



**LILLIAN DESMARIAS
YOUTH LIBRARY**

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Library Director's Formal Response to Request for Review of Library Materials

Dated 10-1-2023

Directed to:



& Livingston County Library Board of Trustees

Preliminary Details:

In the initial conversation held on August 15, 2023, with Jodi Moore, Youth Services Coordinator of the Lillian DesMarias Youth Library, and myself, as Livingston County Library Director, [REDACTED] talked extensively about material found in the Fiction and Non-Fiction books in the Young Adult (YA) collection of the Lillian DesMarias Youth Library. [REDACTED] submitted Review of Material request forms, six (6) in total, and talked about [REDACTED] reasons why [REDACTED] thought these materials should be shelved in Parenting Section of the Youth Library or moved to the Main Library where adult reading materials are housed. Those books and authors along with data and statistics from Missouri Evergreen (ME), a 68-member public library consortium, are:

1. *Growing Up Trans: In Our Own Words* by Dr. Lindsay Herriot M ed PhD (Editor), Kate Fry (Editor), published by Odra Book Publishers, August 17, 2021, added to Youth Library collection 8/19/2022. Circulated 40 times as of 9/28/2023. One of 25 holdings in ME, 12 shelved in Juvenile Non-Fiction, 10 shelved in Teen/Young Adult Non-Fiction, two in MO Dogwood Awards Books, and one shelved in Non-Fiction.
2. *The Pride Guide: A Guide to Sexual and Social Health for LGBTQ Youth* by Jo Langford, published 2018 by Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, paperback edition published June 26, 2020, added to Youth Library collection 2/9/2022. Circulated 40 times as of 9/28/2023. One of 10 holdings in ME, 5 shelved in Teen/Young Adult Non-Fiction, 4 in Adult Non-Fiction and one shelved in Non-Fiction.
3. *Body Brilliant: A Teenage Guide to a Positive Body Image* by Nicola Morgan, published by Franklin Watts Publishing, July 11, 2019, added to Youth Library collection on 2/9/2022. Circulated twice as of 9/28/2023. One holding in ME, shelved in Teen Non-Fiction.
4. *Forever...* by Judy Blume, published by Atheneum Books for Young Readers imprint of Simon & Schuster publisher in 1975, added to Youth Library collection 2/11/2019.

- Circulated 126 times as of 9/28/2023. One of 26 holdings in ME, 20 copies shelved in Teen/Young Adult Fiction, 4 in Adult Fiction, 1 in Fiction, and 1 in Juvenile.
5. *The Nerdy and the Dirty* by B. T. Gottfred, published by Henry Holt & Company in 2016, added to Youth Library collection 8/26/2017. Circulated 31 times as of 9/28/2023. One of 5 holdings in ME, 4 copies shelved in Teen/Young Adult Fiction, 1 in Fiction.
 6. *S.E.X.: the all you need to know progressive sexuality guide to get you through high school and college* by Heather Corinna, published by DaCapo Press in 2007, added to Youth Library collection on 2/9/2022. Circulated 3 times as of 9/28/2023. One copy in ME, shelved in Teen Non-Fiction.
 - a. A second release updated version was published in 2017. ME has 3 holdings that have circulated 12 times shelved in Teen/Young Adult Non-Fiction, 1 copy in Health Neighborhood, and 4 copies in Adult Non-Fiction.

██████████ skimmed or only read specific chapters the first four selections (#1-4). ██████ stated that ██████ did read in its entirety selection #5, and only specific chapters of selection #6.

According to ██████████ Review of Materials forms, selections #1, #2, #3 and #6 were objectional due to “transgender propaganda”. For selections #4 and #5 ██████ stated objections to “sexually explicit, graphic/detailed” content.

For all of the titles, there were either no suggestions for replacements or recommendations to add educational material that does not “push transgender propaganda”. Additionally, ██████ ██████ is not aware of reviews or evaluations of any of the materials ██████ is challenging.

██████████ felt the books with transgender topics and teen sexuality/relationships/romance themes would cause sexual confusion, suicidal thoughts, and/or irreversible hormone treatment/surgery/mutilation and arousal. ██████ would like for the Youth Library to have sex education books without the transgender theme. I will look for such titles with the caveat that most will have this thread because of its relevancy included unless the book were published some years ago.

As I continue with my review of each individual book, I will give the books’ synopsis, editorial reviews, book awards, and my response to each request.

