

ATHERTON HIGH SCHOOL

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Ms. Stovall,

I received your written challenge to the Atherton High School library's copies of *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe and *Lawn Boy* by Jonathan Evison. When we met on February 24, 2022, you shared the following concerns:

- *Gender Queer* contains a graphic cartoon depiction of oral sex
- *Gender Queer* has an image of a knife going through a person which represents negative feelings towards their vagina, which you find "disturbing"
- *Lawn Boy* contains mentions of oral sex
- In summary, you characterize the two literary works as "porn for kids"

After listening to your concerns and reading the books in question, I have made the decision to continue to offer these materials in the Atherton High School library. These books were selected by the Atherton High School librarian in accordance with the JCPS Selection of Instructional Materials handbook pursuant to the following criteria:

D. Materials shall have aesthetic, academic, literary, and/or social value.

G. Materials shall foster respect for all people, especially minority and ethnic groups, and shall represent realistically our pluralistic society.

Additionally, it is important to note that the JCPS Board of Education supports principles of intellectual freedom inherent in the First Amendment and expressed in the *Library Bill of Rights* of the American Library Association and the *Students' Right to Read* of the National Council Teachers of English. The challenge of a school library is to collect and make available a wide variety of information resources representing the range of human thought and experience. The library's mission is to offer a diverse collection from many points of view and to provide access to information for all users. All library users have the First Amendment right to borrow, read, view, and listen to library resources. This has been affirmed through court rulings such as *Island Trees Union Free School District No. 26 v. Pico*, 457 U.S. 853 (1982), *Monteiro v. The Tempe Union High School District*, 158 F.3d 1022 (9th Cir. Ct. of App., 1998), *Counts v. Cedarville School District*, 295 F. Supp. 2d 996 (W.D. AR, 2003).

During our conversation, you mentioned that you "cannot monitor" what your daughter checks out and that you "do not expect the librarian to monitor the books that students check out." I agree that parents and guardians play a major role in guiding their child's reading and library use; however, your desire to protect all children by removing these books from the Atherton High School library interferes with other parents' rights to allow their children to read these books. Each family has the right to determine which library resources are acceptable for their children and therefore, we must accord this right to all parents equally.

It is my decision that Atherton High School will continue to allow students to access the books *Gender Queer* and *Lawn Boy* through the school library. These books will remain in circulation should students wish to check them out. These titles not only meet the guidelines of the JCPS Selection of Instructional Materials handbook but they also support the Atherton High School mission of:

"Our Atherton community appreciates individuality and assures that everyone relates to one another with honesty, compassion and respect. Our Atherton community values academic determination and service to others. Atherton embraces the global community with intercultural understanding."

Sincerely,

Stephanie Fluhr, Ph.D.
Principal, Atherton High School