

**2020-21 MS ENGLISH LITERATURE SELECTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE:****8<sup>TH</sup>-GRADE READING GROUP**

## AGENDA &amp; NOTES

5/19/21; Virtual: <https://pausd.zoom.us/j/94766097557>; 4:10 – 6:10

DESCRIPTION	NAME	PRESENT
ENGLISH INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER	Deanna Jones (8) Fletcher MS <a href="mailto:djones@pausd.org">djones@pausd.org</a>	Yes
	Kim Lohse (7) JLS MS <a href="mailto:klohse@pausd.org">klohse@pausd.org</a>	Yes
	Brooke Tassa (6) Greene MS <a href="mailto:btassa@pausd.org">btassa@pausd.org</a>	Yes
MS ENGLISH TEACHER	Ander Lucia (8) Fletcher MS <a href="mailto:alucia@pausd.org">alucia@pausd.org</a>	Yes
	Kari Nygaard (8) JLS MS <a href="mailto:knygaard@pausd.org">knygaard@pausd.org</a>	Yes
	Jennifer Valero (8) JLS MS <a href="mailto:jvalero@pausd.org">jvalero@pausd.org</a>	Yes
	Kelly Zalatimo (8) Greene MS <a href="mailto:kzalatimo@pausd.org">kzalatimo@pausd.org</a>	Yes
PARENT REPRESENTATIVE	Iva Reid JLS parent <a href="mailto:izreid@gmail.com">izreid@gmail.com</a>	
STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE	Olivia Souter Fletcher student Olivia's parent's email: <a href="mailto:souter98@sbcglobal.net">souter98@sbcglobal.net</a>	Yes
HS ENGLISH TEACHER	Shaina Holdener Gunn HS <a href="mailto:sholdener@pausd.org">sholdener@pausd.org</a>	Yes
ENGLISH LANGUAGE REPRESENTATIVE	Jedd Bloom Greene MS <a href="mailto:jebloom@pausd.org">jebloom@pausd.org</a>	Yes
TEACHER LIBRARIAN	Kristen Lee Fletcher MS <a href="mailto:klee@pausd.org">klee@pausd.org</a>	Yes

<b>DIRECTOR, SECONDARY ED</b>	Kathie Laurence District Office <a href="mailto:klaurence@pausd.org">klaurence@pausd.org</a>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT, SECONDARY</b>	Sharon Ofek District Office <a href="mailto:sofek@pausd.org">sofek@pausd.org</a>	
<b>FACILITATOR, TOSA</b>	Karen Logue District Office <a href="mailto:klogue@pausd.org">klogue@pausd.org</a>	<b>Yes</b>

