

Requester: Richard Price

“Equity Book Bundles”

Date : 1/27/2021 10:53:32 AM

From : "Sarah Paul"

To : "Whitney Anderson", "Vanessa Jobe"

Subject

Attachment : 0E2DB242CDB3497496B0C98692A10369.png; B26CC8B051484B0DBF9E8B6D08D18C12.png;

I'm sorry! I don't understand why she's not understanding and I'm not really sure what she wants from me.

Wed 1/27, 1:04 am

Hello Ms. Paul, will the option be available today to zoom in for the second steps lesson?

SP Sarah Paul

Wed 1/27, 8:49 am

Hi, there is not an actual second steps lesson today. Our social workers have put together a virtual assembly through nearpod. You can view it at this link:
<https://share.nearpod.com/pjK3L14mdb>

Because Ms. Luna and I switch each term, she is starting the day in [redacted] class. This means that she will be teaching the Second Steps lessons this term. The Second steps lessons are separate from the Equity book bundles. Second Steps is a scripted program that has been approved. When we start up the Equity book bundles again, I will be teaching them.

Hope this helps!

Wed 1/27, 9:47 am

Thank you. The link did not work for me on my phone. Does it only work on computers? That's interesting about equity being separate from Second Steps since Dr. Jobe made it pretty clear they were linked together, so I'll be getting clarification on that. Thanks for your help.

SP Sarah Paul


Wed 1/27, 9:57 am

It might need to be on a computer. Try this link:
<https://share.nearpod.com/wW3ecQqkodb>

Both the second steps and Equity programs are taught on Wednesdays and some themes overlap. However, they are two separate programs. I believe what she sent you was the schedule for both programs.

Date : 2/11/2021 2:01:27 PM
From : "Jennifer Covington (Google Docs)"
To : wanderson@murrayschools.org
Subject : Dear Horizon 3rd @jcovington@murrayschools.org How do...

Jennifer Covington replied to a comment in the following document

 Dear Horizon 3rd Grade Parents/Guardians,

Equity Book Bundles do not include an additional resource list or a comprehensive list outside of what was shared in the Book Bundle list. In an email response to parents there were books listed under "additional resources" and "comprehensive list". These lists were not because the books included were part of the Book Bundles, but that the additional books had been read in that specific classroom.



Whitney Anderson

[@jcovington@murrayschools.org](mailto:jcovington@murrayschools.org) How does this look? I'm trying to be clear with out dragging out the explanation and confusing others who it doesn't apply to.



Jennifer Covington New

Looks great Whitney. Thank you! Also - your PTA president did an fantastic job today at the PTA meeting clarifying actual events that took place. I was extremely grateful for her. She is amazing.

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Date : 2/10/2021 6:40:37 PM
From : "Jennifer Covington (Google Docs)"
To : wanderson@murrayschools.org
Subject : Dear Horizon 3rd ... - Hi Whitney. I think there is an email...

Jennifer Covington added a comment to the following document

 Dear Horizon 3rd Grade Parents/Guardians,

Equity Book Bundles do not include an additional resource list.



Jennifer Covington New

Hi Whitney. I think there is an email out there from Vanessa that said there is an additional resource list. I think Vanessa also mentioned something about this when we talked, I think it will be important to clarify that.

I am good with the rest of this. Well done.

[Open](#)

Google LLC, 1600 Amphitheatre Parkway, Mountain View, CA 94043, USA

You have received this email because you are subscribed to all discussions on [Dear Horizon 3rd Grade Parents/Guardians..](#) [Change what Google Docs sends you.](#) You can reply to this email to reply to the discussion.

Google

Date : 1/14/2021 2:54:10 PM

From : "Whitney Anderson"

To : "Karen Peterson"

Subject : Does this email to staff come across as a shocker? I don't want to cause chaos...

Teachers,

As I reflect on our equity work and book bundles I want to say thank you for knowing your students and needs of your classroom. Thank you for braving the unknown and being willing to have new conversations with students.

With that being said, I want to make sure that each of you feel confident in the material. Please know that if you do not feel comfortable (for any reason) I would like to be able to navigate that with you. These topics and these books are in no way, shape or form meant to put pressure on teachers, students, or parents. If you have hesitations, I want to listen and work through it with you.

I don't claim to be anywhere near knowledgeable and admittedly sometimes can be uncomfortable with topics regarding race, gender, etc... I think I have been trying so hard to "catch up and keep up" that I have failed to check in and support others that may need me. I apologize if you have felt the lack of my leadership.

With this reflection I would like to put our book bundles on hold until I am able to make sure we are being proactive and not being reactive. First, I want to have conversations with teachers and make sure I understand where everyone is in this process. I would like to brainstorm ways we can make things better. Second, I would like to put a process in place to make sure we are transparent and communicating clearly with teachers, parents, and other community members. I'd like to discuss this plan with each of you in our grade level PLC.

Please know that I am always available to talk and meet you where you are. Thank you for being part of HORIZON!

Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



Date : 1/14/2021 1:19:24 PM
From : "Whitney Anderson"
To : "Jamie Booth"
Subject : DRAFT teacher email....thoughts?

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Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



Date : 2/8/2021 3:59:15 PM
From : "Doug Perry via ParentSquare"
To : wanderson@murrayschools.org
Subject : Equity Book Bundles and Equity Committee



Murray City School District

Doug Perry posted in All Elementary Parents and Staff, All Secondary Parents

Equity Book Bundles and Equity Committee



February 8, 2021

MCSID Parents and Families:

Recently, concerns were brought forward regarding books read aloud in a classroom at one of our elementary schools along with questions regarding our District Equity Council.

As a district, we recognize and acknowledge the concerns. Since these concerns have been brought forward, we have taken the following steps:

- Suspended the equity book bundles in order to review further.
- Placed a hold on the District Equity council until the mission, vision, and participants are better defined and to ensure it is inclusive and representative.
- Reviewing of policy, procedures, and practices.
- Reviewing of transparency and communication related to books that are being used outside of the adopted curriculum.

We value and embrace full student, family, and employee participation at MCSID to ensure our schools are safe, transparent, and welcoming. We are committed to learning from this experience and doing better. The district and School Board are committed to listening to our stakeholders as we move forward and to taking the time for the thoughtful consideration that is needed.

Respectfully,

Jennifer Covington, Superintendent of Schools

Jaren Cooper, MCSID Board of Education President

Belinda Johnson, MCSID Board of Education Vice-President

[View in ParentSquare](#)

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Please do not reply to this email.

Stay involved with your child's learning and activities at school.



You received this email because you are a ParentSquare user in Murray City School District. If you received this email in error or wish to disable your account, [click here to unsubscribe](#).

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Date : 1/28/2021 1:37:27 PM
From : "Jennifer Covington"
To : "Elementary Principals"
Cc : "Hamilton, Melissa" , "Darren Dean" , "Scott Bushnell"
Subject : Equity Book Bundles

Principals: We know many of you have heard from parents regarding concerns with the Equity Book Bundles. At this time, we are asking you to suspend these books from being read until further notice. The district is working on a process to ensure equity focused books are vetted by educators and parents and that all equity work is transparent and accurately communicated to our parents. We anticipate having information to you by next week.

Please reach out to me via phone if you have any questions. I am happy to discuss.

Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
Murray City School District
5102 S. Commerce Drive
Murray, UT 84107
801.284.7400



Date : 1/20/2021 3:44:38 PM
From : "Vanessa Jobe (via Google Docs)"
To : horizonteachers@murrayschools.org
Subject : Equity Books - Invitation to edit

vjobe@murrayschools.org has invited you to edit the following document:

 [Equity Books](#)



Hello!

We will be data diving tomorrow for PLCs. Additionally, here is a follow up to the communication Mrs. Anderson sent out about the equity book bundles. We have met with our school equity team. We have not met with SCC yet or communicated this with parents yet. After we data dives we will have a few minutes to answer any questions or include additional information that we may be missing to the equity book bundles. Thank you for all the help on this so far team!

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You have received this email because vjobe@murrayschools.org shared a document with you from Google Docs.

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Date : 1/25/2021 11:23:45 AM
From : "Jennifer Covington"
To : "Darren Dean" , "Vanessa Jobe" , "Whitney Anderson"
Cc : "Belinda Johnson" , "Jaren Cooper"
Subject : Equity Books

It has come to my attention that it is being stated that the 2020 Equity Books were reviewed and approved by the Murray City School District Board of Education. The board received information regarding the equity book bundles as part of the equity presentation by Dr. Jobe but did not approve the list.

Anything the School Board takes action on must have a formal vote in an open board meeting. The board did not vote on approval of these resources. This statement is extremely problematic as it would be a violation of open meeting laws.

Please immediately remove this statement from anywhere it is communicated.

Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
Murray City School District
5102 S. Commerce Drive
Murray, UT 84107
801.264.7400



Date : 2/3/2021 4:36:37 PM
From : "Michelle Chacon"
To : "Vanessa Jabe" , "Whitney Anderson"
Subject : Equity

Hello,

I just had some thoughts on the equity bundles being on hold.

I heard some rumors in the lunch room about how some parents thought we were using the equity book bundles which I did not feel reflected what we were doing with them. Like Whitney said in the meeting about how we were teaching a book versus the many ways a book could be taught. I think you are right that it is just a communication issue.

I think it would be helpful to go back and include a quick parent letter with each book's lesson plan that includes our purpose for the book, a synopsis of the book, and the link to the lesson presentation for that book. Then, when a teacher is ready to share a book with the class, they can shoot a message to parents in Parent Square with the parent letter. Maybe a day or two before the lesson? This could help ease the parents' minds since this feels new and scary for them. With new school leadership, I think any changes are just extra scrutinized. Add on the challenges we have faced this past year, and people are even more apt to question things.

When you think about it, Eureka math has parent news letters for each topic. At Challenger they sent home weekly newsletters for each grade that gave a brief summary of everything the students would learn in each subject. I think parents just like to be in the know. I have had students who are Jehovah's Witnesses who were excused from reading anything mystical such as stories with witches or fairies. Like you said, parents get to choose what they want their children to learn. I think a quick parent letter on Parent Square will solve the issue we are having. Then they know what is going on and they can choose to opt their child out or follow up with conversations on the topic at home. It's definitely always a plus when parents are involved with their child's education. While we have their attention, we might as well teach them too!

If you would like to do parent letters, I would be more than happy to help. Just let me know what you need.

Thank you both for your patience and understanding. That's really important when trying to implement change. Hang in there!

Sincerely,
Michelle Chacon

Date : 2/7/2021 1:55:13 PM
From : "Missy Hamilton"
To : "Elementary Principals"
Cc : "Darren Dean" , "Jennifer Covington" , "Robin Williams" , "Scott Bushnell"
Subject : Fwd: Parent Email Regarding Equity Concerns

Dear Principals,

As you send messaging, it might be wise to alert your staffs that if THEY got any messaging you may want to have a one liner prepared to give your staffs something like...

"if you receive any emails from parents regarding equity or concerning lessons being taught about sex education, please tell parents, "thank you for your concern and for advocating for your student. I know that Principal _____ is working cooperatively with the District regarding equity and other such curriculum issues. I have cc them on this email and will let them respond."

Let me know how I can support you otherwise. We've got this friends!

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Jennifer Covington <covington@murrayschools.org>
Date: Sun, Feb 7, 2021 at 12:33 PM
Subject: Parent Email Regarding Equity Concerns
To: Elementary Principals <elementaryprincipals@murrayschools.org>, Secondary Principals <secondaryprincipals@murrayschools.org>, District Admin <djstadmin@murrayschools.org>, Belinda Johnson <bjohnson@murrayschools.org>, Elizabeth Payne <epayne@murrayschools.org>, Glo Merrill <gmerrill@murrayschools.org>, Jaren Cooper <jcooper@murrayschools.org>, Kami Anderson <kanderson@murrayschools.org>

Administrators and School Board: The following email was sent out today by parents. I am confident you will receive emails from parents regarding this.

