

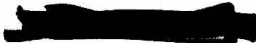
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# **Additional Proposed Guidelines for the Review and Approval of High School Reading Materials**

*Anoka-Hennepin High Schools*

**\*\*\* WARNING \*\*\***

**This Document Contains Extreme  
Profanity and Adult Subject Matter**

 - July 22, 2013

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# Additional Proposed Guidelines for the Review and Approval of High School Reading Materials

*Anoka-Hennepin High Schools*

## **Introduction**

Each and every day parents entrust the public schools to be the primary educators of their children in the academic fundamentals as well as to provide examples of the moral norms of our society through their daily interactions with teachers and staff and via the content of the educational materials used.

Because of the sheer amount of time students spend at school under the instruction of our public school educators, it is possible for those educators to have a disproportionate impact on the moral and societal views of our children.

This has become ever more likely as the traditional family unit continues to be eroded and children receive less and less intentional instruction in these areas due to the ever increasing demands on the time of parents and guardians, especially those who are single parents.

It is imperative that the moral examples exhibited by educators and those whom our kids are taught to trust as role models in our schools, as well as the content of the educational material they are taught from, be held to the highest possible moral standards.

For this reason, and after an incident pertaining to the use of the highly inappropriate book *Eleanor and Park* by Rainbow Rowell as part of the Anoka-Hennepin High Schools Rock the Book Summer Read 2013, it is necessary to establish more stringent guidelines for the review and approval of educational materials used in the Anoka-Hennepin high schools and implement additional protections to ensure that similar inappropriate material is not put into the hands of the minor children the schools and their staff are entrusted to protect.

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## **Background**

During the last couple of weeks of the 2013 school year, as part of the Anoka-Hennepin High Schools Rock the Book Summer Read 2013 program, the Anoka High School libraries were handing out copies of the book *Eleanor & Park* by Rainbow Rowell to students who signed up for the summer reading program.

Our 15-year old daughter happened to be one of the 200+ students who signed up for the summer reading program and received a copy of the book.

Our daughter happened to mention to my wife and I that she had signed up for a summer reading program at school which we had not heard of before so we inquired about what it was all about. She showed us the book *Eleanor & Park* which she had received as part of the program.

We quickly read over the front and back cover to see what the book was about and were very surprised to see that it was being touted as a "sexy, smart, tender romance" and "funny, hopeful, foulmouthed, and sexy". Shocked to see the words "foulmouthed" and "sexy" in the description of a book our 15-year old daughter had been given by the school librarian we began reading the book to see what it was all about.

After being assaulted by 8 instances of "fuck" or "fucking", 5 "shit", 1 "dicklick" and 1 "bastard" in the first three pages of the book it was apparent that someone in the school district had a significant lapse in judgment by allowing this book to be put into the hands of our minor children.

This prompted us to spend roughly 10 hours reading the entire book cover to cover and documenting our findings regarding the content which we have included below. The amount of vile profanity used throughout this publication was absolutely astounding! Never in our 43 years have either of us ever read anything more profane.

Below you will find a list of the various profanities used pervasively and gratuitously throughout the book as well as the number of times the particular profanity was used. This is likely not an exhaustive count as there may be more instances that were missed.

<b>Obscenity/Profanity</b>	<b>Instances</b>
Ass	9
Asshole	1
Bastard	4
Bitch	8
Bitches	2
Christ	4
Cum	2
Cunt	1
Damn	17
Dicklick	1
Effing	5
Fuck	35
Fucked-Up	1
Fucker	1
Fuckin'	1
Fucking	22
God	67
Goddamn	6
Jesus	24
Motherfucker	2
Pussy	3
Shit	9
Smartass	1
Tits	1
<b>Total Instances</b>	<b>227</b>

As if this alone were not bad enough, the subject matter covered in the book is pornographic and sexually explicit. Following are some of the major highlights in the text we found very disturbing and completely inappropriate for minor children. Chapter and page numbers have been provided to allow the original text to be referenced.

