



FREE PEOPLE READ FREELY

The 13th Annual Report on
Challenged and Banned Books in Texas Public Schools

2008-2009 School Year

*Includes an exclusive interview with
H. G. Bissinger
Author of Friday Night Lights: A Town, a Team, a Dream*

In Celebration of National Banned Books Week
September 26 – October 3, 2009



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A Few Thoughts

From ACLU of Texas Executive Director Terri Burke



Celebrating the Freedom to Read

Earlier this year, America lost one of its champions of the First Amendment who fought hard against censorship and struggled to protect our freedom of speech, and freedom to read. Judith Krug was 69 when she died of cancer in April in Evanston, Illinois. Throughout her career, which spanned more than four decades, she led tenacious efforts to educate policy-makers, librarians, educators, parents and students about their constitutional right to express ideas and to read the ideas of others without governmental interference.

For those of you who don't know, Ms. Krug was the director of the American Library Association's (ALA) Office for Intellectual Freedom and the executive director of the Freedom to Read Foundation for more than 40 years. She advised librarians on how to deal with challenges to reading material. She was involved in multiple legal battles challenging both book and Internet censorship in libraries that went all the way to the Supreme Court. In 1997, she and the ACLU led a successful charge against certain provisions of the Communications Decency Act of 1996, which was one of Congress' first attempts to regulate Internet content. She also fought against a part of the USA PATRIOT Act that allowed government officials access to confidential library records and to secretly monitor what people read.

But most notably, in 1982, she founded ALA's Banned Books Week—an annual week-long event that celebrates authors, their literature, the freedom to choose and the freedom to express one's opinions—for which this report is written. Banned Books Week is an incredible legacy she has bestowed upon every person in this country. And her message reads loud and clear: don't take this precious constitutional freedom for granted!

Through Banned Books Week, she created a means for librarians and teachers to teach the importance of the freedoms of speech and expression to our children. She alerted ordinary folk about school districts that ban books from their schools' libraries and the dangers of imposing restrictions on a free society. And she reminded people of the joys of reading, the wonderful ways books teach us about life, and how books open doors to different worlds and ideas.

It is the responsibility of all of us to protect our freedoms, to continue the legacy Judith Krug left for our children and for generations to follow, so we may read freely without the government meddling into our lives.

Judith Krug was a great inspiration to us at the ACLU Foundation of Texas. For 13 years, we have presented an annual report of books challenged or banned in Texas schools. And so it is my great honor to dedicate the ACLU of Texas' 2008-2009 annual banned books report, *Free People Read Freely*, to Judith Krug, a heroine to us all. And a true freedom fighter in my book.

Yours in liberty,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terri Burke". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. To the right of the signature is a vertical red line.

Terri Burke
Executive Director

FOREWORD

By Dotty Griffith, Public Education Director

As a mom, I used to love carpooling. There's no better way to find out what your kids and their friends are up to than driving them around for a while. All you have to do is keep your mouth shut and listen. Of course, once teens start driving, parents are left out of the loop pretty fast. Then, to know what's going on, you rely on other parents, teachers...maybe even talking to your kids and their friends. What an extraordinary concept!

Reminiscing about the joys of carpooling brings me, in a round-about way, to the 13th annual ACLU of Texas banned books report, *Free People Read Freely*. Censorship always dismays me. But adults trying to keep young people from reading books about what young people are thinking and doing seems especially futile. Sounds like banning soap operas to wipe out infidelity.

This year's banned books report got a very high response rate of 70 percent from the more than 1,200 school districts in Texas we queried about challenges to school library books.

Here are some of the highlights of our report:

- Stephenville, Houston and Irving independent school districts reported the most challenges for the 2008-2009 school year. (See p. 7)
- Relatively small Stephenville ISD not only had the most challenges this year but imposed preemptive bans on books not yet written. From our report: "The district banned the two teen vampire series from the library, even though neither series has been completed...Stephenville ISD actually banned books that have not yet been published and perhaps even books that have yet to be written." (See p. 11)
- The most challenged author was P.C. Cast. In Stephenville ISD, all six books in her *House of Night* series were banned at Henderson Jr. High. The second most challenged (and banned) author this year was Richelle Mead; all five books in her *Vampire Academy* series were banned at the same school. This situation indicates that a squeaky wheel or two can deny a whole school access to a particular book or series. "It seems that an individual or group of people went on a crusade..." (See p. 11), thereby imposing the tyranny of a vocal minority.
- Although districts have so-called "reconsideration procedures," once a book is banned from a school library, that ban is often permanent. Fifty-five percent of the school districts "reported that all decisions are final. This means once a book is banned...there is no formal appeals process by which a community member or student might hope to have a book reinstated." (See p. 10)

All this brings me back to carpooling. Once kids outgrow carpooling, perhaps parents should grow up, too. Instead of trying to prevent pre-teens and teens from reading about what they already know, parents should consider reading to find out what's going on in the lives of kids the same age as theirs. Carpooling by reading, so to speak. Then parents can use the books as starting points with their kids for heart-to-heart conversations about values and behavior. That way everyone might learn something.

Instead of banning juvenile literature, let's all read some and talk about it.

FREE PEOPLE READ FREELY

2008 - 2009

“Whoever would overthrow the liberty of a nation must begin by subduing the freeness of speech.”
—Benjamin Franklin

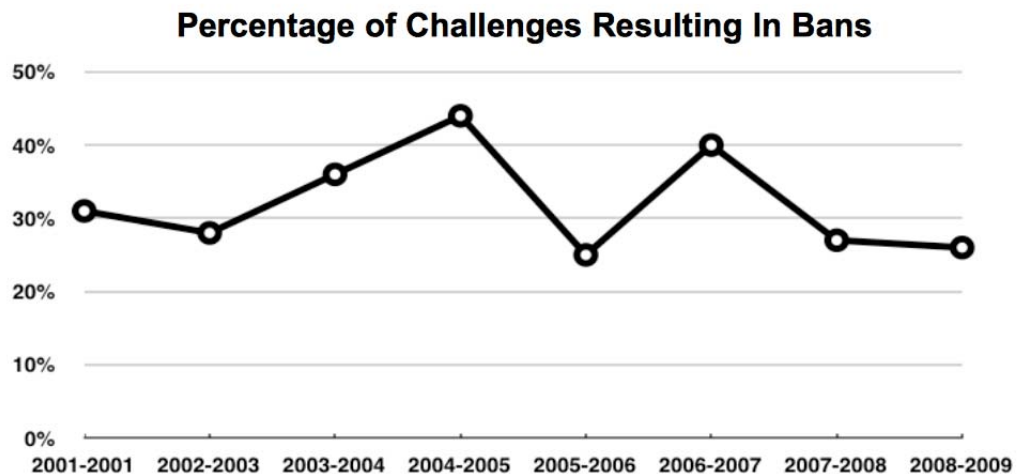
“God forbid that any book should be banned. The practice is as indefensible as infanticide.”
—Dame Rebecca West

“If there is a bedrock principle underlying the First Amendment, it is that the government may not prohibit the expression of an idea simply because society finds the idea itself offensive or disagreeable.”
—Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan, Jr., Texas v. Johnson, 491 U.S. 397 (1989)

Introduction and Summary

Beginning in 1996, the ACLU of Texas has celebrated Banned Books Week by releasing an annual report, cataloging the occurrence of censorship in Texas public schools. This is the 13th of these reports.

In order to compile the information necessary to present this report, more than 1,200 open records requests were sent to every school district and charter school in the state. Each school district received a request asking specific questions about challenges to remove or restrict library books or curriculum based reading materials during the 2008-2009 academic year.



This year’s report is based on the information contained in the 889 responses to these open records requests. Once received, the data was organized in the following fields: challenging district, book challenged, author of challenged book, campus receiving the challenge, reason for challenge, result of challenge, whether the challenge was to a curricular usage or library usage. This year we also added questions for each district about their policies governing challenges to literature. In particular, we asked each district to name the individual(s) responsible for reviewing and deciding challenges, and whether the decision of the reviewer(s) is final or can be appealed.

School library censors were just about as active in the 2008-2009 academic year as they were in the previous year. Ninety-eight challenges were reported this year, while 102 were reported last year. Similarly, 26 books were banned this year while 27 were banned last year. What is more promising, however, are our findings

related to restrictions. Here, we noticed a 25% decrease in the rate of challenges resulting in restrictions. There is bad news also; we noticed a 17% decrease in the rate of challenges resulting in retention. Stephenville ISD reported the most challenges this year with 11. All of these challenges addressed books housed in the Henderson Junior High School library and, unfortunately, every one of them was eventually banned. It is surprising that so many bans—and, therefore, challenges—would come out of district with an enrollment of only 3,500 students. Texas’ largest district, Houston ISD, reported only six challenges this year, down from last year’s 20 challenges.

The most challenged and banned authors of the year were both writers of series about teen vampires. Every installment in P.C. Cast’s *House of Night* series (six books) and Richelle Mead’s *Vampire Academy* series (five books) was banned in Stephenville ISD.