Dear MCSO parents, caregivers and community members,

You may have heard in the news recently about some issues going on in Murray City School District. As fellow parents in Murray, and knowing that the news does not always represent topics accurately, we wanted to share some of the information we have received from parents and the district about these issues:

- 1. Last year MCSO formed an Equity Council. The majority of parents were not informed about the formation of this council nor invited to join. Attached to this email is the Council's mission, goals, and group norms. We encourage you to look into the words or phrases you may not understand on this sheet, such as "equity" (it does NOT mean equality) and "intersectional approach," etc. (See attached: MCSO Equity Council.)*
- 2. In August 2020, MCSO sent out two district memos reminding all educators of Utah laws, code § 53E-9-203, regarding political speech. The MCSO Equity Council found these memos to be harmful and requested that the district apologize and write a new memo updating their stance. (See attached: Memos 1 and 2.)*
- 3. As a result of the Equity Council's request, MCSO did write a new memo which was released in November 2020. In this memo, MCSO claimed that the first two memos harmed the community and were not in line with MCSO equity values. This new memo then encouraged educators to center equity in their daily teaching, with equity-based curriculum, dialogue and displays. (See attached: Memo 3.)*
- 4. As a result of this corrected memo, political speech and signs in classrooms have been deemed appropriate and acceptable in all Murray schools, and the Utah laws, cited in the first two memos, which prohibited such speech and signs were deemed outdated and irrelevant.*
- 5. As part of the new equity-centered curriculum encouraged by MCSO, an "Equity Book Bundles" program was started at Horizon Elementary School in conjunction with their Second Steps program. This Book Bundles program focused on marginalized groups and contained books accordingly. However, at no time was a full book list sent out to parents, nor was it posted on the school or district website.*
- 6. On January 8, 2021, at Horizon Elementary School, a 3rd grade teacher read a transgender children's book titled "Call Me Max" to her entire class, without informing parents nor seeking their approval or consent. The author of this book, Kyle Lukoff, is a transgender male. The back of the book contains an "About the Author" section with a photograph of the author, which was read to the students. This prompted discussion on how Lukoff grew a beard since he used to be a girl. The teacher informed students that science has provided a way for this to be done, and students began discussing taking medicine after puberty if they want to change their gender. Here is a link to a video of this book (the "About the Author" section is not read in this video): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icrPwaChkRY>*
- 7. When parents found out this book was read and discussed with their children (who came home after school and told them), some parents expressed concern about why they were not informed and why consent was not needed. In addition, parents asked where this book was found on the district or school's website or on any book list sent home.*
- 8. In reply to concerned parents, the 3rd grade teacher and the administrators of Horizon Elementary sent a copy of the Equity Council's MCSO revised memo (Memo 3) stating that curriculum was to be equity-centered, informing that as a result of this memo they did not need parental approval to read and discuss the book with 3rd grade classes. They also told parents the book was "wonderful and developmentally appropriate" for 3rd graders.*
- 9. Also in reply to concerned parents, Horizon administrators acknowledged that the book bundles list was not posted anywhere for parents to access. Concerned parents were then sent several book lists with different books on different lists. Some parents were told of an "Additional Resources" list, where the transgender children books could be found, but no parents ever received that list. All of this prompted parents to involve the superintendent and Murray School Board in trying to figure out the facts. (See attached: Book Bundles List.)*
- 10. As administrator of the Equity Book Bundles program and co-chair of the MCSO Equity Council, Dr. Vanessa Jobe (vice-principal at Horizon Elementary) claimed in a Utah Pride Center conference video, on Jan 23, 2020, that the Murray School Board approved the entire book list for the Book Bundles Program. When parents who viewed this conference went to their representatives on the school board, they were told that, in fact, that was misinformation and the school board had not seen or approved any list of books. Horizon's principal, Mrs. Whitney Anderson, then informed parents that Dr. Jobe had actually chosen the books herself from her personal friend's bookstore in SLC. (If you would like to view the MCSO Equity Council's presentation in "Pride, Not Prejudice: An LGBTQIA+ Conference for Utah Educators, Students, and Caregivers," we encourage you to contact the Utah Pride Center on Facebook, as they informed attendees that all videos would be available until April 1st, but for unclear reasons have since removed the videos so no one can access them.)*
- 11. For two weeks, parents were told by both the teacher and administrators that these books and topics were part of Horizon's 3rd grade curriculum. Parents were even sent a topic calendar for the Equity/Second Steps program which showed "Sexuality and Gender" as the October 2020 topic for all grades, which was three months prior to this incident. (Parents still do not know what was taught or discussed in October 2020 regarding that topic.) However, as the issue was pressed further, suddenly MCSO began telling parents that "Call Me Max" was never part of the curriculum, and "Sexuality and Gender" were not intended to be 3rd grade equity topics, and in fact "Call Me Max" was brought into the classroom by a student, not the teacher or administrators. (See attached: Horizon Elementary Equity Topics.)*
- 12. This new story is confusing to parents, since on January 6, 2021, Horizon 3rd graders also read and discussed "Julian is a Mermaid" (a children's book about gender-fluidity) and completed an assignment in conjunction with that book, which assignment was brought home to parents. "Julian is a Mermaid" was also not found on the Equity Book Bundles list sent to parents. No teacher or administrator has explained what list "Julian is a Mermaid" came from. Did the student who brought in "Call Me Max" also bring in "Julian?" Did the student also bring in the assignments for "Julian?" In addition, why was "Sexuality and Gender" found on the October 2020 topics list for 3rd grade (and all grades) if this was not intended to be part of the curriculum? Utah law, code § 53E-9-203, states that these topics are not to be in the curriculum of children without explicit parental consent. Why was "Sexuality and Gender" included in the Equity book topics without parental consent? Why won't MCSO answer these questions clearly and directly?*
- 13. As members of MCSO, please be aware that the Equity Book Bundles program is set to roll out in all elementary schools district wide in the near future.*

In summary, parents are still trying to find answers to these questions and others. We have asked the superintendent and other MCSO representatives about these issues, and most of our questions have gone unanswered. We have requested a public parent meeting with Superintendent Jen Covington regarding these issues, but she did not respond.

We feel these are important topics to be addressed publicly by MCSO with ALL parents. We want EVERY student in MCSO to feel welcomed and loved. We want to be involved in these equity discussions with our children. As parents, we have the legal right to be involved in the choices of these books, discussions, and curricula. We encourage all parents to get involved in these issues if they are important to you. Please look through the Book Bundles book list (attached to this email), find the books on YouTube and read all of them, and see for yourselves if you feel they are "developmentally appropriate" for your children. There are many books on this list (not just the ones discussed in this email) that are considered political and highly controversial. We feel that topics found in the Equity Book Bundles program would be considered sensitive to most parents and students, regardless of differing opinions on those topics. For this reason, we believe parents deserve complete honesty and full transparency from Murray City School District regarding all of these books and issues. If you feel the same, please get involved. Please start asking questions to your teachers, administrators, and MCSO about the Equity Council and its corresponding programs. Please feel free to forward this email (and all attachments) to anyone who may have a vested interest.

Thank you,
Concerned Parents

Unfortunately, this email did not mention that as a district we have suspended all equity book bundles and the Equity Council while we work to put practices and policies in place to ensure full transparency with our families. We have shared the following information with families who have reached out to us and want to share it with you as well.

The book "Call Me Max" was an isolated incident in one 3rd grade classroom at Horizon Elementary School. It has not been used in any other schools or classrooms. It was not approved by the Murray City School District Board of Education. A Horizon student brought the book and asked if the teacher would read the book to the class. The teacher read the book to the class and did answer students' questions about growing a beard and students mentioned something about puberty which the teacher shut down. The administration at Horizon Elementary was not aware of this book being read until it was brought to their attention by parents. The communication that followed with parents was unfortunate in that several different messages were sent with conflicting information. This has caused concerns of trust with parents.

As a district, we want to ensure that parents are fully informed of what is going on in their classroom. It is our duty to be fully transparent. As each of you know, the Equity Book Bundles have been placed on hold at this time while the district works to put procedures in place to ensure transparency and communication. The district is working on an action plan where educators and then the School Community Council will review all equity materials. Parents will be fully informed of what is being used in the classroom and provided with additional information regarding the materials. Parents will also have the ability to opt their child out of any reading by simply notifying their teacher.

The Equity Council was started a little over a year ago with the mission of building a diverse, equitable, and inclusive district by providing all students, families, and employees with a community of care, respect, and belonging. At present, the council consists of educators, administrators, and parents. At this time, the Equity Council has been suspended while the district and School Board work to put measures in place to ensure the purpose of the council is clear, defined, and communicated to all parents and employees.

Our goals moving forward are to put policy and measures in place to ensure that we are open and transparent with books that are being read in the classroom and the mission, purpose and vision of Equity Council. We respect the rights and values of parents and do want to work together. As an education community, we want to show respect by acknowledging differences, looking for the good in everyone, and showing due regard for others' feelings, rights, cultures, and traditions. Our actions as educators and parents will demonstrate our belief that we are better when we are working together on behalf of every child.

I am confident you will be contacted by parents. Thank you for your help in getting the message out that as a district we recognize the concerns, that the book was an isolated incident at one school in one classroom, and that the district is working on measures to ensure transparency with the equity book bundles and the equity council.

Feel free to reach out to me if you want to discuss.

Jen

Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
Murray City School District
5102 S. Commerce Drive
Murray, UT 84107
801.264.7400



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Melissa B. Hamilton (Missy)
Director, Elementary Teaching and Learning
5102 South Commerce Drive
Murray, UT 84107
801-264-7400 x 5025/801-834-1798(cell)



Date : 2/9/2021 1:16:04 PM
From : "Whitney Anderson"
To : "Caryn Wateman"
Subject : Fwd: Parent Email Regarding Equity Concerns

Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



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10. As administrator of the Equity Book Bundles program and co-chair of the MCSD Equity Council, Dr. Vanessa Jobe (vice-principal at Horizon Elementary) claimed in a Utah Pride Center conference video, on Jan 23, 2020, that the Murray School Board approved the entire book list for the Book Bundles Program. When parents who viewed this conference went to their representatives on the school board, they were told that, in fact, that was misinformation and the school board had not seen or approved any list of books. Horizon's principal, Mrs. Whitney Anderson, then informed parents that Dr. Jobe had actually chosen the books herself from her personal friend's bookstore in SLC. (If you would like to view the MCSD Equity Council's presentation in "Pride, Not Prejudice: An LGBTQIA+ Conference for Utah Educators, Students, and Caregivers," we encourage you to contact the Utah Pride Center on Facebook, as they informed attendees that all videos would be available until April 1st, but for unclear reasons have since removed the videos so no one can access them.)
11. For two weeks, parents were told by both the teacher and administrators that these books and topics were part of Horizon's 3rd grade curriculum. Parents were even sent a topic calendar for the Equity/Second Steps program which showed "Sexuality and Gender" as the October 2020 topic for all grades, which was three months prior to this incident. (Parents still do not know what was taught or discussed in October 2020 regarding that topic.) However, as the issue was pressed further, suddenly MCSD began telling parents that "Call Me Max" was never part of the curriculum, and "Sexuality and Gender" were not intended to be 3rd grade equity topics, and in fact "Call Me Max" was brought into the classroom by a student, not the teacher or administrators. (See attached: Horizon Elementary Equity Topics.)
12. This new story is confusing to parents, since on January 6, 2021, Horizon 3rd graders also read and discussed "Julian is a Mermaid" (a children's book about gender-fluidity) and completed an assignment in conjunction with that book, which assignment was brought home to parents. "Julian is a Mermaid" was also not found on the Equity Book Bundles list sent to parents. No teacher or administrator has explained what list "Julian is a Mermaid" came from. Did the student who brought in "Call Me Max" also bring in "Julian"? Did the student also bring in the assignments for "Julian"? In addition, why was "Sexuality and Gender" found on the October 2020 topics list for 3rd grade (and all grades) if it was not intended to be part of the curriculum? Utah law, code § 53E-9-203, states that these topics are not to be in the curriculum of children without explicit parental consent. Why was "Sexuality and Gender" included in the Equity book topics without parental consent? Why won't MCSD answer these questions clearly and directly?
13. As members of MCSD, please be aware that the Equity Book Bundles program is set to roll out in all elementary schools district wide in the near future.

In summary, parents are still trying to find answers to these questions and others. We have asked the superintendent and other MCSD representatives about these issues, and most of our questions have gone unanswered. We have requested a public parent meeting with Superintendent Jen Covington regarding these issues, but she did not respond.

We feel these are important topics to be addressed publicly by MCSD with ALL parents. We want EVERY student in MCSD to feel welcomed and loved. We want to be involved in these equity discussions with our children. As parents, we have the legal right to be involved in the choices of these books, discussions, and curricula. We encourage all parents to get involved in these issues if they are important to you. Please look through the Book Bundles book list (attached to this email), find the books on YouTube and read all of them, and see for yourselves if you feel they are "developmentally appropriate" for your children. There are many books on this list (not just the ones discussed in this email) that are considered political and highly controversial. We feel that topics found in the Equity Book Bundles program would be considered sensitive to most parents and students, regardless of differing opinions on those topics. For this reason, we believe parents deserve complete honesty and full transparency from Murray

City School District regarding all of these books and issues. If you feel the same, please get involved. Please start asking questions to your teachers, administrators, and MCSD about the Equity Council and its corresponding programs. Please feel free to forward this email (and all attachments) to anyone who may have a vested interest.

Thank you,
Concerned Parents

Unfortunately, this email did not mention that as a district we have suspended all equity book bundles and the Equity Council while we work to put practices and policies in place to ensure full transparency with our families. We have shared the following information with families who have reached out to us and want to share it with you as well.

The book "Call Me Max" was an isolated incident in one 3rd grade classroom at Horizon Elementary School. It has not been used in any other schools or classrooms. It was not approved by the Murray City School District Board of Education. A Horizon student brought the book and asked if the teacher would read the book to the class. The teacher read the book to the class and did answer students' questions about growing a beard and students mentioned something about puberty which the teacher shut down. The administration at Horizon Elementary was not aware of this book being read until it was brought to their attention by parents. The communication that followed with parents was unfortunate in that several different messages were sent with conflicting information. This has caused concerns of trust with parents.