<b>AGENDA ITEM</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
1. Welcome!	
2. Agenda Overview	
3. Understand Tonight's Task	<input type="checkbox"/> Sample ballot
4. Discuss Core Lit Candidates	<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss possible core lit candidates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>The Hate U Give</i>: Dyads &amp; Group Conversation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Greene has a great 12-week unit, systematic racism, police brutality are built in. <i>Hate U Give</i> is built in. Fantastic that Greene has that. Would hope that we have something similar at the two other schools. That's why a core lit book is great – everyone is reading it. So much of African-American literature that is brought in is about trauma. In <i>Pet</i> and <i>Poet X</i> – it's a character who happens to be black. We don't want the black experience to be all about trauma</li> <li>- We do have a really extensive justice unit at Greene (<i>Hate U Give</i>, <i>Monster</i>, <i>All American Boys</i>, <i>Dear Martin</i>, <i>57 Bus</i>, <i>Wolf Hollow</i>, <i>Just Mercy</i>, <i>This is My America</i>, <i>Ghost Boys</i>, <i>additional titles</i> ...) All of these offer a range of reading levels for our students. Dig into systematic racism at a level <i>Hate U Give</i> doesn't do. Role of police, prosecutor, public defender, defunding police, mass incarceration, restorative justice. Heavy nonfiction. Hard conversations with kids. Sent out a letter to parents saying we would learn about white supremacy and encouraging them to check out other resources. Proud of our unit. <i>Hate U Give</i> is really long and would mean getting rid of other titles. That's why I've supported it as supplemental and not as core.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Something else to take into consideration: I was part of <i>Stamped</i> pilot. The book was unanimously approved by committee to be supplemental. Many English teachers will help to support our SS counterparts in teaching <i>Stamped</i>. We have an opportunity with <i>Stamped</i> to bring in other pieces of African-American literature</li><li>- <i>Hate U Give</i> is a wonderful novel. So many themes and messages are really wonderful for kids to be grappling with. Offering it as part of a menu of choices feels like a really positive way to have it in our curriculum. Saying the only way we can align is to have a core novel is not true. Other ways to ensure that certain messages and perspectives are available to every middle schooler in Palo Alto.</li><li>- I think we have many good possibilities for core. My concern with picking this text as supplemental is that sometimes we choose the easy route. If we keep relegating some texts to supplemental, I wonder what that is saying – minority texts are always optional, supplemental, a choice?</li><li>- Is the language appropriate? Codeswitching, living in two different worlds – that is powerful. As a core text, I really am struggling with the language that is used. It is maybe a generational thing. Are we modeling for kids that that language is appropriate to use in school?</li><li>- Everyone on the committee already knows where I stand. Just would like to add that I think that sidelining a book for reasons like language in favor of teaching other books feels like derailing the book with arguments that from a student’s perspective don’t feel legitimate. Not to intending to minimize anyone’s opinion.</li><li>- I surveyed my students about language after we finished our justice unit. 99% said no [Facilitator did not catch rest of statement – “no language was not a factor”?]. I also said would they have preferred having their group book as a whole class book? Majority said they preferred having it as a book club choice. <i>Hate U Give</i> was supplemental and was vetted as core – it should have been clear from the beginning that this was a supplemental text. No one talked to 8<sup>th</sup>-grade English teachers at Greene.</li><li>- I think [committee member’s name] earlier</li></ul>
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point about the trauma piece really resonated with me. Brought up this question about what other books are we highlighting? Larger discussion that lots of departments are struggling with right now. In terms of the language point, I'm more concerned about modeling that it's valuable to upraise voices that have historically been silenced than the language. The message of the story is not that the language is okay. That's where teachers come in and their discussions with students. Just finished *Kill a Mockingbird* – whole unit has been about bringing in other voices and about the absence of black voices in that text. Big question [of unit] was should this still be the book and most kids said no, or we need something else with this book. They brought up other books – *Hate U Give* was the first book they brought up. By and large, high school students were really enthusiastic. Many have expressed they had wished they had these conversations sooner. Many of the other texts we've read as a committee – there have been no bumps. I'm concerned that this text has caused such a bump, such tension. Find it very telling. Maybe we need this book.

- I have mostly been listening because I can see both sides. Do want to point out the length – would kids who love the book still love it when they have to plod along in a whole class text? Maybe we need to pilot it and see what students think?
- Greene: With book circles, students have three-week window to finish their book.
- Some students could read *Hate U Give* in a week. Some readers would read it in 2 nights and others would struggle to finish it in the window and what would that feel like? Maybe we should just pilot it and see?
- Vouching for [Teacher Name] – she built our social justice unit from the bottom, has always been my mentor in that regard and in many other regards as well. I want to echo what [Teacher Name] said about choice. That is my biggest concern, too. I'll say with authority that white people will do anything possible to avoid talking about race, so being compelled to address white supremacy/racism would be a good thing. This would be a bold choice. The idea that everyone would need to grapple with this – bold choice. I like the idea of this being core

simply because we would have a mandate to address complicated issues, systematic racism

- I'm frustrated – I'm worried that by making the *Hate U Give* core, we are missing out. *The 57 Bus* blows this one out of the water. I can tell you all about other texts, options. You have no guarantee that a teacher is going to do anything with a core text anyway. I appreciate what this committee is trying to do with making people deal with reality. You can make it core, but you cannot make a teacher teach a book in any specific way, have the conversations they should about social justice, systematic racism
- Been thinking about our charge as a committee. What does it mean to charge ourselves with this text? Yes, it might be extremely difficult to teach this book as core, but what would it mean?
- PAEA BIPOC resolution – we need to look at our curriculum in a new way. Asking for an opportunity to look at curriculum and make changes. A book like this could be an opportunity
- Making sure we have good representation of cultures as well – positive representation. We don't have a positive system in place right now, so doing a deep dive on racism is extremely important and relevant and timely. It is a complicated conflict that forces everyone to examine where they are in that particular topic. We can have lots of positive examples but maybe we should not only have positive examples.

