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Loudoun County School Board, Select Committee of the School Board for Hearing Appeals, Monday, June 22, 2026

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Place Loudoun County Public Schools / School Board meeting (see BoardDocs / LCPS-TV)
Length 17m (video)

- Official meeting video (Vimeo / LCPS-TV): <https://player.vimeo.com/video/1202645916?rel=0>
- BoardDocs (School Board): <https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/loudoun/Board.nsf/Public>

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Speech-to-text: whisper.cpp, model large-v3-turbo. Produced 2026-10-11. Each paragraph starts with its time [HH:MM:SS] in the meeting video.

[00:00:00] afternoon this is April Chandler calling to order the school board special appeal of the elementary school library book parachute kids by Betty Tang this afternoon I am joined by miss Carrie LaBelle who represents Catoctin district and mr. John pepper who represents Dulles we have all read the book and materials in their entirety prior to this meeting correct yes okay And I have that in affirmative from both of the committee members.

[00:00:34] And we have been tasked with considering as possible motions for the committee that the appeals committee affirm the superintendent's decision to retain parachute kids by Betty Tang in the elementary school library collection.

[00:00:51] That the appeals committee modify the superintendent's decision to retain parachute kids by Betty Tang in the elementary school library collection. and that the appeals committee reversed the superintendent's decision to retain Parachute Kids by Betty Tang in the elementary school library collection and direct staff to remove the book from elementary school libraries.

[00:01:12] At this time, we will begin our conversation. Ms. Chandler, I'm also happy to walk through the process that has taken place up until this point, if that's at all helpful. Yes, please.

[00:01:28] Okay, wonderful. So, in accordance, so I am joined today by Alyssa Moritz, our library supervisor, who oversees this process in central office, and in accordance with Policy 5047, Review of Challenged Instructional and Library Materials, she received a notification of a challenge for the book that you're discussing today, Parachute Kids, by Betty Tang.

[00:01:55] She followed the policy and convened a committee, including staff member volunteers, parents at the level at which the book currently is, which is elementary, and teachers at that same level as well. The committee met. Ms. Moritz does not participate as a voting member. She participates in facilitating the discussion and taking notes, and the committee met to discuss the book, similar to the process that you have gone through to get to today.

[00:02:28] They were all given a copy of the book, asked to read it in its entirety, as well as any supporting materials, including any book awards or reviews that are online. Ms. Moritz and her team put those materials together for the committee and provide them ahead of time.

[00:02:44] The committee had a discussion, and then at the end of the discussion, voted on whether or not to retain the book or remove it from the library. Per policy, the library book stays in the circulation until another decision is made.

[00:03:03] And the committee decided unanimously 6-0 to retain the book in the elementary school library. And we're happy to answer any questions. Ms. Moritz obviously participated in the discussion, so she's available to provide any more details if you have them.

[00:03:28] Mr. Pepper. Thank you, Madam Chair. Happy to begin our discussion of the book today, having read the book. I will begin by saying that as I read the request for appeal, it appears it is based on policy 5046 and also policy 5055.

[00:03:52] It states that their complaint is related to sexual content when it predominantly appeals to the prurient, shameful, or morbid interest of juveniles. Having read the book, there was little, I wouldn't even say little, there was pretty much no sexual content of any kind in the book.

[00:04:16] There was a small relationship that was attempted to be developed where the male sibling was teased about there's a family friend who's a girl of the exact same age. They're, I think, freshmen in high school, and she has a bit of a crush on him, and she invites him over for study dates, and he chooses to go sometimes and doesn't go other times.

[00:04:40] But nothing happens on those dates. He's just teased about the cute little crush. The male student also is referenced that he perhaps has feelings towards males in that he possibly has homosexual feelings.

[00:04:55] And there is one scene in the book where he has a shared close moment, I wouldn't even say intimate moment, with a friend of his, but there's nothing that happens. And he ends up being shoved into a ravine and hurts himself and ends up going to the hospital.

