

**National
Coalition
Against
Censorship**

[Via Electronic Mail]

September 15, 2017

Board of Directors
Rocklin Academy Family of Schools
2204 Plaza Dr. Suite 200, Rocklin, CA 95765

Dear Rocklin County Board of Directors:

As advocates for the right of free expression, we write to express our concern that a recent book controversy has triggered a reconsideration of the Rocklin Academy literature policy, which fosters a love for reading and the free exchange of ideas.

Several months ago, a transitioning Rocklin Academy kindergartner selected Jessica Herthel's *I Am Jazz* as her choice for story time. We are aware that the decision to read aloud the children's book about a young girl struggling with her gender identity distressed some parents, who believe the topic is too sensitive for kindergartners and are upset that they were not notified in advance. A few threatened to sue.

We believe that Rocklin Academy did nothing wrong. The First Amendment guarantees the right of students to read and learn anything that is educationally appropriate. Indeed, it is required to uphold the educational standards set forth by California law, which promote broad cultural literacy under the guidance of trained educators and prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender.

It is our understanding that the board of directors will meet on Monday to review its literature policy. We know that some parents are calling for restriction on books that can be used in the classroom. We urge you to resist these demands.

While parents may request an alternate assignment for their child if they find a particular book offensive, no parent has the right to decide what other children read. Media reports indicate that many parents of children in Rocklin Academy strongly supported the reading of *I Am Jazz*.

We are also concerned by calls for expanded parental notification of potentially offensive books. Singling out certain types of content for parental notification casts a negative light on the material regardless of its educational value. Flagging *I Am Jazz* and other books about gender identity would favor those who wish to shield their children from such discussions over parents who trust the professional judgment of educators.

NCAC strongly supports the literature policy of the Rocklin Academy Family of Schools, which protects the right of all its students to read freely. We also applaud school administrators for their fair and considered response to the controversy over *I Am Jazz*, which respects and protects the First Amendment rights of all.

Sincerely yours,

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**NCAC PARTICIPATING
ORGANIZATIONS**

Actors' Equity Association
American Association of
School Administrators
American Association of
University Professors
American Association of
University Women
American Booksellers for Free
Expression
American Civil Liberties Union
American Ethical Union
American Federation of Teachers
American Jewish Committee
American Library Association
American Literary Translators
Association
American Orthopsychiatric Association
American Society of Journalists &
Authors
Americans United for Separation of
Church & State
Association of American Publishers
Authors Guild
Catholics for Choice
Children's Literature Association
College Art Association
Comic Book Legal Defense Fund
The Creative Coalition
Directors Guild of America
The Dramatists Guild of America
Dramatists Legal Defense Fund
Educational Book & Media Association
First Amendment Lawyers Association
Free Speech Coalition
International Literacy Association
Lambda Legal
Modern Language Association
National Center for Science Education
National Communication Association
National Council for the Social Studies
National Council of the Churches
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Teachers of English
National Education Association
National Youth Rights Association
The Newspaper Guild/CWA
PEN American Center
People For the American Way
Planned Parenthood Federation
of America
Project Censored
SAG-AFTRA
Sexuality Information & Education
Council of the U.S.
Society of Children's Book Writers
& Illustrators
Student Press Law Center
Union for Reform Judaism
Union of Democratic Intellectuals
Unitarian Universalist Association
United Church of Christ
Office of Communication
United Methodist Church,
United Methodist Communications
Women's American ORT
Woodhull Sexual Freedom Alliance
Writers Guild of America, East
Writers Guild of America, West



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Charles Brownstein, Director
Comic Book Legal Defense Fund



Mary Rasenberger, Director
Authors Guild



Millie Davis, Director
Intellectual Freedom Center
National Council of Teachers



Sofia Castillo, Director
Free Expression Advocacy
Association of American Publishers
English