

**NATIONAL
COALITION
AGAINST
CENSORSHIP** **KIDS'
RIGHT
TO READ**

December 20, 2021

Board of Trustees Members
North East Independent School District
8961 Tesoro Drive
San Antonio, TX 78217

Re: Review of books targeted by State Rep. Krause

Dear Board Members:

The National Coalition Against Censorship is an alliance of national nonprofit groups dedicated to protecting freedom of expression, including the rights of K-12 students, teachers, and staff. We are writing in regard to the District's recent review of hundreds of school library books. We have some concerns about how that review is being conducted, and we would also like to offer our assistance in helping the District to update its challenge regulations, as was suggested at the board meeting which was held on December 13.

Based on media reports and the district's own statements, it is our understanding that the District has repeatedly violated its own policies when conducting its review. For example, District Policy EF(Local) explicitly states: "Access to a challenged resource shall not be restricted during the reconsideration process, except the District may deny access to a child if requested by the child's parent." Yet, the District has removed all of the books pending the outcome of the review.

We are also concerned about the possibility that some books have been moved from elementary libraries to middle school libraries, or from middle school libraries to high school libraries in contravention of District policy. District Policy EF(Local) states that book reviews must be conducted by a reconsideration committee of several members, yet the District has stated that removal decisions have been made by individual librarians. Finally, District Policy EF(Local) states that challenged materials must be reviewed in their entirety and that decisions must be based on all of the principles of selection set out in district policy, yet it appears that the District has removed books because of isolated "vulgar" or sexual elements.

Book challenges are often highly contentious and emotional, and the District's regulations are well crafted to guarantee that all parties feel that they have been heard and respected, and that decisions are made based on objective criteria which focus on the educational needs of students. Thus, not only is it entirely improper for the District to ignore its own regulations, it is also poor policy.

Therefore, we urge you to comply with your District's regulations and return all of these books back to district libraries, and ensure that all challenges are addressed pursuant to existing regulations. It is necessary to make it clear to employees that all book challenges must be resolved pursuant to those procedures.

Finally, we understand that the District is considering updating its challenge procedures. We have extensive experience assisting districts in developing policies which ensure that all stakeholders feel that their concerns have been heard and considered, and which also ensure that the public feels confident that decisions about instructional materials are made based on legitimate criteria, rather than political pressure or hostility to the viewpoint expressed in those materials. We have attached for your information our guidelines for developing book challenge regulations, which includes several sample regulations from districts across the country.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely yours,



Christopher Finan
Executive Director
National Coalition Against Censorship

Co-signed by: The Authors Guild
Comic Book Legal Defense Fund
National Council of Teachers of English
PEN America
The PEN Children's and Young Adult Books Committee
Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators

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