○ *They Called Us Enemy*: Fishbowl & Q and A

- Loved this book. Artwork was beautiful; innocent perspective was compelling. Wonder how to teach it. Rather short – only took me two days to read. Wonder about the parent perception on having a graphic novel as core. Not that that should hold us back. How to teach graphic novel with fidelity within standards that we have?
- I agree with [Teacher Name]. I think that it does represent a part of American history that is often ignored. Especially with WWII, we like to pretend we did nothing wrong as a country, were entirely on the right side of history. We did some great things, but at the same time we did a lot wrong, important to acknowledge that. The fact that Takei is active in LGBTQ community, you can tie

those two communities together. Not a lot of representation for others, except for white people in curriculum

- We did not learn this history when I was in school. Didn't learn about Chinese Exclusion Act until grad school. Again, back to PAEA BIPOC resolution and Board resolution - this book would be one small step into giving some history that has not previously been taught. Majority of our students are Asian. When I was growing up there were no books with characters who looked like me
  - What if it were a third core for 8<sup>th</sup> grade since it is so short?
  - It is short and I really liked it. There is a whole graphic novel course at Gunn and so the thought of how to teach a graphic novel – [Gunn teacher name] might be a really good resource. Hadn't read a graphic novel before and I really liked it. Accessible for lots and lots of kids.
  - When we used to teach *Diary of Anne Frank*, a lot of teachers felt compelled to teach a lot of the history. Would we need to do that here, too?
  - From what I remember, it explained events as we went. Written and designed in a way that introduced the camps in America to the reader – so I think it does help if you have background knowledge, but it isn't necessary to go through the entire timeline of what happened.
  - It's less insular than *Anne Frank*. With the advantage of an older person reflecting back, there are several moments where things get filled in.
  - One other concern – I wish there had been more of a connection to what is currently happening. As a teacher, I would have to say something about what is currently happening. Would need to get brought in – ending doesn't connect enough to the present
  - Rash of AAPI hate happened before book was published. A great teacher could pull up resources.
- *Pet*: Any new thoughts/questions?
    - No new comments
  - *Poet X*: Any new thoughts/questions?
    - *Poet X* was delightful. I loved it. Loved Xiomara's character. The way it was written in poetry. Saw myself in her.

5. Vote on Core Lit Candidates

Vote on each candidate: Should this text stay in the running as a core lit contender?

- **Results: *Hate U Give, They Called Us Enemy, Pet, Poet X* – all still in the running as core contenders**

**1. Should *The Hate U Give* stay in the running as a core lit contender?**

Yes, *The Hate U Give* should stay in the running as a core lit contender for now. (9) 75%

No, *The Hate U Give* belongs on the supplemental menu. (3) 25%

No, *The Hate U Give* shouldn't stay in the running as a core lit contender nor should it be on the supplemental menu. (0) 0%

**2. Should *They Called Us Enemy* stay in the running as a core lit contender?**

Yes, *They Called Us Enemy* should stay in the running as a core lit contender for now. (11) 92%

○ No, *They Called Us Enemy* belongs on the supplemental menu. (1) 8%

**2. Should *They Called Us Enemy* stay in the running as a core lit contender?**

Yes, *They Called Us Enemy* should stay in the running as a core lit contender for now. (11) 92%

No, *They Called Us Enemy* belongs on the supplemental menu. (1) 8%

No, *They Called Us Enemy* shouldn't stay in the running as a core lit contender nor should it be on the supplemental menu. (0) 0%

○ **3. Should *Pet* stay in the running as a core lit contender?**

Yes, *Pet* should stay in the running as a core lit contender for now. (10) 83%

No, *Pet* belongs on the supplemental menu. (2) 17%

No, *Pet* shouldn't stay in the running as a core lit contender nor should it be on the supplemental menu. (0) 0%

○ **4. Should *Poet X* stay in the running as a core lit contender?**

Yes, *Poet X* should stay in the running as a core lit contender for now. (11) 92%

No, *Poet X* belongs on the supplemental menu. (1) 8%

No, *Poet X* should not stay in the running as a core lit contender nor should it be on the supplemental menu. (0) 0%

Wrap up: Which books are still in the running? Who else will read them by September?

- Questions:
  - Supplemental book pilot: How do we pilot a book that is currently being used as supplemental literature text at one school? Can we pilot it in book circles?
  - Facilitator needs time to think about this question. We'll need to think about this in the fall if we vote to pilot *Hate U Give*
  - Do we want to give our 8<sup>th</sup>-grade colleagues

