

**From:** Mary Wood  
**Sent:** Tue, 25 Apr 2023 12:07:02 -0400  
**To:** Michael Satterfield; Cathy Huddle; Kimberly Snipes; Kevin Scully; Elizabeth Barnhardt; Rebecca Hines; Matt Hogan; Akil Ross

Dear Board Members and Dr. Ross,

I am writing to express deep concern over some of the comments made last night by board members during the discussion of supplementary materials. The very fact that members had to be reminded to not mention specific teachers' names is troubling at best. The notion that this is not understood indicates a dire lack of respect for educators in this district. That disregard was highlighted in the conversation which ensued.

Mr. Satterfield was spot on when he stated that teachers are afraid to speak up. How often are we subject to threats, retribution, and insults by certain community members and elected officials when we attempt to use our voices? Often enough that many of us remain silent while a culture of poor treatment grows around us. Many of my colleagues believe the devaluing of our professions is reflective of the leadership and board of our district. Sadly, they would rather suffer the abuses of power in exchange for holding true to the purpose of our work, which is to nurture and prepare children for their next steps in life.

Last night, I heard a number of false and disparaging remarks about the recent "controversy" surrounding my AP Lang class at Chapin High School. I would like to clear a few things up.

1. Materials in question were taught with full knowledge and approval of the API last year. There is an ever present lack of clarity about policy dictating the expectations of teachers.
2. Not ONCE did I speak with a parent regarding any concerns in my classroom. One parent reached out to me via email, and I promptly replied in the same correspondence and I called this parent, leaving a message for her to return my communication, even offering my cell phone number for ease of conversation. That parent never responded to me. I am aware proper procedure was usurped. This failure undermined my classroom integrity and has affected my personal life in extremely unfortunate ways. There was little to no concern for the effects of these supposed complaints, which I NEVER EVEN SAW, on me, other students, or my colleagues, one who is a 17-year veteran with exemplary AP scores who has taken a teaching job in a neighboring district, largely as a result of the district's handling of this situation.
3. Regarding the supplemental materials: teachers spend years in academia. We are well aware of how to properly vet resources, as we are masters of research and scholarship. We understand the necessity of using material with integrity and imparting that skill upon our students. My materials, which were alluded to as inflammatory or lacking judgment, came from TED Ed and the Brookings Institute. As I feel TED is more widely known, I won't go into detail justifying that resource. The Brookings Institute is an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization based in Washington, D.C. which, "brings together more than 300 leading experts in government and

academia from all over the world who provide the highest quality research, policy recommendations, and analysis on a full range of public policy issues."

4. A quick review of the AP Language and Composition course description provides expectations of students and educators, dictated by the College Board and not the state of South Carolina. For your convenience, I will include the verbiage about this discussion of "controversial material."

**Issues that might, from particular social, historical, or cultural viewpoints, be considered controversial, including references to ethnicities, nationalities, religions, races, dialects, gender, or class, may be addressed in texts that are appropriate for the AP English Language and Composition course. Fair representation of issues and peoples may occasionally include controversial material. Since AP students have chosen a program that directly involves them in college level work, participation in this course depends on a level of maturity consistent with the age of high school students who have engaged in thoughtful analyses of a variety of texts. The best response to controversial language or ideas in a text might well be a question about the larger meaning, purpose, or overall effect of the language or idea in context. AP students should have the maturity, skill, and will to seek the larger meaning of a text or issue through thoughtful research.**

In this culture, EVERYTHING may be considered controversial. Last night, a member mentioned "gender identity" as being inappropriate for instruction. Please note that gender identity is not limited to LGBTQ citizens. This also includes heteronormative groups. Still, there would be no issue if materials were only about "traditional" nuclear families or relationships which are reflective of those structures. To prevent conversations about experiences which exist outside of heterosexual, caucasian norms is both biased and discriminatory and completely antithetical to the development of critical thinking and civil discourse, which is the entire point of an AP Lang course. If you would, please define controversial, as this is a very subjective term with fluid parameters that require structure. And to counter the curriculum of the College Board questions the ethicality of teaching of such courses in LR5.

5. Teachers are also tax-paying community members who often have children or grandchildren in schools. Please represent ALL citizens fairly and accurately.

The idea that we are trusted to protect students from armed intruders but not to select appropriate materials is lost on none of us. I pray reason prevails and that teachers receive the respect we deserve. That example begins with each of you. The statements from some of the board members last night alienated more than just me.

Sincerely,  
Mary Wood