to comply with Matt Krause and suppress our harmless resources and stories.” It has received over 14,000 signatures.

In a December 20 letter to NEISD’s board of trustees, the National Coalition Against Censorship (NCSC) noted that the manner in which the district was reviewing the titles violated their own policies.

District policies require books to remain in circulation while they undergo review, they require review of books in their entirety, and by a committee. According to reports and statements from the district, the books were removed from circulation during review, reviewed by individuals, and removed or relocated based on isolated

elements as opposed to their holistic content.

As of March 15, 110 titles had been withdrawn from all district libraries. Five titles were relocated from elementary school libraries to middle school libraries. Six titles were relocated from middle school libraries to high school libraries.

Books reviewed because of their inclusion the Krause list and their current disposition, when known:

- *#BlackLivesMatter: Protesting Racism* by Rachael L. Thomas
- *10 Things I Can See from Here* by Carrie Mac
- *101 Questions About Reproduction: Or How 1 + 1 = 3 or 4 or More* by Faith Hickman Brynie—Withdrawn
- *101 Questions about Sex and Sexuality: With Answers for the Curious, Cautious, and Confused* by Faith Hickman Brynie—Withdrawn
- *7 Days at the Hot Corner* by Terry Trueman
- *A Guy’s Guide to Sexuality and Sexual Identity in the 21st Century* by Joe Craig—Withdrawn
- *A Home for Goddesses and Dogs* by Leslie Connor—Relocated from elementary to middle school libraries
- *A Line in the Dark* by Malinda Lo
- *A Love Story Starring My Dead Best Friend: A Novel* by Emily Horner
- *A Very, Very Bad Thing* by Jeffery Self
- *Abortion* by Bonnie Juettner Fernandes—Withdrawn
- *Abortion: A Documentary and Reference Guide* by Melody Rose—Withdrawn
- *Absolute Brightness* by James Lecesne—Withdrawn
- *After* by Amy Efaw
- *Afterworlds* by Scott Westerfeld
- *Alan Cole is Not a Coward* by Eric Bell—Withdrawn



- *Alex as Well* by Alyssa Brugman
- *Alison, Who Went Away* by Vivian Vande Velde—Withdrawn
- *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds, Brendan Kiely
- *All Eyes On Us* by Kit Frick
- *All the Things We Do in the Dark* by Saundra Mitchell
- *All We Can Do Is Wait* by Richard Lawson
- *Almost Perfect* by Brian Katcher
- *An African American and Latinx History of the United States* by Paul Ortiz
- *Ana on the Edge* by A. J. Sass
- *And She Was* by Jessica Verdi
- *And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson, Peter Parnell
- *Annie on My Mind* by Nancy Garden—Withdrawn
- *Another Kind of Cowboy* by Susan Juby—Withdrawn
- *Archenemy* by Paul Hoblin—Withdrawn
- *Are You LGBTQ?* by Jeanne Nagle
- *As Far as You'll Take Me* by Phil Stamper
- *As I Descended* by Robin Talley—Relocated from middle to high school libraries
- *Ash* by Malinda Lo
- *Ask Me How I Got Here* by Christine Heppermann
- *Ask the Passengers* by A. S. King
- *At the Edge of the Universe* by Shaun David Hutchinson
- *Autoboyography* by Christina Lauren
- *Away We Go* by Emil Ostrovski
- *Beast* by Brie Spangler
- *Beautiful Music for Ugly Children* by Kirstin Cronn-Mills—Withdrawn
- *Becoming Nicole: The Extraordinary Transformation of an Ordinary Family* by Amy Ellis Nutt
- *Being Jazz: My Life as a (Transgender Teen)* by Jazz Jennings
- *Being the Change: Lessons and Strategies to Teach Social Comprehension* by Sara Ahmed
- *Best Best Colors* by Eric Hoffman—Withdrawn
- *Between Mom and Jo* by Julie Anne Peters—Withdrawn
- *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates
- *Beyond Dreams* by Marilyn Reynolds—Withdrawn
- *Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens Speak Out* by Susan Kuklin
- *Big Guy* by Robin Stevenson
- *Bioethics: Who Lives, Who Dies, and Who Decides?* by Linda Jacobs Altman—Withdrawn
- *Birthday* by Meredith Russo
- *Black Rabbit Summer* by Kevin Brooks—Withdrawn
- *Blood Countess* by Lana Popovic
- *Blood Sport* by Tash McAdam
- *Boy Erased* by Garrard Conley
- *Boy Girl Boy* by Ronald Koertge
- *Brave Face* by Shaun David Hutchinson
- *Caste: The Origin of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson
- *Cemetery Boys* by Aiden Thomas
- *Chainbreaker* by Tara Sim—Withdrawn
- *Cider House Rules* by John Irving—Withdrawn
- *Cinderella is Dead* by Kalynn Bayron
- *Citizen: An American Lyric* by Claudia Rankine
- *Class Act* by Jerry Craft
- *Combat Zone* by Patrick Jones
- *Coming Out: Telling Family and Friends* by Jaime Seba—Withdrawn
- *Considering Hate Violence, Goodness, and Justice in American Culture and Politics* by Kay Whitlock
- *Cradle and All* by James Patterson
- *Crossing Lines* by Paul Volponi—Withdrawn
- *Crush* by Carrie Mac
- *Cut Both Ways* by Carrie Mesrobian
- *Darius the Great Deserves Better* by Adib Khorram
- *Dating, Relationships, and Sexuality: What Teens Should Know* by Wendy Hart Beckman—Withdrawn
- *Daughters Unto Devils* by Amy Lukavics
- *Dear One* by Jacqueline Woodson
- *Death Wind* by William Bell—Withdrawn
- *Deepest Breath* by Meg Grehan
- *Deposing Nathan* by Zack Smedley
- *Detour for Emmy* by Marilyn Reynolds—Withdrawn
- *Doing It Right: Making Smart, Safe, and Satisfying Choices About Sex* by Bronwen Pardes—Withdrawn
- *Doing It! Let's Talk About Sex* by Hannah Witton
- *Drama* by Raina Telgemeier
- *Draw the Line* by Laurent Linn
- *Dreadnought* by April Daniels—Relocated from middle to high school libraries
- *Dreadnought: H.I.V.E. Vol. 4* by Mark Walden
- *Each of Us a Desert* by Mark Oshiro
- *Echo After Echo* by Amy Rose Capetta
- *Empress of the World* by Sara Ryan—Withdrawn
- *En el Bosque* by Robin Stevenson
- *Equal Rights* by Maureen O'Connor
- *Everything Leads to You* by Nina LaCour
- *Everything You Love Will Burn: Inside the Rebirth of White Nationalism in America* by Vegas Tenold
- *Fan Art* by Sarah Tregay
- *Fancy White Trash* by Marjetta Geerling—Withdrawn
- *Far from the Tree: How Children and their Parents Learn to Accept One Another, Our Differences Unite Us* by Andrew Solomon
- *Far From Xanadu* by Julie Anne Peters—Withdrawn
- *Far From You* by Tess Sharpe
- *Feeling Wrong in Your Own Body: Understanding What it Means to Be*