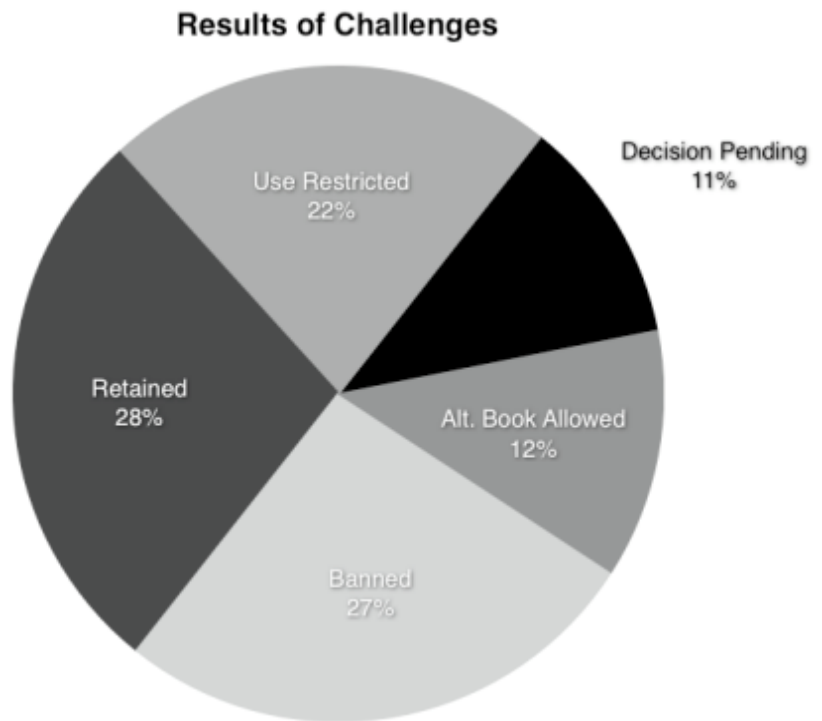
When a controversial feature film, adapted from a book for children or adolescents, is released we often see a spike in the number of challenges of that book. This was the case for the J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series, H.G. Bissinger’s *Friday Night Lights*, and Phillip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* series, which features the *Golden Compass*. Surprisingly, none of these books was widely challenged this year. Especially conspicuous is the absence of any pieces from Stephanie Meyer’s popular *Twilight* series, which is also about teenage vampires and is adapted for the silver screen.

Statistical Summary and Breakdown

Fifty-five school districts reported 98 challenges in the 2008-2009 academic year, while 43 school districts reported a sum of 102 challenges in the previous year. That is a 28% increase in the number of school districts reporting challenges, but a 4% decrease in the number of total challenges. Put otherwise, 5.33% of the school districts in the state reported challenges this most recent school year, whereas 4.17% of all districts reported challenges last year. Accounting for only responding districts, rather than all districts, the figures become 6.2 % (55 out of 889 responding districts) and 5.4% (43 out of 786 responding districts), respectively.

The figures above illustrate an overall rise in the concentration of challenges. That is, the average number of titles challenged by a district reporting at least one challenge has decreased from 2.4 (102 challenges reported by 43 school districts) to 1.8 (98 challenges reported by 55 school districts). This decrease is likely due to the inordinate number of challenges reported last year in Houston ISD (20) and Round Rock ISD (9). All the while, Stephenville ISD revealed the most challenges this year with 11.

In terms of challenges resulting in an outright ban on a library or curricular book, this school year’s results are nearly identical to those of last year. Only 26 of the 98 (27%) challenges resulted in a banning during the most recent school year, whereas 27 of the 102 reported challenges (26%) resulted in the challenged title being



banned during the 2007-2008 academic year. While last year we reported a 42% decrease in the overall number of banned books and a 35% decrease in the “success” rate of challenges from the preceding year (2006-2007), the change in both figures was negligible this year. We regard this as something of a success, considering last year saw such a decline in bans and little has changed this year.

Oftentimes, school boards react to a book challenge with actions that stop short of removing books from a school’s library. These actions are known as restrictions and they fall into two categories: *restriction to access/special permission required*, and *allowance of an alternate book*--the latter refers only to curricular books. Access to a library book may be restricted in a number of ways, but most commonly an access-restricted book may only be borrowed (1) by students of a certain age/grade level or (2) by students with parental permission.

When a challenge is made to a curricular book, a school district may respond by assigning alternative readers to complaining students or, perhaps, to those students with parents who object to the content of the challenged text. That said, 22% (22 titles) of this year’s challenges resulted in restrictions, while 32% (34 titles) of last year’s challenged books were ultimately restricted. This represents a promising decrease of 31% in the restriction rate and 29% decrease in the number of restricted books.

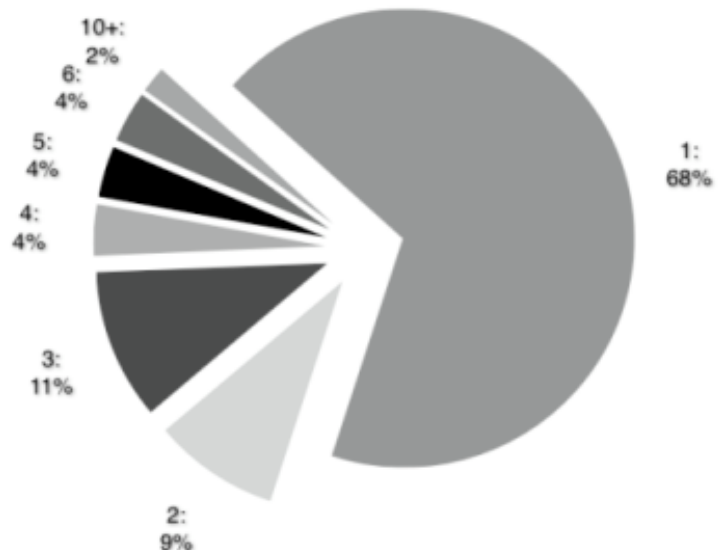
Not all book challenges result in restrictive action by school districts. In fact, it is not rare for a school board to take matters of intellectual freedom seriously and elect to reshelve a challenged book, allowing free and unrestricted access. This year 27 challenges (28%) resulted in retention, while last year 36 challenged books (35%) were retained. This reflects a slight but unfortunate move away from retention and toward restricting.

It is important to note that 70.2% (889/1266) of districts responded to the ACLU of Texas’ information requests this year, as opposed to last year’s rate of 62.57%. Due to the larger sample size, this leads us to believe this year’s results paint a more accurate portrait of censorship in public school libraries. It should also be noted that the result of 11 of the 98 challenges are still pending. These books could eventually be banned, restricted, or retained; it is simply too early to tell.

Where were the Most Challenges?

Stephenville, Houston and Irving school districts reported the most challenges for the 2008-2009 school year. Stephenville ISD led the charge this year with 11 challenges, all of which resulted in bans. Houston ISD and Irving ISD tied for the second most this year with six challenges each. This marks quite the improvement for HISD, as the district reported 20 challenges last year. Unfortunately, only one of HISD’s six challenges resulted in the book being retained without restriction. While Irving ISD experienced just as many challenges, five of the six books challenged were retained without restriction: a sole book was restricted to the reference library. Tying for third was Seguin ISD and Klein ISD, each with four challenges.

Challenges Per District



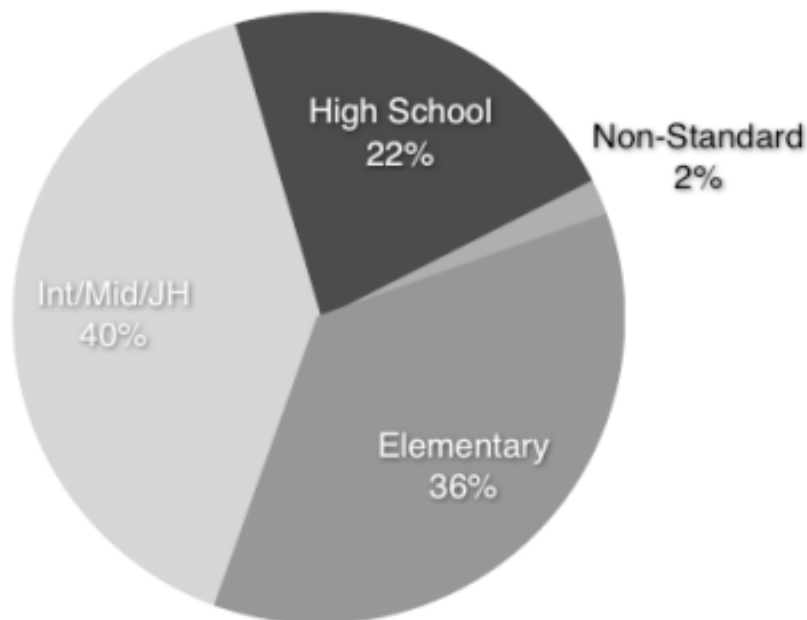
Challenges by Grade Level

For the last two years, we have found most challenges to be occurring at the elementary school level. However, last year the rate of challenges experienced at the middle school level surged from 10% in 2006-2007 to 41% in 2007-2008. This year middle school challenges surpassed elementary school challenges. Also, 40% of challenges were to books housed in middle school libraries, down only 1% from last year. The rate of challenges to books at the elementary school level decreased to 36%, down 11% from last year.

Worth mentioning is the 10% decrease in challenges at the elementary school level; that is a 20% decrease over the last two years.

Challenges to high schools were up this year, however. While only 13% of last year's challenges were to books found in high school libraries, 22% of this year's challenges were to the same books. Lastly, this year 2% of challenges took place at institutions that cannot be neatly classified as one of the three grade levels mentioned above.

