



LIBRARIES Bakersfield, California

Sex, violence, drugs, and alcohol are common plot devices in movies and books for adults, but the father of a Standard Middle School student was shocked when his daughter came to him with a library book containing all of those issues.

“She began to read it and immediately brought it to my attention,” Brandon Duke said. “It took very little time for me to recognize that . . . this should not be in a junior high’s library.”

The book is called *Glass* and was written by Ellen Hopkins. It is the second in the Crank Trilogy, which follows the life of a girl named Kristina and her battle with addiction to methamphetamine. According to Simon and Schuster’s website, the book is recommended for children who are at least fourteen years old.

“Crank. Glass. Ice. Crystal. Whatever you call it, it’s all the same: a monster,” the website says in its description of the book. “Kristina thinks she can control it. Now with a baby to care for, she is determined to be the one deciding when and how much, the one calling the shots. But the monster is strong, and before she knows it, Kristina is back in its grip . . . and it won’t let go.”

Standard School District Superintendent Paul Meyers said once the school was made aware of Duke’s concern, it removed the entire trilogy from the library to evaluate the books.

The school’s library has a “restricted section” for the advanced readers, Meyers said. Parents are required to sign a form each year to allow their children to check out books from the section. “Even those books should be vetted,” Meyers said.

Books are acquired for the library by multiple methods, including donations, book fairs and requests from

teachers, according to Meyers. The Crank Trilogy was more than likely received through a book fair.

“We don’t know how this one slipped through,” Meyers said. “We are a human-run organization and we do make mistakes.”

The Standard School District’s Board of Trustees may ask for the issue to be brought before them, Meyers said. However, policies and procedures are in place that don’t require that.

“It’s a matter of asking ‘How do we tighten up our process?’” Meyers said. “We obviously don’t want to upset parents and we don’t want kids reading things they shouldn’t.”

Duke said he wants the board to get to the heart of the matter as soon as possible. “You (the board) are in a position of authority to make sure things like this don’t go by the wayside,” Duke told the board during its November 10 meeting. “In my opinion, a book like this should not be read by high school children, let alone kids in junior high.” Reported in: *Bakersfield Californian*, November 13.

Knightdale, North Carolina

A Knightdale parent has raised concern over a book her first grader checked out from his elementary school’s library. It’s a graphic novel about a ghost story that is written specifically for kids. But Kay Walker said it’s not appropriate for students of any age.

“It was talking about a man who murders his family and shows a man walking with his shotgun going to his parents and his sister and brother,” said Walker.

Walker was stunned when her son brought home the book from Lake Myra Elementary’s library. She took pictures of it and posted it to Facebook and got a big response from other parents.

“I couldn’t imagine a teacher pulling this book off the library and sitting in front of her kindergarten or first grade class reading it to them,” she said.

The book *Amityville* is part of a series called Junior Graphic Ghost Stories published in 2006 by Rosen publishing. Rosen is dedicated to providing books to schools and libraries. On the publisher’s website, the book is listed as an interest level for grades three through six, and a reading level for grades two through three.

“To make it towards kids who are so young and they’re just learning what is right and what’s wrong, and giving them these ideas, it just it blows my mind,” said Walker.

Walker submitted a request for the book to be reviewed by a committee and was told the book has been pulled from Lake Myra’s library. Wake County Schools released a statement that said:

In accordance with Board of Education policy a committee is formed once an official request is made to review a book. This committee follows the review process as put forth by policy and then makes a recommendation regarding the book in a timely manner.

Walker hopes the book will be taken off of all shelves in Wake County Schools. “When you stare at an image of a man shooting his family, that gets in your head, whether or not you know if it’s wrong or right,” she said.

Walker said she intends to write the book’s author, John Perritano, to inquire why he would write such a story for such a young audience.

“Our children are our next generation. If we want things to change and violence to stop then we have to start with them,” said Walker. Reported in: *wncn.com*, November 18.



SCHOOLS Crestview, Florida

One parent's objections to the phrase "Muslims pray to Allah" in a fifth-grader's workbook has led to the removal of the book from the Walker Elementary curriculum. Walker Principal Lorna Carnley said the *Worldly Wise 3000* workbook was old and could be replaced with a superior product at no cost.

"If we had removed this program, and that had hurt my children, we would have looked at it harder," Carnley said. "This was a no-brainer."

The phrase parent Roy Barbour had a problem with appears on page 100 of the workbook in a lesson on homophones, words that sound the same but have different meanings.

"Muslims pray to Allah" is intended to provide fifth-graders a supplemental lesson in differentiating between the words pray and prey, according to Okaloosa County School District spokesman Henry Kelley.

"It is a fact that Muslims do pray to Allah," Kelley said. "The example was the proper use of the word pray. The sentence didn't say you have to pray to Allah."

In his first correspondence with the school district, Barbour said, "I have yet to see the words God, Jesus or Christians in any assignment."

"I just wanted to draw attention to something that I felt was unnecessary when so many other options were available. For example: The farmers pray for rain," Barbour said. "With so much rebuttal to keep the Christian God out of school and 2015 being the year of being offended, as a Christian, I found this offensive," Barbour said.