As a district, we want to ensure that parents are fully informed of what is going on in their classroom. It is our duty to be fully transparent. As each of you know, the Equity Book Bundles have been placed on hold at this time while the district works to put procedures in place to ensure transparency and communication. The district is working on an action plan where educators and then the School Community Council will review all equity materials. Parents will be fully informed of what is being used in the classroom and provided with additional information regarding the materials. Parents will also have the ability to opt their child out of any reading by simply notifying their teacher.

The Equity Council was started a little over a year ago with the mission of building a diverse, equitable, and inclusive district by providing all students, families, and employees with a community of care, respect, and belonging. At present, the council consists of educators, administrators, and parents. At this time, the Equity Council has been suspended while the district and School Board work to put measures in place to ensure the purpose of the council is clear, defined, and communicated to all parents and employees.

Our goals moving forward are to put policy and measures in place to ensure that we are open and transparent with books that are being read in the classroom and the mission, purpose and vision of Equity Council. We respect the rights and values of parents and do want to work together. As an education community, we want to show respect by acknowledging differences, looking for the good in everyone, and showing due regard for others' feelings, rights, cultures, and traditions. Our actions as educators and parents will demonstrate our belief that we are better when we are working together on behalf of every child.

I am confident you will be contacted by parents. Thank you for your help in getting the message out that as a district we recognize the concerns, that the book was an isolated incident at one school in one classroom, and that the district is working on measures to ensure transparency with the equity book bundles and the equity council.

Feel free to reach out to me if you want to discuss.

Jen

Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
Murray City School District
5102 S. Commerce Drive
Murray, UT 84107
801.264.7400



Date : 2/9/2021 8:40:54 PM
From : [REDACTED]
To : wanderson@murrayschools.org
Subject : Fwd: Re: Re: Equity Book Bundles and Equity Committee

Good evening, Mrs. Anderson:

I can only imagine what you are facing these days. Diversity and inclusion are the hallmark of education but to many times we fall short. Whatever event lead to the suspension of your initiative must be overblown and exactly based on the preconceptions that need to be overcome. All I know, you can see in the email conversation below. I would be really interested in what is contained in the book bundle.

Thanks and Blessings

[REDACTED]

Forwarded email

From: "Doug Perry" <dperry@murrayschools.org>
Date: February 9, 2021
To: [REDACTED]
Cc:
Subject: Re: Re: Equity Book Bundles and Equity Committee

What is a Book Bundle?

The Book Bundle program was initiated by one of our principals (at Horizon Elementary). She wanted to ensure that books emphasizing differences (race, impairments, gender, culture, etc.) were included among our literary resources at schools. The Murray Board of Education has pushed pause on that effort to make sure we have adequate controls and reviews in place before we proceed further.

What is the Equity Council?

The Equity Council was formed by MCSD educators in 2019 to address and review policies and practices that ensure our educators feel safe in our school system. When George Floyd was killed a year later, tensions were elevated and the Equity Council broadened their focus to that of an advisory role to also ensure all students feel safe and welcome in our schools. The Council consists of MCSD educators, administrators, district personnel, and a parent. We have pushed pause on the Council at this time so that its mission, vision, and participants are better defined, inclusive, and representative.

On Mon, Feb 8, 2021 at 4:52 PM [REDACTED] wrote:

Good afternoon,
as a professional in ethics and an elementary school dad I need to know what "equity book bundles" are, please.

Blessings

[REDACTED]

On 2/8/21 at 16:00, Doug Perry via ParentSquare wrote:

From: "Doug Perry via ParentSquare" <donotreply@parentsquare.com>
Date: February 8, 2021
To: [REDACTED]
Cc:
Subject: Equity Book Bundles and Equity Committee



Murray City School District

Doug Perry posted in All Elementary Parents and Staff, All Secondary Parents

Equity Book Bundles and Equity Committee

February 8, 2021

MCSD Parents and Families:

Recently, concerns were brought forward regarding books read aloud in a classroom at one of our elementary schools along with questions regarding our District Equity Council.

As a district, we recognize and acknowledge the concerns. Since these concerns have been brought forward, we have taken the following steps:

- Suspended the equity book bundles in order to review further.
- Placed a hold on the District Equity council until the mission, vision, and participants are better defined and to ensure it is inclusive and representative.
- Revisiting of policy, procedures, and practices.
- Reviewing of transparency and communication related to books that are being used outside of the adopted curriculum.

We value and embrace full student, family, and employee participation at MCSD to ensure our schools are safe, transparent, and welcoming. We are committed to learning from this experience and doing better. The district and School Board are committed to listening to our stakeholders as we move forward and to taking the time for the thoughtful consideration that is needed.

Respectfully,

Jennifer Covington, Superintendent of Schools

Jaren Cooper, MCSD Board of Education President

Belinda Johnson, MCSD Board of Education Vice-President

[View in ParentSquare](#) [Appreciate](#)

Please do not reply to this email.

Stay involved with your child's learning and activities at school.



You received this email because you are a ParentSquare user in Murray City School District. If you received this email in error or wish to disable your account, [click here to unsubscribe](#).

ParentSquare Inc. • 3935 State St, Suite 7502 • Santa Barbara, CA 93105



DOUG PERRY | COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC INFORMATION
Murray City School District

801.264.7400 office | 888.347.6295 cell

[Website](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#)

Date : 1/15/2021 1:45:38 PM
From : "Whitney Anderson"
To : "horizonteachers"
Subject : New supports to Equity book bundles: please read

Teachers,

As I reflect on our equity work and book bundles I want to say thank you for knowing your students and needs of your classroom. Thank you for braving the unknown and being willing to have new conversations with students.

With that being said, I want to make sure that each of you feel confident in the material. Please know that if you do not feel comfortable (for any reason or at anytime) I would like to be able to navigate that with you. These topics and these books are in no way, shape or form meant to put pressure on teachers, students, or parents. If you have hesitations, I want to listen and work through it with you.

With this reflection I would like to put our book bundles on hold until I am able to make sure we are being proactive and not being reactive. First, I want to have conversations with teachers and make sure I understand where everyone is in this process. I would like to brainstorm ways we can make things better. Second, I would like to put a process in place to make sure we are transparent and communicating clearly with teachers, parents, and other community members. I'd like to discuss this plan with each of you in our grade level PLC.

Please know that I am always available to talk and meet you where you are. Thank you for being part of HORIZON!

Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal • Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



Date : 2/7/2021 12:33:48 PM

From : "Jennifer Covington"

To : "Elementary Principals", "Secondary Principals", "District Admin", "Belinda Johnson", "Elizabeth Payne", "Glo Merrill", "Jaren Cooper", "Kami Anderson"

Subject : Parent Email Regarding Equity Concerns

Administrators and School Board: The following email was sent out today by parents. I am confident you will receive emails from parents regarding this.

Dear MCSD parents, caregivers and community members,

You may have heard in the news recently about some issues going on in Murray City School District. As fellow parents in Murray, and knowing that the news does not always represent topics accurately, we wanted to share some of the information we have received from parents and the district about these issues:

1. Last year MCSD formed an Equity Council. The majority of parents were not informed about the formation of this council nor invited to join. Attached to this email is the Council's mission, goals, and group norms. We encourage you to look into the words or phrases you may not understand on this sheet, such as "equity" (it does NOT mean equality) and "intersocial approach," etc. (See attached: MCSD Equity Council.)
2. In August 2020, MCSD sent out two district memos reminding all educators of Utah laws, code § 53E-9-203, regarding political speech. The MCSD Equity Council found these memos to be harmful and requested that the district apologize and write a new memo updating their stance. (See attached: Memos 1 and 2.)
3. As a result of the Equity Council's request, MCSD did write a new memo which was released in November 2020. In this memo, MCSD claimed that the first two memos harmed the community and were not in line with MCSD equity values. This new memo then encouraged educators to center equity in their daily teaching, with equity-based curriculum, dialogue and displays. (See attached: Memo 3.)
4. As a result of this corrected memo, political speech and signs in classrooms have been deemed appropriate and acceptable in all Murray schools, and the Utah laws, cited in the first two memos, which prohibited such speech and signs were deemed outdated and irrelevant.
5. As part of the new equity-centered curriculum encouraged by MCSD, an "Equity Book Bundles" program was started at Horizon Elementary School in conjunction with their Second Steps program. This Book Bundles program focused on marginalized groups and contained books accordingly. However, at no time was a full book list sent out to parents, nor was it posted on the school or district website.
6. On January 6, 2021, at Horizon Elementary School, a 3rd grade teacher read a transgender children's book titled "Call Me Max" to her entire class, without informing parents nor seeking their approval or consent. The author of this book, Kyle Lukoff, is a transgender male. The back of the book contains an "About the Author" section with a photograph of the author, which was read to the students. This prompted discussion on how Lukoff grew a beard since he used to be a girl. The teacher informed students that science has provided a way for this to be done, and students began discussing taking medicine after puberty if they want to change their gender. Here is a link to a video of this book (the "About the Author" section is not read in this video): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icr1naC6KrY>
7. When parents found out this book was read and discussed with their children (who came home after school and told them), some parents expressed concern about why they were not informed and why consent was not needed. In addition, parents asked where this book was found on the district or school's website or on any book list sent home.
8. In reply to concerned parents, the 3rd grade teacher and the administrators of Horizon Elementary sent a copy of the Equity Council's MCSD revised memo (Memo 3) stating that curriculum was to be equity-centered, inferring that as a result of this memo they did not need parental approval to read and discuss the book with 3rd grade classes. They also told parents the book was "wonderful and developmentally appropriate" for 3rd graders.
9. Also in reply to concerned parents, Horizon administrators acknowledged that the book bundles list was not posted anywhere for parents to access. Concerned parents were then sent several book lists with different books on different lists. Some parents were told of an "Additional Resources" list, where the transgender children books could be found, but no parents ever received that list. All of this prompted parents to involve the superintendent and Murray School Board in trying to figure out the facts. (See attached: Book Bundles List.)
10. As administrator of the Equity Book Bundles program and co-chair of the MCSD Equity Council, Dr. Vanessa Jobe (vice-principal at Horizon Elementary) claimed in a Utah Pride Center conference video, on Jan 23, 2020, that the Murray School Board approved the entire book list for the Book Bundles Program. When parents who viewed this conference went to their representatives on the school board, they were told that, in fact, that was misinformation and the school board had not seen or approved any list of books. Horizon's principal, Mrs. Whitney Anderson, then informed parents that Dr. Jobe had actually chosen the books herself from her personal friend's bookstore in SLC. (If you would like to view the MCSD Equity Council's presentation in "Pride, Not Prejudice: An LGBTQIA+ Conference for Utah Educators, Students, and Caregivers," we encourage you to contact the Utah Pride Center on Facebook, as they informed attendees that all videos would be available until April 1st, but for unclear reasons have since removed the videos so no one can access them.)
11. For two weeks, parents were told by both the teacher and administrators that these books and topics were part of Horizon's 3rd grade curriculum. Parents were even sent a topic calendar for the Equity/Second Steps program which showed "Sexuality and Gender" as the October 2020 topic for all grades, which was three months prior to this incident. (Parents still do not know what was taught or discussed in October 2020 regarding that topic.) However, as the issue was pressed further, suddenly MCSD began telling parents that "Call Me Max" was never part of the curriculum, and "Sexuality and Gender" were not intended to be 3rd grade equity topics, and in fact "Call Me Max" was brought into the classroom by a student, not the teacher or administrators. (See attached: Horizon Elementary Equity Topics.)
12. This new story is confusing to parents, since on January 6, 2021, Horizon 3rd graders also read and discussed "Julian is a Mermaid" (a children's book about gender-fluidity) and completed an assignment in conjunction with that book, which assignment was brought home to parents. "Julian is a Mermaid" was also not found on the Equity Book Bundles list sent to parents. No teacher or administrator has explained what list "Julian is a Mermaid" came from. Did the student who brought in "Call Me Max" also bring in "Julian"? Did the student also bring in the assignments for "Julian"? In addition, why was "Sexuality and Gender" found on the October 2020 topics list for 3rd grade (and all grades) if this was not intended to be part of the curriculum? Utah law, code § 53E-9-203, states that these topics are not to be in the curriculum of children without explicit parental consent. Why was "Sexuality and Gender" included in the Equity book topics without parental consent? Why won't MCSD answer these questions clearly and directly?
13. As members of MCSD, please be aware that the Equity Book Bundles program is set to roll out in all elementary schools district wide in the near future.

In summary, parents are still trying to find answers to these questions and others. We have asked the superintendent and other MCSD representatives about these issues, and most of our questions have gone unanswered. We have requested a public parent meeting with Superintendent Jon Covington regarding these issues, but she did not respond.

We feel these are important topics to be addressed publicly by MCSD with ALL parents. We want EVERY student in MCSD to feel welcomed and loved. We want to be involved in these equity discussions with our children. As parents, we have the legal right to be involved in the choices of these books, discussions, and curricula. We encourage all parents to get involved in these issues if they are important to you. Please look through the Book Bundles book list (attached to this email), find the books on YouTube and read all of them, and see for yourselves if you feel they are "developmentally appropriate" for your children. There are many books on this list (not just the ones discussed in this email) that are considered political and highly controversial. We feel that topics found in the Equity Book Bundles program would be considered sensitive to most parents and students, regardless of differing opinions on those topics. For this reason, we believe parents deserve complete honesty and full transparency from Murray City School District regarding all of these books and issues. If you feel the same, please get involved. Please start asking questions to your teachers, administrators, and MCSD about the Equity Council and its corresponding programs. Please feel free to forward this email (and all attachments) to anyone who may have a vested interest.

