

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

December 14, 2023

School Board
Dallas Center – Grimes CSD
2405 W 1st Street
Grimes, IA 50111

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 to object to the district's decision to remove over 70 books from school libraries.

According to media reports,¹ the district has improperly removed 73 books from school libraries in an attempt to comply with Iowa Senate File 496. This law prohibits school libraries from having any materials with "descriptions or visual depictions of a sex act." However, we understand that Iowa's Department of Education has not issued guidance on how to implement the law. As a result, there has been confusion and misunderstanding, most recently in the Urbandale Community School District which misidentified 400 books for removal. Following public complaints, the administration admitted to misinterpreting the law and significantly reduced the number of books to review. This episode should serve as a cautionary tale for the Dallas Center-Grimes School District.

Our concern is twofold: First, it seems highly unlikely that over 70 books chosen by professional educators for inclusion in a school library collection would fit this criteria. For example, Barbara Dee's *The (Almost) Perfect Guide to Imperfect Boys* contains no sexual content and appears to have been improperly removed. Second, the question of whether books have educational value cannot be determined by a single individual; instead, that determination can only be made by a group of the district's professional educators who are experts on what materials are valuable for students.

We understand issues around what materials should be available to students are often emotionally charged. As a result, it is important that districts make decisions about library collections in a manner which ensures that all parties, including educational professionals, students, parents and other members of the school community, feel that their views have been considered and that decisions about educational material are made in an objective, nonpolitical manner.

¹Sitter, P. (2023, December 1). The Des Moines Register [www.desmoinesregister.com](https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/education/2023/12/01/dallas-county-grimes-school-district-iowa-ban-list-removed-anatomy-book-david-macaulay/71746173007/).
<https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/education/2023/12/01/dallas-county-grimes-school-district-iowa-ban-list-removed-anatomy-book-david-macaulay/71746173007/>

We urge you to amend your procedures to make it possible for a review committee to properly weigh the content and context of each book before deeming material in violation of Iowa law, ensuring that important books remain available on library shelves.

Please let us know if you have any questions or need any further support.

Thank you for your attention and consideration to this matter.

Sincerely,



Christine Emeran
Youth Free Expression Program Director
National Coalition Against Censorship

Co-signed by: American Booksellers for Free Expression
The Authors Guild
Children's and Young Adult Books Committee, PEN America
National Council of Teachers of English
PEN America
Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators

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