

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

August 19, 2022

Board of Education
Tulsa Public Schools
3027 S. New Haven Ave.
Tulsa, OK 74114

Dear Members of the School Board,

The National Coalition Against Censorship is an alliance of national nonprofit groups dedicated to protecting freedom of expression, including the rights of K-12 students, teachers, and staff. We are writing in regards to reports that the district has removed the graphic novels *Gender Queer* and *Flamer* from the Tulsa Public Schools' libraries. We are asking you to confirm that the books will indeed be reviewed in the fall, pursuant to district policy.

Initial reports from the district stated that, "when we were made aware of two books with inappropriate images, we immediately asked the secondary schools that had them to remove them from their libraries." At the same time, there was a promise that "[w]hen school resumes, we will follow our process and more carefully review books in question."

Subsequently, Superintendent Gist was quoted as saying that these books "are a problem" and that they were removed right away. If accurately quoted, this remark suggests that district policy is not being followed. Although your policy permits books to be temporarily removed pending adjudication of challenges, it does not permit such books to be permanently removed until after the review process is over. We are concerned that Supt. Gist's statement implies that the books have been permanently removed.

We urge you to follow your district's policies in this matter. The district's formal review policy is essential for resolving disputes fairly and efficiently. The formation of a reevaluation committee helps ensure that book challenge decisions are made based on objective criteria which prioritize the needs of students. The review process helps guarantee that the needs of all students are served by the district's educational resources, and that the school libraries include a broad selection of books that provide value to a variety of students.

A library, including a school library, should include a broad selection of books that provide value to students. Your school district's "*Statement of Vision, Mission, and Beliefs*," emphasizes the importance of student ownership of their education, and the need for students to "feel accepted and supported." Diverse graphic novels like *Gender*

Queer and *Flamer* can help to achieve this goal. These are award winning works that provide complicated but honest stories that help students develop a wider understanding of their world.

We urge the district to confirm it will initiate a formal review of the books, and make it clear to all district personnel that compliance with board regulations is not optional.

Thank you for your attention and consideration to this matter.

Sincerely yours,



Christopher Finan
Executive Director
National Coalition Against Censorship

Co-signed by: American Booksellers for Free Expression
National Council of Teachers of English

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