



THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF LEE COUNTY

Ad Hoc Challenge Materials Committee Meeting

May 6, 2022

11:00 AM

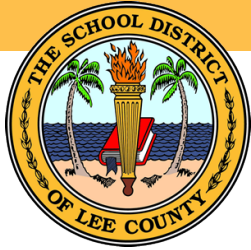
Curriculum Resource Room

AGENDA

- Review of Challenge to Instructional and/or Media Materials Process
- Challenged Materials
 - Dear Martin by N. Stone
 - Thirteen Reasons Why by J. Asher
- Good of the Order

BOARD MEMBERS: DEBBIE JORDAN, CHAIR, DISTRICT 4 | MARY FISCHER, VICE CHAIR, DISTRICT 1

MELISA W. GIOVANNELLI, DISTRICT 2 | CHRIS N. PATRICCA, DISTRICT 3 | GWYNETTA S. GITTENS, DISTRICT 5 | BETSY VAUGHN, DISTRICT 6
CATHLEEN O'DANIEL MORGAN, DISTRICT 7 | KENNETH A. SAVAGE, Ed.D., SUPERINTENDENT | KATHY DUPUY-BRUNO, ESQ., BOARD ATTORNEY



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Committee Response Challenge to Instructional and/or Media Materials

Committee Meeting Date: May 6, 2022

Date Challenge to Instruction and/or Media Materials Form Received: Per Ad Hoc committee, a recommendation was made January 24, 2022, to review the email from [REDACTED] (sent 10/14/21) with a list of materials, reviewed by the Florida Citizens Alliance, based upon citation of objections referencing violation of State Statute FS 847.012. No form was officially submitted for individual books.

NOTE: To be in compliance with Board Policies, complainant submitted a Challenge Form. See pages 4-6 of this response document.

Submitted by: [REDACTED]

Challenged Material: Thirteen Reasons Why by J. Asher

Complainant: Book is being challenged per FS 847.012.

Decision:

- Recommend continued use of challenged material as instructional materials and for media circulation
- Recommend continued use for media circulation only
- Recommend continued use for instructional purposes only
- Recommend continued use of challenged material with the following guidelines:
This book is approved for media circulation only at school sites serving 9th – 12th grade students. In addition, this book is only approved for ninth grade and beyond.
A message will be sent to all families of the schools that currently have the book in media circulation to communicate this book is available and includes sensitive content.
- Recommend to discontinue use of challenged material during instruction and remove from media circulation



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Additional Comments and/or Notes:

While this book is in media circulation, it is not included in current district curriculum or coursework. Parents may exercise their parental rights within the Parent Bill of Rights and submit an individual request to their child's school for an alert to be placed on the child's Destiny account, identifying the book as prohibited for media checkout.

Voting Committee Members in Attendance:

Director of Elementary School Curriculum & Instruction

Director of Middle School Curriculum & Instruction

Director of High School Curriculum & Instruction

Secondary Coordinator of English Language Arts

Coordinator of K-12 Fine and Performing Arts

School-based Administrator Representative Secondary

Diversity & Inclusion Representative

Curriculum Advisory Representative

Non-Voting Committee Members in Attendance:

Coordinator for Projects, Human Resources - Facilitator

Content Specialist for Instructional Technology and Instructional Materials - Recorder



Challenge to Instructional and/or Media Material

School or District: Lee County Public Schools Date: June 15, 2022

Please check type of instructional material:

Book: _____ AV (Video, CD, etc.): _____ Other (Identify): _____

Title: Thirteen Reasons Why

Author: J. Asher

Publisher or Producer: _____

Request initiated by name: [REDACTED]

Student Name: N/A

Telephone Address: [REDACTED]

City: [REDACTED] State: [REDACTED] Zip Code: [REDACTED]

It is expected that the material in question has been read, viewed, or listened to in its entirety. Please complete the following questions. If insufficient space is provided, attach additional sheets.