Carnley said the book had been used at Walker since before she arrived as an assistant principal three years ago. It was replaced following Barbour's complaint with a workbook

offering "a much more rigorous curriculum," she said.

The *Flowcabulary* workbook was already available at the school and fifth-grade faculty immediately replaced the older book with the newer one. "The kids never missed a beat," Carnley said. Reported in: nwfdailynews.com, March 1.

Longwood, Florida

In response to a complaint from a parent of an elementary school student, three high school libraries in Florida have restricted access to the award-winning *This One Summer*, by Mariko Tamaki and Jillian Tamaki.

A parent of a third-grade student at Sabal Point Elementary School in Longwood complained about some of the language in the 2015 Caldecott Honor-winning graphic novel. The district removed the book from the library but then also had it removed from open shelves at three local high schools.

A letter from the National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC)—signed by the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund, American Booksellers for Free Expression, Association of American Publishers, National Council of Teachers of English, American Library Association, and the PEN American Center's Children's and Young Adult Book Committee—points out how the decision undermines the freedom to read: "While the book may be above the maturity and reading level of elementary school students, its value for young adults at the high school level has been recognized by leading professionals. The book may not be of interest to every student, but as per Seminole County Public Schools' own policies, 'The [school's educational media] center shall provide a wide range of materials on all levels of difficulty, with

diversity of appeal, and the representation of different points of view."

The letter also notes that the decision appears to violate Seminole County's policies regarding challenged materials, and raises broader questions as well:

"Restricting a book with such established literary merit in three high school libraries solely because a parent complained about its content being inappropriate for her own elementary-aged child privileges the values of one person over the entire community, and raises serious constitutional concerns."

The graphic novel, about a pair of friends teetering on the brink of young adulthood, is no stranger to controversy. When it received a Caldecott Honor, an award usually associated with picture books, the work caused quite a stir among librarians and educators. Shortly after the announcement, in an interview the Tamaki cousins shared their own shock at the important recognition. "I wouldn't have even considered our book Caldecott material. Very thrilling and surprising," said Jillian Tamaki.

Columnist and former chair of the American Library Association's Intellectual Freedom Committee Pat Scales last year addressed a librarian's question about the appropriateness of the Caldecott recognition given to the graphic novel for older readers, saying that the book fulfills the award's criteria.

In response to the restriction of access in the Florida high schools, Mariko Tamaki said, "*This One Summer* is listed as being for readers ranging twelve to eighteen. It contains depictions of young people talking about, and dealing with, adult things. I think there are a lot of books, including a lot of great graphic novels,



that should be made available to teen readers.”

Mariko Tamaki also appreciates the librarians and educators who continue to shelve graphic novels in their collections, despite the controversy that might ensue. “A lot of libraries and librarians I know have embraced comics as being great books for teens, and that makes me very happy.” Reported in: *School Library Journal*, February 18.

Coeur d’Alene, Idaho

The ad hoc literature committee of the Coeur d’Alene School District has recommended removing Jhumpa Lahiri’s novel *The Namesake* from a list of approved books to be read by high school students. The same committee voted last year to remove John Steinbeck’s novella *Of Mice and Men* from a list of books teachers may assign to ninth-graders. Its recommendation garnered national media attention.

Coeur d’Alene School Board Chair Christa Hazel responded to the committee’s vote, saying it was valuable feedback.

“I think input from the committee gives the board an idea as to what the community threshold is for appropriate literature,” she said.

The committee’s recommendation initiated a thirty-day review period during which the school board solicits public input on whether it should remove the book from a reading list. During the review period, students, educators, parents and members of the public will be able to weigh in on whether the book, which contains references to recreational drug use, is appropriate for high school-age students.

Last year, a similar committee recommended removing Sherman Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* from an optional high school reading list in Meridian. During public testimony, students and educators advocated in favor of

retaining the text. Opponents of *True Diary* described it variously as profane and pornographic, as it contains references to masturbation.

While opponents of the text were briefly successful in removing it from the reading list, it was reinstated, with caveats, during a school board meeting in September 2014. Reported in: *Boise Weekly*, November 5.

Jerseyville, Illinois

The Jersey CUSD 100 School Board responded December 18 to a local pastor who had complained about objectionable content in some books assigned to students in the district. Gary Goode, who teaches at Kingdom Increase Church in Jerseyville, and is also a bus driver for the school district, also spoke on the matter at the board’s November meeting. He raised the matter after his foster child was assigned to read *The Dead Poet’s Society*.

“I read most of the book, and I found it disturbing,” Goode said in an interview shortly after the meeting. “Very close to a strong, mild pornography. . . . To me that book represents a [disrespectful attitude towards] parents and their judgments. It shows rebellion towards teachers, and has graphic immoral areas.”

The book came to Goode’s attention after his foster son, Pete, a high school senior and a devout Christian, found *The Dead Poet’s Society* too objectionable to finish reading. Goode said the book diverged significantly from the film of the same name, and believes it much more troubling than the film. Pete was allowed to read a different book.