Challenges By Grade Level



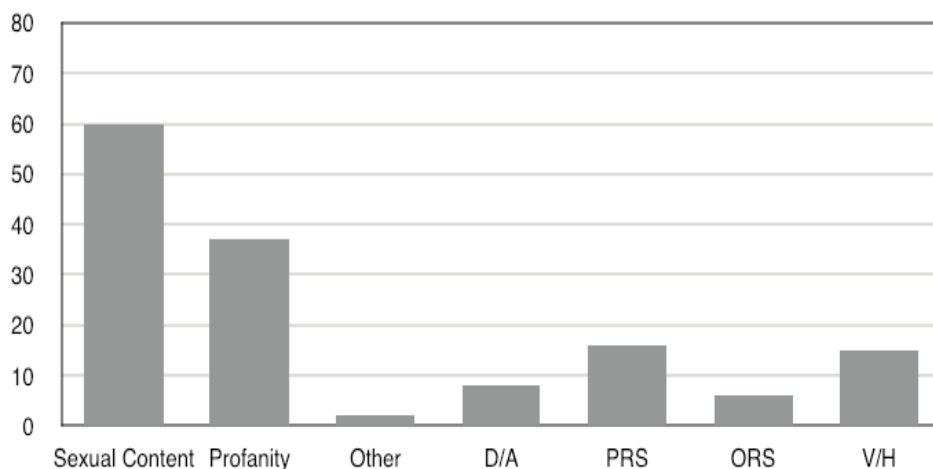
Reasons for Challenges

When we ask school districts about the challenges they have experienced we are especially interested in the reasons why books have been challenged. For each challenge, we ask which qualities of the book the challenging party found objectionable. In past years we have offered five choices, where choosing more than one is acceptable: *profanity, violence or horror, sexual content or nudity, mysticism or paganism, and other.*

Last year *other* topped the list as the most cited reason for challenging a book. We viewed this as a problem, as *other* is not informative. So, in an effort to be clearer we have added two new categories to the list of choices above: *politically, racially, or socially offensive, and drug or alcohol use.* We also replaced *mysticism and paganism* with *offensive to religious sensitivities.*

These changes were made because we found many *other* complaints were often associated with one of the two new categories. We also found that many *others* were categorized as “anti-Christian” or atheist in nature, so we

Challenge By Type



broadened *mysticism and paganism* to *offensive to religious sensitivities* to account for these closely related complaints.

This year 60 books were challenged for containing *sexual content or nudity*, making it the most often cited reason for challenging a book. Of these 60 books, 17 were banned and the use of 14 was restricted. Additionally, 17 of these books were retained. Discounting *other, sexual content and nudity* was also last year's most often cited reason for challenging a book. However, it was then only associated with 43 challenges, 27 of which resulted in a banning or restriction.

Profanity was the second most often cited reason for challenging a book this year. Thirty-seven books were challenged for this reason. Ultimately, 10 of these challenges resulted in a ban and another 10 resulted in a restriction of access.

Politically, racially or socially offensive (PRS) and *violence or horror* are next on the list, respectively. PRS content was the reason 16 books were challenged. Of these 16, three were banned, the use to two was restricted, and six were retained. With 15 challenges, *violence or horror* is only slightly lower on the list. Three of these 15 resulted in a ban, three in a restriction, and two in retention.

Drugs or alcohol use and *offensive to religious sensitivities* were the next lowest pair on the list. Eight books were challenged for references or depictions of *drug or alcohol* use. None of these books was banned; however, the use to five was restricted and two were retained without restriction. Six books were found to be *offensive to religious sensitivities* and were challenged as a result: one was banned, the use of three was restricted, and two were retained without restriction.

Other was at the bottom of the list this year, unlike last year when it was the most often cited reason for challenging a book. One must assume this was due mostly in part to the addition and broadening of the other categories. This year only four books were challenges for reasons not falling under the above six categories, but none of these were banned or restricted.

Process, Policy and Appeals

Most school districts in Texas have formal reconsideration policies in place for use in the event that a book is challenged. Reconsideration policies are designed to ensure books are neither restricted nor banned behind closed doors or without clear guidelines. Furthermore, formal reconsideration policies exist to provide transparency, accountability, predictability and the opportunity for the fate of each book to receive a fair trial of sorts. Sometimes members of the community may even voice their opinion on the book's place in the library.

This year we began to ask each school district about their reconsideration policies. Specifically, we asked them two questions. First, we asked each district to list the personnel responsible for reviewing (and deciding) challenges. The choices we gave were: administration only, librarian only, school board only, and review committee. Secondly, we asked each district if the decision to ban each book is final or not.

Of the 889 district that responded to our open records requests, 786 responded—at least in part—to our questions about their reconsideration policies. Four hundred eighty-one (61%) of these reported a review committee is in charge of reviewing challenges. Usually review committees are comprised of a combination of teachers familiar with the material, librarians, and administrative staff. Sometimes even parents and students are asked to join these committees. Usually it is the principal who names the committee.

Schools with a policy giving the school board sole authority to decide the fate of challenged books were the next most common. We found 143 (18%) school districts to have this as their policy. Following closely behind were school districts that give this responsibility to members of the administration (e.g. principal or superintendent). There are 135 (17%) of these districts. Surprising, only 27 (3%) school districts give librarians sole discretion in reviewing challenges.

The second question, *are decisions to ban or restrict final*, returned alarming results. There were 753 districts that responded to this question. Of these districts, 414 (55%) reported that all decisions are final. This means once a book is banned in these districts there is no formal appeals process by which a community member or student might hope to have a book reinstated into the library.

On the question of finality, 339 districts reported having some sort of appeals process in place. Most often these were either two-tiered or three-tiered processes. With the former, the decision is appealed directly to the school board. With the latter, there is a second level before the school board, usually the superintendent.

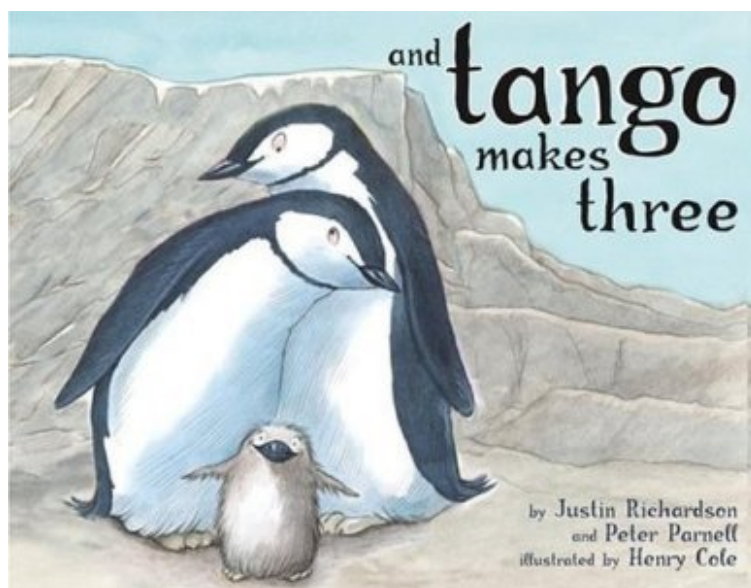
While researching the various reconsideration policies districts employ, we came across a particularly interesting and discouraging finding in Houston ISD. HISD is the seventh largest school district in the United States and one that frequently experiences a relatively large number of challenges. In this key district we discovered what is safe to call a complete failure in policy, record keeping, and government transparency. When asked to provide records of their review committees meetings and membership rolls, representatives of HISD were forced to admit that no such records are kept.

Though the deliberations of HISD's review committees affect a large number of students, the public has little hope of finding key information pertaining to their decisions. If a citizen wanted to request the names, votes, and arguments of the individuals who reviewed a challenge, she would be out of luck. We regard this information as essential public information that should be well documented and available to the public. Decisions directly affecting the constitutional rights of students should simply not be made by anonymous actors and behind closed doors.

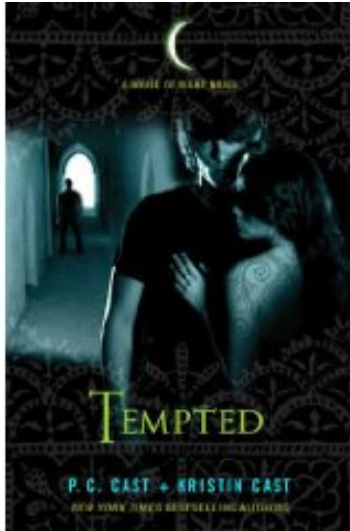
Most Challenged Authors and Titles

There are some authors whose works are challenged in Texas nearly every year. Three books were banned or restricted in the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 academic years: *And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell, *Bless Me, Ultima* by Rudolfo Anaya, and *The Black Tattoo* by Sam Enthoven.

Some noteworthy authors were also challenged this year and in previous years, including: Gary Paulsen, John Steinbeck, Maurice Sendak, Judy Blume, Anonymous (Go Ask Alice), Robert Cormier, and Ray Bradbury. As a side note, renowned authors on the list for the first time include Salman Rushdie, Orson Scott Card, Stephen Chbosky, and Cormac McCarthy.



Though these authors' works have been challenged in years prior, none of them were among this year's most challenged authors. The most challenged author in this year's report was P.C. Cast. In Stephenville ISD, all six books in her House of Night series were banned at Henderson Junior High School. What's more, the second most challenged (and banned) author this year was Richelle Mead; all five books her Vampire Academy series were banned at the same school. This makes Stephenville ISD the most prolific banner of the year with 11 bans.

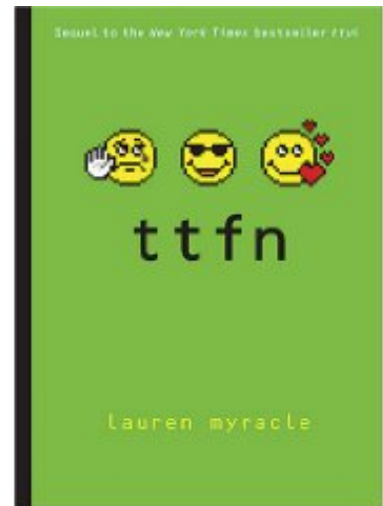


The deeds of Stephenville ISD do not end there, however. Both series are about teenage vampires. It seems that an individual or group of people went on a crusade against books about teenage vampires. Though the books were all challenged for *sexual content or nudity*, one can't help but surmise these books were targeted at least in part because of the type of characters portrayed.

