

Minutes

Internal District Library Media Committee

4/30/2012

4:00 p.m.

Sheri Sauve welcomed the participants to the committee meeting. Introductions were made. Participants are:

Sheri Sauve – Committee Chair

Susan Firmage – Teacher

Trudena Fager – Library Media Teacher at Bountiful High

[REDACTED] (Parent member)

Susan Johnston – Teacher

Kristi Frodsham – School Director

Michelle Beus – Legal Issues Specialist

Sheri Sauve reviewed the following with the committee:

District Library Media Committee Procedures:

- Upon receipt of the completed Request for Reconsideration of Materials form, the library media supervisor will call a meeting of the district library media committee to introduce the complaint or complaints.
- The district library media committee members will be assigned to read, view or listen to the material in its entirety, and the library media supervisor will provide public written reviews of the material being reconsidered from magazines or other, review sources.
- The district library media committee will meet after reading, viewing or listening to the material, at which time the complainant has the option to meet with the committee to present his/her views. The committee will then dismiss the complainant and hear the views of other committee members.
- A decision is made by a majority vote. The committee will decide whether to retain the material in the library media center, move the material to an appropriate library media center, restrict or discard the material, or sanction another appropriate action.
- The same materials may not come before the district library media committee for reconsideration for at least three years.
- The complainant and all school library media teachers/specialists will be notified of the district committee's decision in writing within three-weeks after formal submission of the complaint.
- The material in question will remain in use during the reconsideration process. No item is to be removed from school use without the recommendation of the district library media committee.

Purpose of Committee:

In regards to the challenged book, decide whether or not to: retain, move, restrict, discard, or sanction another action.

Parent Representatives:

██████████ – Parent

██████████ – Parent

██████████ – Parent

A parent related her experience with the book “In Our Mothers’ House” by Patricia Polacco. Her Kindergartener brought the book home from school. She started to read the book with her child and realized her child was not mature enough to understand the subject of the book. The book depicts a lesbian couple who have adopted three children. As a parent she wanted to be able to teach her children about homosexuality on her timetable.

A parent stated, “If there was a book regarding other sexual topics, I would still be here.”

The Kindergarten child had a lot of questions about the book.

The parents felt the topic of the book was too controversial for young children.

The parents explained the process which they had already gone through at the school site. A meeting was held at the school with the library media specialist, community members, and concerned parents. The decision was made to move the book to a shelf that older children would have access to. The parents wanted to restrict access to the book and felt the committee would never agree to restrict the book. They also felt the book did not reflect their community’s morals and values.

A parent expressed the feeling that her ability to choose when to teach her children about homosexuality was taken away.

The parents expressed they would like to have had the librarian guide children to a different book.

The parents have read the book and were dismayed to discover how much autonomy the media specialist has in ordering books for the school.

Committee Members were asked if any had questions for the parents.

A committee member asked the parents if they were aware of the process by which a parent could request the librarian place information in their child’s file to restrict their own child from checking out certain types of books. The parents were not aware of this option.

All three parents were concerned about children checking the book out and reading it at school, without parents ever knowing their child had read the book.

The parents asked for the book to be placed behind the librarian’s desk and to only check the book out to students who have written parental permission.

The parent members were dismissed to allow the committee to deliberate.

Committee Discussion

A committee member began by stating that the author of the book is a well-known and loved author of many children’s books.

It was stressed to the committee the importance of only looking at this book. The committee is not to make a decision based on other books by the same author or about other books. The petition was only to review this book.

The Committee reviewed case law, specifically, several rulings from the Supreme Court regarding school libraries.

Court rarely had a unanimous vote regarding school libraries.

A book cannot be removed because it is offensive to someone’s personal belief.

A book may be removed if it is violent, offensive, or contains vulgar language, will cause substantial disruption, or is not age appropriate but not on whether we morally agree with the content of the book.

In determining whether a book, once placed in a library, can be removed, the Supreme Court asked what is the purpose of a school library? *In the Pico case the* school library was an extension of curriculum **and** for recreational reading **and** was open to the students and parents one evening per week.

None of the cases for elementary schools have reached the Supreme Court.

It is important to remember elementary school libraries are not public libraries.

Our elementary school library media centers are very structured and students are not free to come and go. Student use of the elementary school library is very supervised and generally part of a lesson related to the core curriculum library media skills or

extension of a classroom lesson. Being so closely related to the structured instructional time of students, elementary school libraries should look to the curriculum standards for direction.

Utah state law has specific parameters for discussion of sexual orientation. Such discussions are not even introduced until 8th grade and Utah law specifically prohibits in 53A-13-101 instructional materials containing the “advocacy of homosexuality.”

The committee discussed again that the library should be to extend curriculum and provide recreational reading. Some members voiced concern that if the law specifically prohibits a topic to even junior high and high school students, it would be inappropriate to provide it as recreational reading in lower elementary grades as a picture book.

The committee reviewed the five actions the committee can take. They can decide to:

- Retain the material in the library media center
- Move the material to an appropriate library media center
- Restrict material
- Discard material
- Sanction another appropriate action

The committee then discussed several more issues:

There are alternatives to removing the book. The manner or method for accessing the book could be restricted.

There are five copies of this book in elementary school libraries in the district.

The library media specialist purchased the book to help support non-traditional families in the school’s boundaries.

If access were restricted, how would a same sex family know the book existed in order to check it out for their kids? The library media specialist indicated that in elementary schools, they generally know who the students are and can let the student or parent know that the book is available with parent permission.

Moving the book to an older readers’ location in the library would result in no one checking it out and that would be a bad result because students who may benefit by reading it wouldn’t even have the option.

Restricting the book and requiring parent signature would cause the issue to be buried. The elementary librarian contradicted this by saying that likely the opposite result would occur. That once kids were aware of the book needing permission, it often becomes a novelty and a challenge and many would want to check out the book.

Removing the book completely is not a good option. We all know many non-traditional families. Kids ask questions. This book could help to answer questions by peers in the school situation. It could help those children in same sex families see their family in a book.

The author’s other books deal with many sensitive issues and this book teaches acceptance and tolerance. The book could help prevent bullying of kids from same sex families.

It could be used by a family to discuss the issues, but by law, teachers cannot use this book in their classroom as instructional material.

The committee was asked to vote by secret ballot and placed in a basket.

Vote

The committee voted 6 to 1 to restrict the book by placing it behind the library media specialist’s desk and allowing students to check the book out with written parent permission.

This decision applies to all elementary library media centers in the district. Belinda will send a copy of the letter to committee members.