The school district allows parents who take issue with curriculum materials to request replacement assignments be given. Goode, however, hoped the district would pull the book entirely. Two members of the board replied to Goode’s request, and

both took an opposing position to his view.

“I think someplace along the line in your education, Gary, you’ve got to make your own decision about what you’re going to accept and what you’re not going to accept,” Ed Test, board president, said during the meeting. “Like you and I differ hugely on politics. I don’t accept you. You don’t accept me. But I think you listen [to opposing views].”

Test added he had read a number of books in college that he didn’t like, but he appreciated how they challenged him. “Most of our choices in the curriculum are done by people who are professionals in that area,” Test said, “which I am not, but I trust them, and that’s my answer to you.”

Board member Sherry Droste echoed Test’s sentiments. “I’m going to respect your opinion, but I’m going to concur that those students are going to have [exposure to objectionable materials during their education],” Droste said. “I, too, as an educator have a huge amount of respect for the curriculum folks and for the teachers that are investing a ton of time to evaluate what is most appropriate for kids at a given age or grade level. So I think we are doing a really good job, actually, of exposing them to a wide range of literary opportunities.”

Still, Goode was disappointed no action was taken. “I want to see them grow up with great characters, and so being a minister also I know that those kinds of ingredients alter the character of their little minds, and I wanted to see that book removed from the curriculum,” he said. “Kids only have so much time in a school day, so I think it’s just like a farmer. He goes to the field, he sows the very best seeds that he possibly can for that crop, and I think that there are immense books [they could read instead].”



Goode said he thinks books with potentially objectionable content have their place in society, but he does not feel kids should be exposed to them until after high school.

“I would relish taking three or four pastors in the libraries and sifting through, and then taking out with permission of the board and everybody the ingredients that are not going to build a great America in the future,” he said. Reported in: *Jersey County Journal*, December 18.

Mattoon, Illinois

High school leaders have removed a book from the Mattoon High School curriculum for its use of lewd and possibly offensive materials.

Michele Sinclair, MHS principal, said the book, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, by Jonathan Safran Foer, was removed from an English class because the book contains several passages that were “extremely” vulgar detailing sexual acts. She said parents brought up concerns as to the content in the book.

“The problem wasn’t necessarily the book or the material,” Sinclair said. “The problem was that we did not provide parents with an opportunity to opt out.”

Sinclair said school officials should’ve given the parents the ability to say they were not comfortable with their child reading that material, as is done when R-rated movies are shown in the classroom.

“Once it was brought to our attention, then because we didn’t provide parents with that option, we didn’t really feel like we had a lot of alternatives at this point,” Sinclair said.

Sinclair said school leaders are addressing the process, working with the English department, on creating a document with the summary, connection to the curriculum and notes about the text of books.

“We want full disclosure to parents about what their students are reading,” she said. “The bottom line is these are still kids. Yes, they are young adults, but they are on the cusp of adulthood,” Sinclair said. “Parents should have the right to determine what their students are exposed to in the classrooms.”

Sinclair said deciding which books would be the best to engage the students is challenging. “When students get to certain level where their reading level is so high and we want to provide them with the novels that are appropriate with their reading levels, it is difficult to totally avoid adult issues,” Sinclair said.

Books are added to the curriculum by first being recommended by the English teachers, who brainstorm high engagement books they would like the students to read.

Those books are then approved through the Curriculum Coordinating Committee and Mattoon board of education.

Sinclair said she does not know if *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* will be used in the curriculum again, even under the new procedure. Reported in: *Journal-Gazette and Times-Courier*, September 23.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

After *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was published in 1885, the book was boycotted in some places in the United States for portraying friendship between a black man and a white boy. “In its time, it was derided and censored,” said Deborah Caldwell-Stone, deputy director of the American Library Association’s Office for Intellectual Freedom, which tracks challenges to books.

Today, Mark Twain’s classic—about a boy who flees his abusive father and travels down the Mississippi River with an escaped slave—is still

sometimes challenged in American schools, but for nearly the opposite reason: its liberal use of the N-word and perceived racist portrayals of black characters.

This week, a Montgomery County school removed *Huckleberry Finn* from its curriculum after a group of students said the book made them uncomfortable.

After a forum for students and faculty, the administration of Friends’ Central School decided to strike the book from the eleventh-grade American literature class, principal Art Hall said in a letter to parents.

“We have all come to the conclusion that the community costs of reading this book in 11th grade outweigh the literary benefits,” Hall said in his letter.

The book’s use of the N-word was challenging for some students, who felt the school was not being inclusive, Hall said. According to the school’s website, Friends’ Central is guided by Quaker philosophy, and “peaceful resolution of conflicts, seeking truth, and collaboration are key aspects of a Friends’ Central education.”

“I’m very proud of the process that our community engaged in to make the decision,” Hall said.

The novel was the no. 5 most frequently challenged book in the country during the 1990s, according to the American Library Association (ALA), and no. 14 in the decade of the 2000s.