[00:05:18] It's a big subplot towards the end of the book and later is excluded from this new friend group for his purported feelings towards another male. But that is really the extent of any sort of what could even be closely considered sexualized content in the book, which is virtually nonexistent.

[00:05:35] I will also say that this book, as mentioned, is designed for approximately fourth graders. I have a daughter who has just finished fourth grade and is going into fifth grade and saw me reading this

book and was extraordinarily interested in reading the book, and I said I would, of course, read it first, and I have no qualms in giving it to her to read as she travels to summer camp.

[00:05:58] Thank you. Ms. LaBelle? Thank you, Madam Chair. I also read the book. I loved how the author brought out the feelings and all the problems that you have when you come here from a foreign country, don't know anyone, can't speak the language, can't figure out how the culture works, all of those issues.

[00:06:24] I thought it easily applies to every one of our students that come here to school from a different place. And I was disappointed that she had to bring in or make an attempt at a second type of theme, that being homosexuality.

[00:06:49] I thought, if you wanted that, just write a book about being homosexual in a community. It kind of spoiled the whole thing for me, but I can't say that, as Mr. Pepper expressed, that it was sexually explicit, that it was any of those things.

[00:07:13] Now, what I did notice in looking at where the book has been placed, if I may ask you, do the schools request to put this book in their library? Is it automatically sent to them? That's a great question.

[00:07:31] Thank you. School librarians are responsible for selecting the books that are included in their library collection based upon the students in their community. So no two school libraries are the same. Well, that would explain why I could only find two elementary schools in Western Loudoun that actually have the book there.

[00:07:51] So that would explain that. I noticed that they do have it in both middle schools. They do not have it in the high schools. Freedom, John Champ, and you have it. But none of the Western Loudoun high schools have it.

[00:08:07] So that would explain that. I appreciate that. But like I said, while I was disappointed that you had to put in that little bit, Why couldn't we just talk about the immigrant child and his or her experience? But that's the only thing I could find that really disappointed me about the book.

[00:08:24] I think it does a wonderful job of enlightening students to what the immigrant child experienced. Thank you, Ms. Lavelle. I will take my turn now. I enjoyed reading the book.

[00:08:39] It definitely enlightened me to a historical situation that I was not aware of, and I appreciated that a great deal. But in terms of looking at the defined code of Virginia that outlines sexually explicit content, I don't find that the material in this book meets that definition, first and foremost.

[00:09:07] I do think the way the material is presented in the book is appropriate for the age that the book is recommended for. It is not outside the realm of possibility that students would be aware of the fact that there are people who have and live with this perspective and is perfectly appropriate for students to have an awareness of it as well.

[00:09:34] With that, I would be curious if the committee would like to discuss further or if any of the members are willing to make a motion. Ms. LaBelle? One thing I will say is that I feel like this should be fourth grade and up.

[00:09:56] What is being done to keep it out of the hands of the second graders or the third graders? I mean, if this is recommended fourth grade, then we need to make sure it's fourth and up. So I'll just start by saying that's a great question, and it's something that librarians pay very close attention to.

[00:10:17] you know elementary schools are unique in that they have the most number of grades all in one building and life their libraries reflect that and books that are appropriate for kindergarten students are not necessarily appropriate for fifth grade students and vice versa and so a lot of that falls on the responsibility of the librarian and also conversations with families with parents what they think is appropriate you know mr. pepper is has given a copy of the book to his daughter to read and another rising fifth grade parent may think differently and that's the the parents right to have that conversation

[00:10:56] with their child and the librarian and then I'll let miss Morse add anything specifically about how librarians create that vast elementary school library thank you welcome to one of the biggest dilemmas of elementary librarians how do I make sure the stuff that's a fourth or fifth grade book really isn't in the hands of a kindergarten kindergartner librarians work really hard to develop collections within their library and sometimes they separate books into more mature themes at the elementary level and beginning graphic novels for kids we

