BEAUFORT COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Official Vote by Committee

Committee Number: 38 **Date:** 4/5/23

Name of Novel: Burned by Ellen Hopkins

All ballots are confidential and anonymous. Based on the rubric rating and evidence presented.

☐ Challenged material should be returned to school library circulation.

☑ Challenged material returned to school library circulation, only for certain age groups, content areas, or grade levels. Select:

- ☐ K-5
- ☐ 6-8
- ☑ 9-12

☐ Remove the challenged material in its entirety

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***Burned* by Ellen Hopkins**

Educational Significance

1. This novel supports BCSD's mission, vision, and goals by providing a "personalized learning approach" in selecting choice reading materials and supporting a "diverse community" of students with materials that reflect the student body. There are roughly 6.7 million Mormons in the U.S., 42,000 Church of Latter Day Saints members in South Carolina, and 77 congregations, it should not be hard to believe there are persons that subscribe to the Mormon faith or know Mormons outside of SC in Beaufort County that can relate to this story. The main character, Pattyn, is the oldest girl of 7 (soon to be 8) children in a household complete with all of the church-supported family/sex roles that implies. Women have children, obey their husbands or they don't get into heaven. Pattyn struggles with the thought of the subservient life intended for her, she battles with her hypocritical alcoholic father (drinking is a sin and against church doctrine) who also abuses his wife but is protected by the men of the church, and Pattyn questions her faith in the process.
2. The novel contributes to improved academic achievement for a variety of learners because reading in any format improves cognition, attention-span, and builds vocabulary. Also, *Burned* is a realistic portrait of a teenager in an abusive family who has questions about whether or not she wants that life for herself and questions where God is in the midst of her family's turmoil. The novel is written in verse which is a style teenagers gravitate to because it expresses the essential thoughts of a character with fewer words and lends shape and imagery to the story. Many students actively seek out realistic fiction novels-in-verse and stories about family struggles since they are also questioning their roles within the family unit and preparing for adulthood. When choosing books for personal reading and as an academic supplement to assignments, the addition of relatable topics of family, first love, and religious conflict makes it even more appealing. National School Library Standards VC1 states "learners develop and satisfy personal curiosity by reading widely and deeply in multiple formats" and numerous peer-reviewed research studies show the correlation between improved academic achievement and reading.
3. This novel promotes the integration of higher-level thinking skills because of the real-world scenario and life choices Pattyn is faced with. *Burned* could be an optional companion novel to research projects investigating alcoholism, PTSD, fundamental religious doctrine, and the impact of an abusive parent on their teen children which is applicable across ELA and Health Science curricula, and Media Literacy standards.
4. This novel reflects the needs/interests of the school and culture of the community through the inclusion of everyday situations that students face: the characters' response to the role of firstborn care-taker which is prevalent in our demographic of students, alcoholism and abuse by a parent, bullying at school and at home, and our shared commitment to protecting students and eradicating this behavior from our schools and community. The subject matter is relevant, highly relatable, and present in our schools today. The traumatic events in *Burned* are not unique and happen across the nation and right here in Beaufort County, they are a direct reflection of some of our student's lived experiences.

5. *Burned* adds value to the school library collection. It has already been vetted and selected by high school librarians for inclusion into the collection based on Admin Regulation IS-38 selection criteria. It is also representative of our student body and provides numerous examples of positive behavior and supports in light of very difficult circumstances. Once again, I could have marked almost every page. The items below are a reflection of the maturity Pattyn displays despite dire circumstances, her growth throughout the novel when allowed to see what a loving parent relationship could look like, and represent the critical scenarios that are often taken out of context to censor this book. Examples include:
    a. Support given/received by siblings and adult role models (page 5-9, 14, 15, 29, 65, 66, 118, 119, 169, 190, 195, 201, 207, 236-237, 256, 289, 299, 304, 363, 383, 385, 405, 411, 421-422, 445, 446, 453)
    b. Support given/received by friends/boyfriend (page 99, 114, 296, 326, 333, 335, 366, 369, 396, 429, 433, 455, 512)
    c. Self-awareness, introspection, and actualizations in dire circumstances (page 11, 12-13, 23, 24, 26, 31, 33, 37, 40, 64, 69, 77, 82, 91, 105, 123, 128, 139-140, 150, 184, 191, 204, 252, 248, 302, 413, 425, 465, 484-485, 495)
    d. Mature observations and expression of feelings or events (page 10, 17, 20, 21, 25, 27, 38-39, 54, 67, 68, 70, 97, 109, 126, 164, 174-176, 241, 254, 261, 266, 307, 336, 359, 408, 468, 515)

