



NEWS IN BRIEF

Some cases of censorship are only reported briefly via social media or board meeting minutes. When substantive media reporting regarding a challenge is lacking, the case will be reported here.

Olathe, Kansas

In a Facebook post, Olathe School District board candidate Joshua Paulson called *All Boys Aren't Blue* by George M. Johnson a “pornographic/homosexual” book and stated any teachers who have it in their classroom library “need to be fired.” He called on the district “to publicly address this and apologize to the parents.”

Paulson’s post was made as a comment on a post from the official Olathe Public Schools account announcing a parent seminar called “Navigating the World of School.”

Source: Facebook, September 28, 2021.

York, Maine

Inspired by the book *A Large Expanse of Sea*, a York High School senior painted a depiction of Martin Luther King, Jr., with the words “Still Dreaming” above him. The painting also included a quote from Ruby Bridges, “Racism is a grown-up disease and we should stop using our kids to spread it.”

The student donated her artwork to the school library in April 2021. On September 26, a series of comments were made on Facebook about the artwork culminating in demands for its removal.

The school principal demanded that school librarian Nicole Master-son remove the artwork and told her it was “anti-American” and she “did not have permission” to display it. Master-son was informed the artwork had to be removed until a schoolwide policy governing the display of artwork was

in place. **Source: Seacoast Online, October 2, 2021; Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.**

Novi, Michigan

After seeing a news story about a school board meeting in Fairfax, Virginia, the parent of two Novi High School students called the principal and requested the removal of Jonathan Evison’s *Lawn Boy* from the school library.

Source: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Adair, Missouri

On September 29, 2021, a patron called the Adair County Public Library to complain about the book *Gender Queer* and request that it be removed. He requested to come in and discuss the book with the children’s librarian.

Source: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Independence, Missouri

A banned books display at the North Independence branch of the Mid-Continent Public Library (MCPL) was attacked by three library board members on Facebook, including Vice President Michael Lazio.

Bright red lettering surrounding the display read “Caution: These books are dangerous!” Lazio commented that the display was “appalling.” Trustee Yummy Pandolfi posted, “I’m saddened by this lack of judgment from library employees.” Trustee Michelle Wycoff commented “You are crossing a line that’s not yours to cross.”

Former MCPL employee Austin Gragg characterized the comments as consistent with the board’s anti-intellectual views and stance opposing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/ questioning, intersex,

and asexual (LGBTQIA+) content. He said the board’s views and actions have led to some LGBTQIA+ former employees leaving their jobs with the library.

Source: KCUR, October 1, 2021.

Bedford, New Hampshire

During the public comments section of the September 27, 2021, Bedford High School board meeting, a parent stood up and read a passage from Jonathan Evison’s *Lawn Boy*. In an email to the board, the parent demanded “I would like to know who is responsible for allowing this smut in the library and what is going to be done about this.”

Source: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Salem, New Hampshire

At the September 28, 2021, school board meeting of Salem High School, a parent objected that the school library had the book *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison. He called the book “pornographic material.” No formal reconsideration request was made.

Source: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Massapequa, New York

Sara Cimino complained on Twitter and at the September 21 Plainedge Union Free School District board meeting that the book *Front Desk* by Kelly Yang was being read aloud in fifthgrade classrooms. She tweeted that the book was “CRT” and “even connects to the BLM movement,” referring to critical race theory and Black Lives Matter.

She also said that “after researching and seeing how much Scholastic is behind the BLM movement, we do not want our kids reading or being read any Scholastic books—or any other that teaches subjects of race,



gender, religion, or any other controversial topics.”

Source: Plainedge Union Free School District board minutes, September 21, 2021; @NewWombat on Twitter, September 22, 2021.

Riverhead, New York

During the public comment section of the June 9, 2021, board meeting of the Riverhead Public Library, two community members voiced objections to Pride Month programming with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/ questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) content.

David Schmidt claimed the programs Drag Queen Story Hour and LGBT101 “will affect the community at large in a very dangerous way.” He said he “opposed an agenda that promotes homosexuality.”

Source: Minutes of the Board of Trustees of the Riverhead Free Library, June 9, 2021.

Canby, Oregon

Canby Public Library canceled its subscription to *BookPage*, a circular containing book reviews that is distributed to more than 4,000 libraries and hundreds of thousands of readers each month.

While providing curbside service during the pandemic, instead of making it available free to library visitors, they included copies in the bags containing patron-requested materials.

Complaints were received regarding a recommendation in the March 2021 issue for the title *Lick Like a Lesbian*.

The book was not available from the library, but a community member bought a copy and read passages at a Canby School Board meeting. Staff resignations were demanded as were safeguards to prevent future

distribution of book reviews. City Administrator Scott Archer canceled the library’s subscription.

Source: Canby First, March 4, 2021.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The Free Library of Philadelphia took down two storytime videos from social media after complaints from the Greater Philadelphia chapter of the Zionist Organization of America. The videos featured a children’s librarian reading books about Palestinian people.

A blog post about the incident states they “strengthened our content guidelines, and met with local Jewish organizations and shared remedial measures to mitigate future occurrence.”

Source: Freerlibrary.org, September 3, 2021.

Radnor, Pennsylvania

Bob Whitehead, a candidate for the board of Radnor High School, made a Facebook post on October 7, 2021, asserting that Jonathan Evison’s *Lawn Boy* “is pedophilia and grooming behavior, and has no place in our District Library’s [sic]. If I’m elected I will do whatever needs done [sic] for that to be removed. I am disgusted that it ended up there in the first place.”

