



Book Review Process from the Keller ISD Superintendent

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Keller ISD Families and Employees,

Earlier this week, Keller ISD notified you of the removal of an inappropriate book from one of our libraries. As we shared, once we were made aware of the content of the book it was immediately removed. However, I wanted to follow up and provide you with further information about our book review and removal processes and how the administrative team has been working to better evaluate our curricular resources over the past several months.

Book Removal Process:

It is important to note that the law does not allow us to remove books from our libraries solely because a concern has been raised. The First Amendment protects students' rights relating to the removal of books from libraries. The law requires that schools do not remove materials from a library for the purpose of denying students access to ideas with which a district disagrees.

However, per Keller ISD Policy EF(Legal), a district may remove materials because the content is adjudged to be "pervasively vulgar or based solely upon the educational suitability of the books in question." Additionally, there is a formal process to remove books from the District that can be found in Policy EF(Local). Parents always have the right to identify books and other materials they do not want their own children to access. Parents simply need to provide that information to their child's campus library.

Our approach to this issue is twofold: We will (1) engage in immediate efforts to ensure the books we currently have in our school buildings are age and grade-level appropriate, and (2) establish better processes to ensure that books containing sexually explicit content are not made available in District libraries.

KISD Book Acquisition Process:

While the District re-examines its book acquisition policies and procedures, in order to balance our legal requirements with concerns regarding inappropriate literary content, books that have been identified as potentially "pervasively vulgar" or not educationally suitable will be set aside from the other library books and only made available for check-out with written parent permission. This process will take time, but we are committed to following the review process set out in local policy.

Recognizing the ongoing challenges with regard to determining grade-level appropriateness of certain works, we began to re-examine our book procurement processes and procedures earlier this fall. Upon review, it became evident, through our efforts to align books in SORA to appropriate grade levels, that our procurement process needed to be revised.

Establishing quality metrics and processes to ensure our students have access to books that are integral to the instructional program is nearing a point that we are ready to implement the new process. The goal is to align our process in a way that ensures we are providing books that are appropriate for the reading levels and understanding of students, reflect the interests and needs of the students and faculty, are included because of their literary or artistic value and merit, and present information with the greatest degree of accuracy and clarity.

The options through which books are made available to our students beyond access through traditional school and other public libraries has grown substantially over the last few years. Private citizen book donations, establishment of classroom libraries, independent school and teacher book-purchasing budget allocations, and various electronic options have compelled the District to redesign our processes and procedures around the selection and procurement of literary materials. Board policies EF(Legal) and EF(Local) provide the parameters for selecting and challenging instructional resources. Over the last few days, parents and community members have reached out to District officials with other book titles that are of concern which will be addressed with the improved processes that we are putting into place.

The following are some of the steps that will be implemented as part of Keller ISD's book purchasing process and regulations.

- A new administrative regulation will be drafted for the purchase of books and the acceptance of donations.
- An additional approval layer for any book purchases has been implemented until the new process is in place requiring Educational Support Administrators to approve the purchase.

- Classroom libraries will be cataloged.
- All donations of books or purchase of books for classroom libraries will be required to follow the administrative regulations.
- Teachers, administrators, and librarians will review current collections to ensure that books are classified in the appropriate reading levels.

Keller ISD will use this process to evaluate books in order to ensure our students have access to the most effective and appropriate resources to further their learning. Their safety and well-being is the top priority for myself and the Board of Trustees, and we will continue to work to provide exceptional educational opportunities for all students.

RW