	<p>a chance to weigh in on whether or not to pilot the books?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- That is really a committee decision. We can choose to survey our 8<sup>th</sup>-grade colleagues, similarly to what 7<sup>th</sup> grade did, and use the survey to inform our decisions, but this Committee is the deciding body.</li> <li>- Concern about Balancing numbers: I am the only 8<sup>th</sup>-grade teacher from Greene. We are down a person compared to other schools. This affects voting. Unequal representation.</li> <li>- Let's see who comes back in the fall and who is able to commit to 6 more months. Likely we will need to rebalance our numbers/positions filled. Reminder: Committee was intended to be a full committee. When we started process one two years ago, we had exactly the representation called for in Board policy. Last year, a number of people weren't able to continue - we filled in as best we could. Intent when we started was for a full committee, not for these more separated grade-level groupings.</li> </ul>
<p>6. Identify Titles to Read for September</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Tentative timeline for fall       <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Read, vet and discuss new core candidates: September</li> <li>o Decide on finalist(s). Is pilot advisable? October</li> <li>o Potential pilot(s) take(s) place. Supplemental list finalized. Oct – Feb.</li> <li>o Pilot input collected. Committee reviews/makes recommendation. March</li> <li>o Board presentation. April</li> </ul> </li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Discuss new books you/your group read for today:       <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Anthologies: <i>Thousand Beginnings and Endings</i>:           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- All Asian authors, lot of different religion is represented, was Islam represented? Didn't finish whole collection. I think it could be an interesting supplemental.</li> <li>- I only read the first story and didn't read the rest. Was not what I was expecting. Felt like it went with what students have already studied about Asian culture – long ago. There was some Bollywood and androids that I missed</li> <li>- I read it and it was not my favorite. There's a lot of ancient mythology going on there. Just wasn't compelling enough for me.</li> <li>- <b>Decision: no need to continue with this one.</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>o <i>Foreshadow: Stories to Celebrate the Magic of Reading and Writing</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 8<sup>th</sup>-grade student read the anthology. Wanted to get some tips on writing. What is unique about the book is you have a whole bunch of stories, introduced by famous authors. Authors give a teaser. Different genres. Some weird stories. Every single protagonist is female. Is that a breaker? That would be for you to determine. Would it be valuable in your teaching?</li> <li>- <b>Decision: Going with supplemental. An 8<sup>th</sup>-grade teacher will read</b></li> <li>○ <i>Universe of Wishes:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fantasy and Sci Fiction. Magical elements. Like many short story anthologies, there are stories I loved and stories I didn't. Lot of world building in Fantasy and Sci Fic and then the story ends. Lot of the stories are prequels or additional snippets of books authors have already written. So a teaser. Intersectionally diverse range of protagonists. Overarching theme is desire. So lots of romance. Not a core contender – not strong enough. Only one starred review and no awards. We have other strong contenders. Looking at the 8<sup>th</sup>-grade curriculum – there are some good short stories that could be used as replacements. Nice book for sup'l list as an option for bringing a class set into schools.</li> <li>- <b>Decision: Supplemental. An 8<sup>th</sup>-grade teacher will read</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>○ <i>We Are Not Free:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rises to the level of core. 14 young people, Japanese internment. Probably choose this one over <i>They Called Us Enemy</i>. It is long, which was a consideration for the <i>The Hate U Give</i></li> <li>- <b>Decision: Rises to level of core. More members will read</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>☐ Debrief with whole group: do any of the new books rise to the level of core? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>We Are Not Free</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>☐ Individual work: Identify titles to read for September &amp; share plan with group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Kelly: <i>Universe of Wishes</i> (anthology)</li> <li>○ Kristen: I'm going to look at MS librarian recommendations</li> <li>○ Shaina: <i>They Called Us Enemy</i></li> <li>○ Brooke: <i>They Called Us Enemy</i></li> <li>○ Ander: <i>They Called Us Enemy</i></li> <li>○ Kim: -</li> <li>○ Jen: <i>Universe of Wishes</i></li> <li>○ Jedd: <i>They Called Us Enemy, The 57 Bus</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Deanna: Finish <i>We Are Not Free</i></li> <li>○ Kathie: -</li> <li>○ Olivia: <i>We Are Not Free</i></li> <li>○ Kari: <i>Foreshadow: Stories to Celebrate the Magic of Reading and Writing, They Called Us Enemy</i></li> </ul>
7. Tidy Up the Supplemental Menu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Starred titles</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pink titles</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Orange titles: Decide whether to keep or not. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Once again, no time. Will need meetings just for supplemental in fall. Perhaps with smaller group that creates draft and sends out to bigger group</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
8. Thank you and good-bye!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> For <b>September</b>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Read any Core Candidates that you signed up for</li> <li>○ Read &amp; vet any new book/anthology you selected</li> <li>○ Continue talking to department/course-alike team about your reading. Solicit their thoughts and tell them yours.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Next Meeting:** Early September. Date and time *TBD*.