

MENTOR SCHOOL BOARD TO VOTE AGAIN ON BOOK CHALLENGES. PARENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS REQUEST AN APPEAL TO THE BOARD AFTER THE SUPERINTENDENT'S RECOMMENDATION TO RETAIN CHALLENGED MATERIAL.

One elementary book and one high school book will be voted on during the upcoming March 12th board meeting.

The first book challenge stemmed from a second grader's parents whose child brought the book, *Right Now!: Real Kids Speaking up for Change*, home from their elementary school library. The book is made available for kindergarten through fifth grade students at a few of the Mentor Elementary School libraries. Per the challenge, the parents and 75 other community members/parents felt this book was not factual, is ideologically biased, and not age appropriate.

The book introduces readers to different children from around the world and shares their stories of activism. The book further encourages children to become activists for a variety of political purposes. It talks about immigration laws and the "fear and pain" that they can cause. Additionally, Middle Eastern conflict is highlighted with a reference to the Taliban and a young girl being shot by authorities. Greta Thunberg is mentioned along with climate change activism and pleads with the reader that, "Our world is dying. Our future is dying." The book also highlights Jazz Jennings, a transgender activist. The author states, "When she was born, the doctors thought she was a boy. (It happens sometimes.) But Jazz is a girl. Call her she." This statement is treated as fact, which the challengers took issue with.

The second challenge is for a book that resides within the Mentor High School Library, which is available for 9-12th graders within the district. It was filed by a retired Mentor Schools Elementary teacher and former school Media Specialist. The book is called, *Empire of Storms* and depicts multiple sex acts in graphic detail. The previous Mentor teacher has completed several book challenges within the past two years. The last challenge in October, was for the novel, *The Bluest Eye* which was sexually explicit and included scenes of rape and child molestation. The challenge included over 300 signatures of parents and community members supporting the removal of the book. However, the board decided to agree with the superintendent's decision to retain the book via a 2-2 vote (one member was absent for the meeting). *Empire of Storms*, is being challenged for similar reasons as *The Bluest Eye*, as they both contain pages that depict sexual activities in graphic detail.

The board will be voting on these two items at the next regular meeting on March 12th, at 7pm in Paradigm. Public commentary on agenda items will be held towards the beginning of the meeting while any other public commentary will be entertained at the end of the meeting. To sign up to speak, a form can be filled out online via the board website, or a physical form can be filled out prior to the beginning of the meeting by 7pm.

This release is written on behalf of board members Rose Ioppolo and Annie Payne solely and does not represent a board statement, nor opinions of other board members.



Book	Policy Manual
Section	2000 Program
Title	MATERIALS CONTAINING SEXUAL CONTENT
Code	po2520.03
Status	Active
Adopted	September 12, 2023

2520.03 - MATERIALS CONTAINING SEXUAL CONTENT

The Mentor Board of Education is aware that library/media materials, as well as instructional and supplementary materials and equipment in the District are used almost exclusively by minor students. Consistent with Policy 2520, the primary objective of such materials shall be to enrich, support and implement the educational program of the school.

This policy shall only apply to existing materials that are specifically challenged pursuant to an applicable Board policy and any library/media materials and instructional and supplementary materials that will be first introduced to circulation or accessibility. This policy shall not require any Board employee to conduct an audit of materials currently accessible or in circulation, unless and until a specific material is subject to challenge per the terms of an applicable Board policy. If a Board employee identifies, or is made aware of a material that contains sexual content, they shall notify their supervisor for a final determination on policy implementation.

Process Related to "Sexual Content"

Policy 2520.03 shall apply to the following Board policies and any corresponding administrative guidelines: Policy 2520, 2520.01, 2520.02. The Board has determined that any material containing "sexual content", as defined herein, may be inappropriate for minor students under certain circumstances.

Therefore, in conducting any applicable review of such materials set forth in the aforementioned policies, the Superintendent or reviewing committee shall identify any material that contains sexual content, as defined below.

Following the identification of such material, the Superintendent or reviewing committee shall undertake a process to:

- A. notify parents/guardians that the material contains sexually explicit content;
- B. provide parents/guardians the ability to review the material containing sexually explicit content;
- C. if applicable, request an alternate material that does not include sexually explicit content.

For the purposes of this Policy and those policies cross-referenced herein, "sexual content" shall be defined as any written language or images, pictures, photographs, drawings, movies or other visual depictions that includes, but not limited to: sexual intercourse, masturbation, sadism, masochism, bestiality, fellatio, cunnilingus, pedophilia, molestation, rape, or incest.

Exclusions from Policy Coverage

This policy shall not apply to any state-mandated curriculum nor is this Policy intended to supersede Ohio Revised Code applicable to state-designated courses of study, including any review process associated with such courses of study established under Ohio law. Likewise, this Policy shall not apply to any materials, including but not limited to textbooks or instructional materials, utilized in College Credit Plus courses. Advanced Placement materials established by the College Board shall follow the "Process Related to Sexual Content" described herein.

Superintendent Authority to Develop Administrative Guidelines

The Superintendent shall be authorized to develop Administrative Guidelines consistent with this Policy 2520.03 and other applicable Board policies.

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