- Transgender* by Jaime Seba—Withdrawn
- *Felix Ever After* by Kacen Callender
- *Final Takedown* by Brent Sherard—Withdrawn
- *Finding Community* by Robert Rodi
- *Firestarter* by Tara Sim
- *Flamer* by Mike Curato
- *Forget this Ever Happened* by Cassandra Rose Clarke
- *Freak Show* by James St. James
- *Freakboy* by Kristin Elizabeth Clark
- *Freaks and Revelations: Inspired by Real Events in the Lives of Matthew Boger and Tim Zaal* by Davida Wills Hurwin—Withdrawn
- *Friendship, Dating, and Relationships* by Simone Payment—Withdrawn
- *Gabi, a Girl in Pieces* by Isabel Quintero
- *Gallup Guides for Youth Facing Persistent Prejudice. The LGBT Community* by Jaime Seba—Withdrawn
- *Gay and Lesbian Role Models* by Jaime Seba—Withdrawn
- *Gay Believers: Homosexuality and Religion* by Emily Sanna—Withdrawn
- *Gay Issues and Politics: Marriage, the Military, & Work Place Discrimination* by Jaime Seba—Withdrawn
- *Gay People of Color: Facing Prejudices, Forging Identities* by Jaime Seba—Withdrawn
- *Gays and Mental Health: Fighting Depression, Saying No to Suicide* by Jaime Seba—Withdrawn
- *Gender Danger: Survivors of Rape, Human Trafficking, and Honor Killings* by Rae Simons
- *Gender Equality and Identity Rights* by Marie des Neiges Leonard
- *Gender Identity* by Nicki Peter Petrikowski
- *Gender Identity: The Search for Self* by Kate Light
- *Gender Identity: The Ultimate Teen Guide* by Cynthia Winfield—Withdrawn
- *Gender Issues* by Kenneth McIntosh—Withdrawn
- *Geography Club* by Brent Hartinger
- *Getting It* by Alex Sanchez
- *Gingerbread* by Rachel Cohn—Withdrawn
- *Girl Crushed* by Katie Heaney
- *Girl Made of Stars* by Ashley Her-ring Blake
- *Girl Mans Up* by M-E Girard
- *Girl Nearly 16, Absolute Torture* by Sue Limb—Withdrawn
- *Girls vs. Guys: Surprising Differences Between the Sexes* by Michael J. Rosen
- *GLBT Teens and Society* by Jeanne Nagle—Withdrawn
- *GLBTQ: The Survival Guide for the Queer & Questioning Teens* by Kelly Huegel—Withdrawn
- *Gone, Gone, Gone* by Hannah Moskowitz
- *Gracefully Grayson* by Ami Polonsky
- *Grasshopper Jungle* by Andrew Smith
- *Great* by Sara Benincasa—Withdrawn
- *Guardian* by Alex London
- *Hang-Ups, Hook-Ups, and Holding Out: Stuff You Need to Know About Your Body, Sex, and Dating* by Melisa Holmes—Withdrawn
- *Happy Families* by Tanita Davis—Withdrawn
- *Hear Us Out: Lesbian and Gay Stories of Struggle, Progress, and Hope* by Nancy Garden
- *Hello Now* by Jenny Valentine
- *Hello, I Lied* by M. E. Kerr - Withdrawn
- *Her Royal Highness* by Rachel Hawkins
- *High Drama* by Brandon Terrell
- *Highly Illogical Behavior* by John Corey Whaley
- *History is All You Left Me* by Adam Silvera
- *Hold Me Closer: The Tiny Cooper Story* by David Levithan
- *Homophobia: From Social Stigma to Hate Crimes* by Bill Palmer—Withdrawn
- *Homosexuality Around the World* by Jaime Seba—Relocated from middle to high school libraries
- *Honestly Ben* by Bill Konigsberg
- *Hook Up* by Kim Firmston—Withdrawn
- *Ho'onani: Hula Warrior* by Heather Gale
- *Hot Dog Girl* by Jennifer Dugan
- *How (Not) to Ask a Boy to the Prom* by S. J. Goslee
- *How it All Blew Up* by Arvin Ahmadi
- *How Prevalent is Racism in Society?* by Peggy J. Parks—Withdrawn
- *How to be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi
- *How to Love* by Katie Cotugno—Withdrawn
- *Hurricane Child* by Kacen Callender—Relocated from elementary to middle school libraries
- *I Hope You're Listening* by Tom Ryan
- *Identifying as Transgender* by Sara Woods
- *Identity & Gender* by Charlie Ogden
- *Identity: A Story of Transitioning* by Corey Maison
- *If I Was Your Girl* by Meredith Russo
- *If You Could Be Mine* by Sara Farizan
- *I'll Give You the Sun* by Jandy Nelson
- *Image and Identity: Becoming the Person You Are* by Kris Gowen—Withdrawn
- *In Our Mothers' House* by Patricia Polacco
- *In the Role of Brie Hutchens...* by Nicole Melleby



- *Infinity Son* by Adam Silvera
- *Into the Real* by Z Brewer
- *Invisible Man, Got the Whole World Watching: A Young Black Man's Education* by Mychal Denzel Smith
- *It's Not Like it's a Secret* by Misa Sugiura
- *It's Not the Stork!: a Book about Girls, Boys, Babies, Bodies, Families, and Friends* by Robie H. Harris
- *It's Our Prom (So Deal With It): A Novel* by Julie Anne Peters
- *It's Perfectly Normal* by Robie H. Harris—Withdrawn
- *Ivy Aberdeen's Letter to the World* by Ashley Herring Blake
- *Jacob's New Dress* by Sarah Hoffman
- *Jacob's Room to Choose* by Sarah Hoffman
- *Jane Against the World: Roe v. Wade and the Fight for Reproductive Rights* by Karen Blumenthal
- *Jane, Unlimited* by Kristin Cashore
- *Jaya and Rasa Fall in Love* by Sonia Patel
- *Jess, Chunk, and the Road Trip to Infinity* by Kristin Elizabeth Clark
- *Julian at the Wedding* by Jessica Love
- *Juliet Takes a Breath* by Gabby Rivera
- *Jumpstart the World* by Catherine Ryan Hyde
- *Just Kill Me* by Adam Selzer
- *Kaleidoscope Song* by Fox Benwell
- *Keeping You a Secret* by Julie Anne Peters
- *Kiss Number 8* by Colleen AF Venable, Ellen T. Crenshaw
- *Kissing Kate* by Lauren Myracle
- *La Carta de Ivy Aberdeen al Mundo* by Ashley Herring Blake
- *La Tormenta* by William Bell—Withdrawn
- *Last Exit to Normal* by Michael Harmon —Withdrawn
- *Late to the Party* by Kelly Quindlen
- *Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up With Me* by Mariko Tamaki
- *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison—Relocated from elementary to middle school libraries
- *Let's Talk About Love* by Claire Kann
- *LGBT Families* by L. K. Currie-McGhee
- *LGBTQ Families: The Ultimate Teen Guide* by Eva Apelqvist
- *LGBTQ+ Athletes Claim the Field: Striving for Equality* by Kirstin Cronn-Mills
- *Lies My Girlfriend Told Me* by Julie Anne Peters—Withdrawn
- *Life at School and in the Community* by Richard Worth—Withdrawn
- *Life in Outer Space* by Melissa Keil
- *Lily and Dunkin* by Donna Ge-phart
- *Little & Lion* by Brandy Colbert
- *Living with Religion and Faith* by Robert Rodi
- *Lizard Radio* by Pat Schmatz
- *Lobizona* by Romina Gerber
- *Look Past* by Eric Devine
- *Love Drugged* by James Klise
- *Love is the Higher Law* by David Levithan—Withdrawn
- *Love, Creekswood: A Simonverse Novella* by Becky Albertalli—Withdrawn
- *Marco Impossible* by Hannah Moskowitz
- *Masked* by Norah McClintock—Withdrawn
- *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* by Jesse Andrews
- *Melissa* (previously published as *George*) by Alex Gino
- *Middle School's a Drag* by Greg Howard
- *Middlesex* by Jeffrey Eugenides
- *Mighty Heart of St. James* by Ashley Herring Blake
- *Miles Away From You* by A. B. Rutledge
- *Miseducation of Cameron Post* by Emily M. Danforth—Withdrawn
- *Moonstruck Volume 1 Magic to Brew* by Grace Ellis
- *More Happy Than Not* by Adam Silvera
- *More than a Game: Race, Gender, and Politics in Sport* by Matt Doeden
- *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* by Christine Baldacchino
- *My Best Friend, Maybe* by Caela Carter
- *My Girlfriend's Pregnant!: A Teen's Guide to Becoming a Dad* by Chloe Shantz-Hilkes
- *My Heart Underwater* by Laurel Flores Fantauzzo
- *My Invented Life* by Lauren Bjorkman—Withdrawn
- *My Life as a Diamond* by Jenny Manzer
- *My Life as a Rhombus* by Varian Johnson—Withdrawn
- *My Mixed-Up Berry Blue Summer* by Jennifer Gennari—Withdrawn
- *My Most Excellent Year: A Novel of Love, Mary Poppins, & Fenway Park* by Steve Kluger
- *Nate Expectations* by Tim Federle
- *New Kid* by Jerry Craft
- *No Girls Allowed: Tales of Daring Women Dressed as Men for Love, Freedom and Adventure* by Susan Hughes
- *None of the Above* by I. W. Gregorio
- *Not My Idea: A Book About Whiteness* by Anastasia Higginbotham
- *Notes from the Blender* by Trish Cook
- *October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard* by Lesléa Newman
- *Odd One Out* by Nic Stone
- *Of Fire and Stars* by Audrey Coulthurst
- *Of Ice and Shadows* by Audrey Coulthurst
- *On the Come Up: Based on a True Story* by Hannah Weyer—Withdrawn
- *One Half from the East* by Nadia Hashimi
- *One Man Guy* by Michael Barakiva