The most shameful aspect of Stephenville ISD's practices was the district's preemptive banning of the books. None of the 11 books banned at Henderson Jr High were named in their response to our records request. Rather, the district simply reported that they had banned the two teen vampire series from the library. This is interesting because neither series has been completed. So, Stephenville ISD actually banned books that have

not yet been published and perhaps even books that have yet to be written. There is no way the district could know the content of these books, and yet they have been banned.

The fourth most challenged author this year was Lauren Myracle with five challenges. Myracle writes contemporary young adult novels and is most famous for her *IM* series. Three of these books were challenged in three districts but none were banned. The fourth most challenged author was Gary Paulsen, the author of young adult fiction often set in the wilderness. Three of his books were challenged: one was banned, one lost its place as a classroom reader, and one was age restricted.



Texas Library Association Resources

The Texas Library Association (TLA) holds that the freedom to read is a corollary of the First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of the press. Freedom of choice in selecting materials is a necessary safeguard to the freedom to read and must be protected against extra-legal attempts by self-appointed censors to control that process. Citizens have the right of free inquiry, and democracy itself rests on an open dialogue and demands that freedom of the press in all forms of public communication be defended and preserved.

The Association, through its Intellectual Freedom Committee, supports access to information by responding to librarians facing book challenges, offering model policies and procedures, tracking reports of book challenges by its members, and supporting policies and legislative action that respect access to information. Members of TLA's Intellectual Freedom Committee are also available to consult with librarians facing intellectual freedom challenges. For more information on these resources visit: www.txla.org/groups/committees/IF

Banned Books:

Books Removed from Library Shelves or Class Reading Lists

Laurie Anderson
Speak

Honor Head
My Pet Puppy

Crosby Bonsall
Mine's the Best

Annette Curtis Lance
Blood and Chocolate

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)
Intimate Universe - The Human Body

Richelle Mead
Vampire Academy

Kevin Brooks
Being

Richelle Mead
Frostbite

P.C. Cast
Marked

Richelle Mead
Shadow Kiss

P.C. Cast
Betrayed

Richelle Mead
Blood Promise

P.C. Cast
Chosen

Richelle Mead
Spirit Bound

P.C. Cast
Untamed

Gary Paulsen
Lawn Boy

P.C. Cast
Hunted

Mal Peet
Tamar

P.C. Cast
Tempted

Justin Richardson, Peter Parnell
and Tango Makes Three

Gennifer Choldenko
Al Capone Does My Shirts

Maurice Sendak
In the Night Kitchen
La Cocina de Noche (Spanish translation of *In the Night Kitchen*)

Robert Cormier
The Chocolate War

Sara Shepard
Pretty Little Liars

E.R. Frank
Life is Funny: a novel

James St James
Freak Show

Restricted Books:

Restricted to Readers Based on Age, Reading Level, Parental Permission, etc.

Rudolfo Anaya
Bless Me, Ultima

Chiggers
Hope Larson

Judy Blume
Forever

Sheila P. Moss
The Legend of Buddy Bush

Stephen Chbosky
Perks of Being a Wallflower

Cormac McCarthy
The Road

Meg Cot
Princess on the Brink

Lauren Myracle
l8r g8r

Sam Enthoven
The Black Tattoo

Lauren Myracle
tfn

Barbara Hughes
Drug Related Diseases

Lauren Myracle
ttyl

Barbara Kingsolver
The Bean Trees

Gary Paulsen
The Fox Man

Masashi Kishimoto
Naruto vol. 1: The Tests of the Ninja

Johnny Rico
Blood Makes the Grass Grow

Ellen Klages
Green Glass Sea

Salman Rushdie
The Satanic Verses

Ron Koertge
Shakespeare Bats Cleanup

Ellen Ruskin
The Westing Game

Stephen Krensky
The Bogeyman

Sandra Lee Smith
Marijuana

Retained Books:

Challenges That Did Not Affect Students' Accessibility to Books

Barbers Hill ISD

Barbers Hill Primary
Mary Hoffman
Boundless Grace

Brazosport ISD

Clute Intermediate
Melody Carlson
Pitch Black: Color Me Lost

Corpus Christi ISD

Cullen Middle School
Anonymous
Go Ask Alice

King High School

Denise Zimmerman
The Idiot's Guide to Wicca and Witchcraft

Cypress-Fairbanks ISD

Andre Elementary
Nicole Rubel
It's Hot and Cold in Miami

Denton ISD

Strickland Middle School
J. Michael Straczynski
Spider-Man

Eanes ISD

West Ridge Middle School
Lauren Myracle
ttyl

Houston ISD

Johnston Middle School
Alex Sanchez
Getting It

Irion County ISD

Irion County Elementary
Maurice Sendak
In the Night Kitchen

Irving ISD

Crockett Middle School
Allison Van Diepen
The Street Pharm

Farine Elementary

Christian Burch
The Manny Files

MacArthur High School

Jake Coburn
Prep

MacArthur High School

Alan Watt
Diamond Dogs

Klein ISD

Klein Oak High school
Chris Crutcher
Whale Talk

Leander ISD

Charlotte Cox Elementary
Jack DeMolay
Ghosts in Amityville: The Haunted House

Lytle ISD

Lytle Junior High
Daniel Ehrenhaft
10 Things to Do Before I Die

McKinney ISD

Evans Middle School
Libba Bray
A Great and Terrible Beauty

Midlothian ISD

Mt. Peak Elementary
Darren Shan
Cirque du Freak: Tunnels of Blood

Northside ISD

Elementary Schools
Dav Pilkey
Captain Underpants

Pottsboro ISD

High School
Kaye Gibbons
Ellen Foster

Richardson ISD

Pearce High School, Berkner High School
Michael Connelly
The Poet

Round Rock ISD

All 9 middle schools
Lauren Myracle
ttyl

Caraway Elementary

Todd Parr
The Family Book

Round Rock Opportunity Center

Ellen Hopkins
Impulse

Sanger ISD

Clear Creek Intermediate
Jack Gantos
Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key

The School of Liberal Arts and Science

Sandra Cisneros
Woman Hollering Creek

All Challenged Books: by District

Alief ISD

School: All Middle Schools

Book: *Forever*, Judy Blume

Reason Cited: Profanity; Sexual content or nudity

Action Taken: Use restricted

Notes: If used in classroom, letter must be sent home notifying parents of sexual content.

Alvin ISD

School: All Junior High Schools

Book: *Ender's Game*, Orson Scott Card

Reason Cited: Profanity; Violence or horror

Action Taken: Alternate book allowed (curriculum only)

Barbers Hill ISD

School: Barbers Hill Primary

Book: *Boundless Grace*, Mary Hoffman

Reason Cited: Other: treats the subject of divorce

Action Taken: Retained

Birdville ISD

School: All high schools

Book: *The Bean Trees*, Barbara Kingsolver

Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity; Offensive to religious sensitivities

Action Taken: Use restricted

Notes: Moved from 9th to 11th grade

School: All elementary schools

Book: *Green Glass Sea*, Ellen Klages

Reason Cited: Profanity; Sexual content or nudity

Action Taken: Use restricted

School: All high schools

Book: *Bless Me, Ultima*, Rudolfo Anaya

Reason Cited: Profanity; Sexual content or nudity; Offensive to religious sensitivities

Action Taken: Use restricted

Brazosport ISD

School: Clute Intermediate School

Book: *Pitch Black: Color Me Lost*, Melody Carlson

Reason Cited: Other: treats the subject suicide

Action Taken: Retained

Burleson ISD

School: Bransom Elementary

Book: *The Chocolate War*, Robert Cormier

Reason Cited: Profanity; Sexual content or nudity

Action Taken: Banned

Celina ISD

School: Celina Intermediate

Book: *Harris and Me*, Gary Paulsen

Reason Cited: Profanity; Sexual content or nudity; Politically, racially, or socially offensive

Action Taken: Use restricted; Alternate book allowed (curriculum only).

Notes: Banned from classroom use, but can be checked out from library by individuals.

Childress ISD

School: Childress Elementary

Book: *Al Capone Does My Shirts*, Gennifer Choldenko

Reason Cited: Profanity

Action Taken: Banned

Cleburne ISD

School: Cleburne High School

Book: *Pillars of Earth*, Ken Follett

Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity

Action Taken: Decision pending

Notes: Challenge is to curricular reader.

Copperas Cove ISD

School: Clements Parsons Elementary

Book: *Creepy Castles*, Sarah Parvis

Reason Cited: Violence or horror

Action Taken: Decision pending

Notes: Book was challenged for "being too scary for children."

Corpus Christi ISD

School: Cullen Middle School

Book: *Go Ask Alice*, Anonymous

Reason: Profanity; Sexual content or nudity; Politically, racially, or socially offensive; Drugs or alcohol

Action Taken: Retained

School: King High School

Book: *The Idiot's Guide to Wicca and Witchcraft*, Denise Zimmerman

Reason: Offensive to religious sensitivities; Politically, racially, or socially offensive

Action Taken: Retained

Notes: The book was re-catalogued and placed in the Religion section of the high school library.

School: Cullen Middle School

Book: *Blood and Chocolate*, Annette Curtis Lance

Reason: Profanity; Sexual content or nudity; Violence or horror

Action Taken: Banned

Cypress-Fairbanks ISD

School: All high schools

Book: *Fallen Angels*, Walter Dean Myers

Reason: Profanity; Violence or horror; Drugs or alcohol

Action Taken: Alternate book allowed (curriculum only)

School: Andre Elementary

Book: *It's Hot and Cold in Miami*, Nicole Rubel.

Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity

Action Taken: Retained

School: Andre Elementary

Book: *The Legend of Buddy Bush*, Sheila P. Moss

Reason Cited: Profanity; Politically, racially, or socially offensive

Action Taken: Use restricted

Denton ISD

School: Strickland Middle School

Book: *Spider-Man*, J. Michael Straczynski

Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity

Action Taken: Retained

Dripping Springs ISD.

School: Walnut Springs Elementary

Book: *Flossy and the Fox*, Patricia McKassack

Reason Cited: Politically, racially, or socially offensive

Action Taken: Alternate book allowed (curriculum only)

School: Rooster Springs Elementary

Book: *Princess on the Brink*, Meg Cabot

Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity

Action Taken: Use restricted

Eagle Pass ISD

School: Eagle Pass Jr. High

Book: *Life is Funny: a novel*, E.R. Frank

Reason Cited: Profanity

Action Taken: Banned

Eanes ISD

School: West Ridge Middle School

Book: *ttyl*, Lauren Myracle

Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity; Drugs or alcohol

Action Taken: Retained

East Central ISD

School: East Central Development Center

Book: *Tom*, Tomie dePaola

Reason Cited: Violence or horror

Action Taken: Decision pending

Ector County ISD

School: Jordan Elementary

Book: *Chiggers*, Hope Larson

Reason Cited: Profanity

Action Taken: Use restricted

Fort Stockton ISD

School: Fort Stockton High School

Book: *Like Water for Chocolate*, Laura Esquivel

Reason Cited: Profanity; Sexual content or nudity

Action Taken: Decision pending

Frisco ISD

School: Roach Middle School

Book: *The Contender*, Robert Lipstye

Reason Cited: Politically, racially, or socially offensive

Action Taken: Decision pending

Hooks ISD

School: Hooks High School

Book: *The Chocolate War*, Robert Cormier

Reason Cited: Profanity; Sexual content or nudity

Action Taken: Alternate book allowed (curriculum only)

Houston ISD

School: Foerster Elementary
Book: *Freak Show*, James St. James
Reason Cited: Profanity; Violence or horror; Offensive to religious sensitivities; Politically, racially, or socially offensive
Action Taken: Banned

School: Windsor Village Elementry
Book: *Speak*, Laurie Anderson
Reason Cited: Profanity
Action Taken: Banned

School: Foerster Elementary
Book: *Tamar*, Mal Peet
Reason Cited: Profanity
Action Taken: Banned

School: Golfcrest Elementary
Book: *La Cocina de Noche*, Maurice Sendak
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Banned

School: Johnston Middle School
Book: *Getting It*, Alex Sanchez
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Retained

School: Brookline Elementary School
Book: *The Westing Game*, Ellen Ruskin
Reason Cited: Violence or horror
Action Taken: Use restricted

Hull-Daisetta ISD

School: Junior High
Book: *Fahrenheit 451*, Ray Bradbury
Reason Cited: Profanity
Action Taken: Alternate book allowed (curriculum only)

Irion County ISD

School: Irion County Elementary
Book: *In the Night Kitchen*, Maurice Sendak
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Retained

Irving ISD

School: MacArthur High School
Book: *Diamond Dogs*, Alan Watt
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Retained

School: Crockett Middle School
Book: *Street Pharm*, Allison Van Diepen
Reason Cited: Profanity
Action Taken: Retained

School: Kinkeade Early Childhood School
Book: *The Dirty Cowboy*, Amy Timberlake
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Retained

School: Farine Elementary
Book: *The Manny Files*, Christian Burch
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Retained

School: MacArthur High School
Book: *Prep*, Jake Coburn
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Retained

School: Davis Elementary
Book: *Drug Related Diseases*, Barbara Hughes
Reason Cited: Drugs or alcohol
Action Taken: Use restricted

Joaquin ISD

School: Joaquin Junior High
Book: *Naruto vol 1; The Tests of the Ninja*, Masashi Kishimoto
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Use restricted

Karnes City ISD

School: Karnes City Junior High
Book: *Body Language*, Alan and Barbara Pease
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Decision pending

School: Karnes City Junior High
Book: *The Black Tattoo*, Sam Enthoven
Reason Cited: Offensive to religious sensitivities
Action Taken: Use restricted

School: Karnes City Junior High
Book: *Drawing Portraits*, Barrington Barber
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Decision pending

Klein ISD

School: Klein Collins HS
Book: *Of Mice and Men*, John Steinbeck
Reason Cited: Profanity; Politically, racially, or socially offensive
Action Taken: Alternate book allowed (curriculum only)

School: Haude Elementary
Book: *Lawn Boy*, Gary Paulson
Reason Cited: Profanity
Action Taken: Banned

School: Klein Oak HS
Book: *Whale Talk*, Chris Crutcher
Reason Cited: Politically, racially, or socially offensive
Action Taken: Retained

School: All high schools
Book: *The Road*, Cormac McCarthy
Reason Cited: Violence or horror
Action Taken: Use restricted

Laredo ISD

School: JC Martin Elementary
Book: *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, Jeff Kinney
Reason Cited: Politically, racially, or socially offensive
Action Taken: User provided no response

Leander ISD

School: Canyon Ridge Elementary
Book: *Tempting Faith, DiNapoli*, Lisa Gabriele
Reason Cited: Profanity; Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Decision pending

School: Charlotte Cox Elementary
Book: *Ghosts in Amityville: The Haunted House*, Jack DeMolay
Reason Cited: Violence or horror
Action Taken: Retained

School: Westside Elementary
Book: *The Bogeyman*, Stephen Krensky
Reason Cited: Violence or horror; Drugs or alcohol
Action Taken: Use restricted

Lockhart ISD

School: Lockhart High School
Book: *Blood Makes the Grass Grow Green*, Johnny Rico
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity; Politically, racially, or socially offensive
Action Taken: Use restricted

Lytle ISD

School: Lytle Junior High School
Book: *10 Things to Do Before I Die*, Daniel Ehrenhaft
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity; Violence or horror
Action Taken: Retained

McKinney ISD

School: Evans Middle School
Book: *A Great and Terrible Beauty*, Libba Bray
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Retained

Midlothian ISD

School: Mt. Peak Elementary
Book: *Cirque du Freak: Tunnels of Blood*, Darren Shan
Reason Cited: Profanity
Violence or horror
Action Taken: Retained

Navarro ISD

School: Navarro Junior High School
Book: *Pretty Little Liars*, Sara Shepard
Reason Cited: Profanity; Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Banned

Nederland ISD

School: Langham Elementary
Book: *My Pet Puppy*, Honor Head
Reason Cited: Profanity
Action Taken: Banned

New Caney ISD

School: New Caney High School
Book: *The Secret Life of Bees*, Sue Monk Kidd
Reason: Profanity; Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Alternate book allowed (curriculum only)

Northside ISD

School: Elementary Schools
Book: *and Tango Makes Three*, Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell
Reason Cited: Politically, racially, or socially offensive
Action Taken: Banned

Northside ISD

School: Elementary Schools
Book: *Captain Underpants*, Dav Pilkey
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Retained

Pearsall ISD

School: Pearsall Intermediate
Book: *Marijuana*, Sandra Lee Smith
Reason Cited: Drugs or alcohol
Action Taken: Use restricted

Plano ISD

School: Aldridge Elementary

Book: *Vampires*, Stephen Krensky

Reason Cited: Violence or horror

Action Taken: User provided no response

Notes: Book was removed because of missing text before challenged. It was replaced by a book on the same subject.

Pottsboro ISD

School: Pottsboro High School

Book: *Ellen Foster*, Kaye Gibbons

Reason Cited: Profanity; Politically, racially, or socially offensive

Action Taken: Retained

Reagan County ISD

School: Reagan County High School

Book: *Falling Angels*, Tracy Chevalier

Reason Cited: Other

Action Taken: Decision pending

Richardson ISD

School: Pearce High School

Book: *The World According to Garp*, John Irving

Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity

Action Taken: Alternate book allowed (curriculum only)

Richardson ISD

School: Pearce High School

Book: *The Poet*, Michael Connelly

Reason Cited: Profanity; Sexual Content or nudity; Politically, racially, or socially offensive

Action Taken: Retained

Rockwall ISD

School: Elementary campuses

Book: *The Fox Man*, Gary Paulsen

Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity; Drugs or alcohol

Action Taken: Use restricted

Rockwall ISD

School: Elementary campuses

Book: *My Brother Sam is Dead*, James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier

Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity; Violence or horror

Action Taken: Use restricted; Alternate book allowed (curriculum only)

Round Rock ISD

School: Round Rock Opportunity Center

Book: *Impulse*, Ellen Hopkins

Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity

Action Taken: Retained

School: Middle schools

Book: *ttyl*, Lauren Myracle

Reason Cited: Profanity; Sexual content or nudity

Action Taken: Retained

School: Caraway Elementary

Book: *The Family Book*, Todd Parr

Reason Cited: Politically, racially, or socially offensive

Action Taken: Retained

Sanger ISD

School: Clear Creek Intermediate

Book: *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key*, Jack Gantos

Reason Cited: Other: children behaving badly

Action Taken: Retained

Seguin ISD

School: Jim Barnes Middle School

Book: *l8r g8r*, Lauren Myracle

Reason Cited: Profanity; Sexual content or nudity

Action Taken: Use restricted

School: Jim Barnes Middle School

Book: *tfn*, Lauren Myracle

Reason Cited: Profanity; Sexual content or nudity

Action Taken: Use restricted

School: Jim Barnes Middle School

Book: *ttyl*, Lauren Myracle

Reason Cited: Profanity; Sexual content or nudity

Action Taken: Use restricted

School: Jim Barnes Middle School

Book: *Perks of Being a Wallflower*, Stephen Chbosky

Reason Cited: Profanity; Sexual content or nudity

Action Taken: Drugs or alcohol

Reason Cited: Use restricted

Sheldon ISD

School: CE King High School
Book: *Intimate Universe-The Human Body (video)*, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Banned

