

MINUTES OF THE SECONDARY NOVEL COMMITTEE
SCOTTSDALE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 48
Mohave District Annex, Conference Room A/B, 8500 E. Jackrabbit Rd.,
Scottsdale, AZ 85250
November 9, 2023
5:00-7:00 PM

Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 5:03, by Jonna Wallis

Attendance:

Present: Becky Antioco, Traci Avalos, Mike Bengert, Brandi Brumfield, Shawn Crosier, Kim Dodds Keran, Tammy Holmberg, Laurie Jackson, Tamara Jagodzinski, Whitney Jennings, Chad Johnson, Danielle Kesic, Dan Milligan, Melchor Miranda, Diane Murphy, Stuart Rhoden, Jill Scott, Pat Shaler, Doreen Thomas, Kristen Tindall, Jonna Wallis, Jessica Winget

Absent: Crystal Holmes, Nick Noonan, Gail Oper, Barrie Muzbeck Pinto, Katarina Sisic

Information/Discussion and Possible Action:

1. The group engaged in introductions following a response pattern:
*Question: What is one thing that instantly makes your day better?
2. Review purpose & norms - Information
 - Reminder: Purpose of the committee is not an evaluation of a book's entertainment level; it's an evaluation of the purpose and appropriateness of utilizing books as part of curriculum
 - Review of Arizona law guidelines
3. Schedule of meetings - Information

5:00-7:00 PM at the MDA Room A/B

December 14, 2023
January 18, 2024
February 22, 2024
April 4, 2024
May 2, 2024
4. Review of October 5, 2023 Minutes
 - Motion to approve by: Dan Milligan
 - Seconded by: Brandi Brumfield
 - Vote Count: Unanimous

- Discussion: All book recommendations made by this committee go before the Governing Board for final approval

5. Round 2 book presentations and recommendations - Information/Action:

Grade 12 (College English): *Columbine*

[Questions/Comments/Concerns:](#)

- What triggers copycats? Should this be a concern?
 - Because of the way the author wrote the book, it does not present as a threat
 - There is no glorification of the shooters. Author demystifies the false narratives surrounding the event
- This book is beneficial for college preparedness
- This is being recommended for dual enrollment English only.

Grade 8: *Feed*

[Questions/Comments/Concerns](#)

- National Book Award Finalist
- How does parent approval work for summer reading?
 - Concerns would be listed for parents when list of summer reads goes out
 - Isn't age appropriate. Book is recommended for 14 year olds, not 12/13 year olds
 - Regarding age appropriateness: it is not about the reading level, it is about the content

Grade 8: *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*

[Questions/Comments/Concerns](#)

- Concern coming from a place where the author has no connection to the actual event
 - If someone does not have a lot Holocaust background/knowledge, the story could easily be misunderstood
 - The way it is written may cause the reader to have empathetic feeling towards grieving Nazi father, when he was the one serving out the cruelty.

Grade 12: *The Ultimate Guide for Making Top Grades in College*

[Questions/Comments/Concerns](#)

- Nothing objectionable in this book at all
- How many students wouldn't already know this information already?
 - Because it is such a simple read and reiterates what students are being taught
 - Is this content valuable for general 12th graders?
 - Not a literary analysis

Grade 11 (AP Language): *How to Read Nonfiction Like a Professor*

[Questions/Comments/Concerns](#)

- Book is problematic: author coming from one particular viewpoint
 - Could alienate populations
 - Needs significant counter-points reflecting other viewpoints
 - Flippant attitude/language
 - Political components concerning
- Biased writer: would a student recognize the bias?
- Beyond authors “rants” there are pieces of the book that have classroom value
- Are there other books are being used to provide different counterpoints?
- Could this be recommended as a yellow book to give the teacher pause to think about appropriateness for use.
 - Group conversation about the use of marking a book yellow when there is no explicit or inappropriate content

Grade 12 (College English): *Designing Your Life, How to Build a Well-Lived, Joyful Life*

[Questions/Comments/Concerns:](#)

- Not great writing, No literary merit
- Why a yellow recommendation when it doesn’t have questionable content?
 - Confusing to ask for parent approval when there is no explicit material
 - Was chosen as yellow to ask for administrative approval for the teacher to use
 - Monitoring how the teacher planning to use content in classroom
 - Why offer it at all if group feels there is no literary merit.

Grade 12: *Atlas of the Heart*

[Questions/Comments/Concerns](#)

- Author also has televised shows as well (TED-talk style)
6. Round 3 book assignments and small group meetings - Information:
- Grade 12 (AP Literature): *The Memory Keeper’s Daughter* by Kim Edwards
 - Grade 12 (College English): *The Daily Stoic* by Ryan Holiday
 - Grade 12 (College English): *The Creative Act: A Way of Being* by Rick Rubin
 - Grade 7: *Nimona* by Noelle Stevenson
 - Grade 10-12 (Holocaust/Genocide): *The Birds San Eulogies: A Memoir* by Mirla Raz
 - Grade 8: *Unwind* by Neal Shusterman

7. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at [7:04](#) by Jonna Wallis

Dated this 9th day of November 2023