1. *Growing Up Trans: In Our Own Words* by Dr. Lindsay Herriot M ed PhD (Editor), Kate Fry (Editor), published by Odra Book Publishers, August 17, 2021, added to Youth Library collection 8/19/2022.

Book Synopsis from Orca Book, publisher: What does it mean to be young and transgender today?

Growing Up Trans shares stories, essays, art and poetry created by trans youth aged 11 to 18. In their own words, the works illustrate the trans experience through childhood, family and daily life, school, their bodies and mental health. Together the collection is a story of the challenges, big and small, of being a young trans person. At the same time, it’s a toolkit for all young people, transgender or not, about what understanding, acceptance and support for the trans community looks like. In addition to the contributed

works, there are questions and tips from experts in the field of transgender studies to challenge the reader on how to be a trans ally.

Growing Up Trans came out of a series of workshops held in Victoria, British Columbia, to bring together trans youth from across the country with mentors in the community.

Editorial Reviews: School Library Journal- April 2021 article and August 2021 book review; Kirkus Reviews; Booklist; School Library Connection; Children’s Literature

Book Awards: 2020 Missouri Association of School Libraries Missouri Dogwood Readers Award for nonfiction title for grades 9th – 12th. According to MASL’s website, the Dogwood Readers Award has books of interest to a range of readers in grades PreK-12, grouped by age, and connect young readers in Missouri with quality non-fiction books to broaden their knowledge of the world. (Web. MASL. Accessed 9-28-2023. Dogwood Readers Award.)

Other awards include:

TD Children's Literature Award | 2022 | Short-listed

Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children's Non-Fiction | 2022 | Short-listed

BC Books for BC Schools | 2021 | Commended

OLA Top Ten Best Bets | 2022 | Commended

Rocky Mountain Book Award | 2023 | Short-listed

Bank Street College of Education Children's Book Committee Best Children's Books of the Year | 2022 | Commended

CCBC Best Books for Kids & Teens, starred selection | 2022 | Commended

Forest of Reading Yellow Cedar Award — Honour Book | 2023 | Runner-up

Information Book Award | 2022 | Short-listed

(Web.orcabook.com Accessed 9-28-2023)

Library Director’s Response: ██████████ raises concerns with “transgender propaganda” that I will address along with the generalities that ██████ has stated. After reading the book in its entirety, I find this book is a compilation of stories from youth in their own words. Amazon.com’s synopsis describes this book well, saying, “This is a book written by trans youth under age 18, with authors’ questions and resources provided by adult scholars in transgender studies. The book depicts *their – meaning the youth’s* experiences through verse, poems, art, letters and essays. The contributions from youth, ranging from age 11 to 18, have been collected and collated into the book that has been divided into chapters. Each chapter focuses on a particular topic, such as “Childhood”, “Families”, “Mental Health” etc. At the end of each chapter are guided questions and recommended resources for further education, knowledge and information. Included is a glossary of terms used in the book and a “Meet the Contributors” section for authors’ bios.”

I have no means or knowledge to attest that the youth, and therefore the authors responsible for the compilation, wanted to create a false or untrue statement with their words in a non-fiction title.

The title, *Growing Up Trans, in our own words*, meets the selection criteria for the Youth Library as being relevant to the facet of our community that identifies as transgender. The

title offers more resources and information important for transgender youth to have when needed.

Moving this title from the Youth Library's Young Adult Non-Fiction collection would do a disservice to the parents/caregivers/library patrons who value inclusion and diversity. The reading level is ages 11-18, appropriate for this collection's interest level. I stand by the title remaining in the Youth Library as shelved currently as this anthology is a collection of stories, essays, and poems by youth depicting their own experiences.

There are no substantial grounds for removal of the title from the Lillian DesMarias Youth Library nor its relocation to the Main Library. To do so would be a form of censorship and infringe on other's rights protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

2. ***The Pride Guide: A Guide to Sexual and Social Health for LGBTQ Youth*** by Jo Langford, published 2018 by Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, paperback edition published June 26, 2020, added to Youth Library collection 2/9/2022

Book Synopsis from Rowman & Littlefield Publishers: Sex education materials meant to explain important basics to kids are too-often not written with an empathic understanding of what those basics are. This is particularly obvious regarding books that include LGBTQ identities. Even when they do hit the mark, many have a limited scope and don't take into account the practical realities of developing sexuality.