Spring ISD

School: Spring High School
Book: *Crescent*, Diana Abu-Jaber
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Alternate book allowed

Stephenville ISD

School: Henderson Junior High
Book: *Betrayed*, P.C. Cast
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Banned

School: Henderson Junior High
Book: *Hunted*, P.C. Cast
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Banned

School: Henderson Junior High
Book: *Marked*, P. C. Cast
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Banned

School: Henderson Junior High
Book: *Tempted*, P. C. Cast
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Banned

School: Henderson Junior High
Book: *Untamed*, P. C. Cast
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Banned

School: Henderson Junior High
Book: *Blood Promise*, Richelle Mead
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Banned

School: Henderson Junior High
Book: *Frostbite*, Richelle Mead
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Banned

School: Henderson Junior High
Book: *Spirit Bound*, Richelle Mead
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Banned

School: Henderson Junior High
Book: *Vampire Academy*, Richelle Mead
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Banned

School: Henderson Junior High
Book: *Chosen*, P. C. Cast
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Banned

School: Henderson Junior High
Book: *Shadow Kiss*, Richelle Mead
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Banned

School: Taylor Middle School
Book: *Being*, Kevin Brooks
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity; Violence or horror
Action Taken: Banned

Tomball ISD

School: Tomball High School
Book: *My Sister's Keeper*, Jodi Picoult
Reason Cited: Profanity; Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Alternate book allowed (curriculum only)

Whitehouse ISD

School: Whitehouse High School
Book: *The Satanic Verses*, Salman Rushdie
Reason Cited: Profanity; Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Use restricted

Woodville ISD

School: Woodville Elementary
Book: *Mine's the Best*, Crosby Bonsall
Reason Cited: Politically, racially, or socially offensive
Action Taken: Banned

School: Woodville Intermediate
Book: *Shakespeare Bats Cleanup*, Ron Koertge
Reason Cited: Sexual content or nudity
Action Taken: Use restricted

Charter School

School: The School of Liberal Arts and Science (Dallas)
Book: *Woman Hollering Creek*, Sandra Cisneros
Reason Cited: Profanity; Sexual content or nudity; Offensive to religious sensitivities
Action Taken: Retained

A Short Summary of Each Challenged Book:

10 Things To Do Before I Die, Daniel Ehrenhaft. Realizing he only has 24 hours left to live, normally cautious 16-year-old Ted Burger sets out to complete a “to-do” list compiled by his friends.

A Great and Terrible Beauty, Libba Bray. After witnessing her mother’s death, Gemma is haunted by visions while she attends a prep boarding school in London. Learning to control her visions, Gemma is able to use her magical powers for good and work to avenge some past magical wrongdoings.

Al Capone Does My Shirts, Gennifer Choldenko. In 1935, 12-year-old Moose moves to Alcatraz with his mother, prison-guard father, and autistic sister Natalie. Moose befriends a girl named Piper who has a knack for getting him into trouble, but also helps him come to terms with his new life on the island.

and Tango Makes Three, Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell. At New York City’s Central Park Zoo, two male penguins fall in love and start a family by taking turns sitting on an abandoned egg until it hatches.

Being, Kevin Brooks. A routine trip to the doctor turns into a nightmare for Robert Smith, who discovers that he does not have human organs. Embarking as a fugitive, Robert travels across England and beyond, wanting to avoid the facts of his situation while also questioning everything he thought was real.

Betrayed, P.C. Cast. Young vampire Zoey must confront danger and reconcile her past with her present as her home, the House of Night, is threatened.

Bless Me, Ultima, Rudolfo Anaya. Set in World War II era New Mexico, a young boy must face questions of morality and religion when he meets Ultima, a healer who uses herbs and magic.

Blood and Chocolate, Annette Curtis Klause. A teenage werewolf finds herself stuck between the human and paranormal worlds when she falls in love with a high school boy.

Blood Makes The Grass Grow Green, Johnny Rico. Rico’s autobiographical account details his time fighting against the Taliban as an American soldier.

Blood Promise, Richelle Mead. A story of three vampires who must make sacrifices and compromises after they are captured by an enemy group.

Body Language, Alan and Barbara Pease. The Peases’ work offers a look into how humans communicate nonverbally; focusing on body language, the book provides advice and information on the topic for those wishing to read deeper into others’ communication.

Boundless Grace, Mary Hoffman. Young Grace travels to Africa to meet her father’s new wife and family.

Captain Underpants, Dav Pilkey. A collection of children’s humor stories featuring characters such as Professor Poopyants and the Wedgie Woman.

Chiggers, Hope Larson. As Abby returns for another summer at camp, she finds that her old friends aren’t just as she left them and is forced to forge new bonds with the girls at her camp.

Chosen, P.C. Cast. Vampire Zoey must navigate her way through chaotic events at her vampire finishing school and is forced to confront secrets, murder, and love.

Cirque du Freak: Tunnels of Blood, Darren Shan. Darren and Evra discover blood-drained corpses and embark on a mission to find the creatures responsible.

Creepy Castles, Sarah Parvis. A compilation of some of the world's scariest locations.

Crescent: A Novel, Diana Abu-Jaber. Set in Los Angeles, this story follows Sirine who falls in love with an Iraqi-born academic, only to have their relationship complicated by disturbances in the Middle East.

Diamond Dogs, Alan Watt. Neil, a high-school football player, kills a boy while driving drunk. Neil's father, the sheriff of the town, hides the body but is subsequently called to work on the case. As the events unfold, Neil's life becomes filled with self-loathing, lies, and betrayal.

Diary of a Wimpy Kid, Jeff Kinney. Middle-school student Greg is forced, by his mother, to keep a diary of the school year's events.

Drawing Portraits, Barrington Barber. An instructional book on how to draw portraits and improve one's skills.

Drug Related Diseases, Barbara Hughes. Discusses a number of drugs, including alcohol, cocaine, heroin, and amphetamines, and the health problems that may result from their use or abuse.

Ellen Foster, Kaye Gibbons. Eleven-year-old orphan Ellen faces difficult situations and unloving homes until she finds a place to belong.

Ender's Game, Scott Orson Card. The story of child genius Ender Wiggin, who must save the world from malevolent alien "buggers."

Fahrenheit 451, Ray Bradbury. The classic science fiction story of book burning in a near-future dystopia.

Fallen Angels, Walter Dean Myers. Set during the Vietnam War, this story follows Perry, a teenager from Harlem, as he lives life on the front lines of the war.

Falling Angels, Tracy Chevalier. Living in Edwardian London, Lavinia and Maude forge a friendship that overcomes social boundaries amidst much social upheaval.

Flossy and the Fox, Patricia McKassack. In the rural South, young Flossy outsmarts a fox on her way to deliver eggs.

Forever, Judy Blume. A story of first love between high school seniors Katherine and Michael.

Freak Show, James St. James. Teenage drag queen Billy Bloom pushes boundaries and challenges social norms at the conservative Eisenhower Academy.

Frostbite, Richelle Mead. Three vampire friends must join forces against an enemy army.

Getting It, Alex Sanchez. Fifteen-year-old Carlos asks his gay friend Sal to give him a makeover; Sal agrees, but only in exchange for Carlos' help in forming a Gay-Straight Alliance.

Ghosts in Amityville: The Haunted House, Jack DeMolay. An account of one of the most famous ghost stories in America, as told from the perspective of the inhabitants of the haunted house.

Go Ask Alice, Anonymous. An anonymous diary of a girl whose loneliness drives her to try drugs and eventually let her life spin out of control.

Green Glass Sea, Ellen Klages. Two girls spend a year in Los Alamos as their parents work on the atomic bomb that will end World War II.

Harris and Me, Gary Paulsen. An 11-year-old spends his summer on a family farm and befriends his prankster cousin Harris.

Hunted, P.C. Cast. Vampire Zoey and her friends must discover a way to deal with something that might bring down their House of Night.

La Cocina de Noche, Maurice Sendak. Spanish language edition of *In the Night Kitchen*. See synopsis for *In the Night Kitchen* below.

Impulse, Ellen Hopkins. Three teens in a psychiatric hospital tell their stories of failed suicides.

In the Night Kitchen, Maurice Sendak. A nighttime adventure in a baker's kitchen narrated by a child.

Intimate Universe: The Human Body, BBC (video). An in-depth look at the physiological and emotional workings of the human body throughout the lifespan.

It's Hot and Cold in Miami, Nicole Rubel. Chronicling the fifth grade year of twins Rachel and Rebecca, the story highlights their adventures and the competitive spirit that exists between the girls.

Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key, Jack Gantos. Written from Joey's perspective, this story chronicles the life of a boy with Attention-Deficit Disorder.

l8r g8r, Lauren Myracle. Three best friends detail the ups and downs of high school life through instant-message conversations.

Lawn Boy, Gary Paulsen. On his twelfth birthday, the narrator receives a lawn mower and embarks on a business venture that leads him to climb the financial ladder with great success.

Life is Funny, E.R. Frank. Author Frank describes the lives of eleven Brooklyn teenagers as they navigate through school, relationships, and family problems.

Like Water for Chocolate, Laura Esquivel. Main character Tita's sister marries Tita's love while the unmarried sister is left to prepare the wedding feast. Esquivel's story is one about the intertwining of food and love, and of breaking traditional norms.