“It will always be an issue because it touches on a very sensitive nerve, which is America’s history of racism,” said Antonio Aiello, a Banned Books Week coordinator at PEN American Center, a New York-based literary association.

Hall said the book will remain in the school library. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* will be taught in the eleventh-grade courses, potentially alongside a second novel.



The Wynnewood school isn't alone. *Huckleberry Finn* has sparked controversy at American high schools in recent years, and in 2011 a publisher made waves when it released a modified edition that removed all instances of the N-word.

Other local schools said they either teach *Huckleberry Finn* or have it on their library shelves. The West Chester Area School District, for example, often teaches it in the eleventh grade. The Lower Merion district makes it available in its library.

"We don't shy away from teaching it," said Jim Miller, dean of students and an English teacher at Friends Select School. "We see it as a very important opportunity to educate kids further about the use of language, especially the use of the N-word."

He said the classes teaching *Finn* include a unit on the N-word and encourage students to think critically about history and language. The school hasn't been challenged by parents or students about books, he said.

At Greene Street Friends School, a course of study, new this year, includes books not traditionally used in schools, a spokeswoman said, such as Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, which was the most frequently challenged book of 2014 by the ALA count.

"We don't let concerns about censoring or banned books shape" our curriculum, the spokeswoman said.

In recent years, the ALA has recorded about three hundred to four hundred challenges each year, Caldwell-Stone said, which represent "a snapshot" of what's happening across the country. Removing a text from curriculum because of concerns about its content is generally considered a challenge to the book by those who track bans.

"We would still see this as a kind of censorship because there is something

to be learned from this work," Caldwell-Stone said.

Hall said the choice would empower students. "I do not believe that we're censoring. I really do believe that this is an opportunity for the school to step forward and listen to the students," he said. Reported in: *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 12.

Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Some parents in Eau Claire are upset with what is being taught in their schools. They claim third-grade students had to memorize an Islamic prayer. The superintendent says that is not the case, and the rumors in the community are inaccurate.

Superintendent David Gray said the rumors center around a book called *Nasreen's Secret School*, which is set in Afghanistan. The book is part of a curriculum called "Engage New York," which is being implemented at all Eau Claire schools this year.

Some parents though, are already calling for the school to change back to last year's teaching. "It walks a very gray line about preaching religion or just exposing [students] to it," said Art Keene, a parent who is concerned about the curriculum.

The so-called "gray line" has to do with this excerpt: "Please Allah, open her eyes to the world, I prayed as I left her there."

Superintendent Gray says the line is mentioned by the main character's grandmother and students are not being forced to memorize or recite any prayer.

"There is nothing that requires the students to even consider memorizing an Islamic prayer, let alone expecting them to say one or anything else," said Gray.

Sherri Keene is the president of the Eau Claire's Parent Teacher Organization, and feels a little uncomfortable with the book being taught.

"These things shouldn't be brought up, it's supposed to be completely separate between at the school and religion," said Sherri Keene.

Art Keene views the book a little differently than his wife. "I'm okay with them being exposed to it, but as long as it's balanced, but the problem is the teachers aren't prepared," said Keene.

It's the preparation that's Keene's biggest complaint with the new curriculum. "The teachers are telling us that they have had no training on how to use this new material. They find the teacher guides very difficult to follow," said Art Keene.

Eau Claire switched to the "Engage New York" curriculum because Superintendent Gray says test scores were so low. "We weren't getting the results that we needed," said Gray.

Superintendent Gray says they are working with teachers to support them and address their concerns, but he did not outline a specific plan for any future training. Reported in: *wsbt.com*, December 14.

Mount Horeb, Wisconsin

A southern Wisconsin elementary school canceled a planned reading of a children's book about a transgender girl after a group threatened to sue. The Mount Horeb Area School District released a statement saying it would not proceed with its planned reading of the book *I am Jazz*. The district said it would give the Board of Education the opportunity to address a situation, for which the district has no current policy.

In late November the principal of Mount Horeb Primary Center sent a letter to parents saying the book would be read and discussed because the school has a student who identifies as a girl but was born with male anatomy.



“We believe all students deserve respect and support regardless of their gender identity and expression, and the best way to foster that respect and support is through educating students about the issue of being transgender,” the letter said.

The Florida-based Liberty Counsel group threatened to sue, saying it was contacted by concerned parents. In a letter to the school district, the group contended that reading the book would violate parental rights. The Southern Poverty Law Center classifies the Liberty Counsel as a hate group that advocates for “anti-LGBT discrimination, under the guise of religious liberty.”

In its statement the district said as it seeks to address the needs of the individual student, it will be mindful of the needs of other students and families. It also said families whose children may be affected will be notified of future actions, and the goal is to protect all students from bullying so they can learn together in a safe environment. Reported in: tmj4.com, November 28.

STUDENT PRESS Chicago, Illinois

High school reporters at Steinmetz College Prep had spent weeks working on a story about a change in the school bell schedule, even sifting through hundreds of surveys. Little did they know their story would initially be censored, even resulting in a threat from Steinmetz Principal Stephen Ngo to eliminate the eighty-one-year-old school paper entirely.