- *One of Those Hideous Books Where the Mother Dies* by Sonya Sones
- *One True Way* by Shannon Hitchcock
- *Openly Straight* by Bill Konigsberg
- *Ordinary Hazards* by Nikki Grimes
- *Orpheus Proud* by Sharon Dennis Wyeth
- *Parrotfish* by Ellen Wittlinger—Withdrawn
- *Pearl* by Johanna Knowles
- *Pet* by Akwaeke Emezi
- *Pink* by Lili Wilkinson—Withdrawn
- *Playing the Field* by Phil Bildner—Withdrawn
- *Pride: Celebrating Diversity and Community* by Robin Stevenson
- *Pride: The Story of Harvey Milk and the Rainbow Flag* by Rob Sanders
- *Promposal* by Rhonda Helms
- *Protect and Defend* by Richard North Patterson
- *Proxy* by Alex London
- *Putting Makeup on the Fat Boy* by Bil Wright—Withdrawn
- *Rage: A Love Story* by Julie Anne Peters—Withdrawn
- *Rainbow Boys* by Alex Sanchez
- *Rainbow High* by Alex Sanchez
- *Rainbow Revolutionaries: 50 LGBTQ+ People Who Made History* by Sarah Prager
- *Rainbow Revolutions: Power, Pride, and Protest in the Fight for Queer Rights* by Jamie Lawson
- *Rainbow Road* by Alex Sanchez
- *Raise the Stakes* by Megan Atwood—Withdrawn
- *Ready or Not?: A Girl's Guide to Making Her Own Decisions about Dating, Love and Sex* by Tina Radziszewicz—Withdrawn
- *Red at the Bone* by Jacqueline Woodson
- *Redwood and Ponytail* by K. A. Holt
- *Reluctantly Alice* by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor
- *Remake* by Ilima Todd
- *Rethinking Normal: A Memoir in Transition* by Katie Rain Hill
- *Reverie* by Ryan La Sala
- *Rick* by Alex Gino
- *Roe v. Wade: The Untold Story of the Landmark Supreme Court Decision that Made Abortion Legal* by Marian Faux—Withdrawn
- *Safe Sex 101: An Overview for Teens* by Margaret O Hyde—Withdrawn
- *Saturdays with Hitchcock* by Ellen Wittlinger
- *Say the Word* by Jeannine Garsee
- *Scars* by C. A. Rainfield
- *See You at Harry's* by Johanna Knowles
- *Separate Is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation* by Duncan Tonatiuh
- *Sex, Puberty and All That Stuff: A Guide to Growing Up* by Jacqui Bailey—Withdrawn
- *Sex: If You're Scared of the Truth Don't Read This!* by Carl Sommer—Withdrawn
- *She Loves You, She Loves You Not* by Julie Anne Peters
- *Shine* by Lauren Myracle
- *Ship It* by Britta Lundin
- *Should Abortion be Legal?* by Carla Mooney
- *Should Teens Have Access to Birth Control?* by Don Nardo—Withdrawn
- *Shout* by Laurie Halse Anderson
- *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda* by Becky Albertalli
- *Sister Mischief* by L Goode—Withdrawn
- *So Hard To Say* by Alex Sanchez
- *So You Want to Talk About Race* by Ijeoma Oluo
- *Some Assembly Required: The Not-So-Secret Life of a Transgender Teen* by Arin Andrews
- *Something Like Gravity* by Amber Smith
- *Sonny's House of Spies* by George Ella Lyon—Withdrawn
- *Sparkle Boy* by Lesléa Newman
- *Spinning* by Tillie Walden
- *Stained* by Jennifer Jacobson—Withdrawn
- *Stamped From the Beginning: the Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* by Ibram X. Kendi
- *Star-Crossed* by Barbara Dee
- *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes* by Chris Crutcher—Withdrawn
- *Stick* by Andrew Smith—Withdrawn
- *Suicide Notes: A Novel* by Michael Thomas Ford—Withdrawn
- *Symptoms of Being Human* by Jeff Garvin
- *Taking Responsibility: A Teen's Guide to Contraception and Pregnancy* by Donna Lange—Withdrawn
- *Tattoo Atlas* by Tim Floreen
- *Teen Legal Rights* by David L Hudson
- *Teen Pregnancy* by Patrice Casedy—Withdrawn
- *Teenage Sex and Pregnancy* by Peggy J. Parks—Withdrawn
- *Teens & Sex* by Hal Marcovitz—Withdrawn
- *Teens and Gender Dysphoria* by Don Nardo
- *Tell Me Again How a Crush Should Feel* by Sara Farizan
- *Tessa Masterson Will Go to Prom* by Emily Franklin—Withdrawn
- *The 57 Bus: A True Story of Two Teenagers and the Crime that Changed Their Lives* by Dashka Slater
- *The Abortion Debate* by Courtney Farrell—Withdrawn
- *The Abortion Debate: Understanding the Issues* by Johannah Haney—Withdrawn
- *The Accidental Adventures of India Mcallister* by Charlotte Agell—Relocated from elementary to middle school libraries
- *The Art of Being Normal* by Lisa Williamson
- *The Art of Saving the World* by Corinne Duyvis



- *The Baby Tree* by Sophie Blackall
- *The Best Man* by Richard Peck
- *The Birds, the Bees, and You and Me* by Olivia Hinebaugh
- *The Black Flamingo* by Dean Atta
- *The Breakaways* by Cathy G. Johnson—Relocated from elementary to middle school libraries
- *The Bridge* by Bill Konigsberg
- *The Confessions of Nat Turner* by William Styron
- *The Cutting Room Floor* by Dawn Klehr
- *The Deep & Dark Blue* by Niki Smith
- *The Devouring Gray* by Christine Lynn Herman
- *The Difference Between You and Me* by Madeleine George—Withdrawn
- *The Downstairs Girl* by Stacey Lee
- *The Edge of the Abyss* by Emily Skrutskie
- *The Edge of the Water* by Elizabeth George—Withdrawn
- *The Fight* by Elizabeth Karre
- *The Fire Never Goes Out: A Memoir in Pictures* by Noelle Stevenson
- *The Five Stages of Andrew Brawley* by Shaun David Hutchinson—Withdrawn
- *The Gallery of Unfinished Girls* by Lauren Karcz
- *The Gods of Tango* by Carolina De Robertis
- *The Gravity of Us* by Phil Stamper
- *The Great American Whatever* by Tim Federle
- *The Grief Keeper* by Alexandra Villasante
- *The Handmaid's Tale (graphic novel)* by Margaret Atwood and Renee Nault
- *The Hookup Artist* by Tucker Shaw—Withdrawn
- *The House You Pass On the Way* by Jacqueline Woodson
- *The Last Time I Wore a Dress* by Daphne Scholinski
- *The Last to Let Go* by Amber Smith
- *The Less-Dead* by April Lurie
- *The Love & Lies of Rukhsana Ali* by Sabina Khan
- *The Love Curse of Melody McIntyre* by Robin Talley
- *The Love Interest* by Cale Dietrich—Relocated from middle to high school libraries
- *The Magic Fish* by Trung Le Nguyen
- *The Meaning of Birds* by Jaye Robin Brown—Withdrawn
- *The Migration North* by James De Medeiros
- *The Moon Within* by Aida Salazar
- *The Music of What Happens* by Bill Konigsberg
- *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander
- *The Other Boy* by M. G. Hennessey
- *The Pants Project* by Cat Clarke
- *The Past and Other Things that Should Stay Buried* by Shaun David Hutchinson
- *The Questions Within* by Teresa Schaeffer
- *The Red Scrolls of Magic* by Cassandra Clare
- *The Sin-Eater's Confession* by Ilsa J. Bick—Withdrawn
- *The Stars and the Blackness Between Them* by Junauda Petrus
- *The Summer of Jordi Perez (and the Best Burger in Los Angeles)* by Amy Spalding
- *The Sweet Revenge of Celia Door* by Karen Finneyfrock—Withdrawn
- *The Teenage Body Book: A New Edition for a New Generation* by Kathy McCoy—Withdrawn
- *The Test* by Peggy Kern
- *The Traitor Game* by B. R. Collins—Relocated from middle to high school libraries
- *The Truth About Keeping Secrets* by Savannah Brown
- *The Truth Is* by NoNieqa Ramos
- *The Ultimate Guys' Body Book: Not-So-Stupid Questions About Your Body* by Walter L. Larimore
- *The Underground Girls of Kabul: In Search of a Hidden Resistance in Afghanistan* by Jenny Nordberg
- *The Upside of Unrequited* by Becky Albertalli
- *The Vast Fields of Ordinary* by Nick Burd
- *The Way Back* by Carrie Mac—Withdrawn
- *The Whispers* by Greg Howard
- *The Year They Burned the Books* by Nancy Garden—Withdrawn
- *The You I've Never Known* by Ellen Hopkins
- *They Both Die at the End* by Adam Silvera
- *They Called Themselves the KKK: The Birth of an American Terrorist Group* by Susan Campbell Bartoletti
- *They, She, He, Easy as ABC* by Maya Christina Gonzalez
- *Things that Make White People Uncomfortable: Adapted for Young Adults* by Michael Bennett
- *This Book is Anti-Racist* by Tiffany Jewell
- *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson
- *This is Kind of an Epic Love Story* by Kacen Callender
- *This Is Your Time* by Ruby Bridges
- *This One Summer* by Mariko Tamaki and Jillian Tamaki—Relocated from middle to high school libraries
- *Tips On Having a Gay (Ex) Boyfriend* by Carrie Jones—Withdrawn
- *Tomboy: A Graphic Memoir* by Liz Prince
- *Tomorrow will be Different: Love, Loss, and the Fight for Trans Equality* by Sarah McBride
- *Totally Joe* by James Howe—Withdrawn
- *Trans Mission: My Quest to a Beard* by Alex Bertie