Thank you,
Concerned Parents

Unfortunately, this email did not mention that as a district we have suspended all equity book bundles and the Equity Council while we work to put practices and policies in place to ensure full transparency with our families. We have shared the following information with families who have reached out to us and want to share it with you as well.

The book "Call Me Max" was an isolated incident in one 3rd grade classroom at Horizon Elementary School. It has not been used in any other schools or classrooms. It was not approved by the Murray City School District Board of Education. A Horizon student brought the book and asked if the teacher would read the book to the class. The teacher read the book to the class and did answer students' questions about growing a beard and students mentioned something about puberty which the teacher shut down. The administration at Horizon Elementary was not aware of this book being read until it was brought to their attention by parents. The communication that followed with parents was unfortunate in that several different messages were sent with conflicting information. This has caused concerns of trust with parents.

As a district, we want to ensure that parents are fully informed of what is going on in their classroom. It is our duty to be fully transparent. As each of you know, the Equity Book Bundles have been placed on hold at this time while the district works to put procedures in place to ensure transparency and communication. The district is working on an action plan where educators and then the School Community Council will review all equity materials. Parents will be fully informed of what is being used in the classroom and provided with additional information regarding the materials. Parents will also have the ability to opt their child out of any reading by simply notifying their teacher.

The Equity Council was started a little over a year ago with the mission of building a diverse, equitable, and inclusive district by providing all students, families, and employees with a community of care, respect, and belonging. At present, the council consists of educators, administrators, and parents. At this time, the Equity Council has been suspended while the district and School Board work to put measures in

place to ensure the purpose of the council is clear, defined, and communicated to all parents and employees.

Our goals moving forward are to put policy and measures in place to ensure that we are open and transparent with books that are being read in the classroom and the mission, purpose and vision of Equity Council. We respect the rights and values of parents and do want to work together. As an education community, we want to show respect by acknowledging differences, looking for the good in everyone, and showing due regard for others' feelings, rights, cultures, and traditions. Our actions as educators and parents will demonstrate our belief that we are better when we are working together on behalf of every child.

I am confident you will be contacted by parents. Thank you for your help in getting the message out that as a district we recognize the concerns, that the book was an isolated incident at one school in one classroom, and that the district is working on measures to ensure transparency with the equity book bundles and the equity council.

Feel free to reach out to me if you want to discuss.

Jan

Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
Murray City School District
5102 S. Commerce Drive
Murray, UT 84107
801.264.7400



Date : 2/8/2021 4:21:24 PM
From : "Jennifer Covington"
To : "Elementary Principals" , "Secondary Principals" , "District Admin"
Subject : Parent Letter Regarding Equity Books and Equity Council
Attachment : Parent Letter.pdf;

Please see the attached letter that went out today to all parents with regards to the concerns surrounding the equity book bundles and the District Equity Council. Thank you also to all of you who have navigated conversations with parents and teachers today. We are thankful for you!

Jen

Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
Murray City School District
5102 S. Commerce Drive
Murray, UT 84107
801.264.7400



Date : 1/27/2021 10:57:40 AM
From : "Vanessa Jobe"
To : "Whitney Anderson"
Cc : "Sarah Paul"
Subject : Re: [REDACTED]
Attachment : 0E2B5242CDB3497496B0C98692A10389.png; B26CC8B051484B0DBF9E8B6D08D18C12.png;

Yes, Sarah looks great! Sorry for this confusion.

On Wed, Jan 27, 2021 at 10:56 AM Whitney Anderson <wanderson@murrayschools.org> wrote:
You explained it well. I have had conversations with her that they are separate. Let me know if she has other questions.

Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



On Wed, Jan 27, 2021 at 10:53 AM Sarah Paul <spaul@murrayschools.org> wrote:

I'm sorry! I don't understand why she's not understanding and I'm not really sure what she wants from me.

[REDACTED]
Wed 1/27, 8:04 am

Hello Ms. Paul, will the option be available today to zoom in for the second steps lesson?

SP Sarah Paul

Wed 1/27, 8:49 am

Hi, there is not an actual second steps lesson today. Our social workers have put together a virtual assembly through nearpod. You can view it at this link:
<https://share.nearpod.com/pjk3E14mdb>

Because Ms. Luna and I switch each term, she is starting the day in [REDACTED] class. This means that she will be teaching the Second Steps lessons this term. The Second steps lessons are separate from the Equity book bundles. Second Steps is a scripted program that has been approved. When we start up the Equity book bundles again, I will be teaching them.

Hope this helps!

[REDACTED]
Wed 1/27, 9:47 am

Thank you. The link did not work for me on my phone. Does it only work on computers? That's interesting about equity being separate from Second Steps since Dr. Jobe made it pretty clear they were linked together, so I'll be getting clarification on that. Thanks for your help.

SP Sarah Paul

Wed 1/27, 9:57 am

It might need to be on a computer. Try this link:
<https://share.nearpod.com/wW3ecOqkodb>

Both the second steps and Equity programs are taught on Wednesdays and some themes overlap. However, they are two separate programs. I believe what she sent you was the schedule for both programs.

(she/her/ hers)

8m.264.7420

Date : 1/14/2021 8:13:28 PM
From : "Karen Peterson"
To : "Whitney Anderson"
Subject : Re: Does this email to staff come across as a shocker? I don't want to cause chaos...

This is thoughtful and well written. You come across open and willing to work with others where they are.

I would counsel that you remove the self depreciating paragraph . You feel the weight, but no one knows that, nor do they need to. Leaving the paragraph in will raise questions that will undermine your leadership. You have the love and loyalty of your staff and they respect you. Any difficult situation can be repaired without publicly beating yourself.

I'd recommend that you stick more with the idea that you have already eluded to, the book boxes were enthusiastically embraced as a way to address the events that developed over the summer in order to help students process. We just moved faster than what prudence would dictate. Having reflected on the first half of the year, you just want to get a pulse from everyone in order to do this right.

Including all stakeholders, teachers and parents in this process is critical for this to be a community effort, and one that will last no matter how long it takes to establish because we're all on board, we're all moving in the same direction, just at different speeds.

Thanks for trusting me to read it before you sent.

KP

On Thu, Jan 14, 2021, 2:54 PM Whitney Anderson <wanderson@murrayschools.org> wrote:

Teachers,

As I reflect on our equity work and book bundles I want to say thank you for knowing your students and needs of your classroom. Thank you for braving the unknown and being willing to have new conversations with students.

With that being said, I want to make sure that each of you feel confident in the material. Please know that if you do not feel comfortable (for any reason) I would like to be able to navigate that with you. These topics and these books are in no way, shape or form meant to put pressure on teachers, students, or parents. If you have hesitations, I want to listen and work through it with you.

I don't claim to be anywhere near knowledgeable and admittedly sometimes can be uncomfortable with topics regarding race, gender, etc... I think I have been trying so hard to 'catch up and keep up' that I have failed to check in and support others that may need me. I apologize if you have felt the lack of my leadership.

With this reflection I would like to put our book bundles on hold until I am able to make sure we are being proactive and not being reactive. First, I want to have conversations with teachers and make sure I understand where everyone is in this process. I would like to brainstorm ways we can make things better. Second, I would like to put a process in place to make sure we are transparent and communicating clearly with teachers, parents, and other community members. I'd like to discuss this plan with each of you in our grade level PLC.

Please know that I am always available to talk and meet you where you are. Thank you for being part of HORIZON!

Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



Date : 1/14/2021 8:22:31 PM

From : "Karen Peterson"

To : "Whitney Anderson"

Subject : Re: Does this email to staff come across as a shocker? I don't want to cause chaos...

There's nothing wrong with admitting that some topics are now and uncomfortable for you...I just don't want you to share that you were neglectful.

On Thu, Jan 14, 2021, 8:13 PM Karen Peterson <kapeterson@murrayschools.org> wrote:

This is thoughtful and well written. You come across open and willing to work with others where they are.

I would counsel that you remove the self depreciating paragraph . You feel the weight, but no one knows that, nor do they need to. Leaving the paragraph in will raise questions that will undermine your leadership. You have the love and loyalty of your staff and they respect you. Any difficult situation can be repaired without publicly beating yourself.

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As I reflect on our equity work and book bundles I want to say thank you for knowing your students and needs of your classroom. Thank you for braving the unknown and being willing to have new conversations with students.

With that being said, I want to make sure that each of you feel confident in the material. Please know that if you do not feel comfortable (for any reason) I would like to be able to navigate that with you. These topics and these books are in no way, shape or form meant to put pressure on teachers, students, or parents. If you have hesitations, I want to listen and work through it with you.

I don't claim to be anywhere near knowledgeable and admittedly sometimes can be uncomfortable with topics regarding race, gender, etc... I think I have been trying so hard to 'catch up and keep up' that I have failed to check in and support others that may need me. I apologize if you have felt the lack of my leadership.

With this reflection I would like to put our book bundles on hold until I am able to make sure we are being proactive and not being reactive. First, I want to have conversations with teachers and make sure I understand where everyone is in this process. I would like to brainstorm ways we can make things better. Second, I would like to put a process in place to make sure we are transparent and communicating clearly with teachers, parents, and other community members. I'd like to discuss this plan with each of you in our grade level PLC.

Please know that I am always available to talk and meet you where you are. Thank you for being part of HORIZON!

Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



Date : 2/9/2021 5:23:23 PM
From : "Whitney Anderson"
To : "Jennifer Covington" , "Vanessa Jobe" , "Karen Peterson" , "Jamie Booth" , "Darren Dean"
Subject : Re: DRAFT: 3rd grade parent letter
Attachment : Dear Horizon 3rd Grade Parents.pdf

I guess an attachment would be helpful...whoa. sorry!

Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



On Tue, Feb 9, 2021 at 5:12 PM Whitney Anderson <wanderson@murrayschools.org> wrote:

Thoughts and/or advice on this letter would be much appreciated. Thank you to all of you for your continued support and work on this.

Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



Date : 2/11/2021 12:12:35 PM

From :

To : info@murrayschools.org, ddoan@murrayschools.org

Cc : dmcDougal@murrayschools.org, wanderson@murrayschools.org, vjobe@murrayschools.org

Subject : Re: Equity Book Bundles & Diversity Equity Council

Hello,

I came across the SLTrib article this morning in which it stated that a Murray teacher read a book from the equity book bundle (that was brought to class by another student it seems) resulting in alleged backlash from parents of students in the school.

In response, you chose not to stand up for the community you claim to include and suspended both the book bundle program AND the Diversity Equity Council.

How can your website state that you're committed to providing equality, diversity, and inclusion while suspending and removing programs that are built to incorporate the aforementioned topics? Not only are you suspending books around the LGBTQ community, the books in the bundle include topics about race/anti-racism and books in languages other than English.

Additionally, the article stated that the district will be speaking with teachers about what they can and cannot read to the students? I understand age-appropriate content, but it is unacceptable to ban teachers from including their students of color or students who may be part of the LGBTQ community by reading literature that speaks to them and/or represents them.

Here are some helpful articles on the suicide rates of children and teens:

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/preventing-suicide/facts-about-suicide/>

<https://www.glaad.org/blog/study-finds-some-lgbt-youth-color-more-likely-attempt-suicide>

In summation, I am appalled by your decision and hope you will do what it takes to make this right.

Sincerely,

a Concerned Member of this Community

Date : 1/25/2021 5:42:00 PM
From : "Vanessa Jobe"
To : "Whitney Anderson"
Cc : "Jennifer Covington", "Darren Dean", "Belinda Johnson", "Jaren Cooper"
Subject : Re: Equity Books

Here is this from [REDACTED] Let me know if there is anything further I can do. I apologize for my misunderstanding with the word approved.

Dear Dr. Jobe,

Thank you for reaching out. I understand completely and can add a statement to the video. I will also be reaching out to our technology team and we will edit the video. I have attached the following statement for right now as we work on the video: Edit for Replay of Video: In this session, Dr. Vanessa Jobe mentioned the approval process of the equity book bundle. A clarifying statement has been provided by the Murray City School District that, "the equity book bundles were reviewed by the school board but did not go through with an approval vote."

We will be working on the edit now. This may take a day or so but it is a high priority of ours to help with the edit.

If you need anything else or have any questions, please let me know,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

On Mon, Jan 25, 2021 at 3:17 PM Vanessa Jobe <vjobe@murrayschools.org> wrote:
The coordinator of the presentation will edit the part in which that was stated. Additionally, they will write that the board reviewed information about the books but did not approve the resources.

On Mon, Jan 25, 2021 at 2:51 PM Vanessa Jobe <vjobe@murrayschools.org> wrote:
I am very sorry for my confusion.

On Mon, Jan 25, 2021 at 2:48 PM Whitney Anderson <wanderson@murrayschools.org> wrote:
They were 'reviewed'. It's different from 'approved'.

Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



On Mon, Jan 25, 2021 at 2:28 PM Vanessa Jobe <vjobe@murrayschools.org> wrote:
I stated that the original book bundles were approved in our presentation with Darren this weekend. Did I misunderstand? I thought those original books were approved from our meeting with Darren, Jen and Whitney.

On Mon, Jan 25, 2021 at 1:24 PM Whitney Anderson <wanderson@murrayschools.org> wrote:
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Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



On Mon, Jan 25, 2021 at 11:23 AM Jennifer Covington <jcovington@murrayschools.org> wrote:
It has come to my attention that it is being stated that the 2020 Equity Books were reviewed and approved by the Murray City School District Board of Education. The board received information regarding the equity book bundles as part of the equity presentation by Dr. Jobe but did not approve the list.

Anything the School Board takes action on must have a formal vote in an open board meeting. The board did not vote on approval of these resources. This statement is extremely problematic as it would be a violation of open meeting laws.

Please immediately remove this statement from anywhere it is communicated.

Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
Murray City School District

5102 S. Commerce Drive
Murray, UT 84107
801.264.7400



--
Vanessa Jobe, Ed.D.
Horizon Elementary Assistant Principal
(she/her/ hers)
801.264.7420

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Vanessa Jobe, Ed.D.
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(she/her/ hers)
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Horizon Elementary Assistant Principal
(she/her/ hers)
801.264.7420

--
Vanessa Jobe, Ed.D.
Horizon Elementary Assistant Principal
(she/her/ hers)
801.264.7420

Date : 1/25/2021 1:24:43 PM
From : "Whitney Anderson"
To : "Jennifer Covington"
Cc : "Darren Dean" , "Vanessa Jobo" , "Belinda Johnson" , "Jaren Cooper"
Subject : Re: Equity Books

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Mrs. Whitney Anderson
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Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
Murray City School District
5102 S. Commerce Drive
Murray, UT 84107
801.264.7400



Date : 1/25/2021 2:48:18 PM
From : "Whitney Anderson"
To : "Vanessa Jobe"
Cc : "Jennifer Covington" ; "Darren Dean" ; "Belinda Johnson" ; "Jaren Cooper"
Subject : Re: Equity Books

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Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



On Mon, Jan 25, 2021 at 2:28 PM Vanessa Jobe <vjobe@murrayschools.org> wrote:

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Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
Murray City School District
5102 S. Commerce Drive
Murray, UT 84107
801.264.7400



Vanessa Jobe, Ed.D.
Horizon Elementary Assistant Principal
(she/her/ hers)
801.264.7420

Date : 1/25/2021 2:28:42 PM
From : "Vanessa Jobe"
To : "Whitney Anderson"
Cc : "Jennifer Covington" , "Darren Dean" , "Belinda Johnson" , "Jaren Cooper"
Subject : Re: Equity Books

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Murray City School District
5102 S. Commerce Drive
Murray, UT 84107
801.264.7400



Vanessa Jobe, Ed.D.
Horizon Elementary Assistant Principal
(she/her/hers)
801.264.7420

Date : 1/25/2021 3:18:09 PM
From : "Vanessa Jobe"
To : "Whitney Anderson"
Cc : "Jennifer Covington" , "Darren Dean" , "Belinda Johnson" , "Jaren Cooper"
Subject : Re: Equity Books

The coordinator of the presentation will edit the part in which that was stated. Additionally, they will write that the board reviewed information about the books but did not approve the resources.

On Mon, Jan 25, 2021 at 2:51 PM Vanessa Jobe <vjobe@murrayschools.org> wrote:
I am very sorry for my confusion.

On Mon, Jan 25, 2021 at 2:48 PM Whitney Anderson <wanderson@murrayschools.org> wrote:
They were 'reviewed'. It's different from 'approved'.

Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



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Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



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Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
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5102 S. Commerce Drive
Murray, UT 84107
801.264.7400



--
Vanessa Jobe, Ed.D.
Horizon Elementary Assistant Principal
(she/her/hers)
801.264.7420

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Vanessa Jobe, Ed.D.
Horizon Elementary Assistant Principal
(she/her/hers)
801.264.7420

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Vanessa Jobe, Ed.D.
Horizon Elementary Assistant Principal
(she/her/hers)
801.264.7420

Date : 1/25/2021 2:51:54 PM
From : "Vanessa Jobe"
To : "Whitney Anderson"
Cc : "Jennifer Covington", "Darren Dean", "Belinda Johnson", "Jaren Cooper"
Subject : Re: Equity Books

I am very sorry for my confusion.

On Mon, Jan 25, 2021 at 2:48 PM Whitney Anderson <wanderson@murrayschools.org> wrote:
They were 'reviewed'. It's different from 'approved'.

Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



On Mon, Jan 25, 2021 at 2:28 PM Vanessa Jobe <vjobe@murrayschools.org> wrote:
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5102 S. Commerce Drive
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Vanessa Jobe, Ed.D.
Horizon Elementary Assistant Principal
(she/her/hers)
801.264.7420

Vanessa Jobe, Ed.D.
Horizon Elementary Assistant Principal
(she/her/hers)
801.264.7420

Date : 1/14/2021 9:11:43 AM
 From : "Vanessa Jobe"
 To : [REDACTED]
 Cc : "Whitney Anderson"
 Subject : Re: Equity Council Book List
 Attachment : Screen Shot 2021-01-14 at 8.55.59 AM.png;

Hi [REDACTED]

Thank you and yes absolutely. We are working on a system so the books and lessons will be more visible as well. Ms. Paul has the books posted on her monthly calendar that you will see in 3rd grade. Here is a book list for all of the other books.

The Julian the Mermaid and I am Max Book is not on our equity book bundles at this time. You will see the books that are on our equity bundles below. Those books were for student support. Our new system will allow for better parent involvement for future equity teachings. We will communicate that once the system is in place.

I included the screen shot that I explained in my message to you. The top left row is for special education, then kinder, then first and it builds up.

Please feel free to call with any questions. Thank you for reaching out.
 Thank you,



Book	Grade Level (SPED-8th)
All Are Welcome- Pongold	Special Education
Daniel's Good Day- Archer	Special Education
Little Legends: Exceptional Black Men in History- Harrison	Special Education
Who Was Frederick Douglass- Prince	Special Education
Who Did it first? -Hart	Special Education/ 1st Grade
Black is a Rainbow Color- Joy	Kinder
Be You! -Reynolds	Kinder
Tiger Days: A Book of Feelings- Clark	Kinder
AntiRacist Baby- Kendi	Kinder
You Matter- Robinson	1st Grade
I am Human- Verde/ Reynolds	1st Grade
La princesa and the Pea- Elya	2nd Grade
Ohana Means Family- Loomis	2nd Grade
The Day You Begin- Woodson	2nd Grade
A Family is a Family is a Family- O'Leary	2nd Grade
Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to My Daughters- Obama	3rd Grade
Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History- Harrison	3rd Grade
Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story- Millard	3rd Grade
The Bell Rang- Ransome	3rd Grade
Word Collector- Reynolds	3rd Grade
Paper Kingdom- Rhee	3rd Grade
The Oldest Student: How Mary Walker Learned to Read- Hubbard	4th Grade

What Was the March on Washington? -Krull	4th Grade
What Was the Underground Railroad- Mcdonough	4th Grade
Let's Talk About Race- Lester	4th Grade
The List of Things That Will Not Change- Stead	4th Grade
Frederick's Journey: The Life of Fredrick Douglass- Rappaport	4th Grade
Undefeated- Alexander Nelson	4th Grade
Champions of Change: 25 Women Who Made History- Watkins	5th Grade
This Book is Anti-Racist- Jewell	5th Grade
A Place to Land: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Speech That Inspired a Nation- Wittenstien	5th Grade
Pride: The Story of Harvey Milk and the Rainbow Flag- Sanders and Salerno	5th Grade
Equity's Call: The Story of Voting Rights in America	5th Grade
Ghost Boys, Rhodes	6th Grade
Suffragette: The Battle of Equality, Roberts	6th Grade
Rainbow Revolutionaries: 50 LGBTQ+ People Who Made History- Prager	6th Grade
Stamped: Racism, Antiracism and You- Reynolds	6th Grade
Manerland- Ryan	6th Grade

On Wed, Jan 13, 2021 at 9:22 PM [REDACTED] wrote:
Hello!

I love the idea of the equity books and appreciate the work that is done to make sure that differences are discussed in the classroom. As a parent, I want to be sure that we discuss these topics in our home before they are taught at school. Recently some books were shared in our 3rd graders class with topics we didn't know would be addressed.

I understand that changes can be made due to needs in the classroom. However, is there a way for us to know what will be taught beforehand? Do you have an updated list that I could use to review what is coming for the equity lessons in the near future? We also have a 6th grader so I would love a current list for that grade as well.

As parents, we want to support the efforts that teachers are making in the classroom across all subjects. We can't do that, though, if we don't know what is going to be taught.

Thanks very much!

--
Vanessa Jobe, Ed.D.
Horizon Elementary Assistant Principal
(she/her/hers)
801.264.7420

Date : 2/3/2021 4:59:42 PM
From : "Vanessa Jobe"
To : "Michelle Chacon"
Cc : "Whitney Anderson"
Subject : Re: Equity

Hi Michelle! Yes absolutely. That is what we are going for. We are waiting for District communication and the book check system through the SCC. When it is time to move forward sharing the links and lessons is a great idea. Thank you for reaching out and thank you for the hard work in your classroom!
Vanessa

On Wed, Feb 3, 2021 at 4:36 PM Michelle Chacon <mchacon@murrayschools.org> wrote:

Hello,

I just had some thoughts on the equity bundles being on hold.

I heard some rumors in the lunch room about how some parents thought we were using the equity book bundles which I did not feel reflected what we were doing with them. Like Whitney said in the meeting about how we were teaching a book versus the many ways a book could be taught. I think you are right that it is just a communication issue.

I think it would be helpful to go back and include a quick parent letter with each book's lesson plan that includes our purpose for the book, a synopsis of the book, and the link to the lesson presentation for that book. Then, when a teacher is ready to share a book with the class, they can shoot a message to parents in Parent Square with the parent letter. Maybe a day or two before the lesson? This could help ease the parents' minds since this feels new and scary for them. With new school leadership, I think any changes are just extra scrutinized. Add on the challenges we have faced this past year, and people are even more apt to question things.

When you think about it, Eureka math has parent news letters for each topic. At Challenger they sent home weekly newsletters for each grade that gave a brief summary of everything the students would learn in each subject. I think parents just like to be in the know. I have had students who are Jehovah's Witnesses who were excused from reading anything mystical such as stories with witches or fairies. Like you said, parents get to choose what they want their children to learn. I think a quick parent letter on Parent Square will solve the issue we are having. Then they know what is going on and they can choose to opt their child out or follow up with conversations on the topic at home. It's definitely always a plus when parents are involved with their child's education. While we have their attention, we might as well teach them too!

If you would like to do parent letters, I would be more than happy to help. Just let me know what you need.

Thank you both for your patience and understanding. That's really important when trying to implement change. Hang in there!

Sincerely,
Michelle Chacon

--

Vanessa Jobe, Ed.D.
Horizon Elementary Assistant Principal
(she/her/hers)
Rm. 264.7420

Date : 2/3/2021 5:42:21 PM
From : "Michelle Chacon"
To : "Whitney Anderson"
Subject : Re: Equity

Pardon my ignorance, reference forms for what exactly? I applied at a couple of school districts in Florida late last night, but I didn't think they would contact you so soon.

On Wed, Feb 3, 2021 at 5:26 PM Whitney Anderson <wanderson@murrayschools.org> wrote:

Thank you for your thoughts and considerations! I think you make really great points and it's so nice to get multiple eyes on a solid solution.

Thank you!

Also, I've been receiving emails with reference forms attached. I filled out a couple today. I have a few more to do as well. Let me know what else I need to do!!

Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7120



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Sincerely,
Michelle Chacon

Date : 2/3/2021 5:26:12 PM
From : "Whitney Anderson"
To : "Michelle Chacon"
Subject : Re: Equity

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Sincerely,
Michelle Chacon

Date : 2/4/2021 2:38:11 PM
From : "Michelle Chacon"
To : "Whitney Anderson"
Subject : Re: Equity

Thank you! They hadn't even contacted me yet so I didn't know they were sending you anything. I guess that's a good sign

On Thu, Feb 4, 2021 at 1:48 PM Whitney Anderson <wanderson@murrayschools.org> wrote:

Ha...sorry for the confusion. I filled out two from:

I didn't say the school that it was going to, it was a form with a series of questions and ratings for different aspects of teaching. Is that not what you are looking for?

Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



On Wed, Feb 3, 2021 at 5:42 PM Michelle Chacon <mchacon@murrayschools.org> wrote:

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Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



On Wed, Feb 3, 2021 at 4:36 PM Michelle Chacon <mchacon@murrayschools.org> wrote:

Hello,

I just had some thoughts on the equity bundles being on hold.

I heard some rumors in the lunch room about how some parents thought we were using the equity book bundles which I did not feel reflected what we were doing with them. Like Whitney said in the meeting about how we were teaching a book versus the many ways a book could be taught. I think you are right that it is just a communication issue.

