BEAUFORT COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
RECONSIDERATION COMMITTEE CHECKLIST

Committee Number: 66 **Date** 8/2/23

Name of Novel Felix Ever After by Callender, Kacen

Directions: After reading the selected novel, review the material using the below criteria. Note upon review of the book the following Beaufort County School District Non Discrimination will be taken into consideration:

Non-Discrimination. The BCSD affirms the right of all individuals to be treated with respect and to be protected from intimidation, discrimination, physical harm, and/or harassment. The BCSD is committed to nondiscrimination and equal opportunity for all students, parents/legal guardians, staff, visitors, applicants for admission and employment, personnel, and community members who participate or seek to participate in its educational programs or activities. Accordingly, the BCSD does not discriminate against any individual on the basis of race, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, sex, pregnancy, childbirth, or any related medical conditions, color, physical or mental disability, age (40 or older), ancestry, genetic information, national origin, or any other applicable status protected by Title VI, Title VII, Title IX or any other local, state, or federal law.

EDUCATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE	Check all that apply
The novel supports the BCSD's mission, vision, and goals.	✓
The novel directly supports the acquisition of related standards. (Educational Significance)	✓
The novel contributes to improved academic achievement for a variety of learners and learning styles.	✓
The novel promotes the integration of higher-level thinking skills.	✓
The novel reflects the needs/interests of the school and the culture of the school community.	✓
The novel/material adds value to the library/school collection	✓
The novel reflects a clear, adequate, and broad presentation of the content.	✓

Evidence from the text or standards relating to EDUCATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE:

Subject matter - felix exploring, trying to understand his identity along with the struggles of his loving father to understand him represents multiple viewpoints; includes sensitive/controversial issues; is informative

QUALITY, CONTENT, MANNER OF PRESENTATION	Check all that apply
The novel is to be engaging and able to meet a variety of student needs. Meet high standards of quality in factual content and presentation to include, but not limited to: i. No errors, validity, accuracy; ii. Objectivity; iii. Well written; and iv. Strong visual appeal.	✓
Ensure reputation and significance of author and producer.	✓
The novel/material contains a value/currency commensurate with cost.	✓
The novel/material has high artistic quality, and/or literary style.	✓
The novel/material avoids bias and adheres to standards of sensitivity relative to student race, sex, religion, culture, ethnicity, disability, and socioeconomic status.	✓
Ensure that the novel/material contains clarity adequacy, and scope of test.	✓
The presentation of contents is organized in a manner that provides clarity and ease to the reader.	✓
The novel/material ensures a high degree of readability and/or comprehensibility.	✓
Evidence from the text relating to QUALITY: Novel gets very good professional reviews: an important story; Writing is smart and engaging; top notch depicting; essential purchase. Felix reaches out to appropriate resources to learn as advised by his father, not just reading online, but LGBT support group/clinic. Novel is easy to follow; good readability	

AVOIDANCE OF PERVASIVE VULGARITY	Check all that apply
When considered as a whole, the novel does not appeal to sexual interest in a shameful way.	✓
The novel does not depict or describe sexual conduct in a clearly offensive way.	✓
The novel abides by prevailing standards in the adult community in regard to suitable material for minors.	✓
The novel is free from graphic depictions of sexual activity.	✓
Evidence from the text relating to PERVASIVE VULGARITY: Some sexual exploration, but appropriately introduced and characters are respectful; descriptive without being offensive or vulgar p. 256 ; 310	

APPROPRIATENESS	K-5	6-8	9-12
The novel is appropriate to the age and grade level of students.			✓
The novel is appropriate to the maturity level of students.			✓
The novel is appropriate to the content area.			✓
The novel/material reflects the contemporary community standards.			✓
Evidence from the text relating to APPROPRIATENESS: Professional reviews assign book to grades 8-12; ages 14 and up. Characters are rising Seniors, 17 and up. Alcohol/drug use is the norm amongst the characters- not out of line with age group and seemingly used to avoid tough circumstances of self understanding but also recreational.			

BEAUFORT COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
RECONSIDERATION COMMITTEE CHECKLIST

Committee Number: 66 **Date** 2 Aug. 23

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EDUCATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE	**Check all that apply**
The novel supports the BCSD's mission, vision, and goals.	✓
The novel directly supports the acquisition of related standards. (Educational Significance)	✓
The novel contributes to improved academic achievement for a variety of learners and learning styles.	✓
The novel promotes the integration of higher-level thinking skills.	✓
The novel reflects the needs/interests of the school and the culture of the school community.	✓
The novel/material adds value to the library/school collection	✓
The novel reflects a clear, adequate, and broad presentation of the content.	✓
Evidence from the text or standards relating to EDUCATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE: See attached	