Chapter	Page	Text
1	7	She's fucking hot is what she is
4	18	After five kids, her mother had breasts and hips like a woman in a cigarette ad
5	40	Jesus-fuck-sit-down
13	60	Kim, with the giant breasts
14	62	It made her breasts feel like they were going to detach from her body. 'I'm going to tell Mrs. Burt that my mom doesn't want me to do anything that might rupture my hymen,' Eleanor said.
14	67	Nothing but a bitch in heat.
15	70	not because some cool, cute guy didn't like her like that.
15	71	He'd even wondered – seriously, while he was kissing her, he'd wondered this – whether he might be gay.
15	74	Jesus. Was it possible to rape somebody's hand?
16	75	Do I make you wet?
18	88	Suck me off
18	93	It made her want to have his babies
19	101	I think it's because she has red hair and giant tits
25	151	Fucking woman. Fucking kids. Fuck you, you little bitch – who the fuck touched my stereo?
25	153	FUCK THIS. 'I hate you.' FUCK ALL OF YOU. 'Fuck you.' STUPID BITCHES. 'Fuck you, fuck you, fuck you.'
30	174	I know you're a slut you smell like cum
33	195	He still hadn't managed to touch Eleanor anywhere below the chin or above the elbow.
34	203	Playing cards in Park's kitchen, even if his mom was in there, was better than just sitting in the living room, thinking about all the things they'd be doing if they were alone.
34	205	Eleanor was twelve, and she couldn't imagine a guy fucking her mom over worse than her dad had.
34	206	The c-u-n-t word.
34	207	But if you're getting it – you know, getting it – I want to know about it. I want the whole freaking report.'
40	239	'Those little bitches ...' Mrs Burt sighed.

Chapter	Page	Text
40	240	Fuck you, Tina. Fuck you to the moon.
41	244	It's not like he hadn't thought about it (a lot) – Eleanor under her clothes. But he could never fill in any of the details. The only women he could actually picture naked were the women in the magazines his dad every once in a while remembered to hide under his bed.
41	245	Park hadn't told her about his dad's twenty-year-old Playboys, but he hadn't touched them since he met her.
42	251	Park ran his hand out to her hip and back again, catching his thumb under her sweater. She swallowed and lifted her chin. He pulled her sweater up farther and, then, without thinking about why, he pulled up his shirt, too, and laid his bare stomach against hers.
42	251	She wanted him to touch her everywhere. He'd stopped at the edge of her bra and only dipped his fingers into the back of her jeans – but it wasn't Eleanor who stopped him. She never would.
43	257	Anyway, they hadn't gone that far. He hadn't touched her anywhere that you couldn't show on television. Even though he'd wanted to. He wished now that he had. It might be months before they were alone again.
45	274	Eleanor climbed up his shirt, climbing on top of him. And Park kept pulling her to him, even when she couldn't come any closer. She was wedged between Park and the steering wheel, and when he pushed his hand up her shirt, she leaned against the horn.
45	275	'Do you think we should get in the back seat?' She pushed off of him and slid over the back seat. God, it was huge, it was glorious. Not even a second later, Park landed on top of her.
45	275	She felt so good underneath, even better than he'd expected.
45	275	It seemed impossible that this could feel as good to Eleanor as it did to him – but she was making these faces ... She looked like a girl in a Prince video. If Eleanor was feeling anything like what he was feeling, how were they ever supposed to stop? He pulled her shirt up over her head.
48	281	Do I make you wet?
48	281	Pop that cherry
48	282	Suck me off
48	282	'I asked him if his dick was bigger than his truck,' Tina said.
48	283	I know you're a slut you smell like cum



Chapter	Page	Text
48	284	It was going to be constant torture now that he knew what she was like under her clothes – and there wasn't a next time in their near future. Tonight was another fluke, a lucky break, a gift ...
48	284	That night, before they'd climbed back into the front seat of the Impala, he'd taken off all of Eleanor's layers and even unpinned her bra – then laid her down on the blue upholstery.
48	285	Steve sat at one end of the couch and immediately lit a joint. He held it out to Park, but Park shook his head. The garage already smelled like a thousand joints had been smoked in here, then put out in a thousand beers.
48	286	driving around in that shit-colored Micro Machine ...
50	296	'Jesus F. Christ, Park,' his dad said in his normal voice, 'are you serious?'
50	296	'That little fucker ...'