I think it would be helpful to go back and include a quick parent letter with each book's lesson plan that includes our purpose for the book, a synopsis of the book, and the link to the lesson presentation for that book. Then, when a teacher is ready to share a book with the class, they can shoot a message to parents in Parent Square with the parent letter. Maybe a day or two before the lesson? This could help ease the parents' minds since this feels new and scary for them. With new school leadership, I think any changes are just extra scrutinized. Add on the challenges we have faced this past year, and people are even more apt to question things.

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If you would like to do parent letters, I would be more than happy to help. Just let me know what you need.

Thank you both for your patience and understanding. That's really important when trying to implement change. Hang in there!

Sincerely,
Michelle Chacon

Date : 2/4/2021 1:48:15 PM
From : "Whitney Anderson"
To : "Michelle Chacon"
Subject : Re: Equity

Hi...sorry for the confusion. I filled out two from:

I didn't say the school that it was going to, it was a form with a series of questions and ratings for different aspects of teaching. Is that not what you are looking for?

Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



On Wed, Feb 3, 2021 at 5:42 PM Michelle Chacon <mchacon@murrayschools.org> wrote:

Pardon my ignorance, reference forms for what exactly? I applied at a couple of school districts in Florida late last night, but I didn't think they would contact you so soon.

On Wed, Feb 3, 2021 at 5:26 PM Whitney Anderson <wanderson@murrayschools.org> wrote:

Thank you for your thoughts and considerations! I think you make really great points and it's so nice to get multiple eyes on a solid solution.

Thank you!

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Date : 2/4/2021 5:05:27 PM
From : "Whitney Anderson"
To : "Michelle Chacon"
Subject : Re: Equity

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Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



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Date : 2/4/2021 6:21:22 PM
From : "Michelle Chacon"
To : "Whitney Anderson"
Subject : Re: Equity

Oh good! I was literally just telling my husband how bad I felt about causing you extra work.

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Michelle Chacon

Date : 2/7/2021 4:07:53 PM
From : "Jennifer Covington"
To : "Vanessa Jobe"
Cc : "Whitney Anderson" , "Darren Dean"
Subject : Re: Julian is a Mermaid

Thank you Vanessa. Could you please clarify with me how the book got into the 3rd and it sounds like 4th grade classes? Did teachers come to you, see it in your office and ask to read it to their class? Who was responsible for creating the assignment that went along with it?

Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
Murray City School District
5102 S. Commerce Drive
Murray, UT 84107
801.264.7400



On Sun, Feb 7, 2021 at 2:58 PM Vanessa Jobe <vjobe@murrayschools.org> wrote:

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Also, I do not know the owner of the Kings English Book shop. I know someone who has their masters in children's literature. I met him once. He helped with the book list.

-Vanessa

On Sun, Feb 7, 2021 at 12:39 PM Jennifer Covington <jcovington@murrayschools.org> wrote:

Hi Vanessa. Could you please let me know how the book 'Julian is a Mermaid' came into the classroom? I did not see this on the original book bundle list that was sent out. Was this read in Ms. Paul's classroom or was it read in other classrooms as well? This information will help me to answer parental questions regarding this book.

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Murray City School District
5102 S. Commerce Drive
Murray, UT 84107
801.264.7400



--

Vanessa Jobe, Ed.D.
Horizon Elementary Assistant Principal
(she/her/ hers)
801.264.7420

Date : 2/7/2021 2:56:24 PM
From : "Vanessa Jobe"
To : "Jennifer Covington"
Cc : "Whitney Anderson", "Darren Dean"
Subject : Re: Julian is a Mermaid

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--
Vanessa Jobe, Ed.D.
Horizon Elementary Assistant Principal
(she/her/hers)
801.264.7420

Date : 2/7/2021 7:34:48 PM
From : "Vanessa Jobe"
To : "Jennifer Covington"
Cc : "Whitney Anderson", "Darren Dean"
Subject : Re: Julian is a Mermaid

Cortney (4th) has her own copy and Sarah (3rd) borrowed it. I have not had any teachers see the book in my office and ask to read it in their classes.

Could you (Darren and Whitney) meet tomorrow at 9:00 or 1:00? Or whenever else is good for your schedules to answer the question on assignments? I am not clear about what assignments are being referenced here since the book was not a part of the bundles.

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Murray City School District
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Horizon Elementary Assistant Principal
(she/her/hers)
801.264.7420

Vanessa Jobe, Ed.D.
Horizon Elementary Assistant Principal
(she/her/hers)
801.264.7420

Date : 2/8/2021 7:39:00 AM
From : "Jennifer Covington"
To : "Vanessa Jobe"
Cc : "Whitney Anderson" , "Darren Dean"
Subject : Re: Julian is a Mermaid

Thank you Vanessa for explaining this. If I am reading your message right, the reading of Julian is Mermaid was a teacher decision. Is that correct? I am not necessarily concerned with the assignment if that is the case. However, I am concerned that you state these are not part of the equity book bundles and yet emails were sent by you to parents after this book and Call Me Max were read showing these two books as part of a comprehensive list of the books that 3rd grade reads during their second steps lessons. They were not on the original list and then were emailed to parents as a list of books that are read in 3rd grade. This indeed is sending mixed messages. I hope you can see that the different messages that were sent are one of the root causes of the concern of parents. If they were read by a teacher and there was concern, that should have been handled on a classroom basis.

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Vanessa Jobe, Ed.D.
Horizon Elementary Assistant Principal
(she/her/hers)
801.264.7420

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Vanessa Jobe, Ed.D.
Horizon Elementary Assistant Principal
(she/her/hers)
801.264.7420

Date : 2/8/2021 8:11:09 AM
From : "Vanessa Jobe"
To : "Jennifer Covington"
Cc : "Whitney Anderson" , "Darren Dean"
Subject : Re: Julian is a Mermaid

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I have supported the use of Julian is a Mermaid by having the book in my office and the 4th grade teacher (Courtney) shared how she used the book in our PD in October.

Is it still an option to meet later on today?

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—
Vanessa Jobe, Ed.D.

Horizon Elementary Assistant Principal

(she/her/ hers)

801.264.7420

Date : 2/8/2021 3:59:05 PM
From : "Jennifer Covington"
To : "Vanessa Jobe"
Cc : "Whitney Anderson", "Darren Dean"
Subject : Re: Julian is a Mermaid

I am sorry for the delay in getting back to you. I have been busy with this the entire day. I have personally reached out to many parents to understand what they want in order for us to move forward. It comes down to wanting to hear from the Horizon Administration on what actually took place and acknowledging that there were missteps made in communication and transparency. They are in large part wanting recognition of their concerns and an apology. Some parents feel a letter would suffice while others want to have a meeting. As I have spoken with my team here today, we think both of these are good strategies to move forward. Please let me know if you have time available tomorrow to discuss. I am free anytime after 11:30 a.m. I would also like to invite Scott Bushnell to attend with the four of us.

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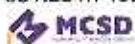
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Horizon Elementary Assistant Principal

(she/her/hers)

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(she/her/hers)

801.264.7420

Vanessa Jobe, Ed.D.

Horizon Elementary Assistant Principal

(she/her/hers)

801.264.7420

Date : 2/8/2021 6:13:16 PM
From : "Vanessa Jobe"
To : "Jennifer Covington"
Cc : "Whitney Anderson", "Darren Dean"
Subject : Re: Julian is a Mermaid

Sounds good, I am also open after 11:30. Thank you for everyone's work on this.

On Mon, Feb 8, 2021 at 3:59 PM Jennifer Covington <jcovington@murrayschools.org> wrote:

I am sorry for the delay in getting back to you. I have been busy with this the entire day. I have personally reached out to many parents to understand what they want in order for us to move forward. It comes down to wanting to hear from the Horizon Administration on what actually took place and acknowledging that there were missteps made in communication and transparency. They are in large part wanting recognition of their concerns and an apology. Some parents feel a letter would suffice while others want to have a meeting. As I have spoken with my team here today, we think both of these are good strategies to move forward. Please let me know if you have time available tomorrow to discuss. I am free anytime after 11:30 a.m. I would also like to invite Scott Bushnell to attend with the four of us.

Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
Murray City School District
5102 S. Commerce Drive
Murray, UT 84107
801.264.7400



On Mon, Feb 8, 2021 at 8:11 AM Vanessa Jobe <vjobe@murrayschools.org> wrote:

I am going to print off every communication I have so we can go through it to understand where the comprehensive list came from. My intention was to protect the student who brought the book and include: Julian is a Mermaid as an additional resource to equity book bundles. Those books were not on the original list.

I have supported the use of Julian is a Mermaid by having the book in my office and the 4th grade teacher (Courtney) shared how she used the book in our PD in October.

Is it still an option to meet later on today?

Vanessa

On Mon, Feb 8, 2021 at 7:39 AM Jennifer Covington <jcovington@murrayschools.org> wrote:

Thank you Vanessa for explaining this. If I am reading your message right, the reading of Julian is Mermaid was a teacher decision. Is that correct? I am not necessarily concerned with the assignment if that is the case. However, I am concerned that you state these are not part of the equity book bundles and yet emails were sent by you to parents after this book and Call Me Max were read showing these two books as part of a comprehensive list of the books that 3rd grade reads during their second steps lessons. They were not on the original list and then were emailed to parents as a list of books that are read in 3rd grade. This indeed is sending mixed messages. I hope you can see that the different messages that were sent are one of the root causes of the concern of parents. If they were read by a teacher and there was concern, that should have been handled on a classroom basis.

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On Sun, Feb 7, 2021 at 7:34 PM Vanessa Jobe <vjobe@murrayschools.org> wrote:

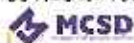
Cortney (4th) has her own copy and Sarah (3rd) borrowed it. I have not had any teachers see the book in my office and ask to read it in their classes.

Could you (Darren and Whitney) meet tomorrow at 9:00 or 1:00? Or whenever else is good for your schedules to answer the question on assignments? I am not clear about what assignments are being referenced here since the book was not a part of the bundles.

On Sun, Feb 7, 2021 at 4:07 PM Jennifer Covington <jcovington@murrayschools.org> wrote:

Thank you Vanessa. Could you please clarify with me how the book got into the 3rd and it sounds like 4th grade classes? Did teachers come to you, see it in your office and ask to read it to their class? Who was responsible for creating the assignment that went along with it?

Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
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On Sun, Feb 7, 2021 at 2:56 PM Vanessa Jobe <vjobe@murrayschools.org> wrote:

I believe that book was read in a 4th grade classroom as well. I had that book in my office. I did not put that book on the equity book bundles and it was not a part of the original list.

Also, I do not know the owner of the Kings English Book shop. I know someone who has their masters in children's literature. I met him once. He helped with the book list.

-Vanessa

On Sun, Feb 7, 2021 at 12:39 PM Jennifer Covington <jcovington@murrayschools.org> wrote:

Hi Vanessa, Could you please let me know how the book 'Julian is a Mermaid' came into the classroom? I did not see this on the original book bundle list that was sent out. Was this read in Ms. Paul's classroom or was it read in other classrooms as well? This information will help me to answer parental questions regarding this book.

Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
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Horizon Elementary Assistant Principal
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801.264.7420

Date : 2/3/2021 12:14:39 PM

From :

To : "Jennifer Covington"

Cc : "Glo Merrill", "Kami Anderson", "Belinda Johnson", "Elizabeth Payne", "Jaren Cooper", "Buck, Sarah", "Jennifer King", "Kauffman, Earl", "Scott Withoni", "Darren Dean", "wanderson@murrayschools.org", "jennside@murrayschools.org", "rebekah1990@gmail.com", "mbarc@murrayschools.org", "jauwerda@gmail.com", "mbarc@murrayschools.org", "Bouwman, Jim", "jauwerda@murrayschools.org", "jauwerda@murrayschools.org"

Subject : Re: Murray School District Equity Council

Ms. Covington -

I am very grateful that you took the time to call me. Thank you for listening and taking our concerns seriously, for recognizing how some things were handled poorly and your commitment to work toward handling things better in the future. I went away very encouraged by our conversation. I will discuss with some of the other parents the things that we talked about and get back to you. Have a great day!

Thanks,

On Mon, Feb 8, 2021 at 10:08 AM [REDACTED] wrote:

Ms. Covington -

Thank you for the reply. I am glad that the materials will be re-evaluated, hopefully parents will be included in that conversation and that our input will be considered when deciding which materials are "developmentally appropriate". As parents, we sincerely seek a safe, tolerant, inclusive and understanding environment for every child in the classroom and to build and maintain trust between parents and administration. Bottom line is that hopefully we all can agree on the necessity of working together from here on out as a partnership and with full disclosure and transparency. To be blunt, it feels like parental rights have been secretly undermined. Regarding the incident at Horizon, I have forwarded your reply to parents at Horizon who can respond directly to that. They are more familiar with the specific facts of the *Call Me Max* incident and can better speak to the conversations, emails, and conflicting information received from teacher, principal, Dr. Jobe, Dr. Dean, etc.