<u>Quality, Content, Manner of Representation</u>

1. *Burned* is a highly engaging read, representative of students and student perspectives here in BCSD. It is free of textual errors and is organized in a format that makes it highly desirable for students. The use of space on the page and the way the verses are laid out make it a desirable read, as is the straightforward language style and Pattyn's thought process and inner monologue as she thinks through her dilemmas.
2. Ellen Hopkins is a highly acclaimed author.
    a. New York Times Bestselling Author
    b. 2001 SCBWI Charlotte's Web Award for outstanding contributions to children's literature by a new author
    c. 2006 National Book Award nominee (**Burned**)
    d. 2007 ALA Best Books for Young Adults nominee (**Burned**)
    e. 2006-2007 Tayshas Reading (**Burned**)
    f. 2010 Nevada Governor's Arts Award
    g. 2012 ALA Popular Paperbacks for Young Adults (**Burned**)
    h. 2013 Joan F. Kaywell Award
    i. 2015 Nevada Writers Hall of Fame
3. *Burned* can be found for purchase anywhere for about $10-$15 which is highly valuable with regards to the amount of circulation it would receive and would be cost-effective.
4. It has high artistic quality and an engaging literary style, the text features, page and poetic imagery, dialogue, the use of foreshadowing is heavy and lends directly to English Language standards for decoding text and identifying literary elements and plot devices.

5. *Burned* deals very well with issues of sexual activity, religion, and culture in that it explores them with a critical eye and questioning attitude. Sex is a topic of discussion within the religious constraints of her faith - whether or not Pattyn should begin to have sexual feelings is normal but only within the faith or among Mormons is unrealistic. Pattyn is trying to justify whether or not she wants to be a vessel or something more, and how her family situation makes that relationship untenable. She is a teenager and thinks about biologically natural things and rebels when she is shamed into thinking she is undeserving of an opinion or a life outside of her home and faith and sees the hypocrisy of her father's behavior. She doesn't want to be her mom who accepts abuse because their faith proclaims the man is in charge. Yet, it is also sensitive to the fact that not all relationships or people in the church are this way. It ends with a huge cliff-hanger… will Pattyn seek revenge on her father and the kids at school for their role in her loss?
6. *Burned* has a high degree of readability as there is a family/faith struggle and a love story to tell. Both are equally engaging in the format provided.

Avoidance of Pervasive Vulgarity

1. *Burned* does not appeal to sexual interest in a shameful or erotic way as sex is never graphically described in the book.
2. The sexual activity mentioned was not descriptive and is appropriate for the recommended age/grade level. Mentions of kissing or touching are chaste, and any reference to sex says only that - "we made love" or "making love became an integral part of our couplehood." or "it was spectacular, a vision of love perfected, two humans joined in earthly lust and spiritual passion." describing their last night together.
3. *Burned* abides by prevailing standards in the adult community in regard to being suitable material for mature minors in the recommended age/grade band. There are about a dozen curse words 90% of them are used by the alcoholic abuser - her father. The only reason it is challenged is that someone (who is not a professional review source) gave it an arbitrary rating of 3 out of 5 on booklooks.org complete with out-of-context passages that describe conversations about sex with her mom and Aunt J, violence inflicted by her abusive father, kissing, and Pattyn's internal thoughts as she journals and wrestles with her situation and where God is in all of the chaos. It shows the misidentified bad and none of the resolution or hopeful outcome that comes right behind it in the form of first true love, a family member/adult confidant that understands her struggle, and the power of siblings that stick together in hard times.
4. There are no graphic depictions of sexual activity.

Appropriateness

1. Professional review sources recommend this book for a young adult audience, ages 14 or grade 9 and up. I agree, it is appropriate for high school readers. Pattyn turns 17 in this story and is in the summer of her senior year of high school. These are experiences that high school students encounter and discuss with each other, especially first love, faith, and the pressure of family expectations or problems at home with alcoholism and abuse, and underage drinking as a means to cope or escape.

2. As for maturity, this novel is appropriate for high school readers. Readers that aren't experienced in the Mormon faith or another fundamentalist type of religion would be called to ask questions and would learn things. Readers that are suffering from an abusive relationship in their home would be able to see themselves in the story and question the decisions and actions of Pattyn and how they applied them to their own experience, they might draw courage from her resilience and/or question her final motivations to seek revenge. All students would engage in critical thinking as a result, they would put themselves in Pattyn's shoes and wonder what they would do in that circumstance.
3. This novel easily supports English curriculum and standards (linked below) as a supporting text for analyzing and interpreting meaning and context for each grade level, discovering relationship themes via friends or family/step-family, and applies to national school library standards previously mentioned.
4. *Burned* reflects the contemporary standards of a community that seeks to support families of all or no faith as they navigate abusive relationships and break free of sex-role stereotypes and expectations for future generations.

SC ELA Standards via Rubicon Atlas
https://beaufort.rubiconatlas.org/Atlas/References/Standards/View/Default?ShowKey=1&AllStatuses=1&localStandards=1&DistrictID=1&FromReferences=1&