Marijuana, Sandra Lee Smith. A scientific book that examines the ways marijuana has been produced and used, and discusses the harmful effects of the drug on the mind and body.

Marked, P.C. Cast. An introduction to vampire Zoey and the House of Night, in which she finds friendship, love, and adventure.

Mine's The Best, Crosby Consall. Two boys, each with a balloon, debate over whose is better.

My Brother Sam Is Dead, Christopher Collier. The classic story of one family torn apart by the Revolutionary War.

My Pet Puppy, Honor Head. A book designed to help children learn how to care for their pet.

My Sister's Keeper, Jodi Picoult. A story of one girl's fight to keep her organs her own, despite having been genetically engineered to be a perfect match for her cancer-stricken sister.

Naruto vol 1: The Tests of the Ninja, Masashi Kishimoto. Naruto attempts to gain entrance to the Ninja Academy, make friends with his classmates, and pass an upper-level ninja test.

Of Mice and Men, John Steinbeck. A story of two migrant farm hands, father-like George and simple-minded Lennie, who weather tough times together.

The Perks of Being a Wallflower, Stephen Chbosky. A coming-of-age story told in the form of letters written by protagonist Charlie, who must deal with sex, drugs, friends, and family problems in his 10th grade year.

Pillars of the Earth, Ken Follet. A story that chronicles one man's journey to build a cathedral in 12th century England while navigating the chaotic political landscape of the era.

Pitch Black: Color Me Lost, Melody Carlson. Protagonist Morgan deals with her friend Jason's suicide and feels responsible for Jason's death.

Prep, Jake Coburn. A story focusing on male Manhattan prep-school students who fight, do drugs, drink heavily, and join gangs despite their privileged and wealthy upbringings.

Pretty Little Liars, Sara Shepard. Four high school girls grapple with secrets and a missing childhood friend.

Princess on the Brink, Meg Cabot. Princess Mia wonders whether or not to use sex to keep her boyfriend Michael from moving to Japan.

Shadow Kiss, Richelle Mead. Vampire Rose fights a personal battle over whether to save her best friend or hold on to the boy she loves.

Shakespeare Bats Cleanup, Ron Koertge. Fourteen-year-old, baseball-obsessed Kevin takes to writing poetry when he is diagnosed with mono. His poetry provides insight into his adolescent dreams, romance, and grief.

Speak, Laurie Anderson. Teenage outcast Melinda begins to find it hard to speak – physically. As she observes the world around her, she searches for her true voice.

Spider-Man, J. Michael Straczynski. One of the man Spider-Man comics the author has written.

Spirit Bound, Richelle Mead. The fifth installment of Mead's *Vampire Academy* series. Due for release in 2010.

Tamar, Mal Peet. A drama about resistance fighters in the Netherlands during World War II, partially narrated by a resistance fighter's granddaughter whose curiosity compels her to research her grandfather's past.

Tempted, P.C. Cast. Vampire Zoey discovers she has the power to stop the evil immortal, but only with the chance of losing her own life.

Tempting Faith DiNapoli, Lisa Gabriele. Faith, the eldest daughter of an Italian family, takes it upon herself to compensate for her entire family's shortcomings by being as much of a "saint" as possible.

The Bean Trees, Barbara Kingsolver. Taylor leaves home in Kentucky to move West, on the way becoming the adopted-mother of an abandoned child.

The Black Tattoo, Sam Enthoven. An adolescent boy's best friend is possessed by an ancient demon known as the Scourge. In order to save his friend, the boy must venture into hell and battle the Scourge.

The Bogeyman, Stephen Brensky. A guide to the various bogeymen that have appeared in film, literature, and folklore throughout the ages.

The Chocolate War, Robert Cormier. Jerry's refusal to sell chocolate for a class fundraiser launches the entire school into a battle of control and honor.

The Contender, Robert Lipstye. High school dropout Alfred joins a gym in his quest to become a champion boxer.

The Dirty Cowboy, Amy Timberlake. A cowboy decides to take his yearly bath, only to emerge unrecognizable to his canine companions, who refuse to relinquish the cowboy's clothing.

The Family Book, Todd Parr. A children's book that illustrates the many and varied types of families, from the traditional nuclear family to those with same-sex parents.

The Foxman, Gary Paulsen. A story of friendship and healing in Minnesota's wilderness that focuses on a 15-year-old orphan who is forced to move away from his alcoholic parents.

The Idiot's Guide to Wicca and Witchcraft, Denise Zimmerman. A "how-to" book giving a history of witchcraft and earth-based religion. Also provides advice for casting spells.

The Legend of Buddy Bush, Sheila P. Moses. Accused of raping a white woman, Buddy Bush must endure arrest, trial, and visits from the Ku Klux Klan.

The Manny Files, Christian Burch. Matthew, a male nanny, is hired to care for four children, one of whom takes it upon herself to get him fired.

The Poet, Michael Connelly. Jack, a Denver crime reporter, is given the assignment of writing a story about his brother Sean's suicide. However, Jack isn't convinced that Sean's death was a suicide and he proceeds to launch his own investigation into his brother's death.

The Road, Cormac McCarthy. A story of a father and son struggling to survive in a post-nuclear-holocaust world, full of gray skies and starvation.

The Satanic Verses, Salman Rushdie. Two actors from India are the main characters in a series of allegorical tales about metamorphoses, dreams, and revelations.

The Secret Life of Bees, Sue Monk Kidd. In the 1960's South, 14-year-old Lily embarks on a journey with her nanny to find answers about her mother and her past.

The Street Pharm, Allison Van Diepen. In Brooklyn, Ty is a 17-year-old drug dealer who must navigate through relationships and a family business while trying to stay alive on the streets.

The Westing Game, Ellen Raskin. A mystery that explores the Halloween murder of Sam Westing.

The World According to Garp, John Irving. A tragic-comic novel spanning the conception and life of the titular character.

Tom, Tomie dePaola. An autobiographical account of the author's relationship with his grandfather, Tom.

ttfn, Lauren Myracle. Through instant message language, three high school friends weather the trials of moving, drug experimentation, and relationships.

tyl, Lauren Myracle. Through a series of instant messages, three high school friends keep in touch and offer each other advice in dealing with high school happenings.

Untamed, P.C. Cast. High school vampire Zoey deals with being a social outcast.

Vampire Academy, Richelle Mead. Two vampire best friends begin school at a vampire academy and are faced with "typical" high school challenges.

Vampires, Stephen Krensky. Krensky offers information on vampire history, folklore, and reported attacks, among other topics.

Whale Talk, Chris Crutcher. Orphan T.J. assembles an army of outcasts to teach the school's jocks a lesson.

Woman Hollering Creek, Sandra Cisneros. Mexican-American women of San Antonio muse on their loyalty to Mexico, their lovers, and their sense of self-worth.

The ACLU of Texas Interviews H. G. Bissinger

H.G. *Bissinger's Friday Night Lights: A Town, a Team, a Dream* tells the story of the 1988 Permian High School football team of Odessa. Bissinger, a journalist by trade, spent an entire year in Odessa in order to acquaint himself with the team, the fans and the culture. In doing his research, he found rampant racism and sexism in Odessa. He also found that Permian High valued football over academics.

Bissinger's reporting on Odessa's football culture was, at times, unflattering for the town. In order to expose the racism he found, he often quoted the townsfolk employing racial epithets. A substantial amount of vulgarities also made it to the page.

Last year, Friday Night Lights was challenged in Beaumont ISD for racism, sexual content, and profanity. The district responded to the challenge by not just banning the book in a single school, as is most often the case, but by banning the book in every one of the districts' 30 school libraries.

A ban of such magnitude is rare, and the ACLU of Texas believes it was the most egregious instance of censorship reported last year. In an effort to follow up on this story we interviewed H. G. Bissinger to get his thoughts on the banning, and censorship of public school library books in general.

Please tell our readers a bit about yourself.

Well, I would encourage people to check out my website¹, but I can give a few highlights.

I was raised in New York City. I went to Phillips Academy in Andover and then to the University of Pennsylvania. I was a newspaper reporter for about 15 years before I went down to Odessa in the summer of 1988 to begin researching *Friday Night Lights*. I lived there for a year with my family.



I've written several books since *Friday Night Lights*. The second book was a book about urban America called *A Prayer for the City* (1998). My third book was about Major League Baseball called *Three Nights in August* (2005). And then there's a fourth book coming out in September that I've written with the basketball player LeBron James that's called *Shooting Stars* (2009). I am also a contributing writer and editor at *Vanity Fair* magazine. I've done that for over a decade. And—not to brag—but I won the Pulitzer Prize for Investigative Reporting in 1987. I now live in Philadelphia with my wife and three sons.

Would you describe the responses you have received from individuals who have read Friday Night Lights.

Overall, the responses have been fantastic. I've gotten thousands of very positive reactions: "the book was seminal..." "very important..." "it really described the culture of sports and the impact it has on small town lives in way no book had before..." It's also used in hundreds of high schools and colleges around the country. I've had dozens of teachers say "this is the best book we've assigned, particularly for high school boys because they really

¹ www.buzzbissinger.com

don't like to read anything but they read *Friday Night Lights*."

What did those in Odessa think of the book when it was first released?