- *Transgender Rights and Issues* by Andrea Pelleschi
- *Two Boys Kissing* by David Levithan
- *Two Parties, One Tux, and a Very Short Film About the Grapes of Wrath* by Steven Goldman
- *Under Threat* by Robin Stevenson
- *Underneath it All: A History of Women's Underwear* by Amber J. Keyser
- *Understanding Gender* by Juno Dawson (formerly James Dawson)
- *Unpregnant* by Jenni Henriks
- *V for Vendetta* by Alan Moore—Withdrawn
- *Wayward Witch* by Zoraida Cordova
- *We Are Lost and Found* by Helene Dunbar—Withdrawn
- *We Are the Ants* by Shaun David Hutchinson
- *We March* by Shane W. Evans
- *We Now Return to Regular Life* by Martin Wilson
- *We the Students: Supreme Court Cases For and About Students* by Jamin B. Raskin—Withdrawn
- *We Were Eight Years in Power: An American Tragedy* by Ta-Nehisi Coates
- *What Happened To Lani Garver* by Carol Plum-Ucci
- *What if it's Us* by Becky Albertalli
- *What Philosophy Can Do* by Gary Gutting
- *What They Always Tell Us* by Martin Wilson
- *Whatever* by S. J. Goslee
- *When the Moon Was Ours* by Anna-Marie McLemore
- *When We Were Magic* by Sarah Gailey
- *Whistle Me Home* by Barbara Wersba—Withdrawn
- *White Rabbit* by Caleb Roehrig
- *Who I Was With Her* by Nita Tyndall
- *Wide Awake* by David Levithan
- *Will* by Maria Boyd
- *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* by

- David Levithan and John Green
- *Willful Machines* by Tim Floreen
- *With or Without You* by Brian Farrey—Withdrawn
- *Wonders of the Invisible World* by Christopher Barzak
- *You Know Me Well* by Nina LaCour
- *Zenobia July* by Lisa Bunker
- *Ziggy, Stardust & Me* by James Brandon

**Reported in:** *National Coalition Against Censorship*, January 5, 2022; *San Antonio Express-News*, December 7, 2021, and December 8, 2021; *San Antonio Report*, December 9, 2021; *Huron Daily Tribune*, December 9, 2021; *Atlanta Black Star*, December 10, 2021; *KSAT*, December 13, 2021; *The Texas Tribune*, December 6, 2021.

### Spring Branch, Texas

After removing Cathy Johnson's Breakaways from school library shelves, the Spring Branch Independent School District (ISD) announced on November 2 that it was also removing all copies of *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe. (See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy*, v.6 iss.4: Censorship Dateline: Schools: Spring Branch, Texas).

*Gender Queer* is a nonbinary coming-of-age graphic novel. Kobabe wrote and illustrated it in part to explain what it means to be nonbinary and asexual. It received an Alex Award, a Stonewall Book Award, was nominated for an Ignatz Award, and was included on the Young Adult Library Services Association's 2020 list of Great Graphic Novels for Teens.

The Breakaways also portrayed LGBTQIA+ characters. A third graphic novel with LGBTQIA+ characters, *Drama* by Raina Telgemeier, has also been challenged at

the district. Lisa Andrews Alpe, who initiated the challenges of all three books, has been leading the effort to review books in Spring Branch ISD libraries.

"We found probably close to 100 books that we are concerned about," said Alpe. Alpe also said she had referred to representative Matt Krause's list of 839 books he directed all Texas school districts to audit their libraries for.

(See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy*, v.6 iss.4: For the Record: Texas).

**Reported in:** ABC13, November 2, 2021.

### Tyler, Texas

At the November 15 board meeting for the Tyler Independent School District (ISD), Chrstin Bentley, Founder and President of the Texas Freedom Coalition, called for a school-sponsored independent audit of sexually explicit library material that would include community input.

A written statement from superintendent Marty Crawford that was read at the meeting stated that, "The board and district administration are in agreement with our community that resources, curriculum products, and classroom instruction should be in alignment with local, public expectations and within State of Texas standards as set forth by the Texas legislature, the State Board of Education, and Texas Education Agency [TEA]."

In October, Governor Greg Abbott called for an investigation into "pornography" in public schools and state Representative Matt Krause distributed a list of 839 books of interest to every school district in the state. Krause requested that audits be made of which schools have each of the titles, how many copies are held, and how much was spent to obtain them.



Most of the books on Krause's list had LGBTQIA+ characters; are by authors who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC), or discuss race and racism. (See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy*, v.6 iss.4: For the Record: Texas).

On November 17, the Texas Freedom Coalition filed a Freedom of Information Act request asking Tyler ISD to disclose all documents from the Tyler Legacy High School library pertaining to the following list of books, including circulation records for students and staff, who ordered the books, and when they were purchased:

- *All Boys Aren't Blue* by George M. Johnson
- *Blue Is the Warmest Color* by Julie Maroh
- *Brave Face* by Shaun David Hutchinson
- *Exit, Pursued by a Bear* by E. K. Johnston
- *Gabi, a Girl in Pieces* by Isabel Quintero
- *Girl Mans Up* by M-E Girard
- *I'll Give You the Sun* by Jandy Nelson
- *Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up With Me* by Mariko Tamaki
- *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison
- *Red, White & Royal Blue: A Novel* by Casey McQuiston
- *Stealing Parker* by Miranda Kenneally
- *The Black Flamingo* by Dean Atta
- *The Circus Rose* by Betsy Cornwell
- *The Hookup Artist* by Tucker Shaw
- *The Little Black Book for Girlz: A Book on Healthy Sexuality* by St. Stephen's Community House
- *We are All Made of Molecules* by Susin Nielsen-Fernlund
- *Whatever: Or How Junior Year Became Totally F\$@cked* by S.J. Goslee

All but two of the books on Texas Freedom Coalition's list prominently feature LGBTQIA+ characters.

On November 19, Tyler ISD announced they were removing *All Boys Aren't Blue* and *Lawn Boy* from all school libraries.

*All Boys Aren't Blue* is a memoir about Johnson's experiences growing up as a queer Black man which Kirkus referred to as a "captivating merciful mirror for growing up Black and queer today." It received numerous accolades including being the American Library Association's 2021 Rainbow List selection for Young Adult Nonfiction, one of the Young Adult Library Services Association 2021 Teens' Top 10, and one of the 2019 Outstanding Books for the College Bound.

*Lawn Boy* is a semi-autobiographical coming-of-age novel exploring themes of poverty, racism and sexual identity. It won a 2019 Alex Award, given by the Young Adult Library Services Association to adult books that have special appeal to young adults.

In late November, TEA opened a state investigation into the Keller ISD for allowing students to have access to "sexually explicit content." That was the first such investigation in response to Governor Abbott's call for TEA to prevent the "availability of pornography and other obscene content" in schools. (See: this issue: Censorship Dateline: Schools: Keller, Texas).

At the December 13 board meeting of the Tyler ISD, parents called for more books to be removed from school libraries and for more transparency regarding the book selection process.

At the board meeting, Bentley read from *All Boys Aren't Blue* and claimed it was pornography masquerading as a children's book. She said she had a list

of 120 "questionable books" she had found at Tyler ISD libraries and that she was still finding more.

Jennifer White, a parent of a Tyler ISD student, read from the recently withdrawn *Lawn Boy* before saying, "Some of the books have been removed, and it's a start, [but] there's been no transparency in this process and no parental involvement in this process. Those things are necessary for public trust which y'all have lost a lot of."

Among other requests, White asked that parents receive notifications about all of their children's "library activity."

**Reported in:** *Once in a Blue Spoon*, January 27, 2022; *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, December 15, 2021, December 25, 2021; *28 News*, November 18, 2021; *The Tyler Loop*, January 20, 2022.

## Canyons, Utah

On October 29, the Canyons School District removed eight titles from the libraries of its four high schools in response to social media posts made by Utah Parents United (UPU). UPU has led efforts against school mask mandates, critical race theory, and social-emotional learning.

The titles were:

- *All Boys Aren't Blue* by George M. Johnson
- *Beyond Magenta: Transgender Teens Speak Out* by Susan Kuklin
- *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison
- *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe
- *L8r, G8r* by Lauren Myracle
- *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov
- *Monday's Not Coming* by Tiffany Jackson
- *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Pérez





UPU became involved with the Canyons School District after a mother cc'ed them on an email she sent to school administrators regarding book titles she had concerns about after seeing them on social media. They said that every book in the district should be reviewed for sexual content.

UPU published a list of 153 “obscene” titles to search for on their website alongside guides on how to challenge them. They also released an hour-long video encouraging parents to call the police to report offensive titles found in school libraries.

By November 18, three additional titles were removed from Canyons School District libraries following what district spokesperson Jeff Haney described as hundreds of emailed complaints: *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison, and *The Opposite of Innocent* by Sonya Sones.

With the exception of *Lolita*, all titles removed focus on issues surrounding race and the LGBTQIA+ community. It is worth noting that UPU’s website promotes twelve “good books,” including transphobic titles by Erin Brewer, Abigail Shrier, Barbara Anderson, and Matt Walsh; an anti-CRT screed; and a book about students who band together to defend the police who kill unarmed Black men.

The district’s policy governing reconsideration of instructional material, last updated in May of 2020, allows only those with a direct tie to a school, such as a student, the parent of a student, or an employee, to challenge a book. It also stipulates that “the material in question will remain in use during the challenge process.”

The mother who sent the original email had children at middle and elementary schools in the district, but not at one of the high schools. All the

books she raised objections to were held in high school libraries.

The board, recognizing that she did not have grounds to challenge the materials according to the policy, opted to pre-emptively remove all of the books objected to until the policy could be changed and they could be formally challenged.

Rita Christensen, president of the Utah Library Association, said “Abandoning constitutional principles, bypassing legal and transparent processes, and ignoring the rule of law while imposing personal, political, or moral values on others is a dangerous pattern that is anti-rule of law, anti-democracy, and anti-American.”

