

NATIONAL COALITION AGAINST CENSORSHIP

KIDS' RIGHT TO READ

March 18, 2025

School Board
Radnor Township School District
135 South Wayne Avenue
Wayne, PA 19087

Dear Members,

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 response to the recent removal of three books from the Radnor High School library.

According to news reports,¹ the district has removed Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*, Maia Kobabe's *Gender Queer*, and Craig Thompson's *Blankets*, claiming that they are "not age-appropriate for students."² As we understand it, an ad-hoc committee created by your superintendent voted to remove the books after receiving a reconsideration request from a parent in January.

We are writing to recommend a few important changes to your *Material Re-Evaluation Procedure* (Policy 144.1³). We suggest that you revise your current policy to standardize review criteria and provide a process to appeal decisions. Publicizing those criteria also helps ensure confidence and transparency in the process.

We understand that the process of determining which materials should be available to students is often emotionally charged. An effective book challenge procedure is in everyone's best interest, and can ensure consistency and lawfulness of those decisions. It is important that districts make decisions about library collections in a transparent 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, pedagogical, and nonpolitical manner that upholds the rights of its students to free inquiry and free expression.

¹Hanna, Maddie. "Radnor Bans Three Books in Response to a Parent's Challenge, Including "Gender Queer."" The Philadelphia Inquirer, 4 Mar. 2025, www.inquirer.com/education/radnor-high-school-book-ban-20250304.html.

²Hanna, Maddie. "Radnor School District Will Review Its Library Policy after Backlash over Book Bans." The Philadelphia Inquirer, 12 Mar. 2025, www.inquirer.com/education/radnor-school-district-book-ban-review-20250312.html.

³Radnor Township School District. 144.1 Selection Policy for Radnor Township School District Libraries. 5 Mar. 2008, go.boarddocs.com/pa/radn/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=9X58NR1F27F3.

Based on NCAC's 50 years of experience advising public institutions in developing best practices that address book challenges, we are recommending policy improvements for you to consider.

We recommend revising your book review policies to incorporate the following improvements, which are commonly found in policies across school districts nationwide:

1. Ensure that the review procedure is transparent to the public, including providing notice of the hearing times, locations, and reasoning for review decisions. Many school districts dedicate a page on the district website to tracking book challenges.
2. Establish clear and objective review criteria for the committee to follow in making their recommendation. Such criteria help ensure that recommendations are made in the best interests of students as opposed to disagreement with the viewpoints expressed in the challenged material – which can create constitutional liability for the district.
3. Provide a process by which committee decisions can be appealed to the board.

Therefore, we strongly encourage you to amend your policy. We have attached a resource, *Material Review and Policy Guidelines and Examples*, which elaborates on our recommendations and includes sample policies from districts across the country.

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
Comic Book Legal Defense Fund
National Council of Teachers of English
PEN America
Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators

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