



SCHOOLS Barrington, Illinois

At the June 21 school board meeting for Barrington 220 Community Unit School District, parents protested the inclusion of *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe on a list of recommended summer reads that was sent to parents of middle and high school students.

One held up a sign proclaiming “PORN in our schools.” A parent of two grade school children said, “This is exactly [how] I would expect a pedophile to behave when approaching a child to normalize sexual behavior.”

One of the book lists shared was created by the Association of Illinois School Library Educators. The other was a list of recipients of a readers’ choice award voted on by Illinois students.

On June 23, superintendent Robert Hunt announced that Kobabe’s book was being formally reconsidered at the Barrington High School, the only library in the school district where it is held.

Objections to *Gender Queer* also dominated the July 12 board meeting. This time, many attendees spoke out in support of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) students and their reading interests.

Cook County Commissioner Kevin Morrison, the first openly LGBTQIA+ commissioner in the county, cautioned that these protests were about more than one book and were tied to a nationwide movement.

“The words we’re hearing are not different from what we’re seeing in other parts of the country with anti-LGBTQ legislation that’s being pursued,” said Morrison. “We know that his language is dangerous. It causes violence.”

Requests to reconsider two additional LGBTQIA+ titles were also received, for *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson and *Flamer* by Mike Curato.

On August 16, the school board voted to retain *Gender Queer* in the high school library.

On September 20, they voted to retain *Flamer* and *This Book is Gay*.

Reported in: *Daily Herald*, June 24, 2022, and July 14, 2022; WBEZ, September 20, 2022.

Edina, Minnesota

On May 20, the Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association (MPPOA) sent a letter to the administrators of the Edina Public Schools district, challenging use of the book *Something Happened in Our Town: A Child’s Story About Racial Injustice* by Marianne Celano. They also condemned a school field trip to attend a dramatic adaptation of the book performed at the Minneapolis Children’s Theater.

The book was written by child psychologists to spark conversations about racism, promote acceptance, and help kids process and cope with traumatic events. It tells the story of how two families, one White and one Black, respond to a police shooting of a Black man in their town.

MPPOA alleged that *Something Happened*, “Encourages children to fear police officers as unfair, violent, and racist.” They also claimed the picture book was creating a “staffing crisis” for officer recruitment and retention. They requested that the district discontinue use of the book in elementary schools.

The district informed MPPOA that the book was not assigned reading, though they confirmed the book was read aloud to a fifth grade class in Highland Elementary. They stated that going on the field trip to see the play was optional for families of fourth and fifth grade students.

MPPOA previously challenged *Something Happened* at the Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan school district (see: Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy, v.6

iss. 1: *Censorship Dateline: Schools: Rosemount, Minnesota*).

Reported in: *Hometown Source*, June 15, 2022.

Milford, Ohio

In late April, three parents filed requests for the reconsideration of *In the Time of Butterflies* by Julia Alvarez from Milford Exempted Village School District’s 10th grade English language arts curriculum and from school libraries.

The requests were spurred by a post to a neighborhood Facebook group proclaiming “Our 10th graders are being forced to read this pornography in school!”

In the Time of Butterflies is set in the Dominican Republic in the 1960s and chronicles three sisters’ involvement in the resistance movement against Rafael Leónidas Trujillo dictatorship. It was nominated for the 1994 National Book Critics Circle Award and is a selection of the National Endowment of the Arts’ Big Read program.

One parent alleged that assigning the book “is willingly and knowingly pandering obscenity to minors.”

Another wrote that the book exposes children to “an unhealthy view of sexuality” and “normalizes necromancy” in defiance of Christian beliefs.

A committee of administrators, teachers, and parents read and reviewed the book, in accordance with district policy. They voted unanimously to retain it. Superintendent John Spieser endorsed their decision and the book remains in district school libraries and the 10th grade curriculum.

Reported in: *Cincinnati Enquirer*, May 12, 2022.