The removal of the books is in violation of district and policy prompted responses from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC), PEN America, and contributed to a response from Utah Governor Spencer Cox.

John Mejia, legal director for ACLU, said “It gave us great concern, particularly because a lot of these books were about marginalized and oppressed identities, and it’s important that students with these identities have access to books that relate to them and put them in a positive light.”

Richard Price, an associate professor of political science at Weber State who runs the blog *Adventures in Censorship*, said “If you don’t want to look at it, then you don’t have to check it out. But I fear what this group is trying to do is forbid all people from reading them. They’re trying to parent for all parents.”

On January 4, the district announced they had changed their review and selection policy. On January 20, they announced that the books that had been removed in October and November had been returned to the shelves. By March 1, *Gender Queer*,

*Lawn Boy*, and *Lolita* were permanently withdrawn.

**Reported in: KSL.com, December 1, 2021, and November 20, 2021; KJZZ, November 19, 2021; Deseret News, November 18, 2021, March 1, 2022; KSL 102.7 FM, November 18, 2021; National Coalition Against Censorship, November 10, 2021; FOX 13, November 22, 2021; The Daily Universe, January 20, 2022; ACLU of Utah, November 22, 2021; The New York Times, November 29, 2021.**

### Washington, Utah

On October 26, a parent in the Washington County School District and member of Utah Parents United, requested that the district remove four books from its libraries. (See: this issue: *Censorship Dateline: Canyons, Utah*).

The books she objected to were *Melissa* (previously published as *George*) by Alex Gino, *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Pérez, *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas, and *This One Summer* by Mariko Tamaki.

All of the titles focus on issues surrounding race and the LGBTQIA+ community. They were written by LGBTQIA+, Black, and Latinx authors.

Formal requests for reconsideration were submitted for *Out of Darkness* and *The Hate U Give*.

During a special work meeting on November 15, Superintendent Larry Bergeson and the members of the school board discussed ways to screen library materials more carefully, restrict access to books they consider to be controversial, and automatically notify parents of every book title their children check out.

On December 14, *The Hate U Give* was withdrawn from elementary and middle school libraries, and



Out of Darkness was withdrawn from all district libraries. Bergeson cast the tie-breaking vote to withdraw Out of Darkness.

“As I read through all of it . . . I was depressed,” said Bergeson about Out of Darkness. “When something’s criminal, when something goes over things like incest and rape . . . that’s wrong. I can’t go there. My decision is, it’s out.”

“If we have less information, I think we are poorer for it. I think that if we engage ideas, we don’t fear them,” said Erika George, director of the Tanner Humanities Center and a law professor at the University of Utah. “But if we curtail, we harm ourselves and we harm our society.”

George said that, “The notion that there are some texts that can’t be discussed, that can’t be read, that can’t be engaged with, it’s really kind of the preconditions that we see in societies that aren’t free and aren’t open.”

**Reported in: KUER, November 1, 2021; St. George News, December 20, 2021.**

### Fairfax, Virginia

At the December 2 Fairfax County Public School (FCPS) board meeting, Stacy Langton, the parent who unsuccessfully challenged *Gender Queer* and *Lawn Boy* in September, called for an “army of angry parents” to show up at the school board meeting during a radio show.

Protesters gathered outside the board meeting, holding poster-sized signs of school board members’ faces emblazoned with the word “resign.”

During the meeting, Langton once again inaccurately characterized the books as illegal pedophilia-depicting pornography and called for their removal.

Both books depict members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Students spoke out against the politicized efforts to restrict access to LGBTQIA+ books.

“What is happening is vulnerable Queer students who are looking for some sort of affirmation in their life because we don’t have enough support resources are going into these libraries looking for books,” said Aaryan, an FCPS student and founder of the Pride Liberation Project. “They’re taking that away and that’s incredibly harmful to our community.”

The school board took no action on them at this meeting, as they had recently voted to return the books to library shelves, and called them “valuable in their potential to reach marginalized youth who may struggle to find relatable literary characters that reflect their personal journeys.”

In solidarity with the school system, the Dolley Madison Library put up a display in which *Gender Queer* and *Lawn Boy* sat alongside a gnome in rainbow-clothing holding The Holy Bible. The display was removed on December 7, in response to objections from Langton.

“Fairfax County Dolley Madison Library mocks my effort to remove porn in schools and mocks Christianity,” tweeted Langton.

Library director Jessica Hudson said that the “reading display was intended to highlight the freedom to read” and that “it was not the intention of staff to create a display that could be construed as offensive.”

(See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy*, v.6 iss.4: Success Stories: Schools: Fairfax, Virginia).

**Reported in: ABC 7 News, December 9, 2021; WUSA9, December 2, 2021; WTOP News, December 8, 2021; Fox News, December 2, 2021.**

### Harrisonburg, Virginia

During the November 4 meeting of the Harrisonburg City school board, parents objected to the availability of Maia Kobabe’s *Gender Queer: A Memoir* through the high school library. One parent accused the board of violating state law and pushing LGBTQIA+ narratives to confuse children.

Many of those who spoke out in opposition to LGBTQIA+ literature during the meeting identified themselves as being from surrounding communities in Rockingham County. Superintendent Michael Richards said that they technically shouldn’t be speaking at other tax-based jurisdictions’ board meetings.

Nonetheless, in response to their complaints and in violation of district policy, Richards made the decision to remove *Gender Queer* from the Harrisonburg High School library.

Richards was well aware of the policy as he cited it during the board meeting and detailed the appropriate process for having a book reconsidered. “Despite the fact that they didn’t follow the process, I took the graphic novel off the shelves for review,” said Richards.

After Richards removed the book from the library, he claimed his “responsibility to protect the safety and wellbeing of students” outweighed his obligation to follow district policies and allow challenged materials to be considered in a fashion ensuring a fair and constitutional outcome.

Richards articulated specific concerns he had that a younger sibling might read the book if a high school student were to check it out.

*Gender Queer* is a nonbinary coming-of-age graphic novel. Kobabe wrote and illustrated it in part to explain what it means to be nonbinary and asexual. It received an Alex



Award, a Stonewall Book Award, was nominated for an Ignatz Award, and was included on the Young Adult Library Services Association's 2020 list of Great Graphic Novels for Teens.

On November 22, the National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) sent a letter to the school board rebuking Richards's actions and urging it to follow its own policies, act in accordance with their "ostensible commitment to academic freedom and intellectual inquiry," and return *Gender Queer* to the shelves until it has been "adjudicated in an unbiased manner and in accordance with District policies."

"*Gender Queer* likely does not appeal to every student. But if every library book is required to serve every student, the shelves would be bare. A library, including a school library, is meant to include a broad selection of books that provide value to students," wrote NCAC.

During the December 7 school board meeting, numerous parents voiced complaints that Richards had removed *Gender Queer* and not followed district policy in doing so.

Richards subsequently formed a committee to review *Gender Queer*.

The committee's recommendations and the ultimate disposition of the book within the district have not been announced at the time of this writing.

**Reported in:** *The Harrisonburg Citizen*, November 11, 2021; *Daily News-Record*, November 20, 2021; *National Coalition Against Censorship*, November 23, 2021.

### Loudoun County, Virginia

On December 13, the Loudoun County School board voted unanimously to uphold Superintendent Scott A. Ziegler's prior decision to keep Jonathan Evison's *Lawn Boy* in high school libraries.

Amy Jahr had appealed the decision after her initial challenge to the book was unanimously rejected by a seven-member review committee. She viewed the unanimity of the committee as an indication of a conspiracy to provide reading materials to children against their parents' wishes.

"If you have a whole panel of parents, hey even get 20 parents on there," said Jahr, that would "make it fair, make it balanced."

*Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe was also challenged at Loudoun County schools, but met with a different fate. The review committee voted to retain it, but on January 14 school spokesperson Wayde Byard announced that Ziegler overruled the committee and "decided to remove the book from circulation."

The decision was appealed to the school board and the school board voted 3-0 to uphold the superintendent's decision to withdraw the book.

*Gender Queer* is a nonbinary coming-of-age graphic novel. Kobabe wrote and illustrated it in part to explain what it means to be nonbinary and asexual. It received an Alex Award, a Stonewall Book Award, and was included on the Young Adult Library Services Association's 2020 list of Great Graphic Novels for Teens.

Both the superintendent and the board's issues with the book seem to lie with the fact that it is illustrated. Ziegler said "I am not generally in favor of removing books from the library. I believe our students need to see themselves reflected in the literature available to them." However Ziegler wrote that "the pictorial depictions in this book ran counter to what is appropriate in school."

Board member Ian Serotkin said that "the sexually explicit illustrations which have gotten significant media and public attention may only appear

on a handful of pages, but . . . the sexually explicit illustrations themselves cannot be ignored."

Kobabe said, "There are queer teens, I promise, in every single high school where this book is being challenged." People are "reacting because they know that they're on the losing side of the culture war, and this is sort of an angry effort because they know the tides are already turned against them. But it's still going on. It can still hurt people."

(See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy*, v.6 iss.3: Success Stories: Loudoun County, Virginia).

**Reported in:** WSET, December 13, 2021; *The Washington Post*, November 23, 2021, and January 15, 2022; *Loudoun Times-Mirror*, January 19, 2022.