(Please sign your name to each additional attachment)

1. What brought this material to your attention? Public Records Request
2. Did you examine the entire material? No If not, what parts did you examine? Selected Excerpts
3. To what in the material do you object? (Please be specific. Cite pages, film sequence, etc.)
See attached report. The subject of this book is not appropriate for general circulation.
4. What do you believe is the theme or purpose of this material?
Between children that have considered suicide or had suicide in their own family, this is a dangerous book.
5. What do you feel might be the result of a student using this material?
Some children may be encouraged to copy the theme of this book.
6. For what age group would you recommend this material? 18+
7. In your opinion, is there anything of value in this material?
Yes, but only with parental approval and parent supervision.
8. Have you read any critical reviews of this material? If so, what? Please be specific. No
9. What would you like the school or district to do about this material? Check your choice.
 Do not assign it to my child
 Other (Please explain) Tag the book to alert the parent to the potential objectionable nature of the book.

[REDACTED] June 25, 2022
 Signature of Objector Date (M/D/Y)

Please submit to the school principal for review.



Thirteen Reasons Why, by Jay Asher is a book you may be familiar with because of the controversial Netflix series of the same name. It is a novel about a suicide. The novel follows a high school girl who kills herself after creating a series of tapes for her classmates to play after her death. She gave the tapes to people who influenced her decision.

A Colorado community ordered librarians to temporarily stop circulating the book as seven students killed themselves. There was no evidence that any of the students who killed themselves were inspired by the series or the book.

Some would argue that suicide is a very real treat to our young people and therefore books like this are needed; others would say books like this can lead to suicide. I will leave you to make your own mind up about that. Many psychiatrists, and mental health professionals claim that this book could prompt troubled young people to copy the suicide of its central character, Hannah Baker.

“We have a responsibility to protect children and teenagers,” said Dr. Helen Rayner, a psychiatrist specializing in children and adolescent mental health. “Dramatic and detailed portrayals of suicide needlessly put vulnerable young people at risk of copycat behavior as they see how to carry out harmful or potentially fatal acts.” Some critics say the book romanticizes suicide.

This may be a better book for teachers and parents to read than middle school aged children or even high schoolers. It is scientifically proven that the teenage brain has not yet developed the maturity to see the long-term results of decisions. That is why teens are typically more impulsive, willing to take risks that you and I would not, and often make poor decisions. Maybe this book would be better introduced when a person has matured to the point that they understand suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem.

According to the Lee County Schools website, suicide is the third leading cause of death in youth ages 10 – 24 (just posted Nov. 1, 2021) and that “lesbian, gay, transgender, bi-sexual, and questioning (LGBTQ) individuals are almost three times more likely than others to experience a mental health condition such as major depression or generalized anxiety disorder... LGBTQ youth are two to three times more likely to attempt suicide than straight youth.”

There are a total of 98 copies of this book in Lee County Schools. More troubling than that is South Fort Myers High school has 16 copies, and 18 copies can be found in Bonita Springs High School. The only reason that I can think that you would need that many copies in a single library is if it is assigned reading by a teacher. Suicide is complex and highly personal. I do not know anyone that is trained and skilled enough to tackle this problem in a classroom setting. This is one problem that should be left to the parents and professionals, not the schools.

Thirteen Reasons Why, can be found in the following middle schools in Lee County: Cypress Lake (3 copies), Lehigh (5 copies), Caloosa, Lexington, Oak Hammock (5 copies), Paul L. Dunbar, Gulf Middle, Bonita Springs, Three Oaks, Veterans Park Academy of the Arts, and Success Academy. I do not think 10-14 year old children are developed enough for this book. This book can be found in the following High Schools: Cypress Lake, Dunbar, Fort Myers, Mariner, South Fort Myers, Cape Coral, Estero, Ida S. Baker, North Fort Myers, Riverdale, Gateway, and Bonita Springs high schools.