



Office of the School Board

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DATE: August 1, 2011

TO: Steve Kolezar, Chairman
School Board Members

FROM: Dr. Pamela Moran
Division Superintendent

RE: Re-Affirming My Support for the Recommendation of Reconsideration Committee

I am writing to re-affirm the committee's recommendation that A Study in Scarlet be removed from the 6th grade book list for Language Arts. In addition, I re-affirm the committee's decision that A Study in Scarlet shall remain in use in school media centers of the Albemarle County Public Schools.

In addition to the comments I made in my recommendation to the Board in the Committee's report, I would like to include the following notes.

- This particular book is not considered a curriculum resource. It is a book of choice that is on the reading list as an optional supplemental reading. Board members expressed concern that a controversial book remained on the list and in use for 19 years. The process that has been followed by the complainant, the committee, and staff is the process we use to reconsider such a resource when school staff has not done so.
- If this book were in fact required in the curriculum for 6th grade Language Arts, it would be appropriate to ask the child to choose another book. Since it is not tied to the curriculum, school staff has a high bar to cross to justify its use. School staff has not done so, and the Committee composed of a principal, teachers, and community members in its review has found the book inappropriate for 6th grade Language arts students as a required reading.
- There is no curricular support at the 6th grade level in Language Arts or any other subject areas for teaching some of the topics presented and elaborated upon in this book, in particular the subject of forced bigamy. Under Board Policy INB, "Teaching about Controversial Issues," we state that students may "Study any controversial issue which has political, economic, or social significance



and which is within the range, knowledge, maturity and competence of the students, and which does not conflict with State Board of Education regulations and the Albemarle County School Board Policies and regulations.”

- The topic of “forced” bigamy integrated into this book as context, in my professional judgment, is not a developmentally appropriate topic for open discussion among sixth graders about the Mormon faith. In fact, staff has chosen over the years to not address the religious and historical context of this book as a component of analysis of the full story told in the book while asking students to read it in its entirety. Albemarle teachers understand the value of students delving into controversial issues so that students learn how to engage in civil discourse and ask questions about topics that challenge historical, political, religious, social, and cultural points of view. Our teachers understand the importance of sensitivity in introducing controversial topics, moderating the discussions that ensue, and ensuring that differences of perspective and opinion are respected, a core value of the school division. Doing so reinforces the application of Lifelong Learning Competencies by students.
- Removing this book from the 6th Grade Language Arts Book choice list would not preclude the Language Arts and Social Studies Vertical Teams from conducting a thorough learning resources review per Policy IIAA with form IIAA-F2 to determine its suitability for use at a higher grade level and with contextual support through curricula already in place, particularly history and social studies. This book may merit use in a higher grade level because of its relevance to curricular content as well as the maturity level of students.

Upon action of the Board, if the committee’s recommendation is upheld, I will ask the Lead Coaches responsible for curriculum oversight and screening and identification of curricular resources to determine appropriate placement of this book. Thank you for your consideration of my recommendation to uphold the committee’s book review.