### Spotsylvania, Virginia

During the public comments section of the November 8 meeting of the Spotsylvania County School Board, a parent said she was alarmed that the high school library's ebook app included LGBTQIA+ fiction.

The board then voted 6-0 that staff should remove all such materials from school libraries and submit a report on the number removed for a special meeting to be held on November 15.

Board member Rabih Abuismail said "I think we should throw those books in a fire."

Board president Kirk Twigg agreed, adding that he wanted to "see the books before we burn them so we can identify within our community that we are eradicating this bad stuff."

Only two books were mentioned by title during the meeting: *33 Snowfish* by Adam Rapp and *Call Me by Your Name* by Andre Aciman. District librarians were tasked with searching for specific terms in the online library catalog. As a result of their queries, a



list of 140 titles was submitted to the board.

At the board's special meeting on November 15, after four-and-a-half hours of passionate public comments from parents, students, teachers, and librarians opposed to censorship. Only two people spoke in favor of removing books from school libraries.

Twigg and Abuismail were accused of violating the school board's code of ethics. Numerous speakers requested Abuismail formally apologize to the district's 34 librarians who were reassigned from their regular duties to search for books that might meet the board's arbitrary banning criteria.

Following the public comments, member Baron Braswell made a motion to rescind the board's November 8 vote to remove library material and forgo discussion of the requested report of book titles.

Braswell said that the opinion provided by legal counsel was that the action the board had taken was unconstitutional. He apologized to Superintendent Scott Baker for the board's poor example of governance and failure to follow due process.

Braswell's motion to rescind the November 8 book banning action carried with a vote of 5-2. Abuismail and Twigg voted against.

Despite this, *Call Me by Your Name*, was removed from all district high school libraries without review and without a formal request for reconsideration having ever been submitted.

On the morning of November 17, Spotsylvania High School students held a protest against censorship. The protest was planned prior to the meeting at which the board rescinded the motion to ban library material. Many held rainbow and LGBTQIA+ affirming signs. Another held a

sign proclaiming "We trust our librarians."

On November 22, a local Facebook group called Spotsy 411 posted an event urging Spotsylvania parents to have their children check out books they'd like to see removed from their school library and bring them to the December 13 school board meeting where "we will burn every last one of them."

Spotsy 411 also posted the names and workplaces of all district employees who spoke in opposition to the book banning initiative during the November 15 special meeting.

The event was taken down from Facebook on November 25 and the Spotsy 411 group was removed on November 28.

The Fire Marshal's Office notified the school district that the proposed book burning would violate state and local fire codes.

**Reported in: *The Washington Post*, November 10, 2021, and November 16, 2021; *NBC News* 4, November 11, 2021, and January 10, 2022; *Wonkette*, November 11, 2021; *National Coalition Against Censorship*, November 16, 2021; *Vanity Fair*, November 11, 2021; *LGBTQ Nation*, November 11, 2021; *Yahoo! News*, January 13, 2022; *Esquire*, November 10, 2021; *The Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star*, November 16, 2021, November 17, 2021, December 2, 2021, and January 12, 2022; *The Week*, November 17, 2021; *Patch*, November 10, 2021.**

### **Bremerton, Washington**

The Central Kitsap School District removed the Maia Kobabe's memoir *Gender Queer* from the shelves of the Olympic High School library on October 20.

The decision was made in response to an email complaint sent

by Steve Adams, a non-custodial parent of a child who does not attend Olympic High School, on October 19.

The decision to remove the book followed a meeting of District Director of Equity Jeni Zapatka, Assistant Director of Curriculum and Instruction Amy Archuleta, and two librarians.

The cited reason for removal was "sexually-explicit illustrations." District spokesperson David Beil explained that the book had not been properly vetted by library staff.

Kobabe's graphic memoir is a 2020 American Library Association Alex Award winner and a Stonewall Award Honoree. School Library Journal called it "a great resource for those who identify as nonbinary or asexual, as well as for those who know someone who identifies that way and wish to better understand."

Earlier this year, the Central Kitsap School District mandated the removal of a poster proclaiming that "Love Has No Gender" and "We Are Equal" from an elementary school classroom.

The poster had been displayed by a music teacher at Cougar Valley Elementary School and was provided by the Kitsap Safe Schools Network, which works "to protect every child from bullying at school, especially bullying based on perceived sexual orientation and gender identity."

At the Central Kitsap school board meeting on November 3, Superintendent Erin Prince acknowledged that they did not follow the approved procedure for handling challenges to library materials.

Believing the district didn't go far enough by violating their own policy to remove an award-winning book a day after it was challenged, Steve Adams sought criminal prosecution of a high school librarian,





the principal, the superintendent, and members of the school board. Adams reported to the police that they were distributing “pedophilic pornography.”

Kitsap County Prosecutor Chad Enright declined to file charges after reviewing the book. Enright determined the book did not violate either of the relevant state laws and furthermore was protected by the First Amendment.

Q Youth Resources, a county-based nonprofit serving LGBTQIA+ youth and their families, expressed concern that the district’s policies weren’t followed.

As a result of objections raised by Q Youth Resources board chair Eli Oldfield, district officials agreed to convene a review committee and review *Gender Queer* in accordance with their established policies and procedures.

On December 2, the Library Materials Review Committee met after having read *Gender Queer* in its entirety. The committee unanimously recommended that the book be retained in all high school libraries.

On December 8, the school board voted to endorse the review committee’s recommendation and return *Gender Queer* to school libraries.

Newly-elected board president Jennifer Schulze also said that the removal of the “Love Has No Gender” poster caused harm within the community.

Schulze said the board had evaluated guidance from Washington’s Superintendent of Public Instruction and the American Academy of Pediatrics, and consulted with LGBTQIA+ advocates. As a result of these activities, Schulze said the board would reverse course and permit the display of “Love Has No Gender” posters in K-5 classrooms. A joint

statement signed by the board and superintendent Prince affirmed this action.

A draft for an updated policy regarding staff expression and participation in political activities was also introduced at the meeting to help provide a consistent path forwards.

Oldfield praised this outcome and requested that district administration, staff, and board members undertake cultural competency training around LGBTQIA+ issues.

Parent Charlene Ocamp contended that by reversing its decision, the board was “promoting degeneracy” and making “pornography and sexual-grooming materials” available to students.

Adams requested that the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction investigate Prince for drafting “her own district policy to address a certain measure she wanted handled a certain way.”

Adams also submitted requests for reconsideration of the following titles:

- *Out of Darkness* by Ashley Hope Pérez
- *The Children and the Wolves* by Adam Rapp
- *Beloved* by Toni Morrison
- *Monday’s Not Coming* by Tiffany D. Jackson
- *Punkzilla* by Adam Rapp
- *Gilgamesh: A Graphic Novel* by Andrew Winegarner and April Rasmussen.

The outcome of these challenges was unknown at the time of writing.

**Reported in: *Kitsap Sun*, November 1, 2021, November 18, 2021, December 9, 2021.**

### Mukilteo, Washington

On January 24, the Mukilteo School Board unanimously voted to remove Harper Lee’s classic novel *To Kill a*

*Mockingbird* from the ninth-grade English/Language Arts required reading list.

*Mockingbird* deals with themes of racial injustice, gender roles, and the loss of innocence. It was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1961.

Mukilteo received one request to remove the book from the district’s curriculum. The complaint stated the book has a “White savior” narrative and marginalizes characters of color. It also observed the book uses the “n-word” more than 50 times without providing context about its negative connotations.

This action was recommended by the Instructional Materials Committee, consisting of roughly 20 teachers, librarians, administrators, and parents. 63% voted to remove the book from the required reading list and 68% voted to retain the book on the approved novels list.

*Mockingbird* remains available to students from the library and teachers are still allowed to teach it, but it is no longer a required part of the curriculum.

This was the first time in 20 years that someone requested a book’s removal from the district’s required reading lists.

As of this writing, a replacement for *To Kill a Mockingbird* in the curriculum has not been announced.

**Reported in: KING5, January 10, 2022, and January 24, 2022.**

### LIBRARIES Pella, Iowa

A formal request for reconsideration of Maia Kobabe’s memoir *Gender Queer* was received at the Pella Public Library. In accordance with their policies, the library board reviewed the book. They voted unanimously to retain it as part of the collection.

*Gender Queer* is a nonbinary coming-of-age graphic novel. Kobabe



wrote and illustrated it in part to explain what it means to be nonbinary and asexual. It received an Alex Award, a Stonewall Book Award, was nominated for an Ignatz Award, and was included on the Young Adult Library Services Association's 2020 list of Great Graphic Novels for Teens.

More than fifty people attended the December 15 board meeting where the decision to retain the book was announced. Most spoke out against the book. One said the city council would be asked to draft an ordinance against the distribution of obscene material and wondered what other "objectionable" material might be in the library.

About a third in attendance spoke in defense of the book, stressing its literary merit and arguing that it would be a useful resource for teens struggling with their own gender identity. They also stressed the importance of representing all community members in the library's collection.

Parent Ali Thomas said, "My kids will not be hurt or scarred by this book, but someone could be hurt by changing how it's shelved or taking it out entirely."