Park County, Wyoming

On April 29, an individual without children in the Park County School District requested the formal reconsideration of *The Color Purple* by Alice



Walker. The individual also submitted a request for the reconsideration of *How to be an Antiracist* by Ibram X. Kendi.

The complainant indicated that they were challenging the books on behalf of a group and that they were ready to file complaints against roughly 100 additional titles.

On the reconsideration forms, the complainant characterized *The Color Purple* as “pornographic . . . grooming material” and called *How to be an Antiracist* “non-colorblind” and “Marxist.”

On June 2, the district’s review committee voted 9-0 to retain both books.

Reported in: *Big Horn Radio Network*, May 31, 2022; *Cowboy State Daily*, June 3, 2022.

LIBRARIES Ketchikan, Alaska

On June 2, the city council of Ketchikan voted against canceling a Drag Queen Storytime event scheduled at the Ketchikan Public Library as part of the city’s Pride Month celebrations. During the council meeting, three members of the public spoke in opposition to the event and five spoke in support of it.

According to library director Pat Tully, the half-hour event would feature a drag queen named Luna reading *The Hips of the Drag Queen Go Swish, Swish, Swish* by Lil Miss Hot Mess. The event is intended to foster self-acceptance.

The event was held as scheduled on June 17 and was attended by children of all ages. Tully said it was the best attended storytime the library has ever had. The library had to add two additional readings to accommodate all those in attendance.

In an interview after the event, Luna said Drag Queen Storytimes accomplish two things. “Kids get to come in and have a great time and celebrate Pride . . . kids who maybe have same-sex parents, or gay uncles and aunts, etc.” Luna continued, “at the same time, I think it was an opportunity to prove what

we were doing is more than okay to all those people who thought that it wasn’t.

Also on June 17, former Ketchikan Borough Assembly member John Harrington asked the borough to cut more than half a million dollars in funding to the library over their decision to host a Drag Queen Storytime event. This is equivalent to roughly 40% of the library’s funding.

The city of Ketchikan owns and operates the library, but the borough contributes to its funding through property taxes on homes and businesses outside of city limits. Harrington’s proposal would eliminate all burrough funding.

When the borough declined to take up Harrington’s proposal, he began the petition process to introduce it to the municipal ballot as a citizen initiated measure.

Reported in: KRBD, June 3, 2022, June 17, and June 23, 2022; KTOO, June 18, 2022.

Dixon, Illinois

Throughout the month of June, a group protested the Dixon Public Library’s (DPL) Pride Month display. They sent a form letter from *CatholicVote*’s “hide the Pride” initiative to library director Antony Deter as well as to city officials (*See this issue: For the Record: Nationwide*).

On July 11, more than a hundred community members attended the board meeting of DPL, including members of the conservative group Sauk Valley Freedom Fighters (SVFF). The SVFF members demanded the removal of books with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) characters.

Some said that library staff should be prosecuted on pornography charges for making the books available to the public.

Roughly half of those who spoke during the public comments section opposed the censorship of library

materials and voiced concerns about discrimination against LGBTQIA+ individuals.

Formal reconsideration requests were submitted for *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe and *Patience & Esther: An Edwardian Romance* by Sarah Searle.

Brett Nicklaus, who helped found SVFF and recently lost his bid to be the Republican nomination for state senate in the 37th district, called for the books to not only be removed from the library, but burned.

Fifteen-year old Daxxen Krzykowski referred to the censorship efforts as “blatant homophobia” and said that “banning books is a slippery slope into fascism.”

Bob Balayti countered that this wasn’t homophobia, but a “spiritual war” with the devil.

At their next board meeting on August 8, the library board unanimously approved policy changes strengthening the library’s opposition to censorship and discrimination.

During the meeting, Deter said that 16 requests had been received for the reconsideration of *Gender Queer* and *Patience & Esther* on the grounds of “sin,” “vulgarity,” and “lesbianism.” These requests for reconsideration were the first the library had received in at least seven years.

All of the requests to reconsider the books were denied.

On September 12, Deter presented the library board with sample policies to help the library navigate challenges to displays, like they faced for their Pride Month display.

