Cherokee County School District

Agenda Request Form

Meeting Date	Agenda Item Number
September 15, 2022	E-4

Title

Challenged Book Appeal

Requested Action

School Board Consideration of Superintendent's Recommendation for Approval to Uphold the Media Advisory Committee's Recommendation for the Challenged Book, Looking for Alaska (2005).

Summary Explanation and Background

The School Board acknowledges the right of parents and other citizens to raise questions through established procedures when materials are challenged as inappropriate for public school use. Though care is taken to select valuable materials for students and teachers, there may be objections by the public as to the selections that have been made.

Summary: In this regard, The Superintendent's SY2021-22 Annual Media Advisory Committee met on May 19, 2022, to review the book, Looking for Alaska by John Green. The complainant, a Cherokee County citizen, expressed concerns regarding content contained within the text, specifically "smoking, foul language and sexual representation." Committee members read the book in its entirety and convened to discuss the specific concerns. Those unable to attend submitted an online survey expressing their thoughts for committee consideration. The complainant's concerns were addressed and reviewed against the book's educational value. As it relates to the educational value of the book, the committee believes the book has both instructional and educational value. It was noted that the text contained mature topics. However, those topics did not detract from the novel's educational value. "Yes, sex, drinking, and drugs exist, but it does not glorify them. I think this would be a great thing for students to read. They have to learn about death, about elders, about challenges. This is a great way to learn about tough things without experiencing them firsthand," noted a committee member.

Recommendation: The Superintendent recommends that the School Board uphold the committee recommendation that the book remain available on middle and high school shelves (only) for choice-based, student checkout in the Media Center and classroom libraries.

Priority Area

Student Achievement: Access and Opportunity

Financial Impact

N/A

Exhibits: (List)

Media Advisory Committee Summary

Source of Additional Information

Dr. Brian V. Hightower	770.479.1871
Nicole H. Holmes	770.479.1871
Barbara Jacoby	770.479.1871

Ad Hoc Committee Summary for SY2021-22

Mission: The purpose of this review committee is to address system challenges of media center holdings, classroom library holdings and other supplemental resources within the framework of existing IFAB policy and procedures. The committee makes recommendations to the Superintendent based upon a consensus of committee members.

Summary: The Superintendent's SY2021-22 Annual Media Advisory Committee met on May 19, 2022, to review the book, *Looking for Alaska* by John Green. The complainant, a community member, expressed concerns regarding content contained within the book, specific to "smoking, fowl [sic] language and sexual representation." Committee members read the book in its entirety and convened to discuss the specific concerns. Those unable to attend submitted an online survey expressing their thoughts for committee consideration. The community member's concerns were addressed and reviewed against the educational value of the book.

In regard to the educational value of the book, the committee believes the book has educational value. The committee noted this book was a typical young adult novel, a modern coming-of-age story. "This book is full of literary merit; it needs to be available for our students. The author clearly values education," stated a committee representative.

Findings: In response to the complainant's claim of "smoking, fowl [sic] language and sexual representation," the committee noted that the book in fact contained mature topics. However, those topics did not detract from the educational value of the novel. "Yes, there is sex, drinking, and drugs, but it does not glorify it. I think this would be a great thing for students to read. They have to learn about death, about elders, about challenges. This is a great way to learn about tough things without experiencing them firsthand," noted a committee member.

Another noted, "I like that the adults in this book do not make sketchy decisions. The author does a good job of drawing a line between emotional and physical intimacy."

In response to the complainant's concern of "smoking, fowl [sic] language and sexual representation," a student stated, "taking a book like this about real life is setting a precedent about ignoring real life. This is this generations *Catcher in the Rye*."

The committee believes the concerns did not supersede the educational value of the book.

Recommended Actions: The committee recommends that the book remain available on middle and high school shelves (only) for choice-based, student checkout in the Media Center and classroom libraries.