“I kind of felt like all of our work was going to waste,” said McKenzie Lacefield, a reporter for the *Steinmetz Star*, which has a storied history as the alma mater of *Playboy* editor-in-chief Hugh Hefner, whose ongoing donations cover the cost of printing.

Following public outcry, two meetings between Ngo and the journalism class and some adjustments to the original story draft, the story is set to run in the January-February edition of the *Star*.

The new bell schedule, implemented this school year, pushed the school start time back an hour to 9 a.m. The article addressed the effects of the new bell schedule and includes data from a survey students conducted. In total, the student reporters received nearly 1,400 responses from students, parents and staff members. Lacefield said she felt like there was nothing controversial about the story and the reporters had aimed to present different perspectives on the topic.

And while Lacefield and *Star* Adviser Sharon Schmidt say the story was censored, administrators argue it was always their original intent to postpone publication to allow more time for reporting.

Schmidt, who is also a teacher at Steinmetz, said the trouble with the story started after she contacted Randal Josseland, Network 3 chief of schools for Chicago Public Schools, for comment on the survey. Ngo, already upset at the tone of Schmidt’s email to Josseland, received the original article and decided to postpone its publication to allow the students more time to conduct more interviews.

“I asked them to address some things that were missing,” Ngo said, adding that he wanted students to interview members of the local school council and the school nurse.

Although Schmidt returned a revised article days later, Ngo said he was too busy to review the article and decided to once again postpone the story. Ngo said it was never his intention to permanently kill the story, but to postpone its publication to allow for further reporting.

“That was a big surprise to me and I thought it was very unreasonable,” Schmidt said.

Ngo began prior review of articles at Steinmetz in 2013 after a controversial editorial cartoon appeared in the school newspaper, something that troubled the local school council and school staff members, he said. He cited the *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier* Supreme Court decision as providing him authority to review content before publication. *Hazelwood* allows school officials to censor articles in student newspaper as long as there is a reasonable educational justification and the censorship is viewpoint neutral. Although he has been reviewing articles prior to their publication since 2013, Schmidt said this was the first time he withheld an article.

Ngo met with the journalism class December 16 to explain his decision. Lacefield said Ngo did not directly answer any of the students’ questions and never gave a clear reason as to why he was censoring the article. “It was useless, it was just kind of a waste of time,” Lacefield said.

Ngo said he reiterated his recommendations for further reporting in that meeting and had told the class that he wanted to postpone publication until after the break. But to Schmidt, there was not much else to research or report—the students had spent weeks working on the story, she said. Displeased with the meeting, Lacefield decided to publish the story on her personal blog two days later.

“I really thought that people should get it one way or another,” she said. Lacefield said she didn’t want to wait for 2016 to see the story come out and knew school administrators could not stop her from publishing on a platform not affiliated with the school.

After Lacefield published the story online, Schmidt reported on the



situation for *Substance News*, an online education news site. Local news outlet *DNA Info* reported on the censorship as well.

After Schmidt's article was published, Ngo sent out an email to school counselors stating there would be no journalism program next year. "Scratch Journalism [sic] for next year. We will not be offering it anymore. There will be no more *Steinmetz Star*. I'm still deciding what to do with it for the second semester," Ngo wrote.

"I thought that entire email was crazy," Lacefield said. "It was not thought through." Schmidt said she was angry and hurt by the email, but was prepared to fight the administration to keep the paper running.

"I just thought it was ridiculous, because it's such a good program," Schmidt said.

Despite his email, Ngo said he has no intention of ending the journalism program at Steinmetz, adding that the students do a great job with the publication. Ngo said he wrote the email in an emotional state after learning that the stories were posted online.

After the holiday break, Ngo and Jossierand met with the journalism class to talk about why they postponed publication of the story. Still, Lacefield said the class never received a clear reason why the article was censored in the first place. "Overall, it's been difficult to get answers," Lacefield said.

While the *Steinmetz Star* will continue to publish a print edition through the end of the school year, Ngo said it's still up in the air whether the *Star* will continue in its current form, as grant funding for printing is set to run out at the end of this school year.

While she is disappointed the story didn't run last year, Lacefield said she is glad it will finally be printed in the student newspaper. "I feel like we've

won a war," Lacefield said. Reported in: splc.org, January 13.

Missoula, Montana

When a Montana high school newspaper published topless pictures on the cover of its January edition, in an attempt to discuss the "Free the Nipple" gender equality movement that is sweeping the nation, district officials recalled the issue immediately.

The controversy led to the school principal, who reviewed the issue before publication, being suspended without pay for three days and the newspaper adviser receiving a formal reprimand. The student journalists are currently fighting for their newspaper to be republished in the University of Montana's student newspaper *Kaimin* with an editor's note warning readers that the content may be offensive.

The photos accompanied an editorial titled "Free the Nipple" in the *Wire* produced by Willard Alternative High School students. The editorial discussed the difference in perception between male and female toplessness and questioned society's assumption that gender defines whether it is appropriate to expose one's chest.