QUALITY, CONTENT, MANNER OF PRESENTATION	Check all that apply
The novel is to be engaging and able to meet a variety of student needs. Meet high standards of quality in factual content and presentation to include, but not limited to: i. No errors, validity, accuracy; ii. Objectivity; iii. Well written; and iv. Strong visual appeal.	✓
Ensure reputation and significance of author and producer.	✓
The novel/material contains a value/currency commensurate with cost.	✓
The novel/material has high artistic quality, and/or literary style.	✓
The novel/material avoids bias and adheres to standards of sensitivity relative to student race, sex, religion, culture, ethnicity, disability, and socioeconomic status.	✓
Ensure that the novel/material contains clarity adequacy, and scope of test.	✓
The presentation of contents is organized in a manner that provides clarity and ease to the reader.	✓
The novel/material ensures a high degree of readability and/or comprehensibility.	✓
Evidence from the text relating to QUALITY: See attached	

AVOIDANCE OF PERVASIVE VULGARITY	Check all that apply
When considered as a whole, the novel does not appeal to sexual interest in a shameful way.	✓
The novel does not depict or describe sexual conduct in a clearly offensive way.	✓
The novel abides by prevailing standards in the adult community in regard to suitable material for minors.	✓
The novel is free from graphic depictions of sexual activity.	✓
Evidence from the text relating to PERVASIVE VULGARITY: See attached	

APPROPRIATENESS	K-5	6-8	9-12
The novel is appropriate to the age and grade level of students.		8	✓
The novel is appropriate to the maturity level of students.		8	✓
The novel is appropriate to the content area.		8	✓
The novel/material reflects the contemporary community standards.		8	✓
Evidence from the text relating to APPROPRIATENESS: See attached			

***Felix Ever After* by Kacen Callender**

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 as well as experiences outside of the norm that students can learn from. Felix Love is a teenager in New York City desperately searching for love and to feel worthy of love from everyone around him. As a black trans male, his experiences provide insight the average BCSD student may not be familiar with - however, the themes of searching for love when a parent abandons you, reaching out to your friends or seeking the right friends as you struggle to understand who you are and how the world sees you is a universal teen struggle. Whether you agree or disagree with the subject material or the existence of transgender people this is a story about finding love within and then being able to share that love with the people who matter most to you.
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, *Felix Ever After* is a realistic portrait of a teenager whose been bullied for being transgender and dealing with emotions of being worthy of giving and receiving love thanks to a mother who abandoned him and a lack of meaningful relationships from more than just one best friend. It is a realistic fiction novel with a biracial transgender male protagonist written by a biracial transgender male author which makes it unique and a more realistic depiction of Felix's everyday feelings and search for himself. Many students actively seek out realistic fiction stories about bullying, searching for their identity (not just in a gender transitioning aspect but in general) and struggles since they are also questioning their roles and identities and preparing for adulthood. When choosing books for personal reading and as a potential academic supplement to assignments, the addition of relatable topics of friendships and how we treat others, family, first love, first kiss, and getting into college 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 Felix is faced with as he researched an identity label that made him feel like himself, and when deciding to seek revenge for the bullying incident and how it shaped his interactions and friendships, even for the bad decisions he and his best friend Ezra made by choosing to drink and smoke weed to escape their circumstanes. *Felix Ever After* could be an optional companion novel to research projects investigating current issues and legislation regarding sex/gender, Title IX and participation in school clubs or sports for transgender people, gender-inclusive bathrooms, and the impact of parent viewpoints on their teen children with regard to gender issues which is applicable across ELA, Social Studies, and Health Science curricula, as well as 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: Abandonment by a parent in this case a mother who has left and never contacted Felix since he was 10, violence and bullying at school due to gender preferences or expression of traits other than those they're born with, struggling with what comes after high school when college isn't gauranteed. The subject matter is relevant, highly relatable, and present in our schools today. The traumatic events in *Felix Ever After* 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. *Felix Ever After* 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 from an interracial aspect and from a transgender aspect and provides numerous examples of positive behavior and supports in light of very difficult circumstances. The items below are a reflection of key passages in the book that highlight its worthiness for inclusion in the collection and show the character development we witness as Felix searches for love everywhere and ultimately understands he needed to love himself first and be willing to accept that his father was doing the best he could, his best friend was in love with him all along, and that seeking revenge is the low road and not worth it, acceptance is only worth it from people who matter and not everyone matters or will accept you for who you are. Examples include:
    a. Support given/received by friend(s), parent, and other adults/teachers/community members (page4, 34, 42, 67-68, 84, 122, 167, 171, 192, 207, 224-25, 237, 258, 269, 275, 285-87, 322, 330-31)
    b. Evidence of growth, mature observations and expression of feelings or events (page 24, 26, 30, 45, 58-59, 63, 69, 73, 79-81, 103, 123, 132-33, 141, 148, 172, 177-79, 219, 235, 258, 272, 278, 323, 336)