Library Director Maria Strickler said the book doesn't violate Iowa law or library policy and said that the library's collection development policy was followed when the book was acquired for the adult section after a patron had requested the title.

"Public libraries need to meet the needs of the entire community, not just one portion of it," said Strickler.

Forty people attended the December 20 Pella City Council meeting to protest the library's decision to retain *Gender Queer*. One called it "cartoon pornography" and another called it "an attack on the traditional family."

Numerous people suggested that the library's collection development policy needed to change to prevent

titles like this from being acquired. Two people said they had spoken with Iowa state legislators about introducing a bill to address their concerns with books like *Gender Queer*.

Two people suggested withholding the library's funding until the book was removed from the shelves. Another proposed firing all members of the library board. One person said that having the book in the library was tantamount to distributing obscene materials to children, and was therefore criminal.

The Pella City Council reviewed the library's collection development policy and organizational structure for over an hour at their January 4 meeting. Council member Liz Sporrer was appointed to further review the library's collection development policy "as it relates to access of mature content by minors."

At the January 18 meeting, council members Mark De Jong, Calvin Bandstra, and Spencer Carlstone requested that the library board research how to restrict access to the book to prevent children from accessing it.

Council member Lynn Branderhorst said she felt the book constitutes pornography under Iowa Code.

Sporrer agreed with the library board's decision to retain the book and said it's important to ensure access to the book is not limited or censored. She felt the board's decision regarding the book should stand even if the council decides to change the library's collection development policy.

Mayor Don DeWaard appointed Branderhorst to serve as liaison to the library board and instructed them to further review the collection development policy regarding restricting access to mature content by minors.

**Reported in: KNIA—KRLS, December 15, 2021, December**

**22, 2021, January 3, 2022; KTVZ, January 5, 2022.**

### Lafayette, Louisiana

At the Lafayette Parish public library, *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson was challenged by Michael Lunsford, executive director of Citizens for a New Louisiana, a conservative anti-tax group. Lunsford lives in St. Martin Parish, but works in Lafayette Parish.

*This Book is Gay* received numerous awards, a starred review in Booklist, and is currently on three separate Amazon bestseller lists. A review in The Guardian said "*This Book is Gay* makes you feel confident and comfortable with yourself, regardless of sexuality."

Lunsford said he filed a complaint about the book after finding it on a list of titles published by MassResistance, an anti-LGBTQIA+ organization which the Southern Poverty Law Center classifies as a hate group. He described the book as pornographic and said that "having it in the teen section bothers me."

Outgoing board president Douglas Palombo, board member Landon Boudreaux, and Lunsford met with library director Danny Gillane to jointly express their concerns about the book.

Gillane said he explained the library's reconsideration policy during the meeting and informed Lunsford of how to complete a request for reconsideration through the library's website.

*This Book is Gay* is the first title to be challenged at the library system since 2012.

Lunsford said he was also considering challenging *Sex is a Funny Word* by Cory Silverberg; *Dating and Sex: A Guide for the 21st Century Teen Boy* by Andrew Smiler; *Doing it Right: Making Smart, Safe, and Satisfying Choices About Sex* by Bronwen



Pardes; *Doing It! Let's Talk About Sex* by Hannah Witton, and *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe.

Madison Manuel said the rates of sexually transmitted illness in Louisiana are some of the highest in the country and the availability of age-appropriate sex education materials to teens provides them with information they're not getting at home and which may save lives.

At the November 15 Lafayette Library Control meeting, roughly 30 residents showed up to support retaining *This Book is Gay*.

Many spoke of their experiences as LGBTQIA+ community members and the value of having access to resources like Dawson's book. "They show queer teenagers like myself and my friends that they are not alone. We are not invisible and we are valid" said Gabriel Juarez.

However, board new board president Robert Judge, who had, alongside board member Stephanie Armbruster, protested the 2018 Drag Queen Story Time event at the library, insisted the book was without merit.

In a motion that failed, Judge and Armbruster were the only two board members who voted to withdraw *This Book is Gay* from the collection. Ultimately, the board voted to relocate the book to the adult section of the library.

Lunsford filed a formal request to reconsider *The V-Word* by Amber Keyser.

At the February 21 Lafayette Library Control meeting, Judge made a motion to create a restricted library card for those 14 years of age and younger which could not be used to check out materials from the adult section of the library. Parents would be able to opt out of the restriction.

After heated discussion, including a reading from *The V-Word* by Lunsford, the motion was tabled.

A motion to change the reconsideration policy to state that the "the reconsideration committee is an ad hoc committee that conducts business in a closed meeting. It is composed of two library board members and one librarian appointed by the library director" passed by a vote of 4-3.

The prior make-up of the reconsideration committee was one board member and two library staff members appointed by the library director.

The outcome of the challenge to *The V-Word* is unknown at the time of this writing.

**Reported in: *The Acadiana Advocate*, October 31, 2021, and December 17, 2021; *KFLY*, November 15, 2021; *Daily Advertiser*, November 16, 2021.**

### Ridgeland, Mississippi

On January 25, Mayor Gene McGee announced he was withholding \$110,000 of funding from the Madison County Library System (MCLS) until they purged their collection of books by or about LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Tonja Johnson, executive director for the Madison County Library System said she learned of this decision when she reached out to McGee after failing to receive the city of Ridgeland's first quarterly payment for 2022.

Johnson said no payment would be forthcoming so long as the library had "homosexual materials." McGee said that it went against his Christian beliefs to fund "homosexual materials."

Johnson explained that publicly-funded governmental entities are not religious institutions and that "we are a public library and we serve the entire community." According

to Johnson, McGee replied that "the library can serve whoever we wanted, but that he only serves the great Lord above."

At the January 25 library board meeting, Bob Sanders, legal counsel for the library board, was asked if the mayor had legal authority to override the contract with the library system and the decision of the aldermen. Sanders replied, "Uh, no."

McGee's unlawful attempts to withhold funding from the library seem to have been motivated by a library display of LGBTQIA+ material which he referred to in multiple interviews.

Titles included in the display were:

- *As a Woman: What I Learned About Power, Sex, and the Patriarch After I Transitioned* by Paula Williams
- *Grandad's Camper* by Harry Woodgate
- *The Name I Call Myself* by Hasan Namir
- *Outlove: A Queer Christian Survival Story* by Julie Rodgers
- *People of Pride: 25 Great LGBTQ Americans* by Chase Clemesha
- *The Queer Bible: Essays* by Jack Guinness

Johnson said, "I think it's important to understand that LGBTQ+ books and materials are not just for the LGBT community. Those books are for all of us, whether we can see ourselves reflected in those materials or so that we can develop understanding, empathy, and respect for someone else."

At the February 15 meeting of the Ridgeland Board of Aldermen, twenty speakers addressed the board during the public comments section, some condoning the censorship of library material, others defending the free and open access to information.



Alice O'Neal Gratenhuis said that demands to hide or remove LGBTQIA+ materials reminded her and her wife of a lifetime of cruelty. "I grew up terrified because of the blank smiles of those who would rather their child be dead than gay," said Gratenhuis.

In March, McGee and the Ridgeland Board of Aldermen said they would restore funding if the library signs a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

On April 12, the new MOU was signed by both parties. It states that "Ridgeland and its elected officials strongly support a diverse library collection that is consistent with the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights," and that "this includes matters dealing with all sexual orientations or religious preferences."

However, the MOU also states that "the city is deeply concerned" that displays and materials are "age-appropriate."

The MOU also stipulates that MCLS will handle all challenges to displays and material in a manner consistent with their policies, but will "at the request of the mayor or board of aldermen, meet to discuss any concerns or complaints, including formal material challenges made to MCLS."

MCLS is shielded by the MOU from any efforts on the part of the mayor or board of aldermen to alter the outcome of any decisions regarding challenges.

**Reported in: *Mississippi Free Press*, January 25, 2022, February 16, 2022; *LGBTQ Nation*, January 26, 2022; *WJTV*, March 25, 2022.**

## Wake County, North Carolina

On December 15, it was reported that the Wake County Public Library (WCPL) system received requests to

reconsider the titles *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe and *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison.

All seven copies of *Gender Queer* that were in the system were removed from circulation promptly after the complaint was received. More than 30 people were waiting on the hold list to read the book.

*Gender Queer* is a nonbinary coming-of-age graphic novel. Kobabe wrote and illustrated it in part to explain what it means to be nonbinary and asexual. It received an Alex Award, a Stonewall Book Award, was nominated for an Ignatz Award, and was included on the Young Adult Library Services Association's 2020 list of Great Graphic Novels for Teens.

*Gender Queer* was also one of the titles targeted by Lieutenant Governor Mark Robinson in public comments harshly criticizing the availability through libraries of material he considered to be pornographic. (See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy*, v.6 iss.4: For the Record: North Carolina).

Robinson's comments drew national attention as he focused on books by and about members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

According to Wake County spokesperson Alice Avery, "WCPL determined that [*Gender Queer*] does contain explicit illustrations that do not align with WCPL's selection policy."

Avery said it was the first book to be removed from WCPL in response to a request for reconsideration since 2015.

