BEAUFORT COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
RECONSIDERATION COMMITTEE CHECKLIST

Committee Number: 94 **Date** 29 Nov 2023

Name of Novel grl2grl by Peters, Julie Anne

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: 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 text.	✓
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.			✓
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: See attached			

***Grl2grl by* Julie Anne Peters**

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, their interests, and their lived experience. Grl2grl is a novel of 10 short stories, each with teenage girls at the center of each story and how they deal with relationships and their sexual identity at this stage in their lives. Each story is unique and provides a new perspective and insightful experiences that every BCSD student may not be familiar with - however, the themes of loneliness, heartbreak, longing, vulnerability, wanting to be yourself without fear of public opinion or discrimination, and needing to feel safe with those who are supposed to love them are universally applicable. Whether you agree or disagree with the subject matter or the existence of gay, lesbian, or transgender people, or don't believe women who have been abused by those they love, these stories serve as a reminder that every experience is different, WE ARE NOT THE SAME, and being different is not an acceptable justification for being ignored or removed from literature.
2. The novel directly supports acquisition of related library standards. When choosing books for personal reading and as a potential academic supplement to assignments, the addition of relatable topics of friendships, heartbreak, first love, 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".
3. The novel contributes to improved academic achievement for a variety of learners because reading in any format improves cognition, attention-span, and builds vocabulary. Numerous peer-reviewed research studies show the correlation between improved academic achievement and reading. Also, *Grl2grl* is short fiction, each story is easily digestible or able to skipped without ruining the overall understanding of the book. There are realistic portraits of teenagers who feel misunderstood, stigmatized, in some cases are being actively abused or assaulted for who they are. Many students actively seek out realistic fiction stories about these themes, searching for a connection to what's happening in their own lives, exploring their identities and relationship struggles since they are also questioning their roles in society and preparing for adulthood.
4. This novel promotes the integration of higher-level thinking skills because of the real-world scenarios and variety of experiences represented. Each vignette takes on a different aspect and possibility of teenage girl life. *Grl2grl* could be an optional companion novel to research projects investigating current issues and legislation regarding hate crimes, sex/gender, victim support options for sexual abuse, and the impact of parent viewpoints on their teen children with regard to sexuality which is applicable across ELA, Social Studies, and Health Science curricula, as well as Media Literacy standards.
5. This novel reflects the needs/interests of the school and culture of the community through the inclusion of everyday situations that students (not just the lesbian students) face: A partner who cheats, heartbreak, becoming victim to an online predator, experiencing sexual abuse by a trusted family member, violence for being transgender, and bullying due to gender preferences or expression of traits. The subject matter is

relevant, highly relatable, and present in our schools today. The traumatic events in *Grl2grl* 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.

6. *Grl2grl* adds value to the school library collection. It was already 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 a gender identity and experience aspect and provides numerous windows of insight and opportunities to develop empathy. The items below are a reflection or summary of key passages from each story that highlight its worthiness for inclusion in the collection.
    a. **Passengers** demonstrates the unnecessary stigma associated with not conforming to gender expectations or needing to be part of the in crowd. "She's not committing one way or the other, let's just say. Who says you have to? Why do we have to? If I want to dress like a guy, so what? I don't, but if I did…" The story also does not make excuses for who we are attracted to.
    b. **Can't Stop the Feeling** is about questioning your sexual orientation and identity, feeling overwhelmed because you don't know how to move forward, taking steps at your own pace to decide who you are and how you interact with others with a story based on gathering the courage to attend a GSA meeting. "'You can stay," she said. "You're welcome." "No." I shook my head. "I can't." She held my eyes for a moment, then nodded. I didn't want her to feel sorry for me. But she smiled warmly, like she understood. "When you're ready," she said. Her voice was steady and sure.'"
    c. **After Alex** shows the similarities in gay/straight relationships, and the difficult but also self-serving decisions people make when their partner (also their first love) cheats on them. In this case the red flags and warnings went unheeded despite obvious correlations to unhealthy straight relationships that were brought to light by the protagonists support network." 'Forget her, Rachael. Alex doesn't deserve you. She was never good enough for you.' How many times had I heard that?"
    d. **Outside/Inside** is about a girl trying to find the perfect card to tell her crush that she likes her and explaining her anticipation of a pending relationship. Much like Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery* we don't find out until the very last line that her crush is her teacher. The story ends abruptly - what a plot twist and perfect time for deep discussion on student/teacher boundaries and appropriate behavior.
    e. **On the Floor** describes the physicality of basketball and what takes place on the court between two rival girls as they play against each other, one trying and succeeding in distracting the other. The back and forth of the game and their interactions lead the reader to believe they have a relationship outside of basketball. There is nothing untoward here.
    f. **Stone Cold Butch** is the story of a girl who believes herself to be ugly and undesireable so she makes herself as cold and unattractive as possible to avoid the sexual abuse from her father. She needed to feel "strong, powerful, and defiant." in the only way she could, by changing her appearance and keeping people away. In doing so she shuts down every potentially good relationship.

g. **Abstinence Makes the Heart Grow Fonder** delves into the religious aspect of homosexuality starting with a discussion in sex ed class about abstinence. A student asks ilf lesbians are not allowed to legally marry then how does the concept of abstinence apply to them? This story from 2007 assumes lesbians are still not allowed to marry legally. As two friends who had grown apart start to talk to each other again the dialog that occurs is smart and truthful and doesn't hold back the reality of biology and the need to procreate, but is nuanced enough to fill in the blanks about waiting for the right someone to come along.