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

1. *Felix Ever After* 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 based on the sequence of events, the mystery of who committed the egregious act of bullying, and the letters that Felix wrote to his absent mother were almost like a diary which students seek out all the time.
2. Kacen Cellender is a highly acclaimed author of 3 additional books including a National Book Award winner, a Stonewall Book Award winner, and a Lamba Literary Award winner. FELIX EVER AFTER is:
    a. Stonewall Honor Book
    b. Indie Bestseller
    c. Indie Next Pick
    d. ALA Booklist Editor's Choice
    e. Vanity Fair Best Book
    f. Forbes Best YA Book
    g. Chicago Public Library Best Teen Fiction

h. New York Pubic Library Best Teen Fiction
i. Goodreads Finalist for Best Teeb Book of the Year
j. YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults
k. YALSA Quick Picks for Reluctant YA Readers
l. Rainbow Book List selection

3. *Felix Ever After* can be found for purchase anywhere for about $12 which is highly valuable and cost-effective for a book with such acclaim and positive reviews.
4. It has high artistic quality and an engaging literary style, we see clearly from Felix's point of view and understand all of his internal struggles clearly as the story progresses thanks to multiple situations that require reflection and the diary like letters to his mother, as opposed to a multiple POV.
5. *Felix Ever After* deals very well with issues of sexual activity, religion, and culture in that it explores them with a serious and questioning attitude and respect for those that practice religion (Declan's father p. 304). Sexual activity is not flaunted, nor is it a means to an end, it is taken seriously as Felix spends his time searching for acceptance and love not physical intimacy. <u>In fact there is no sex in the story</u>, Felix only ever gets his first kiss and defers a potential sexual encounter with specific discussion about <u>not</u> being ready. This is a story about a transgender teenager and multiple other teens who are gay or display attractions other than the heteronormative so sex and gender are discussed but sex does not occur in the book. Multiple points of view on that subject matter are represented - from the homo/transphobic to the very accepting through Felix's classmates and the gender support group meetings he attends. Felix's transition is discussed including hormone therapy and top surgery along with his struggle to really feel like he made the right decisions and whether or not it was to blame for his mother leaving. It is only objectionable to those who don't want literature that validates the fact that transgender people exist and live their lives among us and don't need the approval of others to do so.
6. *Felix Ever After* has a high degree of readability as students will relate to the anxiety over bullying, being accepted and loved by others, and preparing to go off to college to experience the real world. BCSD students will also learn about a whole new environment that is New York City and how different that place is from here, giving them a window into other's lived experiences while still being relatable to mundane teen struggles of self.

<u>Avoidance of Pervasive Vulgarity</u>

1. *Felix Ever After* does not appeal to sexual interest in a shameful or erotic way as there is no sex in the book.
2. The sexual activity (kissing) was not descriptive and is appropriate for the recommended age/grade level. Mentions of kissing or touching were also combined with the mental aspect of sexual activity and why activity or lack thereof does not define a person or a relationship. Discussion of consent occured even for kissing - so a very good example for teens all around.

3. *Felix Ever After* abides by prevailing standards in the adult community in regard to being suitable material for minors in the recommended age/grade band. There were several references to drug and alcohol use specfically to demonstrate the differences between Felix's struggle and his best friend Exra's struggle with affluent parents who both ignored and funded those behaviors as a means to keep him in check. It was a point of learning in the material that taken out of context would not make sense or seem like a bad example for teens. It was supposed to be a bad example and a way to show how not to overcome your problems.
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 8/9 and up. I agree, it is appropriate for high school and could be suitable for mature middle school readers because Felix's mother left when he was 10 and he began the transition process when he was 12 under the supervision of his father. Even though a person may not support or understand the idea of being transgender that should not prevent them from reading about it or choosing not to read it.
2. As for maturity, this novel is appropriate for high school readers and mature middle school students. Readers that aren't experienced with the issues of transgender people would be called to ask questions and would learn things especially from the research Felix conducts and the support groups he attends. This by no means would make people gay or cause people to become transgender as is the ignorant fear of people seeking to ban books on the subject. Readers could put themselves in Felix's shoes with regards to being bullied, searching for love and acceptance, overcoming traumatic family experience with the loss of a parent and if they are not having a crisis of identity they may be able to sympathize or empathize with their friends or relations that do. All students would engage in critical thinking as a result.
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, and applies to national school library standards previously mentioned.
4. *Felix Ever After* reflects the contemporary standards of a community that seeks to eradicate stereotypes and treat people with respect regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. It reflects a community that wishes to develop empathy in children not perpetuate ignorance and apathy over real-world issues.

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&