The decision to remove it brought condemnation from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of North Carolina, Equality NC, and the LGBT Center of Raleigh. In a joint statement, they said that "The coordinated effort throughout the country to denigrate books that center

LGBTQIA+ issues and voices from libraries and schools is harmful and unconstitutional."

Dolph Goldenburg, interim executive director of the LGBT Center of Raleigh, said he was concerned about the impact removing the book would have on LGBTQIA+ residents.

"We believe that all libraries should offer easily-accessible LGBTQ+ affirming and supportive titles," said Goldenburg. "Since the library system has determined that *Gender Queer* isn't consistent with its selection policy, we are offering to provide WCPL 25 queer-affirming titles for every copy of *Gender Queer* that has been removed from circulation."

In response to the removal of *Gender Queer*, 55 Wake County librarians signed a letter protesting the decision and the process that resulted in it.

"We're a library. We're not supposed to be censoring other voices. That's antithetical to what we stand for," said one librarian signatory. "We give voice to everyone—whether we agree with them or not."

Lisa Behrens, chair of the Wake County Library Commission, said "We share concerns about the book removal process and we're actively listening to the public discussion on this." Behrens said the commission would be reviewing the library's selection and reconsideration policies at their January meeting.

*Gender Queer* was returned to circulation in January when WCPL initiated the process of revising their policies.

On March 25, WCPL approved a new reconsideration policy. According to director Mike Wasilick, "The updated process ensures we have opportunities to receive diverse input before making any decisions."

The new policy requires challenged material to be reviewed by a committee of nine librarians from a variety of





backgrounds. The county attorney's office will be consulted on all decisions made by review committees.

**Reported in: *Raleigh News & Observer*, December 15, 2021, March 25, 2022; CBS17, December 15, 2022, and January 10, 2022.**

### Denton, Texas

On November 15 the Denton Public Library announced the cancellation of Rainbow StoryTime which was scheduled for November 20.

The November program would have included three titles focused on children accepting themselves and one another: *Red: A Crayon's Story* by Michael Hall, *I'm a Girl* by Yasmeen Ismail, and *What Riley Wore* by Elana K. Arnold.

Denton's Rainbow StoryTimes occur three times a year and are typically scheduled on days focused on marginalized groups. While none of the books selected dealt included portrayals of transgender children, confusion as to the nature of the storytime seemingly stemmed from its scheduling on national Transgender Day of Remembrance.

The cancellation occurred after the library received disrespectful and hostile complaints from people who mistakenly believed the program would include books about transgender children.

Email and telephone complaints poured into the library from as far away as California and responding to them had completely inundated staff by November 10.

On November 12, Don Huffines, a Republican Texas gubernatorial candidate posted a news release on his website calling for Denton to "end taxpayer-funded transgender storytime" and "fire the library employees who approved the event."

Jennifer Bekker, director of Denton Public Library, said that while there were no direct threats, "We did see on some public social media posts some things that made us concerned for public safety. And it made us concerned about the safety of the staff."

The library had requested security and crowd control from the Denton Police Department before the complaints took a dark and menacing turn resulting in the decision to cancel the event.

The city released a statement regarding the cancellation which stated that "contrary to inaccurate information being spread, this event is not focused on teaching children about gender identity or anything relating to sex or sexual orientation. . . . The StoryTime features books about families, friendship, and being yourself."

Huffines took credit for the event's cancellation on his website, announcing he was "pleased that the pressure raised by our campaign and, more importantly, concerned patriots in Denton County, led to the appropriate cancellation of this event."

In response to the event's cancellation, Amber Briggie, mother of a transgender boy, worked with her church and Armadillo Ale Works to organize a Transgender StoryTime event at the brewery. Hundreds of people turned out. The books *Red: A Crayon's Story*, *Julian is a Mermaid* by Jessica Love, and *Calvin* by J. R. Ford were read aloud to attendees.

**Reported in: *Denton Record-Chronicle*, November 15, 2021; *LGBTQ Nation*, November 18, 2021, and November 22, 2021; *NBC DFW*, November 16, 2021.**

### League City, Texas

At their November 15 board meeting, Clear Creek Independent School District (ISD) announced a change

to how students can access library books.

Prior to the change, students had access to books in the Harris County Public Library's (HCPL) ebook collection through the Sora app. At the October 26 board meeting, parents complained that students were able to access Corey Silverberg's *Sex is a Funny Word* through the app.

*Sex Is a Funny Word* is a critically acclaimed and award-winning children's book discussing sex, gender identity, privacy, safety, respect, and protecting yourself against unwanted sexual touch and abuse.

In response to the complaints, elementary school students' access to HCPL content was turned off. The district is working on a form to allow parents to opt their children into HCPL access. They're also reclassifying some of the materials to older age categories.

In response to the book challenges at the school, League City administrators focused on removing titles from the Helen Hall Public Library, a separate entity from HCPL.

City Manager John Baumgartner said of *Sex Is a Funny Word*, "This book is indoctrinating and smut."

Councilor Justin Hicks called for the withdrawal of *Sex is a Funny Word* along with seven other books for children. All disclosed titles portrayed characters who were members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

The other titles challenged at Helen Hall Public Library which have been publicly disclosed:

- *Prince and Knight* by Daniel Haack
- *Julian is a Mermaid* by Jessica Love
- *Jacob's New Dress* by Sarah Hoffman

**Reported in: *ABC 13*, November 17, 2021; *Galveston Daily News*, November 12, 2021.**



## Llano, Texas

On December 20 it was announced that the Llano County Library (LCL) would shut down all three of its locations for four days so that staff members could conduct a “thorough review” of every children’s book.

The review was undertaken at the behest of the Llano County Commissioners Court and was done to ensure that all reading material for younger readers was “age-appropriate.” Librarians were additionally tasked with moving books from the young adult section to the newly created “young adults plus” section for older teens.

As a result of the search for “objectionable” children’s materials, the following titles were withdrawn from the system:

- *It’s Perfectly Normal* by Robie Harris
- *In the Night Kitchen* by Maurice Sendak
- *I Need a New Butt* by Dawn McMillan
- *Freddie the Farting Snowman* by Jane Bexley

During the closure, Llano County Commissioners also required DVDs to get marked with color-coded stickers indicating age-appropriateness.

The commission also suspended the library’s only ebook platform, Overdrive. This action was taken following public complaints at the December 13 board meeting that the books *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison and *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe were available through it.

*Lawn Boy* and *Gender Queer* are prominent award-winning titles with content pertaining to the LGBTQIA+ community.

According to LCL staff, they were directed to segregate LGBTQIA+ content out from the rest of the collection.

Commissioner Mike Sandoval said that the commission was also dissolving their old advisory board and creating a new advisory board consisting of 13 members appointed by the commission and County Judge Ron Cunningham to watch over the county library and their online catalog.

On January 7, the National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC) sent a letter to the Llano County Commissioners’ Court regarding concerns about their removal of books in a manner inconsistent with their book challenge procedures.

NCAC urged the return of the materials until a formal review was conducted and for the county to follow their book challenge policy in the future.

The commission’s actions to remove and limit access to materials followed roughly two months after Governor Abbott and state representative Matt Krause called for investigations into school library materials throughout the state. (See: *Journal of Intellectual Freedom & Privacy*, v.6 iss.4: For the Record: Texas).

During the October 25 board meeting, held the evening of the day Krause’s letter and list of targeted books were made public, a group of county residents voiced outrage over library material they considered to be inappropriate.

Texas Library Association’s director of advocacy and communication said Krause’s call for an investigation of school library materials “definitely ramped it up” with regards to scrutiny and challenges of public library material, as well.

After the October meeting, Bonnie Wallace emailed Cunningham a list of 60 books she felt should be relocated to the adult section of the library. All but two of the books were on Krause’s list. Cunningham later appointed her vice-chair of the new Library Advisory Board.

On February 16, an email went out from LCL system director Amber Milum stating that “staff members are not to attend Advisory Board meetings” and “may not use your vacation time to attend.”

At their February 17 meeting, the LCL Advisory Board discontinued the practice of allowing public comments during meetings. During the meeting, they discussed switching the library’s ebook platform to Bibliotheca.

Rochelle Wells, a member of the board’s collections subcommittee, which oversees material acquisition for the county libraries, cited the fact that Bibliotheca was not part of the Central Texas Digital Consortium as an advantage, as it would give them local control over the titles included.

The board plans to restrict card holders under the age of 18 from accessing the ebook platform.

During the March 3 meeting of the LCL Advisory Board, the board voted to close its meetings to the public. The vote came after a presentation on the Texas Open Meeting Act from Matthew Rienstra, assistant attorney to the county.

Rienstra told the board that the act “does not apply to you. You’re not passing rules or exercising any authority.”

On March 9, Suzette Baker was fired from her job as head librarian for Llano County’s Kingsland branch. The reasons given for her dismissal



were insubordination and failure to follow instructions.

Baker said she was fired for asking for too much information regarding the switch from Overdrive to Bibliotheca and the decisions to withdraw and limit access to books.

According to Baker, when she asked human resources about the prohibition against attending board meetings, she was “told not to start any trouble.”

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**December 20, 2021; *The Hill*, December 22, 2021; *National Coalition Against Censorship*, January 11, 2022; *Daily Trib*, February 21, March 4, 2022, March 7, 2022, and March 17, 2022.**