That said, I do have some ongoing concerns: You have expressed a commitment to be "open and transparent." However, you didn't respond to my request for a parent meeting - can you tell me if that is on the table? Moreover, the Equity Council's presentation has been blocked from viewing: https://www.youtube.com/watch?fbclid=IwAR13qj_9L3InJS0l_JpQ_FRLRnh-WdkR96Evpc0cV-0F2T-JLcWluayzNbw&v=P29NAz2RH-4&feature=youtu.be. This does not seem to be moving toward transparency? I did take notes and Dr. Jobe specifically said the books on the Equity Books Bundle had been approved by the School Board. Dr. Dean was part of that video presentation and he did not dispute her statement and has not replied to my emails. Parents were also told the Bundle had been approved and that the Book Bundles have been distributed to other schools in the District. In the interests of transparency, if this "personnel issue" is affecting our children and rights as parents, I think we deserve some additional explanation and clarification. In the interests of transparency, is Dr. Dean willing to explain why the Equity Council (that we did not know existed) was able to pressure him into apologizing for a memorandum that explained that pursuant to Utah law "a public-school classroom is reserved for its intended purpose of importing relevant instructions and is not an open forum for employees to engage in their own political speech" and instead approved "equity-based curriculum, conversations, dialogue, and displays" without any notice to parents of this change in philosophy and approach. Before the Equity Council resumes full operation, will we be fully informed about its purposes, goals, and objectives and how our students' curriculum will be affected by its "core beliefs". Will parental involvement be permitted or will participants continue to be hand-picked?

Even if the Board did not approve the books on the Equity Books Bundle List, in the interests of transparency, why were parents not provided with the full book list and why was it not posted on the school or district website? If it was a student who brought in *Call Me Max*, did that student also bring in *Julian is a Mermaid* and the written assignment that went along with it? *Julian is a Mermaid* touches on gender-fluidity and was not on the Equity Book Bundles list sent to parents.

As part of the Equity Council's presentation, Dr. Dean said that the Equity Council was a grassroots movement. It was such a grassroots movement, that none of us knew about it. There is a grassroots movement of parents who are very concerned about what has happened and making sure it gets fixed. I am aware of dozens of parents who are concerned. It is not just me - as I am sure you are becoming aware. We look forward to a more open dialogue and that as "we show due regard" for teachers and students' feelings, rights, cultures, and traditions," there can also be due regard for parents' rights.

Most appreciately,

On Fri, Feb 5, 2021 at 3:39 PM Jennifer Covington <jcovington@murrayschools.org> wrote:

[REDACTED] Thank you for the follow up questions. I am happy to address them in hopes of providing the clarity you are asking for. Please know that we do value parents and parental input and never want anything to feel like it is being done in secret.

The book "Call Me Max" was an isolated incident in one 3rd grade classroom at Horizon Elementary School. It has not been used in any other schools or classrooms. It was not approved by the Murray City School District Board of Education. A Horizon student brought the book in and asked if the teacher would read the book to the class. The teacher read the book to the class and answered the question you mentioned brought up by the students in the class about growing a beard. The administration at Horizon Elementary was not aware of this book being read until it was brought to their attention by parents. The communication that followed with parents was unfortunate in that several different messages were sent with conflicting information. We understand and appreciate that this has caused concerns of trust with parents. This is a personnel matter that we as a district have addressed with the administration at Horizon Elementary to ensure it does not happen in the future. We have also spoken with all of our administrators so they are aware of what occurred.

With regard to the equity book bundles, a presentation was made to the school board by Dr. Jobe in the fall that listed the books the school would be using throughout the year. The board did not review or approve those - it was simply part of a presentation that was made to the board. Horizon Elementary is the only school that has implemented those equity book bundles at this time. As mentioned in my last email, all equity book bundle books have been suspended while we work to put a process in place where those books will be reviewed by educators and approved by the School Community Council. We are committed to being fully transparent with this process and ensure our parents are fully informed.

The Equity Council was formed by educators, who were feeling unsafe as employees in our school system, as a place where we could look at policy to ensure equal employment opportunity for all. When Trayvon Martin was killed and tensions in our state and country rose, the equity committee broadened their focus to ensure all of our students felt safe and welcomed in our schools. Another individual did let me know that a parent had been told that the Equity Council did not want any more "white-identifying" people on the council. Our Director of Human Services and Student Services serves on this council and was not aware of anyone being told this. I asked that parent who told me this to please have that individual, or any individual who was told that, to please contact me personally so I could hear their story and address it appropriately. At this time, all work with the equity council has been suspended while we work to ensure a solid direction and framework moving forward that will have many voices.

Our goals moving forward are to put policy and measures in place to ensure that we are open and transparent with books that are being read in the classroom and the

mission, purpose and vision of Equity Council. We respect the rights and values of parents and do want to work together. As an education community, we want to show respect by acknowledging differences, looking for the good in everyone, and showing due regard for others' feelings, rights, cultures, and traditions. Our actions as educators and parents will demonstrate our belief that we are better when we are working together on behalf of every child.

Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
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On Thu, Feb 4, 2021 at 2:05 AM [REDACTED] wrote:
Dear Ms. Covington and Others:

Thank you for the replies, I appreciate your time and what appears to be your commitment to transparency going forward. I also appreciate that some of these issues are being discussed and re-evaluated. Although most of my questions weren't answered, that's understandable - there were a lot of them. Hopefully at some point they will be. I hate taking your time on this issue and, to be honest, I hate taking so much of my own time on it. But something is happening here in Murray that just doesn't seem right - and is causing many of us deep concern.

Transparency and parental involvement should be the biggest learning lesson. We all want our kids to be safe and for teachers and parents to have resources. But regardless of any parent's opinion on the propriety of teaching some of these things in school, I would think all parents can agree that we deserve to be advised of what sensitive and complicated issues are being taught and how they are being presented IN ADVANCE and be given the opportunity to provide consent and be prepared for questions that arise (for instance, I would assume that a parent with a child experiencing gender identity issues would especially want to know how that topic is being addressed before it happens).

Since my last email to you, I have been receiving information that has left me quite bewildered and confused. Many other parents seem to feel the same way. Conflicting information has been coming from Dr. Jobe and other school personnel regarding how Julian is a Mermaid and Call Me Max ended up being read to a 3rd grade class at Horizon without parental consent. One parent was told that the book was brought by a student or parent and read by the teacher to the class. Dr Jobe said that "Call Me Max" was only read to help a student feel supported for a specific incident and she sent a parent an Equity book list that did not include Call Me Max or Julian is a Mermaid. Dr Jobe also apparently said that she didn't believe LGBTQ+ issues should be discussed until 6th grade.

Another parent was told that those books were part of the curriculum and were part of the school and district's focus on equity work and Second Steps program. The 3rd grade teacher told another parent that reading these books were part of the school and district's focus on equity and anti-racist work and she included copies of the school district's memoranda as proof that the materials were approved (inferring that advance notice to parents was not required). She said that the books were part of their equity lessons for the week. Dr. Jobe told another parent that the lessons are wonderful and developmentally appropriate and included a list of the equity books for the year, which DID include both Julian is a Mermaid and Call Me Max. In addition, Dr Jobe apparently told at least one parent that the equity book bundles had been approved by the Murray School Board, but a member of the board has said that was not true. So parents are being told two different things by Dr. Jobe and others. Either it was an isolated incident or it was part of an approved plan. Either the books were approved by the Board or they weren't. Either the books are developmentally appropriate or should wait until 6th grade. It can't be both. So, Number One, there seems to be a problem with getting true and accurate information, and Number Two, parents were never given notice and never provided consent. Utah Code Section 53E-9-203 requires parental consent before topics involving "sexual behavior, orientation or attitudes" are discussed. This was acknowledged by the First Memorandum sent to District personnel, in August, before the Equity Council (as claimed in their video at the Utah Pride conference) successfully persuaded the District to send a revised Memorandum with an apology that substitutes "Equity" in place of Utah Law.

What I have been told is that these two books were part of the Equity Book Bundles program administered by Dr Jobe. Parents became concerned after their children came home and mentioned the teacher had talked to them about how science has made it possible for women who want to become men to grow a beard after going through puberty. If I understand correctly, certain parents received a list from Dr Jobe, after the fact, informing them that "Call Me Max" was part of the curriculum and book list for the 3rd grade equity book bundles program. See attachments from Dr. Jobe. Apparently, she provided the parents with a list of monthly topics and the October 2020 topic was Sexuality and Gender, so the books and topics appear to have been intentionally part of the 3rd grade curriculum from the outset of the school year, without parents' knowledge or consent. Moreover, Call Me Max was apparently incorporated into teacher trainings last summer.

Prior to Call Me Max, the 3rd Graders read and did an assignment on Julian is a Mermaid. The author Jessica Lovo says about this book that "As a genderfluid person, I didn't see this as a transgender book, but more about the freedom of gender expression," and originally it was about how Julian wanted to be a drag queen, but the author changed it to a mermaid because "there's something magical about how mermaids have no genitalia." Remember, this is for 3rd grade. The students then did an assignment where the worksheet says that Julian sees himself as a mermaid in the story, and asks them to draw a picture in a mirror of what they would like to become. Could it be that Julian is a Mermaid was preparing them for Call Me Max? Here is a link to Call Me Max where you can see that a child is looking in a mirror (like the assignment in Julian is a Mermaid) and sees herself as a boy who is transgender. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcrPnaCbKrY>. The book goes on to state that when a baby is born and parents call the baby a boy or girl, if the baby could talk the baby might say "NO I'M NOT" because the parents made a mistake. So without parents' consent or knowledge, the children are being taught at school that their parents may have made a mistake in calling them a boy or a girl. Again this is in 3rd grade.

So can you please clear this up? Were the books and Equity Bundles approved by the School District, only approved by Dr. Jobe, or implemented by the Equity Council? If the Equity Council, who formed the Equity Council and where does it derive its authority? I was sent a document with the Mission of the Equity Council. It is attached. One of the core beliefs is centering those impacted by marginalization in the curriculum. According to the document, marginalized include people of color, disabled, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer people, immigrants, etc. When I think of centering, it sounds like the curriculum and teaching will place these categories in the center, or the focus, or top priority. It also talks about an intersectional approach, which from the Utah Pride Center lectures we watched, means "unlearning all binaries" such as male and female. Based on Call Me Max and Dr Jobe's involvement with the Equity Council, this centering and these teachings have been happening at least as early as 3rd grade. Nowhere in the document is there anything about seeking parental input, buy-in, or consent; instead, the "group norm" is to "call others out". Apparently, at least one parent has been told the Equity Council doesn't want any more "white-identifying" people on the council. Is that accurate?

I am not the only one seeking additional information. Many parents are concerned and many more than I realized. Can you please provide us with the real story on what has been happening and what the goals are going forward? I agree that those who may be "marginalized" may have unique challenges that need to be addressed in a sensitive manner. That is all the more reason to involve us in the process. At the same time, I am learning that according to the "Equity" agenda, Equity is not about "Equality". According to Ten Commitments for Equity-Literate Educators: "Equity is not about valuing every perspective. An equity view does not value heteronormativity," and "educational outcome disparities are the result of structural inequities and have nothing to do with students' grittiness, mindsets..." I fundamentally disagree with a philosophy that elevates victimhood and ignores individual choice and

accountability.

Perhaps an in-person meeting with parents would be helpful - one that is calm and involves transparent discourse and explanations. The more transparency, the more understanding. Maybe then fewer bridges will be burned and more bridges can be built. We all want what is best for the kids, even if we see things from different perspectives. To find common ground we need to be able to trust that our rights as parents will be valued and respected. When things are hidden, it feels like we are somehow the enemy. We want to work together, PLEASE work with us and not in secret or behind our backs. You might ask, why do you care so much, your kids don't go to Horizon?? I watched the video from the Utah Pride Center conference and Dr. Jobe made it very clear that this is meant to be incorporated District-wide.

Thanks, [REDACTED]

On Tue, Feb 2, 2021 at 4:45 PM Jennifer Covington <jcovington@murrayschools.org> wrote:

[REDACTED]

Thank you for your email. We value and appreciate your thoughts. We agree that it is important that students, employees and families in the Murray City School District are able to participate in a school system that values and respects each person. Transparency and communication are also essential to what we do and believe. We are committed to doing our best in both of these areas.

The Equity Council was started a little over a year ago with the mission of building a diverse, equitable, and inclusive district by providing all students, families, and employees with a community of care, respect, and belonging. At present, the council consists of educators, administrators, and parents. At this time, the Equity Council has been suspended while the district and School Board work to put measures in place to ensure the purpose of the council is clear, defined, and communicated to all parents and employees. You are correct that these are complicated issues with no easy answers and it is important that parents have a voice in the work that is being done as we work to support all students.

The Equity Book Bundles have also been placed on hold at this time while we work to put procedures in place to ensure transparency and communication. The district is working on an action plan where educators and then the School Community Council will review all equity materials. Parents will be fully informed of what is being used in the classroom and provided with additional information regarding the materials. Parents will also have the ability to opt their child out of any reading by simply notifying their teacher.

We want to be thoughtful and intentional as we work on both of these areas. All procedures and measures will be shared with our parents as we agree that transparency and communication are vital.