At the meeting, new board member Piper Grazulis said that *Gender Queer* is pornography, but that it’s also legal under Illinois law. At the meeting, Angie Shippert, who is running for the Lee County Board, said that she plans to appeal her denied request for the reconsideration of *Gender Queer*.



Reported in: *Shaw Local*, July 13, 2022; August 10, 2022; September 9, 2022; September 14, 2022.

Cambridge, Minnesota

Starting in February, the East Central Regional Library began to receive formal requests for the reconsideration of *It's Perfectly Normal* by Robie H. Harris. By May 1, they had received 30 requests, many of which were identical.

The library system has 14 locations in 6 counties and owns 3 copies of the challenged title. After initial review, the title was retained in the childrens' section throughout the library system. One person appealed this decision to the library board for review.

A group of more than 30 people all spoke out against the book during the public comments section of the May 9 board meeting. The formation of a review committee was announced during the meeting, tasked with making a recommendation to the board at their August 8 meeting.

The committee's presentation to the board was postponed until their September 12 meeting. The committee recommended retaining *It's Perfectly Normal* in the children's section. The library board voted 16-1 to adopt their recommendation. Following that, the board voted to not consider additional requests for reconsideration of Harris's book for five years. That motion passed 15-2.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report; *AlphaNews*, May 11, 2022; *Isanti-Chisago County Star*, September 15, 2022.

Portsmouth, Ohio

On June 13, two patrons of the Portsmouth Public Library berated youth services staff over the library's Pride Month display, alleging they were "grooming children" and "promoting pedophilia." They checked out all of the displayed books, in accord with

CatholicVote's "Hide the Pride" campaign (See: this issue: *For the Record: Nationwide*).

One of the patrons responsible for removing the display through brute force circulation contacted the *Scotia County Daily News* about the display and some of the titles on it. On June 16, *Scotia County Daily News* ran a report the library's Pride Month display, focusing on four books that were included:

- *Being You: A First Conversation About Gender* by Megan Madison
- *Mommy, Momma, and Me* by Lesléa Newman
- *Prince and Knight* by Daniel Haack
- *The Every Body Book: The LGBTQ+ Inclusive Guide for Kids About Sex, Gender, Bodies, and Families* by Rachel E. Simon

Numerous people spoke out both in favor of and in opposition to the display during the public comments section of the library's board meeting on June 21. The board said the library does not currently have a policy governing the reconsideration of displays, but that they will seek legal counsel and explore creating one.

The books were never formally challenged and remain available.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report; *Scotia County Daily News*, June 16, 2022; *WSAZ*, June 21, 2022.

Coppell, Texas

In early January, the Cozby Library and Community Commons received a request for the reconsideration of *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe.

During their February 10 board meeting, director Dennis Quinn went over the request the library received, the library's collection development policy, and the recommendation from the review committee that the library retain the title in their collection.

Martha Garber, board vice chair, made a motion to accept the recommendation of Quinn and the reconsideration committee to retain the book. The motion failed with a 3-3 vote. Board member Michelle Ostrander then made a motion to withdraw the book, seconded by Matthew Ittoop. That motion also failed with a 3-3 vote.

The reconsideration request was tabled until the March 10 board meeting. In accordance with the library's policy, the title remained available while undergoing review.

On March 10, Ostrander again made a motion to remove the title from the library, seconded by Matthew Ittoop. This time the vote failed by a vote of 4-2, with Haridas Radhakrishnan changing his vote from the February meeting.

Reported in: *Book Riot*, February 8, 2022.

Harris County, Texas

On March 17, the Harris County Public Library (HCPL) received a request for the reconsideration of *A Day in the Life of Marlon Bundo* by Jill Twiss. The book was retained.

On March 22, HCPL received a request to reconsider *Rainbow Shoes* by Tiffany Stone.

The review committee determined that while they did not believe the book should be withdrawn based on the concerns raised in the request, it did meet weeding criteria in the Texas State Library and Archives Commission's CREW weeding manual.