h. **Boi** is a difficult story of a girl (Eva) who is wants to transition and presents as a boy (Vince). Though nothing surgical has taken place they bind their chest and have a prosthetic penile device for wear under clothing. The story details their feelings about their identity and how desparate they are to be who they feel they really are instead of what they outwardly present. They have a sympathetic cousin who has been there for them through past bullying incidents, stood in for the family that left them behind, and saves them when they're jumped and brutally beaten for no reason at all. [Eva/Vince] "I'll never be okay. What they took, what they stole from me, it's damage. Damage beyond repair."

i. **TIAD** Tomorrow is another day shows how easily someone can be manipulated online. In this case the manipulation was emotional not physical after a girl goes to a chat room support group when her girlfriend dumped her. The people there are supportive and keep her from doing harm to herself, but one takes extra interest and leads her on. This is both a fantastic example of how reaching out when you're hurting can help you stave off depression or selfharm, but is also a cautionary tale about remaining vigilant to the possibility of people who are not who they say they are.

j. **Two-Part Invention** is about a young musician who finally gets the courage to tell her long time friend that she wants to be more than friends. The anxiety she describes about her love not being reciprocated is entirely relatable and their sweet friendship is quickly summed up in the final interaction when her friend says "All these years… all this time… you're tone deaf, you know that? You never pick up the beat…" She pressed her forehead to mine. "Tune in, girl. I love you."

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

1. *Grl2grl* 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 inclusion of 10 short stories that can be read/reread in any order.
2. Julie Anne Peters (recently deceased) was a highly acclaimed author of 20 books for children and young adults, that feature LGBTQ characters. Her 2004 title *Luna* was the first book to be published by a mainstream publisher with a transgender character. She was a National Book Award finalist, a Stonewall Book Award finalist, a Lamba Literary Award winner, and a Buxtehuder Bulle nominee. *Grl2grl* has been recognized in the following ways:
    a. Rainbow List book selection

b. Golden Crown Literary Award finalist
c. Books for the Teen Age selection, New York Public Library
d. Cooperative Children's Books Center Choice designation

3. *Grl2grl* is no longer in print, but can be found cheaply through resale or used book outlets. The publishing date puts it right at the edge of recommended age for our collections.
4. It has high artistic quality and an engaging literary style, we see clearly from teenage girls' points of view and begin to understand the internal struggles of identity exploration and the ways that manifests in various relationships.
5. *Grl2grl* deals very well with issues of sexual activity, religion, and culture in that it explores them with a serious and questioning attitude. The sexual activity included is not overt or provocative. There is no sex in the story. One of the stories contains sexual abuse by a father that has occured in the past and that will soon occur again but the scene ends. The girl in this story recounts how she had engaged in sexual activity in the past that should have mattered to her, but because of the abuse she doesn't feel anything, she's numb and only sees her abuser. Religion was also explored through the story about abstinence and how some people assert that gays/lesbians are shunned by god. That discussion begins in sex education class - where questions about sex/sexuality are expected and always appropriate.
6. *Grl2grl* has a high degree of readability as students will relate to the anxiety over understanding their feelings about gender and sexuality, being accepted and loved by others, being taken advantage of, potentially being physically and emotionally harmed, and how to deal with that. BCSD students will also have the opportunity to empathize with those who are different from themselves and seek an understanding perspective.

Avoidance of Pervasive Vulgarity

1. *Grl2grl* does not appeal to sexual interest in a shameful or erotic way as there is no sex in the book. There are sexuality and gender issues present and discussion of those topics as they pertain to young women, lesbians, and a girl who wants to transition to male, but no active sex. Previous sexual encounter was mentioned "The first time we made love was on a Friday afternoon."
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 attraction, what makes us desire others, and why activity or lack thereof does not define a person or a relationship. It also addresses the harm that sexual abuse by a family member can do, the harm ignorant people can cause when they attack someone who wants to be something other than what they were born being, and the harm that social media and online predators can cause when they take advantage of a person's vulnerability and trust.
3. *Grl2grl* abides by prevailing standards in the adult community in regard to being suitable material for minors in the recommended age/grade band. These are situations and feelings that BCSD students can relate to or may be actively experiencing. Denying the existencec of these stories denies the people themselves, excludes and discriminates

against our students who identify this way or who can relate to the situations in the book. There are difficult topics within, but the approach used here is carefully constructed with each story having both a right and wrong way to handle the issue at hand.

4. There are no graphic depictions of sexual activity.

Appropriateness

1. Professional review sources recommend this book for a young adult audience, ages 13 and up or grade 9 and up. I agree, it is appropriate for high school students. All characters in the book are in high school and while the situations may not be common to all, they are relatable for all.
2. As for maturity, this novel is appropriate for high school readers. Readers that aren't experienced with the issues of transgender people would be called to ask questions and could sympathize with that character. Readers that don't feel the way these girls feel about other girls would be able to understand how those feelings are just as complicated and scary as the feelings they have for the opposite sex. All students would engage in critical thinking as a result.
3. This novel or one of the stories within could easily support English curriculum and standards (linked below) as a supporting text for analyzing and interpreting meaning and context for each grade level, discovering relationship themes, and applies to national school library standards previously mentioned. It's inclusion in the collection is the perfect example of a choice read that opens doorways to understanding.
4. *Grl2grl* 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&

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