The newspaper's cover featured five topless women and one topless man with their nipples hidden by red dots and faces cropped out. But inside the edition, page 8 featured a photo of a topless man and woman with their nipples bare and fully exposed.

"The breast's main function is to nurture, not to cater to the male gaze," editorial author Chase Boehmle wrote. "American culture is so backwards that it is more offensive to use a body for its intended purpose, than it is to fetishize it."

In an interview-based section following the editorial, a breastfeeding mother answered, "I think it's kind of fucked" in response to negative

opinions associated with public breastfeeding.

The edition also contained a separate piece within the editorial section titled, "Misconceptions SLAMMED," highlighting derogatory statements made to breastfeeding mothers in the comment sections on parenting blogs. One of the misconceptions read, "I can't just whip my dick out and feed my wife at a restaurant, so why should you get to whip out your tit and feed your baby?"

Within thirty minutes of the newspaper's distribution, the Missoula County Public Schools district recalled the edition and began investigating whether it violated district policy. The investigation found the *Wire* had violated Board Policy 3221, which states school-sponsored publications may not contain material "libelous, obscene, or profane" nor cause "a substantial disruption of the school."

Missoula County Public Schools released a statement defending officials' decision to recall the newspaper, stating it was inconsistent with school board policy because of the nude photos and "lewd and vulgar" language within the edition, specifically "fucked" and "dick." The district requested the *Wire* revise the issue by removing the photos and explicit language and then seek republication.

"The editorial Free the Nipple is well reasoned and provides an avenue for reasonable discourse on a controversial topic," the statement said. "It is the use of partially nude women perceived to be students that violates board policy."

But Lisa Waller, the *Wire* faculty adviser, said the individuals in the photos are not students of any high school and are over the age of eighteen.

Keaton Alexander, co-editor of the *Wire*, said all of the models were



consenting volunteers who signed confidentiality contracts.

Instead of revising the issue and republishing it within the school, Waller and the student journalists are in talks with the University of Montana's student newspaper, the *Kaimin*, which might reprint the *Wire*'s entire issue.

Many in the school and larger community are disappointed by the district's decision to recall the edition, arguing it reinforced the double standards surrounding gender equality.

"The message [of the article] was merely proven by the controversy," Alexander said. "The ideas could certainly remain if reprinted without the images, but the point would be significantly dulled." He said without the nude photos, the editorial would be reduced from an intellectual action of activism to mere commentary on the issue.

Jacquelyn Davis, a student teacher at Willard, said the district overlooked the issue of gender equality, and thus played a part in reinforcing sexism. "The language that the district tried to censor was meant to emphasize and challenge discrimination against women," Davis said. She said the recall robbed readers of the opportunity to learn about and challenge a relevant example of sexism, while also silencing the students' voices.

The January edition of the *Wire* took nearly three months of research and ten weeks of writing, Alexander said, as well as several days of design work and editing to produce a final version.

Waller, Willard Principal Jane Bennett and the *Wire* staff deliberated for several days before deciding to publish the edition. Waller said the district pulled it in a "knee-jerk reaction," within a half hour of its distribution and without hearing any complaints.

The district cited legal precedent in Supreme Court cases *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*, *Bethel School District v. Fraser* and *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier* to support its decision, stating the right of schools to "maintain the culture of the learning environment and support speech in student publications that aligns with the District's curriculum."

Superintendent Mark Thane said the district used the *Hazelwood* precedent in particular to determine whether the edition violated board policy during its investigation. The Supreme Court's *Hazelwood* ruling gave administrators the right to censor student publications if they can demonstrate a reasonable educational justification and if the censorship is viewpoint neutral.

"One of the most important points of *Hazelwood* is making certain [the publication] is suitable for the audience it is intended for," Thane said. "The *Wire* is a school-sponsored publication directly tied to the curriculum."

Though the photos were disruptive to the educational functions of the district, he said, they were not considered obscene under the policy. Thane said the "Free the Nipple" article itself was well written, and he fully supports the students exploring controversial topics, but without the topless photos and inappropriate language.

Alexander said the legal ambiguity used to censor the *Wire* was "entirely unjust."

"This would never happen to a publication run by adults," he said. "The editorial was believed to be unvaluable from the start, because the voice from which it came is societally considered to be ill-informed and naive." Reported in: splc.org, February 3.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Michael Moroz knew he might receive some criticism for a student newspaper column critical of race-related protests. But he didn't expect the criticism to come with a police escort.

After facing death threats and a firestorm of criticism from students and alumni over an opinion article critical of sit-ins and hunger strikes at the University of Missouri, the Central High School senior walks from class to class with school police. He has retained an attorney for advice and to help him with media coverage of the situation.

"It's not exactly comfortable walking (around) with a school police officer," Moroz said.

The column, titled "A Case of Overreaction" and published in December in the Philadelphia school newspaper, *The Centralizer*, argues that protests at the University of Missouri were an overreaction to a number of racially charged controversies on campus. Moroz's column was published next to an opinion article that supported the demonstrations.