The Pride Guide is written explicitly for the almost ten percent of teenagers who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, or any of the unique identities that are not heterosexual/cisgendered. It explores sex, dating, relationships, puberty, and both physical and online safety in one resource.

The issue, today, is not whether or not queer youth will get sex education. The issue is how and where they will gather information and whether or not the information they gather will be applicable, unreliable, or exploitative. Equipping teens and their families with knowledge and self-confidence, this work provides the best protection against the unfortunate consequences that sometimes accompany growing up with an alternative gender or identity.

With real-world information presented in a factual and humorous way, responsible adults can teach queer youth to (and how to) protect themselves, to find resources, to explore who they are, and to interact with the world around them while being true to themselves and respectful of others.

Written with these issues in mind, The Pride Guide covers universal topics that apply to everyone, such as values clarification, digital citizenship, responsibility, information regarding abstinence as well as indulgence, and an understanding of the consequences and results of both action and inaction. For LGBTQ youth, this is a resource containing information on the unique issues queer youth face regarding what puberty looks like (particularly for trans youth), dating skills and violence, activism, personal safety, and above all, pride.

Parents and other supportive adults who are motivated to educate themselves and who are interested in gaining some tools and skills around making these necessary conversations less uncomfortable and more effective will benefit from this book. The go-to resource for making informed decisions, *The Pride Guide* is indispensable for teens, parents, educators, and others hoping to support the safe journey of LGBTQ teens on their journey of discovery.

Editorial Reviews: Booklist- starred review; School Library Journal; teenlibrariantoolbox.com review

Library Director's Response: [REDACTED] raises concerns with “transgender propaganda” that I will address along with the generalities that [REDACTED] has stated. After reading the book in its entirety, I find that this non-fiction book targets the age range of 10th-12th grades, relevant for the Youth Library's Young Adult Non-Fiction collection because it is written for age ranges 14-17. I found no instances of youth having “suicidal thoughts or confusion” as [REDACTED] objects because the book addresses these topics outright in the intro. The book addresses how to deal with these thoughts, where to seek help, and offers additional resources. The chapters flow from biology to puberty, dating to religion, and safe sex to familial relationships.

The main concepts of this book are encyclopedic, self-acceptance, diversity and inclusion. Moving this title from the Youth Library's Young Adult Non-Fiction collection would do a disservice to the parents/caregivers/library patrons who value self-acceptance, diversity and inclusion.

There are no substantial grounds of this title to be relocated to the Main Library as the author has written the book for the young adult audience at their reading level. To do so would be a form of censorship and infringe on other's rights protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

3. ***Body Brilliant: A Teenage Guide to a Positive Body Image*** by Nicola Morgan, published by Franklin Watts Publishing, July 11, 2019, added to Youth Library collection on 2/9/2022.

Book Synopsis from Watts Publishing Group: Written by teenage expert, Nicola Morgan, 'Body Brilliant' will help teenagers to develop or retain a positive body image.

We're all bombarded with information and images - through the media and our peers - about being too big, too small, being cool, being popular or having the 'right' kind of clothes. This book addresses the body issues that nearly everyone worries about at some point in their lives and gives practical and mindful solutions to work through worries, using real-life examples, quotes and anecdotes from young adults interviewed especially for this book.

'Body Brilliant' explores psychological pressures that make us see our bodies in certain ways, positively or negatively, as well as considering how adolescent body changes, gender identity and gender expectations, sexuality and sexual orientation affect self-image, and looks at issues such as body dysmorphia and eating disorders.

'Body Brilliant' also encourages you to think about how you view differences in others and understand that variety is a brilliant thing. And that being yourself is much better than being just like everyone else. Learn to celebrate the differences that make every body brilliant!

Editorial Reviews: The School Librarian; Scholastic

Library Director's Response: [REDACTED] raises concerns with “transgender propaganda” that I will address along with the generalities that [REDACTED] has stated. After reading the book in its entirety, I find this book to be a non-fiction account of positive body image, how to develop and maintain it during the middle school and high school years. At the end of each chapter, the author includes resources and books for further information and knowledge. The author divides her work into two parts. The first is reflective of cultural surroundings that affect body image. The second part provides factual information about nutrition, exercise, self-expression and self-respect. The chapter that [REDACTED] finds objectionable includes factual information about gender identity relevant to body image.

Moving this title from the Youth Library's Young Adult Non-Fiction collection would do a disservice to the parents/caregivers/library patrons who value teens' positive body image and how this relates to their overall health and wellbeing along with self-acceptance, and inclusion. Library patrons' personal opinions cannot supersede the library's mission to serve all members and facets of the communities the library serves.

