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MEMORANDUM

To: Mr. Walt Wilcox, Associate Superintendent for Natrona County School District #1, Superintendent Designee for Reconsideration of Learning Resources

From: Natrona County School District #1 Reconsideration Committee

Prepared by: Dr. Charlotte Gilbar, Executive Director for Natrona County School District #1, Chairperson of Reconsideration Committee *CG*

Date: March 22, 2023

CC: Mr. Michael Jennings, Superintendent for Natrona School District #1

Subject: Decision of Reconsideration Committee on *Crank* by Ellen Hopkins and *Fallout* by Ellen Hopkins

This written report is being prepared as part of the process of reconsideration of learning resources. Natrona County School District #1 (NCSD #1) received two formal requests for reconsideration of learning resources for five different books on January 6, 2023. The first formal request asked for *Crank*, *Glass*, and *Fallout* by Ellen Hopkins to be reconsidered. The second formal request asked for *Tricks* and *Traffick* by Ellen Hopkins to be reconsidered. As per Administrative Regulation 6232 (AR 6232) "If two or more requests and/or three or more learning resources are submitted simultaneously this process will be followed and two resources will be considered at a time, in chronological order. The learning resources will be reviewed in alphabetical order within the same submission for reconsideration," therefore the Reconsideration Committee considered two books from the first formal request in alphabetical order. Those two books were *Crank* and *Fallout* by Ellen Hopkins.

The NCSD #1 Reconsideration Committee pursuant to the rules and regulations of Natrona County School District #1 met in public on February 28, 2023 at the Central Services Facility at 970 North Glenn Road, Casper, WY 82601. Additionally, the Reconsideration Committee deliberated in one closed session on February 28, 2023 at the same location.

In the public sessions, the Reconsideration Committee reviewed materials prepared by the district. The materials used as references for the committee in regards to Natrona County School District #1 policy and regulation were Board Policy 6232, Administrative Regulation 6232 (AR 6232), Standard Operating Procedure 6232 (02) (SOP 6232 (02)), Board Policy 6233, and Administrative Regulation 6233 (AR 6233).

In regards to the specific books, the Reconsideration Committee read in entirety both *Crank* and *Fallout* by Ellen Hopkins. The committee also reviewed product details, reviews, award nominations, and awards received for each book. These factors are part of the criteria for selection determined through AR 6232.

Both of the books under reconsideration were part of the Kelly Walsh High School, Natrona County High School, Midwest School, and Dean Morgan Middle School library collections. *Crank* is a novel written in free verse that is based on a real-life event that relates the story of a 16-year olds descent into addiction. The book was processed for the first time in 2015 and has been checked out a total of 104 times at Kelly Walsh High

School and Natrona County High School. *Fallout* is the third novel in the series and is told in three voices and is written in free verse. It has been checked out 29 times at Kelly Walsh High School and Natrona County High School.

The decision of the Reconsideration Committee was deliberated in closed session on February 28, 2023 and by majority vote decided to keep *Crank* in the high school libraries and by majority vote decided to keep *Fallout* in the high school libraries. However, both books would be removed from Dean Morgan Library circulation.

The Reconsideration Committee looked at AR 6233 to determine if there were sexually explicit images within either of the books. The definition for sexually explicit images from Board Policy 6233 and AR 6233 is, "Any picture, photograph, drawings, motion picture films, digital image, or similar visual representation depicting the human acts of masturbation, intercourse, or direct physical stimulation of the genitals." Neither *Crank* or *Fallout* contained sexually explicit images.

The Reconsideration Committee utilized the criteria for the School Library Selection Criteria (SOP 6232 (02)) and applied this set of criteria to each of the books in their entirety, not only specific sections, chapters, or pages. This requirement is per AR 6232 which states the committee shall "Weight values and faults and form opinions based on the material as a whole rather than on passage or sections taken out of context" (p. 9).

Both books were not considered primary learning resources and to the knowledge of the committee were not used in classrooms as required reading but available in libraries for check out by individuals that chose to read the novels. Thus, by definition the books would be categorized as library supplementary learning resources. The Reconsideration Committee carefully considered each criteria in relation to each book separately from SOP 6232 (02).

The criteria considered from SOP 6232 (02) was:

Criteria for selection of materials in NCS D libraries is dependent on the goals and objectives of the educational institution of which the library is a part; however, there are general criteria below that should be used in NCS D to support and enrich the curriculum and/or students' personal interests and learning.

- Meet high standards in literary, artistic, and aesthetic quality; technical aspects; and physical format
- Be appropriate for the subject area and for the age, emotional development, ability level, learning styles, and social, emotional, and intellectual development of the students for whom the materials are selected
- Incorporate accurate and authentic factual content from authoritative sources
- Earn favorable reviews in standard reviewing sources and/or favorable recommendations based on preview and examination of materials by professional personnel such as but not limited to: School Library Journal, VOYA, Booklist, etc.
- Exhibit a high degree of potential user appeal and interest
- Represent differing viewpoints on controversial issues
- Provide a global perspective and promote diversity by including materials by authors and illustrators of all cultures
- Include a variety of resources in physical and virtual formats including print and non-print such as electronic and multimedia (including subscription databases and other online products, e-books, educational games, and other formed of emerging technologies)
- Demonstrate physical format, appearance, and durability suitable to their intended use
- Balance cost with need

The committee concluded by majority vote that both books met each of the criteria with the following elaboration for clarity on the criteria of appropriateness as stated in SOP 6232 (02).

As part of the review process, the Reconsideration Committee reviewed documents provided by the district titled *product details* that had information on each book. The product detail pages reviewed *Crank* as a book with “a target age of 14 and up” and reviewed *Fallout* as a book for the target age group of “14 to 17”; these both would qualify within the range of high school students.

Additionally for *Crank*, there were three other professional reviews that noted the age range as ages 14 and up, grades 8 and up, and grades 8-12. The book also won four awards: 1) Wyoming Soaring Eagle Award in 2008-2009, 2) Missouri Gateway Award in 2007, 3) Illinois Lincoln Award Winner in 2009, and 4) Vermont Green Mountain Book Award in 2009.

Additionally for *Fallout*, there were three other professional reviews that noted the age ranges as grades 10-12, ages 14+, and grades 9 and up. The book won three awards; 1) Joan F Kaywell Book Award Honoree, 2) Goodreads Choice Award in 2010, and 3) Tayshas Reading in 2011.

For both *Crank* and *Fallout*, the literary nature and expertise of the novels as they were written in free verse was a discussion of the Reconsideration Committee. The use of verse allowed for the serious nature of the topics addressed in the novels as more accessible to high school students while not sensationalizing drug addiction, sexual activity, and or other dangerous activities. In the judgment of the Reconsideration Committee, there was not an attempt for exploitation or moral disruption, but to clearly communicate the dangers of drug addiction and the effects that it has on families.

The Reconsideration Committee rendered the decision on the aforementioned criteria based on the books being located at the high school level. There was no consideration during deliberation for these books to be located at lower grade levels than high school.

The Reconsideration Committee discussed at length the criteria “to be appropriate for the subject area age, emotional development, ability level, learning styles and social development of the students for whom the learning resources were selected” (SOP 6232 (02) p.1). The committee concluded that both titles were appropriate for high school libraries, with the understanding that the age range of high school students varies from approximately 14-18 years of age and that parents/guardians have “the right to determine the reading, viewing or listening matter for his/her own children” (AR 6232). It is the understanding of the Reconsideration Committee that NCSD libraries have a process in which parents/guardians may opt-out of specific titles or authors that they deem inappropriate for their children. This process allows for parents to determine the reading material for their own children.