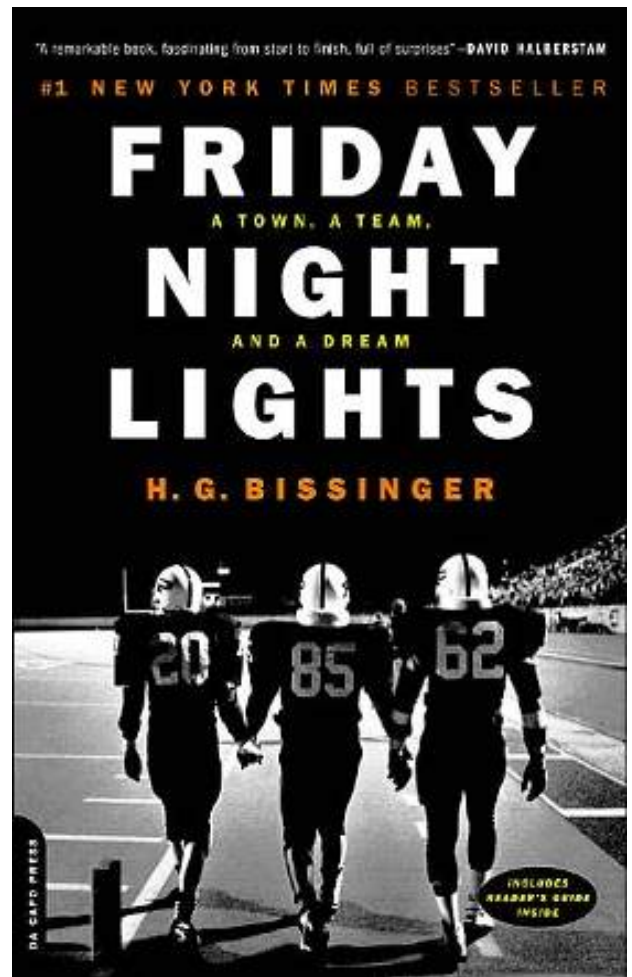
The initial response in Odessa was not fantastic. They were upset with the book. I felt the book was empathetic, but it certainly told the truth when it had too. Whether it was about race, academic standards or gender inequality and the way women were treated in Odessa, it did not sugar coat. The basic message was that high school football had been over emphasized beyond all rational proportion in Odessa. But it was certainly not unique to Odessa. It was a common phenomenon in Texas and in virtually every state in the country.

I also received threats of physical violence from some in Odessa. I was supposed to go down to Odessa to do a series of book signings when the book came out. Various bookstores called the publishers and said, "We cannot guarantee your safety." So, the publisher elected to cancel those book signings. I know Odessa, and there are great people there, but they take their football very seriously. Though it wasn't related to the book, Permian had just been declared ineligible for the playoffs. They had been turned in by their rival.² So everyone was going crazy and, as the book came out, they blamed the book and they blamed me for the team's troubles. It was a very chaotic situation.

Are they still upset with you in Odessa?

I've been to Odessa five or six times since then. I did go back in 2004 to write an article for Sports Illustrated about going back to Odessa on the eve of the film coming out. And within Odessa, many people admitted they hated me when the book came out: "We thought the book was unfair, but as we thought about it and read it, we realized it was a horrible look in the mirror. But it was in many ways an accurate one. So we had to change." From what I can tell, there have been positive changes in Odessa. As a result of the book, football is not as important.

² The football team had been turned in for holding illegal off-season practices.



Other sports are being emphasized, education is being emphasized, and there is more racial equality. This is music to my ears. The book had a positive impact on Odessa, but I also give Odessa a lot of credit for that.

What was your reaction to hearing that Beaumont ISD had banned Friday Night Lights in all of their school libraries?

I was saddened, a little surprised, and angered. Sure, the book has a few obscenities. Whether we like to admit it or not, kids down to the age of five have heard obscenities—just turn on a television! But, I think this is an important book for everyone to read, in particular kids from the age of 14 and up. It is very accessible and easy to read, but it talks about themes that are very important. As I said, it talks honestly about race and the ways in which African-American athletes are treated poorly.

It talks about educational standards becoming ridiculous because of the over importance of high school football. It talks about gender inequality. It talks about what happens when a town puts all its hopes and dreams into a high school football team, as Odessa did and so many towns in Texas still do. The situation is not getting any better in Texas. They're building these outlandish stadiums that cost millions of dollars, have replay scoreboards, VIP seating and licensing opportunities.

I thought Beaumont's decision was a horrible form of censorship and extremely shortsighted. I understand it was banned in part for sexual content, but I'm not sure what they were referring to in terms of sexual content. I barely remember anything like that in the book. Profanity was used because you have to quote people accurately, that's what a reporter does. This is the language kids sometimes use. I'm sorry if that offends people, but let's wake up. It wasn't used gratuitously; it was used to accurately reflect the feelings of the people I wrote about at the time.

I'm also sorry if the people of Beaumont or anyone else got offended by the use of the *n-word* in the book. Trust me, I was incredibly offended by the use of that word while in Odessa. The idea that that word would be used routinely by whites in the late 1980s was appalling to me as well, but I had to use that word. If I don't use that word in the book, then the whole impact of writing about racism would have been completely lost.

It seems like Beaumont ISD is trying to shield students from the fact that racism exists. How do you feel about this tactic?

I don't know what they think they are shielding kids from. It's like they're acting as if racism doesn't occur in Beaumont. And that's not to single out Beaumont; racism occurs everywhere. Just like racism wasn't unique to Odessa, Texas. It also occurs in Philadelphia where I live and in New York City where I grew up. It occurs everywhere.

Kids and adults should know about racism, and they should be sensitive to it. *Friday Night Lights* hammers home the message of how we often think

of African-Americans who play sports: we love them on the football field, but off the football field we often think they are inferior. This extends to African-American athletes being treated as sub-human in the classroom and not being worth anything except that they play football. And this still goes on today.

For Beaumont to think they are doing anyone a favor by sheltering and shielding kids from depictions of racism, they're doing exactly the opposite. They are depriving kids of knowledge they should have so that they're more sensitive to saying things that are inflammatory and aware of the repercussions of what can happen.

How different do you think the high schools in Beaumont ISD are from Permian High School in the late 1980s?

My sense from past history is that Beaumont takes its football pretty seriously. I have to imagine the book hit pretty close to home for many in Beaumont. I've been in Texas long enough to know football is important in virtually every community and town in Texas. It's part of the culture and myth of Texas. And nowhere is the culture of football stronger than it is in Texas. So, I'm sure it did.

As it turns out, it hit close to home not just in Texas, but in every state in the country. Otherwise, it would not have sold two million copies. It would not have been made into a movie or a television series. So obviously it hits close to the bone in many places. Beaumont ISD is probably sticking its head in the sand and acting like these problems don't exist there. But I can pretty much guarantee you, if I spent a year in Beaumont and had the type of access I had in Beaumont that I had in Odessa, I would pretty much find the same things there that I found in Odessa.

How are schools and students affected when books like Friday Night Lights are banned?

Whether it is my book or any book, they're being deprived of knowledge they should have. Kids are sophisticated enough today to read something and agree with it or call it silly and not agree with it. Or

they can be offended by it. But no one, whether they're adults or kids or senior citizens, should be deprived of knowledge. It's ridiculous.

Friday Night Lights is probably considered the most classic book written on sports in the last 25 years. It was named the best book ever written on football by *Sports Illustrated* and the fourth best sports book of all time. Not only is that an honor, it is an indication that this book is really saying something important. Now, as I said, people don't have to agree with it and people don't have to like it, but they should have access to it. And that's true of any book.

Are there any messages in your book that you think were lost on the censors in Beaumont?

Look, football is exciting and I love football and in particular I love high school football. I loved going to those Permian games in Odessa. I'm not against football by any stretch of the imagination. But, this book shows what can happen when high school football becomes *the* major thing in town, or the only important thing in town. It kind of swallows everything: academic standards go down, football players don't get the education they should get and minorities are treated as animals. There is also a very serious gender gap between young men and women who go to high school. The women are treated as inferior and encouraged to not be as smart as the male students because it's simply *not cool*.

High school football is fun and exciting, it's great for the fans, but the game ends. And for a lot of these kids, they're playing in front of thousands of people at the age of 17 or 18, and then they're has-beens at 19. And no one should have to live that way. I remember hearing an assistant coach saying, "We're not here to have fun. This is a business trip." And if anyone in Beaumont says, "We just treat it as a game and it's just for fun," he is lying. It is of supreme importance and it's becoming more and more important all over the country. Calling attention to these problems is all part of the message of *Friday Night Lights*.

What advice would you offer to those parents who place emphasis on athletics?

There are great lessons that can be learned from playing sports: lessons about discipline,

camaraderie, what it means to work in collaboration, and about achieving your dreams, particularly at the high school level. But you cannot do that to the detriment of completely ignoring a kid's education. For everyone who gets a college scholarship, or every rare one who gets to the pros, there are hundreds of thousands of kids who don't get there.

These kids are going to wake up one day and they're going to ask, "What happened? I have no education, I really don't have any skills, and I don't really like to read. What am I going to do?" Life is becoming more complex and more competitive worldwide. America is a very different place than it used to be. So, if you're a parent and all you care about is sports for your Johnny and Judy, you're leading them down a terrible path. And I think *Friday Night Lights* showed that.

If, however, you combine the lessons you can learn in sports with academics, then you will have raised a spectacular kid. I know this because the kids I went to high school with who were good athletes and also good in the classroom are the most formidable, competitive professionals I've ever met—and they're enormously successful. So, sports can have a great role, but society must pay more than simple lip service to the value of education.

Finally, what advice would you offer the parents who try to get books like yours banned in school libraries?

They are absolutely just fooling themselves. Not only are they fooling themselves, they are fooling their kids. If they really think that by banning books they are protecting their children then they are crazy. They're not going to be able to do it. Books are beautiful and wonderful, so to deprive a kid of books to shield them from the real world is ridiculous. And it often leads to the opposite; the more you deprive a kid of something the more he or she wants it. So, I think what these parents are doing is dangerous.

ARE YOU A STUDENT ACTIVIST?



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The deadline for submissions is **Monday, November 23.**



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