


**NATIONAL
COALITION
AGAINST
CENSORSHIP**  **KIDS'
RIGHT
TO READ**

A project of the National
Coalition Against Censorship

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American Booksellers for
Free Expression
Comic Book Legal Defense
Fund

May 14, 2019

Dr. Marci Shepard, Superintendent
Orting School District
121 Whitesell St NE
Orting, WA 98360

Sent via Electronic Mail to: shepardm@orting.wednet.edu

Dear Dr. Shepard,

Our group of organizations dedicated to protecting freedom of expression in schools recently learned that *Eleanor and Park*, by Rainbow Rowell was pulled from the 8th grade Battle of the Books choice curriculum without review and may be removed from the Orting school library. Both actions were prompted by one parent's personal objections.

We are deeply concerned that administrators appeared not to even be aware as to the policy which pertains to the review of challenged curricular materials (Policy 2020) and made the decision to pull the book from the Battle of the Books choice curriculum unilaterally. While we are glad to learn that an Instructional Materials Committee has been convened to review the book's suitability for the library, we urge you to reconsider the decision to remove it from the curriculum.

We would also like to offer guidance to your Instructional Materials Committee as it reviews the book. The attached considerations for handling book challenges include key legal points and recommended procedural safeguards against censorship in your schools.

The award-winning *Eleanor and Park* is widely taught and read for its inspiring story of two marginalized teens finding love and self-acceptance. Rowell has been heralded for presenting her teen characters' "intelligent observations, extreme inner desires, and irrational feelings through compelling alternating narrations." (The Horn Book). It was on School Library Journal's 2018 Top 100 Must-Have YA Books List and is regarded by the National Council for Teachers of English and American Library Association as a book that "[exemplifies literary excellence in young adult literature](#)."

Some parents may object to the use of profanity in *Eleanor and Park*. However, in the face of such [challenges](#) elsewhere, many review committees have chosen to retain, recognizing the profound value of its message to young readers who may relate to the protagonists' yearning for belonging. For example, in [Chesterfield, Virginia](#), a committee of school administrators, teachers, librarians and parents reviewed *Eleanor and Park* and found its uplifting message valuable to middle school curriculums and libraries. We encourage your committee to assess the book in its entirety - beyond the specific passages challengers find objectionable - and consider how it might resonate with your diverse student body.

Finally, protect against future censorship, we strongly recommend that you clarify Board Policy 2020 on the selection and reconsideration of instructional materials, by, for instance, clarifying the composition of the review committee and timeline of review. We also urge you to make sure administrators and educators are familiar with this policy.

We hope to continue working with you. Please do not hesitate to contact us for further guidance. Thank you.

With warm regards,



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National Coalition Against Censorship



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Millie Davis, Director
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