This book touches on a variety of age inappropriate and highly controversial topics including underage sex, underage drinking and drug use, pornography, and the sexual abuse of children. These are topics that are best left to be addressed by parents or guardians in a supervised context with some moral guidance... not in our school libraries or classrooms.

The general tone of this book is also very insensitive and denigrating toward those of the Christian faith as nearly half of the 227 instances of profanity are the disparagement of their God and Savior through the irreverent and derogatory use of His name(s) as curse words.

As the stated objective noted in the Selection Philosophy (Section I) of the of the Anoka-Hennepin ISD11 District Media Program Philosophy states that "The primary purpose of the Media Center is to enrich and support the educational program of the school" it is unclear how this obscene and profane work in any way contributes to that objective and fails to stand up to the even the lowest decency standards that we should expect from our public schools.

On June 7, 2013, my wife and I met with Anoka High School Principle Mike Farley about our concerns and at a follow-up meeting on June 24, 2013, Mr. Farley requested that we provide some recommendations on a review and approval process that could be utilized to ensure that this type of material is

never again sanctioned and promoted to our children by the Anoka-Hennepin school district.

The following is our attempt at providing some general guidelines for such a process.

## **Review of Generally Accepted Decency Standards**

There are a variety of secular sources we can reference to establish a generally accepted standard of societal decency (albeit a lax standard by any measure) that we can use as a basic starting point when determining the acceptability of a given piece of educational material or literature to be used in our schools.

### ***Merriam-Webster Dictionary***

One of the most widely agreed upon standards of decency our society has long held is that pornographic and sexually explicit materials are entirely inappropriate for children of any age.

This being the case, it is instructive to review the definition of what constitutes pornography. Webster's defines pornography as:

#### **pornography<sup>1</sup>**

por·nog·ra·phy

noun \-fē\

Definition of PORNOGRAPHY

1: the depiction of erotic behavior (as in pictures or writing) intended to cause sexual excitement

2: material (as books or a photograph) that depicts erotic behavior and is intended to cause sexual excitement

3: the depiction of acts in a sensational manner so as to arouse a quick intense emotional reaction <the pornography of violence>

— por·no·graph·ic adjective

— por·no·graph·i·cal·ly adverb

### ***Federal Communications Commission (FCC)***

The FCC is probably the most recognized of these resources. While there is not a FCC sanctioned list of profane words that cannot be used it is

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<sup>1</sup> "Definition of Pornography." <http://www.merriam-webster.com>. 2013. <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pornography>>.



instructive to note that in 1975 the FCC levied its first indecency fine<sup>2</sup> against radio broadcaster Pacifica Foundation, which aired comedian George Carlin's "seven words you can't say on television" act.

According to the Supreme Court case Pacifica Foundation was fined for the use the following seven words that were deemed profane and inappropriate for broadcast: shit, piss, fuck, cunt, cocksucker, mother-fucker, and tits.

### ***FCC Guidelines on Profanity***<sup>3</sup>

Profane language includes those words that are so highly offensive that their mere utterance in the context presented may, in legal terms, amount to a nuisance. In its Golden Globe Awards Order the FCC warned broadcasters that, depending on the context, it would consider the F-Word and those words (or variants thereof) that are as highly offensive as the F-Word to be profane language that cannot be broadcast between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m.

### ***Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA)***

Another notable organization that is responsible for decency guidance is the MPAA which rates motion pictures. These ratings provide parents with advance information about the content of movies to help them determine what movies are appropriate for their children at any age. Ratings are assigned by a board of parents who consider factors such as violence, sex, language and drug use, then assign a rating they believe the majority of American parents would give a movie.

### **MPAA Rating Classifications**

- **G** - General Audiences. All Ages Admitted.
- **PG** - Parental Guidance Suggested. Some Material May Not Be Suitable For Children.
- **PG-13** - Parents Strongly Cautioned. Some Material May Be Inappropriate For Children Under 13.
- **R- Restricted** - Children Under 17 Require Accompanying Parent or Adult Guardian.
- **NC-17** - No One 17 and Under Admitted.