[00:11:34] encourage conversations between parents and their students about what is right what what is right for their family and their family values and we support each and every family and their family values as we can most elementary librarians have a policy of if you read something and you don't like it stop which our kids do and they bring the book back if they're at home we tell them to tell a trusted adult mom dad teacher at school if they don't like the book we are always willing to trade out a book because we know that not every book is right for every student we encourage parents to sit down and log into our catalog on the computer with their students and they can help their

[00:12:13] students and guide their students towards books they find appropriate and some students come to school every week with a list of books that they want to look for in the library from with help from their parents so those are some of the things they do a librarians really shy away from telling a student they shouldn't get a book we and we struggle because that first grader really wants to carry the Harry Potter book I don't know why it's heavy but you know it's got a status to it so it's a struggle that we have and we live with almost daily in the elementary library but I think our librarians are pretty good at helping kids find the just right books for them thank you all right miss Moritz

[00:12:52] I would like to ask a follow-up question could you please or dr. Ellis walk us through what rights parents have in order in this situation to guide their children and to decide what materials are appropriate for their children and And then as a follow-up question, I would just like to have the committees vote one more time, the initial committee.

[00:13:16] So you asked about parents' involvement in the process. So as Ms. Mort said, we highly encourage families to be involved with their students in all of their education, but specifically in terms of library books.

[00:13:33] Have conversations about what you like to read, what you don't like to read. I remember my son, when he was in second grade, he brought a book home about ghosts. And while it was an appropriate reading level, it really freaked him out. And so he stopped reading it.

[00:13:49] He brought it to me. And poor thing, wouldn't even take the book back to the library himself. I had to deliver it to the school, but that was fine. It was a learning experience for all of us. So having conversations with their child, with the librarian. I know many families talk directly with the librarian to get some guidance on appropriate books.

[00:14:10] The classroom teacher is always a resource. If the child brings home a book that the parent deems not appropriate, they are absolutely within their rights to take the book from the child and deliver it back to the library and say, my child will not check this book out again.

[00:14:29] And is there anything else you would add to that? Similarly, I know we're not talking about middle and high school, but in instructional materials that are in the classroom, parents are given options as well.

[00:14:46] So really, we try to involve and include parent opinions as much as possible. And then you asked to reiterate the vote. So there were six voting members on the committee. Again, that was made up of parents at the elementary school, teachers at the elementary school, and central office employees.

[00:15:07] and they voted 6-0 to retain the book in the elementary school libraries. Thank you for that clarification. So it's fair to say that parents retain the right to control whether or not their child reads this book, regardless of whether or not it stays within the school library.

[00:15:24] Absolutely. Thank you. Ms. LaBelle. One more quick question. Is this the only time this book has ever been queried? In other words, a parent remarked about it, talked about it being inappropriate here.

[00:15:41] Here in Lawton County, I mean. As far as, this is our first challenge on this book. Now, if a parent has talked to a school librarian, I haven't heard about it. We try and help each other be aware of, not that we pull books out, but be aware of books that might cause some parents to be concerned, just so we're aware of it.

[00:16:01] So if somebody comes to us, we have read the book. That's mostly the important thing because we don't ever want to talk about a book without reading the whole thing in its entirety. Thank you. This is a relatively new book, right? I mean, I think the copyright 23, and it won lots of awards in 23 and 24, so relatively new.

[00:16:27] But, okay. Well, committee members, any further questions? Mr. Pepper? I would like to make a motion, if possible. Okay. I move that the appeals committee affirm the superintendent's decision to retain parachute kids by Betty Tang in the elementary school library collection.

[00:16:45] I second the motion. It has been properly moved and seconded that the Appeals Committee affirm the superintendent's decision to retain Parachute Kids by Betty Tang in the elementary school library collection. Is there any further discussion? Seeing no further discussion, let's move forward with the vote.

[00:17:03] All those in favor, please raise your hand and say aye. Aye. Seeing none opposed, given that we've had a unanimous vote, that motion passes. parachute kids by Betty Tang will remain in the elementary school library collection as the committee has chosen to affirm the superintendent's decision to retain it as such and with that seeing no further business this meeting is now adjourned thank you for coming



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