There are no substantial grounds of this title to be relocated to the Main Library as the author has written the book for readers ages 11-16 in grades 6-11 at their reading level. To do so would be a form of censorship and infringe on other's rights protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

4. *Forever...* by Judy Blume, published by Atheneum Books for Young Readers imprint of Simon & Schuster publisher in 1975, added to Youth Library collection 2/11/2019.

Book Synopsis from Atheneum Books for Young Readers, Simon & Schuster publisher: Judy Blume's groundbreaking novel about first relationships, first love, and...the first time.

The bed is brass, covered with a patchwork quilt, and “nice and firm,” Michael says, “in case you're interested.”

Katherine is interested.

Katherine and Michael are in love, and Katherine knows it's forever—especially after she loses her virginity to him. But when they're separated for the summer, she begins to have feelings for another boy. What does this say about her love for Michael? And what does “forever” mean, anyway? Is this the love of a lifetime, or the very beginning of a lifetime of love?

Editorial Reviews: The New York Times Book Review; Kirkus Reviews; Common Sense Media Review; The Guardian; Booklist; School Library Journal-starred review; Kirkus Reviews-starred review

Book Awards: 1996 Winner of the Margaret A. Edwards Award, ALA literary award that annually recognizes an author and "a specific body of his or her work, for significant and lasting contribution to young adult literature"; 2012 NPR Your Favorites 100 Best Ever Teen Novels; 2019 BBC List of Most Inspiring Novels

Library Director's Response: [REDACTED] raises concerns with "teen sexuality" and objects to the few pages of the entire work of fiction as being sexually explicit. I will address this along with the generalities that [REDACTED] has stated as [REDACTED] has skimmed the entire book. After reading the book in its entirety, I find this book depicts a fictional developing romance between two high school seniors, how their respective families monitor and give advice concerning this budding relationship and the honesty of young love's challenges. This book will enable parents/caregivers to share their own values regarding first love, dating, and sensitive topics as a conversation starter when their teenager reaches that chapter in their lives.

Moving this title from the Youth Library's Young Adult Fiction collection would do a disservice to the teens with involved parents/caregivers needing resources relating to developing relationships, sensitive topics, and advocating sexual responsibility. More so, those teens who do not have involved parents/caregivers need access to such information. The author noted the reading age of 14 years and up with grade levels of 9-12 for her target audience. Since the original publication in 1975, this title has been published in paperback form in 2014 which includes an author's note about sexual responsibility.

No substantial grounds exist to relocate this title to the Main Library or move from its current shelving location. To do so would be a form of censorship and infringe on other's rights protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

5. *The Nerdy and the Dirty* by B. T. Gottfred, published by Henry Holt & Company in 2016, added to Youth Library collection 8/26/2017.

Book Synopsis from Henry Holt & Company, publisher: His classmates may consider him a nerd, but Benedict Pendleton knows he's destined for great things. All he has to do is find a worthy girlfriend, and his social station will be secured. Sure, Benedict is different--but that's what he likes about himself.

Pen Lupo is sick and tired of hiding who she is. On the outside, Pen is popular, quiet, and deferential to her boyfriend. On the inside, however, Pen is honest, opinionated--and not sure that she's quite like other girls. Do they have urges like she does?

When fate intervenes, Pen and Benedict end up at the same vacation resort for winter break. Despite their differences, the two are drawn together. But is there such a thing as happily ever after for this unlikely pair?

Editorial Reviews: Kirkus Reviews-starred review; School Library Journal; Booklist-starred reviews; Publishers Weekly-starred review; VOYA-starred review; The Horn Book Review

Library Director's Response: [REDACTED] raises concerns with "teen sexuality" and this fiction title being "sexually explicit" that I will address along with the generalities that [REDACTED] has stated as he read the entire work. After reading the book in its entirety, I find this book depicts the fictional relationships that develops between two unlikely characters finding and sharing their authentic self. The story unfolds between the first-person chapters in honest exploration of teen identity, sexuality and connection. The target audience is grades 10-12 as the main characters are in high school. The reading age are 17-18 years which are suitable for the Young Adult Fiction collection at the Lillian DesMarias Youth Library.