On April 21, a request for reconsideration of *Maiden and Princess* by Daniel Haack was submitted to HCPL. The book was retained.

On May 19, HCPL received a request to reconsider *Worm Loves Worm* by J.J. Austrian and Mike Curato. The book was retained.

Finally, on June 6, a patron submitted a complaint about the library's



Pride Month displays and requested that they be taken down immediately. The library kept the displays up for the rest of the month.

All of the challenges to materials at HCPL pertained to resources for and representations of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) individuals. The request forms all specifically identified LGBTQIA+ content as the reason for the challenge.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge reports.

Huntsville, Texas

On May 3, Huntsville city officials met with Rachel McPhail, city librarian of the Huntsville Public Library, and urged her to remove all books with representation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) individuals from the children's section.

They presented McPhail with a slide deck about challenging LGBTQIA+ library materials called "Mama Bear and the Public Library." Sarah Raney had presented the slideshow to a church group the week before. Three titles were included in the slide deck and referenced by the elected officials, though formal requests to reconsider them were not submitted.

On May 25, McPhail had a meeting with the city manager and the deputy city manager, in which the librarian was again urged to relocate the books. She was informed city council members are applying pressure for the books to be handled. The city manager also advised her against having a Pride Month display in the library.

The library retained all three titles where they were originally shelved.

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge reports.

Phillips, Wisconsin

During the May 26 board meeting for the Phillips Public Library, a group of about 12 people spoke out against specific titles which include topics of social justice, racism, or the lived experiences of individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+).

Two board members led the group and personally submitted requests for the reconsideration of 29 titles. Library director Rebecca Puhl said it was the first time she'd received a request for the reconsideration of library materials in the 14 years she's worked there.

A formal review of the titles conducted in accordance with the library's policies took place from May through September. All titles were retained.

Titles challenged in this case:

- *Ana on the Edge* by A.J. Sass
- *AntiRacist Baby* by Ibram X. Kendi
- *Beauty Woke* by NoNieqa Ramos
- *Call and Response: The Story of Black Lives Matter* by Veronica Chambers
- *Calvin* by Ronald Martin Ford, Jr.
- *Different Can Be Great: All Kinds of Families* by Lisa Bullard
- *Everything You Say About Me that's Wonderful is True* by Dr. Casey
- *From Archie to Zack* by Vincent X. Kirsch
- *Heather Has Two Mommies* by Lesléa Newman

- *Introducing Teddy: a Gentle Story About Gender and Friendship* by Jessica Walton
- *Jack (Not Jackie)* by Erica Silverman
- *Jacob's New Dress* by Sarah Hoffman
- *Julian at the Wedding* by Jessica Love
- *Love, Violet* by Charlotte Sullivan Wild
- *Melissa* (previously published as *George*) by Alex Gino
- *My Rainbow* by Trinity Neal
- *Not My Idea: A Book About Whiteness* by Anastasia Higginbotham
- *Our Skin: A First Conversation About Race* by Megan Madison
- *Papa, Daddy, and Riley* by Seamus Kirst
- *Pride: The Story of Harvey Milk and the Rainbow Flag* by Rob Sanders
- *Race Cars: A Children's Book About White Privilege* by Jenny Devenny
- *Sewing the Rainbow: A Story about Gilbert Baker and the Rainbow Flag* by Gayle Pitman
- *Stella Brings the Family* by Miriam Schiffer
- *This Day in June* by Gayle Pitman
- *Two Grooms on a Cake: The Story of America's First Gay Wedding* by Rob Sanders
- *Use of Force and the Fight Against Police Brutality* by Elliott Smith
- *What Are Your Words?: A Book About Pronouns* by Katherine Locke
- *When We Say Black Lives Matter* by Maxine Beneba Clarke
- *You Be You!: The Kid's Guide to Gender, Sexuality, and Family* by Jonathan Branfman

Reported in: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report; Price County Review, June 9, 2022; WXPB, September 23, 2022.