In another part of the article, Moroz also addressed the killing of Michael Brown, an unarmed African American young man who was shot by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014.

"Brown was, at worst, justifiably killed, and at best, a thug," Moroz wrote in the article.

Although the article first appeared in the print edition of *The Centralizer*, Moroz said it was not until the article was posted on December 27 on the school newspaper website—and featured on their Facebook page—that students and alumni alike began to comment.

"That's when the threats really started coming in," Moroz said.



Some of the social media comments turned threatening, with one commenter calling on people to “shoot” Moroz, while another said people who liked the article “need to be dealt with.” Another commenter threatened to “drag Moroz by his satchel.” While the threats are no longer as frequent, Moroz said he continues to receive visceral comments daily.

After one day online, student editors removed Moroz’s article from the newspaper website and posted a message on their Facebook page addressing the decision.

“If an article comes across as insensitive, and the Central community would rather have it taken down because of this, then an article will be taken down,” staff members said in the Facebook message.

Moroz said it felt like the paper did not support him or his article. He also said the Facebook message set a bad precedent for the newspaper.

Student editors, Moroz said, censored his piece from the website. It can now only be found in the PDF file of the print edition that contained his original article.

Fernando Gallard, spokesman for the School District of Philadelphia, said the article was not censored and can still be found online, as well as in the print editions which are still at the school. “It’s 100 percent published,” Gallard said.

Moroz said he has been all but stripped of his title as managing editor and no longer has access to the website or the newspaper email account. He is no longer allowed to post or edit articles and can only do assignments his fellow editors assign him, Moroz said. “Now he’s basically a managing editor in name only,” said Jordan Rushie, Moroz’s attorney.

Rushie said school administrators should be teaching students how to

handle people they disagree with instead of infantilizing them by removing content that is upsetting. He said students should be able to criticize, but should not be able to censor content they disagree with.

“Diversity means a lot of things,” Rushie said. “But it also means a diversity of ideas.”

In response to the incident, Gallard said Central President Timothy McKenna scheduled a special advisory program with students for later this month to discuss freedom of speech, Moroz’s article and how to respond to opinions in a responsible manner, especially on social media.

While he’s happy the school has scheduled the program, Moroz said the fact that the administration is addressing it shows there is a problem. “It’s just remarkable that it has to be done,” Moroz said.

Still, Gallard said students at Central come from a wide array of backgrounds and have a variety of beliefs and views. “These are kids that are proud of being open-minded,” Gallard said.

With threats on his life, Moroz argues school administration should have been more supportive of his situation. Moroz said school administrators should have immediately sent out a school-wide email making clear that any threats would be punished by the Philadelphia School District’s Code of Student Conduct.

Rushie also said the school should be doing more to enforce the code of conduct, which has policies on bullying, threats and harassment. The code defines threats as “aggressive verbal or written language or gestures directed towards a student and/or school community member.” According to the code, students responsible for threatening students or staff with aggravated assault can face suspension,

lateral transfer or disciplinary school assignment.

“The school is not applying the handbook, and the handbook should apply to everybody,” Rushie said.

Rushie said he does not want to stop criticism of the article, but wants to ensure Moroz has a safe learning environment at Central.

Gallard said school administration have punished students as a result of their social media comments. He also said students who did make threatening comments were referred to the Philadelphia Police Department. “Our principal has taken the appropriate disciplinary actions,” Gallard said. Reported in: splc.org, January 15.

Mt. Vernon, Virginia

When Anderson Bonilla became editor in chief of the yearbook at his Virginia high school, he decided he wanted to show student life as it really is instead of the glossy, idealized version of high school so often memorialized.

There is a feature about Mount Vernon High School’s immigrant students, and another showing classmates who are learning English. There is a page that gives tips on how to help students cope with grief after losing a friend. And there are two full pages dedicated to showing the lives of teenage mothers who attend the school.

“We want to show the real world of what Mount Vernon is,” said Bonilla. He made the theme of the *Surveyor* “Where we really live.”

“We wanted to report something worth knowing,” he said.

But a photo of one of the pregnant teens baring her stomach ignited a fight between student leaders who want to show “the real world” and school officials worried about how it might be viewed by students later in life.



According to Bonilla, Principal Esther Manns said she will not allow the photos of Hannah Talbert, a junior at the school, to be featured in the yearbook. In a statement, a school spokesman said that Manns “raised concerns” about some photos and asked for students to make sure they had permission to run them. She has not made any final decisions, spokesman John Torre said.

Talbert took a series of self-portraits and posted them on Instagram. She initially did not know that her photos would be in the yearbook, but after she learned about the plan, she signed off. She said she is proud to be a teen mother balancing the care of a six-month-old with a full load of International Baccalaureate courses.

“I’m going to buy a yearbook, and me having a baby was a big part of my life,” said Talbert, who recently turned 17.

“I’m kind of disappointed that the school wanted to take it out,” said her father, Mac Talbert. He believes that showing his daughter in the yearbook could make other young women who find themselves in similar circumstances feel less alone. “Hannah’s not the only kid who has had to face this. She’s taking it head-on.”