No formal request for reconsideration was made.

Whitehead was not elected.

Source: Friends of Bob Whitehead—Community Organization and Action Facebook page, October 7, 2021; Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Horry County, South Carolina

Administrators of Horry County Schools instructed teachers to stop

using CNN 10 for daily classroom use, seemingly in response to parent concerns about “political indoctrination” from “fake news CNN.”

According to CNN, CNN 10 is a daily 10-minute news show designed for students which seeks to “identify stories of international significance and clearly describe why they’re making news, who is affected, and how the events fit into a complex, international society.”

The district denied this took place, but Freedom of Information Act requests surfaced emails from principals advising social studies teachers that CNN 10 was not approved for daily use and could only be used when it directly supported curriculum content.

Source: Myrtle Beach Sun News, August 20, 2021.

Knoxville, Tennessee

A parent at Sterchi Elementary School complained after a teacher shared the audiobook version of *Something Happened in Our Town* with her fourth grade class. The book details family discussions about racial injustice in policing following the shooting of an unarmed Black man. The parent felt it was anti-police.

Co-author Marianne Celano said, “We wanted to write a book that would help parents and kids talk to one another about these issues and promote values of anti-racism.” The school district said the book was not part of the approved curriculum, though education association president Tanya Coats said teachers often use supplemental learning materials.

Source: WBIR, May 1, 2021.

Pflugerville, Texas

A patron sent an email to the Pflugerville Public Library on September 24, 2021, objecting to the DVD *Killing*



ED: Charter Schools, Corruption, and the Gulen Movement in America for its “bias” and “politically motivated baseless claims.” The documentary asserts that a Texas-based charter school movement is operated by a global Islamic organization known as the Gulen movement.

Source: Office for Intellectual Freedom challenge report.

Plano, Texas

Two speakers at the October 5 meeting of the Plano Independent School District (ISD) board meeting requested that books be removed from school libraries.

One book objected to was *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison. The other was not identified by the speaker.

Source: Dallas Morning News, October 6, 2021.

Davis, Utah

The Davis School District banned display of Pride flags and Black Lives Matter flags in any of their buildings.

North Layton Junior High interpreted the ban as including other decorations such as rainbow stickers or pins.

Source: The Salt Lake Tribune, September 21, 2021.

Smithfield, Virginia

School Board Chair Jackie Carr objected to Smithfield High School’s “Read Woke” reading list at the September 9, 2021 school board meeting. The list includes 70 titles that are part of an optional reading challenge.

Librarian Cicely Lewis said the books on the list “challenge a social norm, give voice to the voiceless, provide information about a group that has been disenfranchised, seek to change the status quo, or have a protagonist from an underrepresented or oppressed group.”

Carr suggested implementing an email notification system to alert parents every time their child checked out a book with “this kind of content.”

Community member Volpe Boykin took things further and suggested banning the books from the school library. Boykin said, “If you don’t look back into these books and pull those out, you’re as disgusting as the people who wrote them.”

Source: The Smithfield Times, September 21, 2021.

Madison, Virginia

Community members complained on Facebook about Pride flags displayed in the Madison County High School library. In response, the superintendent and principal took down both flags. Policy was not followed regarding the removal of the displayed artwork. The principal had previously approved the flag declaring “Science is real, Black lives matter, no human is illegal, love is love, women’s rights are human rights, kindness is everything.”

Source: MaddRapp, August 24, 2021; August 26, 2021; and August 29, 2021.

Stafford, Virginia

On September 21, 2021, the Stafford County Board of Supervisors unanimously passed a resolution denouncing teaching of the *1619 Project* and critical race theory (CRT) in county schools. They also unanimously passed a resolution condemning requiring students to state their preferred pronouns.

The passed motions allow the Board to withhold any money the county’s public school system spends on teaching CRT or requiring students to state their preferred pronouns.

Source: ABC13 News, September 21, 2021.

Bellingham, Washington

Bellingham school officials and a local business were targeted with antisemitic and other hate speech and harassment over *I am Jazz*, a children’s book about a transgender girl that was read to first graders. Superintendent Greg Baker said the book is part of the district’s recent commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion and meets state guidelines for age-appropriate education. School spokeswoman Dana Smith said the district has received malicious emails and phone calls.

Source: The Bellingham Herald, May 7, 2021.

New Berlin, Wisconsin

During an August 5 meeting of the New Berlin Library Board, 17 of the fewer than 40 attendees made public comments regarding the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) books *This Book is Gay* by Juno Dawson and *Queer: The Ultimate LGBTQ Guide for Teens* by Kathy Belge and Marke Bieschke.

Many argued the titles should be moved from the Young Adult section to the Adult section of the library. People who spoke in defense of the books were booed by other attendees. No decision was made regarding whether or not to move the books.

Source: Patch, August 5, 2021.

Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin

Whitefish Bay School District residents approved a tax levy by an overwhelming majority despite some parents’ efforts to withhold funding until books about White privilege and police shootings were removed from the school library.

The push to withhold funding was part of a nationwide movement to ban books that fall under a vague and



inaccurate definition of “critical race theory.”

The five books targeted were:

- *Not My Idea: A Book About Whiteness* by Anastasia Higginbotham

- *Ghost Boys* by Jewell Parker Rhodes
- *Something Happened in Our Town: A Child’s Story about Racial Injustice* by Marianne Celano
- *The Jacket* by Andrew Clements

- *Julián is a Mermaid* by Jessica Love

Source: Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, September 1, 2021.



INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM ROUND TABLE

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Library Bill of Rights