Moving this title from the Youth Library's Young Adult Fiction collection would do a disservice to the teens finding first loves and developing relationships based on their authentic self in light of their parents' burdens and peer expectations. Therefore, no substantial grounds exist to relocate this title to the Main Library. To do so would be a form of censorship and infringe on other's rights protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

6. *S.E.X.: the all you need to know progressive sexuality guide to get you through high school and college* by Heather Corinna, published by DaCapo Press in 2007 added to Youth Library collection on 2/9/2022.

Book Synopsis: Have you ever wondered... Am I normal? (and what is "normal," anyway?) What's up down there? I really like girls, but I like boys sometimes, too. Am I gay, bisexual, or just messed up? Are we both really ready to have sex? Is it ok if I masturbate? I feel like I can't ever say no to my partner. What's the problem? Heather Corinna and Scarleteen.com have been providing sex education and information for young adults, parents, and mentors for nearly ten years. Whether you're straight, gay, sexually active, or just plain curious, S.E.X. spells out everything you need to know, including: A sexual readiness checklist; Illustrations of female and male reproductive anatomy; How to love your body, even when it's changing every day; Tips on safer sex for body, heart, and mind; An in-depth birth control breakdown; How to create and enjoy the relationships that are right for you; Popular mechanics of partnered sex: sexual activities explained, including pregnancy and STI risks STIs 101: what they are and how to keep yourself from getting them.

Editorial Reviews: Library Journal; Common Sense Media

Library Director's Response: [REDACTED] raises concerns with "transgender propaganda" and sexual fantasy that I will address along with the generalities that [REDACTED] has stated as he read Chapter 4 and 5 specifically. I believe this is the title that [REDACTED] found most offensive. After reading the book in its entirety, I find this book depicts factual information regarding sexuality, anatomy, body image, gender, relationships, intimacy, virginity, partnered sex, safe sex, abuse and rape, consent, and pregnancy. The foreword to the reader and the foreword to the parents, teachers, mentors, and Young Adult allies outlines the content. She describes how to use this book to normalize the sexuality discussion with the teens with trusted adults. The author encourages the reader and those trusted adults to do research and gather factual information from recommended

sources found at the end of each chapters which she includes in both print and online forms. The reading level is ages 14 and up, meeting the criteria to be housed at the Youth Library in the Young Adult Non-Fiction collection. However, after deliberating at length, I suggest moving this title to the Non-Fiction Parent Shelf of the Lillian DesMarias Youth Library. Moving this title from the Youth Library's collection would do a disservice to the teens and/or parents/caregivers needing this information to navigate the teenage years and sensitive topics. Parents/caregivers need to have accurate, comprehensive, and nonjudgmental information when broaching these sensitive subjects with their teens which this title includes. Having this book available and accessible at the Youth Library on the Parent's Shelf will be beneficial to both parents/caregivers and teens.

Library Director's Determinations:

I welcome the opportunities to have discussions with [REDACTED] about [REDACTED] concerns. The Lillian DesMarias Youth Library is an inclusive, welcoming, public space to engage young readers and parents/caregivers to become life-long readers and learners.

The Livingston County Library serves all members of the community, regardless of socio-economic status, religious beliefs, age, gender, race, etc. Library patrons' personal opinions cannot supersede the library's mission to serve all members and facets of the communities the library serves. The mission of the Livingston County Library is to provide quality materials and services which fulfill educational, informational, cultural, and recreational needs of the entire community in an atmosphere that is welcoming, respectful, and comfortable. Appendix H of the Livingston County Library's policies contains the American Library Association Statements including the Freedom to Read and the Library Bill of Rights as supporting documents to ensure intellectual freedoms. As Library Director, I reaffirm my duty to protect each individual's choice and their freedoms secured by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution.

I do encourage [REDACTED] to recommend titles which the Youth Library would consider to have a well-rounded collection for the communities we serve. The Library values its patrons book requests to maintain relevant collections. Mr. Wetzel did state that he would like to see sex education books without the transgender topic in our discussions. I will research for the same to see what is available that meets our criteria for collection development.

Pursuant to Secretary of State's Rule 15 CSR 30-200.15 Library Certification Requirement for the Protection of Minors (F) the result of Review of Materials Request "shall be disclosed to the public and published on the library's website". Any personal identifiable information will be redacted on the library's website which is www.livingstoncountylibrary.org.

Recourses:

[REDACTED] can appeal to the Livingston County Library Board of Trustees by asking the Library Director to secure a place on the agenda for the next scheduled meeting.

Respectfully,

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