



*Building Bright Futures*

Dr. Cynthia Stevenson

Superintendent

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January 23, 2009

Dear Mr. Sheffield, Members of the Review Committees, Mr. Hammans, Mr. White, and Ms. Wolter,

I want to thank all of you for your participation in the recent process outlined in policy KEC and in regulation KEC-R that define how challenges to learning materials shall be reviewed. I know that each of you demonstrated great integrity and thoughtfulness during the four hearings that were conducted in December 2008.

Any challenge of literature contained in our school libraries is a difficult and complex issue that involves diverse values and needs in our communities and among our staff members. The review and hearing process that includes parents, librarians, and administrators provides for consideration by individuals with a variety of viewpoints. The taking of testimony provides for the complainant to be heard.

In asking for a review of these four novels, Mr. Sheffield believed that they should not be available to middle school students based upon frank language and sexual situations in the books. Each of the four novels was completely read by each member of the committee assigned to that novel. Each committee included parents, librarians, and middle school administrators. In addition to reading the books, the committees reviewed the written complaint submitted by Mr. Sheffield, the relevant district policies, documentation provided by the parties, and book reviews concerning each of the books. The committees also took testimony from and asked questions of Mr. Sheffield, the middle school principal, and middle school teacher librarians.

The following is my decision based on review of the complaints and review of the committees' recommendations.

The Girl who Loved Tom Gordon by Stephen King

Based on the recommendations of the committee, The Girl Who Loved Tom Gordon will remain on middle school library shelves.

Christine by Stephen King

Based on the recommendations of the committee, Christine will remain on middle school library shelves.

Carrie by Stephen King

Based on the recommendations of the committee, Carrie will remain on middle school library shelves.

Cujo by Stephen King

Based on the recommendations of the committee, Cujo will remain on middle school library shelves.

It is important to note that all members of the committees, both staff and parents, were unanimous in their recommendations to the superintendent that each of the books remain on the middle school library shelves.

Each committee stressed that their recommendations did not infringe on the rights of parents to decide what books their children should read. While the committees noted that the books did contain some language and situations that could lead some parents to decide to not have their children read these particular books, the opportunity the books provide in encouraging some reluctant readers to engage in pleasure reading offsets the language and situations. They also stated that they believed that libraries should have a wide variety of reading choices. Finally, the committees did not agree with Mr. Sheffield's assertion that the books posed an immediate, imminent, or long term danger to students who read the book. The committees felt that middle school students have the ability to discern between imaginative scenarios of the books and fact.

Again, thank you for your participation in the process. According to regulation KEC-R, an appeal of this decision may be made to the Board of Education in writing within ten calendar days of the date of this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cynthia Stevenson".

Dr. Cynthia Stevenson  
Superintendent

cc: Board of Education  
Tony Giurado