The case pits the First Amendment rights of high school students against the concerns of administrators who worry about the long-term impact of the photos, especially in the context of sensitive issues, including teenage pregnancy.

Bonilla said he left his meeting with the principal believing that she had decided the photos of Talbert would not appear in the yearbook. She did not, however, submit any written decision on the pictures. Under the school district’s policies, students can appeal a decision in writing.

District policy states that principals can censor only material that they

believe will cause a disruption or that is “harmful to juveniles.”

“We are actually giving a realistic view of what these girls go through,” Bonilla said. “She’s still here. She’s getting her education. That’s what we’re trying to show the school.”

“I don’t think I’ll regret it,” Talbert said of appearing in the yearbook. “That would be like saying I regret having my son, and I don’t.” Reported in: *Washington Post*, December 23.

PERIODICAL Bowling Green, Ohio

An Ohio newspaper editor was fired for insubordination after allowing staffers at the *Bowling Green Sentinel-Tribune* to read an editorial she wrote about the National Rifle Association and responsible gun ownership.

Jan Larson McLaughlin said she didn’t think she was fired for writing the editorial, but for attempting to talk with the publisher, Karmen Concannon, about “how to proceed” after Concannon rejected it.

“I knew that particular editorial was dead, but I needed to know how to proceed from there,” McLaughlin said. “I needed some direction. She refused to talk to me. . . . The newsroom standing behind me was just the last straw of me constantly pushing to be a better newspaper, to be who we are supposed to be in the community.”

The unpublished editorial urged gun owners not to let the powerful lobbying arm of the NRA continue to control gun policy in America.

“The NRA has not always been the paranoid ‘pry the gun from my cold dead hands’ organization that it is now,” McLaughlin wrote. “It was formerly an association aimed at serving its membership by providing safety classes, marksmanship training and even gun control support. But

somewhere it got hijacked from its real purpose to its fanatical presence. It’s time for reasonable gun owners to say enough is enough.” Reported in: talkingpointsmemo.com, December 16.

FOREIGN Kuwait; Saudi Arabia

The Ministry of Education in Kuwait has pulled eight books from its schools, saying they contained “inappropriate” ideas and illustrations. They did not mention further details. The ministry made the move after it received complaints from several parents who cited concerns about the influence of such books on their children.

Ahmad Al Kindari, the head of libraries at the ministry, said in a note to all schools there had been observations and calls by parents about the books even though they had been endorsed by the inspection teams.

“We are taking out the books because we are keen on honoring our pledge to assuming our educational role,” he wrote. “We will review the books at a later stage.”

One book, *Memories Are Chasing Me*, had already been pulled; the other seven to be taken off the shelves are biographies of Picasso, Shakespeare and Cleopatra, *Hayfa Confesses*, *Midnight Crimes*, *My Conversation with My Son*, and *My Conversation with My Daughter*.

Last month, Saudi education authorities called for pulling around eighty books from the shelves of libraries and learning resources centers in schools that promoted Muslim Brotherhood ideology. Officials were given two weeks to remove the religious books that the authorities banned.

The list included works by religious authors Hassan Al Banna, Yousuf Al Qaradawi, and Sayyed Qutb.



Al Banna was the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Egypt while Qutb, an Islamic theorist, was a leading member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in the 1950s and 1960s.

Doha-based Al Qaradawi, an Egyptian Islamic theologian who chaired the International Union of Muslim Scholars, had a regular religious talk show on pan-Arab broadcaster Al Jazeera, allowing him to reach millions of viewers. However, he often waded into controversy over fatwas and views.

In their note, the education authorities warned all schools not to accept any gifts of books or publications and to limit their resources to what the education ministry offered them. Reported in: *Gulf News*, January 18.

Doha, Qatar

A book based on Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* has been removed from a Qatar school library after it was deemed to contain "indecent" illustrations. Officials from Qatar's Supreme Education Council intervened after a complaint from the father of a pupil at the Spanish SEK International School, based in the Gulf state's capital Doha.

The father claimed the book contained illustrations and phrases that were "indecent" and contained "sexual innuendo," the Al-Sharq newspaper reported. It is not known which specific images caused offense, but the book cover shows a smiling Snow White being held by the prince who in the story revives her with a kiss after she eats a poisoned apple.

SEK principal Vivian Arif told *Doha News* that the school took "immediate action" after receiving the

complaint. "SEK International School Qatar is proud to be established in this country and presents its formal apologies for any offense that this unintended situation may have caused," Arif was quoted as saying in a statement.

The school opened in September 2013 and has more than 150 pupils from 27 different countries, according to its website. It offers classes for students from the ages of three to eighteen.

The book was based on the Disney animated version of *Snow White*, released in 1937 and based on the Brothers Grimm fairytale. The removal of the book came less than a fortnight after Qatar banned the film *The Danish Girl*—about an artist who undergoes one of the world's first sex changes—after protests about the film's alleged "depravity." Reported in: *Deccan Chronicle*, January 21.