According to the MPAA Classification & Rating Rules<sup>4</sup> (effective January 1, 2010) a motion picture's single use of one of the harsher sexually-derived words (such as the f-word), though only as an expletive initially requires at least a PG-13 rating. More than one such expletive requires an R rating, as must even one of those words used in a sexual context.

<sup>2</sup> "FCC v. PACIFICA FOUNDATION." FCC v. PACIFICA FOUNDATION, 438 U.S. 726 (1978). 1978. <<http://laws.findlaw.com/us/438/726.html>>.

<sup>3</sup> "Obscenity, Indecency & Profanity - FAQ." <http://www.fcc.gov/guides/obscenity-indecency-profanity-faq#TheLaw>.

<sup>4</sup> MPAA Classification and Rating Rules. 2010.

An R-rated motion picture may include adult themes, adult activity, hard language, intense or persistent violence, sexually-oriented nudity, drug abuse or other elements, so that parents are counseled to take this rating very seriously.

Children under 17 are not allowed to attend R-rated motion pictures unaccompanied by a parent or adult guardian.

***Anoka-Hennepin Secondary Policies, Procedures & Guidelines***

Another important resource for decency standards are those found in the Anoka-Hennepin Secondary Handbook (2012-13)<sup>5</sup>.

Section III of the District Student Discipline Policy (506.0) addresses the Code of Student Conduct which identifies "unacceptable acts subject to disciplinary action in the school district" including:

8. Violations of school procedures or acts disruptive to the educational process, including disobedience, disruptive and disrespectful behavior, defiance of authority, cheating, insolence, insubordination, failure to identify oneself, *use of profanity*, improper activation of fire alarms, activation of stink bombs and unauthorized access to school data;

11. Possession, distribution, or display of slanderous, libelous, *pornographic*, racist, or gang related materials or symbolism;

The handbook also identifies School Bus Discipline Rules and Regulations and in this section notes the following punishable Class I Offenses which include:

*Profanity*, verbal abuse, harassment, obscene gestures or *possession of unacceptable material*

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<sup>5</sup> "Secondary Handbook 2012-13." 2012.  
<<http://www.anoka.k12.mn.us/education/components/docmgr/default.php?sectiondetailid=233661&fileitem=150896&catfilter=11718>>.

## **Additional Proposed Review Guidelines**

Now that we have generally defined a normative baseline of societal decency standards we can begin to establish additional criteria for determining whether a given piece of literature or educational material is appropriate for use in the Anoka-Hennepin school district.

Following is a common sense list criteria that would address at a minimum the most egregious material(s) that we should all be able to agree should never be put into the hands of our minor children without the express consent and moral guidance of a parent or guardian.

1. **Is the material pornographic in nature?** Does the material present sexual or sexually explicit content or subject matter that is not in a curricular context or that is void of any moral context or guidance? If the answer to this question is "yes" then the material should not be used.
2. **Would the material meet FCC broadcast decency standards?** If the material were broadcast in its entirety without redaction, would it meet FCC guidelines for what is acceptable? If the answer to this question is "no" then the material should not be used.
3. **Could the material qualify for a PG-13 rating or below?** Would the material qualify for no greater than a PG-13 rating if rated using the most basic MPAA criteria? If the answer to this question is "no" then the material should not be used.
4. **Does the material comply with Anoka-Hennepin Secondary Policies, Procedures & Guidelines?** Would it be allowable for a student, teacher, or staff to read aloud, write, post, or otherwise display any portion of the subject matter or individual words in a classroom or general school context such as in an assigned paper, on a classroom or hall poster, in classroom conversation, or on one's apparel? If the answer to this question is "no" then the material should not be used.
5. **Does the material contain highly controversial or adult subject matter including profanity?** Does the material present subject matter or content that is not age appropriate for minors or contain profanity? If the answer to this question is "yes" then the material should not be used.

This is not meant to be an exhaustive or comprehensive guideline but is intended to reiterate the need for our educators to exercise some degree of common sense when making determinations about the age appropriateness and acceptability of materials used to support the education of our children.

We would expect that the Anoka-Hennepin school district revisit their current policies and at the very least follow them or strengthen them using these recommendations as a starting point.