Thank you for your advocacy of not only your students but all students. As a district, we are committed to working to make sure parents are fully informed of what is happening in their child's classroom.

Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
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On Mon, Feb 1, 2021 at 4:50 PM [REDACTED] wrote:

To Members of the Board, Superintendent, and Chairs of Community Councils (at Viewmont, Riverview and Murray High):

My wife and I are parents of 4 students that each attend one of the above-referenced schools - and my wife is a former teacher who often substitute teaches at Viewmont Elementary at teacher's requests. She isn't involved in the drafting of this email and is seeing it for the first time along with you, though she was aware I would be sending it. Our children are good students and the Murray Schools have been a nice fit for our family. Our children are generally shy and sometimes have a hard time making new friends, but we try to help them through that as parents - and they have had good teachers. We would hope that all teachers and staff would look at them as individuals who need help, support, guidance, and skills-training - not because, or in spite of, their gender, sexual orientation, race, religion or any other category.

With that backdrop, I recently learned about the Murray School Equity Council that was apparently created some time ago. I don't believe parents have been told about this Council, have we? If we were, somehow I missed the memo. I watched two of many videos/lectures (that have now been taken down) from the Utah Pride Center's recent conference for Utah Educators. One video that was extremely concerning to me was the Keynote Speaker Dr. Kyl Myers. I also viewed the presentation by the Murray School District's Equity Council. As I said, the videos are no longer able to be viewed, but I did take some notes while watching the presentations. Based on those lectures, I would like to ask you some questions to find out more about the Equity Council, what their goals and objectives are, and how this will affect the children and our family.

1. In the Equity Council's video presentation a question was asked about how it has been received by the parents. The answer was basically that they need to do a better job getting the word out to the parents. I would agree with that. How do we find out about what the Equity Council is doing? Do they have open meetings? Are their agendas shared with the community councils? Are the community councils giving input? Can you please let me know the best way to obtain access to this information?
2. In the Equity Council's video presentation, they mentioned that one of their greatest "Successes" was that the council was able to get the District to rescind a Memorandum that went out to District personnel in August by issuing a revised Memorandum in November. I have now read all these memoranda (see attached) and the first one seemed to communicate that the School District would follow Utah law and could control political speech in the classroom. The last one apologizes for being "harmful to the community" and appears to put "Equity" as the overriding principle governing Educators. Was the council really the body that achieved this "Success"? How did they do it? Should parents have been informed? No one asked me whether the Memorandum was harmful - were other parents asked? A memorandum to personnel regarding what will be allowed in the classroom directly impacts all parents and children in the district. Should we draw any conclusions from the fact that the first memorandum was issued before the election and the last one was three weeks after the election?
3. I have been informed that a book called Call Me Max, dealing with transgenderism, was read in a 3rd grade class in our district without parental consent. When those parents objected, the teacher cited them to the 3rd memorandum that was apparently released due to the Equity Council's successful initiative. Is it true that parents do not need to be informed when subjects regarding sexual orientation, transgenderism, the Black Lives Matter organization, gender issues are taught to our children? We had to sign a consent form for our child to watch "Because of Winn Dixie", but if it is a book on transgenderism is subject matter for the 3rd grade classroom, no parental consent is required?
4. In the introduction to the keynote address at the Utah Pride Center's conference for Utah Educators, the speaker made the point that schools are not about "transferring knowledge," but should be about engaging in discussions that "bring about change." I would like to know what the Murray School District's view is with respect to that comment? Who agrees with that premise and who disagrees? Is Murray School District's primary objective to help our students engage in discussions that bring about change? If

so, what change?

5. The Keynote Speaker made the point that she now teaches at a University where she doesn't have to deal with communications from parents. Does Murray School District value and appreciate and incorporate parental input? What is being done to be transparent about what our children are being taught? Does Murray District agree with me that there should be more transparency, not less? Do you agree that parents have a right to know what is being taught in the classroom regarding controversial subjects in society and how those issues are being presented? That we should focus more on educating our students to be productive, qualified, and skilled in the work force and being respectful citizens rather than on social engineering and political indoctrination? What is your stance?

6. The keynote speaker said that all students, parents and staff need to "unlearn all binaries" and to be retrained. In other words, no children should be looked at as male or female without the students first indicating what they want to be called. I assume this would also mean that if a student who is biologically a male says he is a female, he would be allowed to use the girls bathroom. Is this how the Equity Council and Murray School District view the world? If this is the direction we will go, will parental input be considered? An example she gave of improper gender bias was having a "Daddy Daughter Dance" or "Muffins with Mothers". We have had similar events in our children's schools, does the Equity Council aim to cancel these types of things?

7. Have you thought about whether the term "Equity" could really be a code word for opening the door to ignoring the Utah Constitution and the right of parents to have a say in their children's education? Are you in favor of the school system being revolutionized to incorporate political agendas and to replace basic and common sense teachings of mutual respect and courtesy with those political agendas? Are you in favor of using "Equity" to treat people differently based on certain "marginalized" categories with the goal of achieving equal outcomes rather than working toward providing equal opportunities? If yes to these questions, will you please let us know that in a transparent way? The Equity Council said something to the effect that one of their core beliefs is to center those most impacted by "marginalization" in the curriculum, policies, and practices. What does that mean?

8. The Equity Council mentioned some kind of an Equity Book bundle that is available or will become available. Do parents have access to this?

9. The Equity Council mentioned getting an equity director appointed at each school. Will we be informed before this happens? What is the criteria and what will they do? Will it be a paid position?

10. Jordan School District has Culture and Diversity Specialists who have begun doing training in classrooms. Will Murray School District have similar positions? Will parents be informed on what specifics are being taught?

Black Lives Matter and other people are trying to get a State School Board Member removed from the State Board of Education because she shared some of the lectures that were presented at the Utah Pride Center conference, including the two that I mention above, and because she is standing up for Utah families and the right of parents to know what their students are being taught. I'm attaching a copy of a message they sent to the Utah State School Board. To me it sounds anything but tolerant, anything but understanding, and anything but being willing to engage in a dialogue or conversation. Calling someone racist and homophobic because of differences of opinion does not sound like Equity to me, it kind of comes across more like bullying. Another group criticized her because she is advocating for the Golden Rule - doing unto others as we would have done unto us. To them, somehow that principle violates separation of church and state and is white supremacist.

I have not in the past been involved in Community Councils, but I can see that is a mistake because I had no idea that an Equity Council even existed, let alone that they are giving lectures on the changes that need to happen in our school system. Any information or answers you can provide to the questions raised in this email would be greatly appreciated and to each of us as parents going forward. My hope is that you will seek, consider, and appreciate the input of parents instead of only those groups who will scream, intimidate, threaten, and cancel.

Thanks, [REDACTED]

Date : 2/8/2021 10:09:07 AM

From :

To : "Jennifer Covington"

Cc : "Glo Merrill", "Kami Anderson", "Belinda Johnson", "Elizabeth Payne", "Jaren Cooper",

"Jennifer King", "Kauffman, Earl",

"Scott Wihongi",

Barren Dean

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Subject : Re: Murray School District Equity Council

Ms. Covington -

Thank you for the reply. I am glad that the materials will be re-evaluated, hopefully parents will be included in that conversation and that our input will be considered when deciding which materials are "developmentally appropriate". As parents, we sincerely seek a safe, tolerant, inclusive and understanding environment for every child in the classroom and to build and maintain trust between parents and administration. Bottom line is that hopefully we all can agree on the necessity of working together from here on out as a partnership and with full disclosure and transparency. To be blunt, it feels like parental rights have been secretly undermined. Regarding the incident at Horizon, I have forwarded your reply to parents at Horizon who can respond directly to that. They are more familiar with the specific facts of the *Call Me Max* incident and can better speak to the conversations, emails, and conflicting information received from teacher, principal, Dr. Jobe, Dr. Dean, etc.

That said, I do have some ongoing concerns: You have expressed a commitment to be "open and transparent." However, you didn't respond to my request for a parent meeting - can you tell me if that is on the table? Moreover, the Equity Council's presentation has been blocked from viewing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P29NAz2RH-4&feature=youtu.be>. This does not seem to be moving toward transparency? I did take notes and Dr. Jobe specifically said the books on the Equity Books Bundle had been approved by the School Board. Dr. Dean was part of that video presentation and he did not dispute her statement and has not replied to my emails. Parents were also told the Bundle had been approved and that the Book Bundles have been distributed to other schools in the District. In the interests of transparency, if this "personnel issue" is affecting our children and rights as parents, I think we deserve some additional explanation and clarification. In the interests of transparency, is Dr. Dean willing to explain why the Equity Council (that we did not know existed) was able to pressure him into apologizing for a memorandum that explained that pursuant to Utah law "a public-school classroom is reserved for its intended purpose of imparting relevant instructions and is not an open forum for employees to engage in their own political speech" and instead approved "equity-based curriculum, conversations, dialogue, and displays" without any notice to parents of this change in philosophy and approach. Before the Equity Council resumes full operation, will we be fully informed about its purposes, goals, and objectives and how our students' curriculum will be affected by its "core beliefs". Will parental involvement be permitted or will participants continue to be hand-picked?

Even if the Board did not approve the books on the Equity Books Bundle List, in the interests of transparency, why were parents not provided with the full book list and why was it not posted on the school or district website? If it was a student who brought in *Call Me Max*, did that student also bring in *Julian is a Mermaid* and the written assignment that went along with it? *Julian is a Mermaid* touches on gender-fluidity and was not on the Equity Book Bundles list sent to parents.

As part of the Equity Council's presentation, Dr. Dean said that the Equity Council was a grassroots movement. It was such a grassroots movement, that none of us knew about it. There is a grassroots movement of parents who are very concerned about what has happened and making sure it gets fixed. I am aware of dozens of parents who are concerned. It is not just me - as I am sure you are becoming aware. We look forward to a more open dialogue and that as "we show due regard" for teachers and students' feelings, rights, cultures, and traditions," there can also be due regard for parents' rights.

Most appreciately,

On Fri, Feb 5, 2021 at 3:39 PM Jennifer Covington <jcovington@murrayschools.org> wrote:

Thank you for the follow up questions. I am happy to address them in hopes of providing the clarity you are asking for. Please know that we do value parental input and never want anything to feel like it is being done in secret.

The book "Call Me Max" was an isolated incident in one 3rd grade classroom at Horizon Elementary School. It has not been used in any other schools or classrooms. It was not approved by the Murray City School District Board of Education. A Horizon student brought the book in and asked if the teacher would read the book to the class. The teacher read the book to the class and answered the question you mentioned brought up by the students in the class about growing a beard. The administration at Horizon Elementary was not aware of this book being read until it was brought to their attention by parents. The communication that followed with parents was unfortunate in that several different messages were sent with conflicting information. We understand and appreciate that this has caused concerns of trust with parents. This is a personnel matter that we as a district have addressed with the administration at Horizon Elementary to ensure it does not happen in the future. We have also spoken with all of our administrators so they are aware of what occurred.

With regard to the equity book bundles, a presentation was made to the school board by Dr. Jobe in the fall that listed the books the school would be using throughout the year. The board did not review or approve these - it was simply part of a presentation that was made to the board. Horizon Elementary is the only school that has implemented those equity book bundles at this time. As mentioned in my last email, all equity book bundle books have been suspended while we work to put a process in place where those books will be reviewed by educators and approved by the School Community Council. We are committed to being fully transparent with this process and ensure our parents are fully informed.

The Equity Council was formed by educators, who were feeling unsafe as employees in our school system, as a place where we could look at policy to ensure equal employment opportunity for all. When Trayvon Martin was killed and tensions in our state and country rose, the equity committee broadened their focus to ensure all of our students felt safe and welcomed in our schools. Another individual did let me know that a parent had been told that the Equity Council did not want any more 'white-identifying' people on the council. Our Director of Human Services and Student Services serves on this council and was not aware of anyone being told this. I asked that parent who told me this to please have that individual, or any individual who was told that, to please contact me personally so I could hear their story and address it appropriately. At this time, all work with the equity council has been suspended while we work to ensure a solid direction and framework moving forward that will have many voices.

Our goals moving forward are to put policy and measures in place to ensure that we are open and transparent with books that are being read in the classroom and the mission, purpose and vision of Equity Council. We respect the rights and values of parents and do want to work together. As an education community, we want to show respect by acknowledging differences, looking for the good in everyone, and showing due regard for others' feelings, rights, cultures, and traditions. Our actions as educators and parents will demonstrate our belief that we are better when we are working together on behalf of every child.

Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
Murray City School District
5102 S. Commerce Drive
Murray, UT 84107
801.264.7400

On Thu, Feb 4, 2021 at 2:05 AM [REDACTED] wrote:
Dear Ms. Covington and Others,

Thank you for the replies. I appreciate your time and what appears to be your commitment to transparency going forward. I also appreciate that some of these issues are being discussed and re-evaluated. Although most of my questions weren't answered, that's understandable - there were a lot of them. Hopefully at some point they will be. I hate taking your time on this issue and, to be honest, I hate taking so much of my own time on it. But something is happening here in Murray that just doesn't seem right - and is causing many of us deep concern.

Transparency and parental involvement should be the biggest learning lesson. We all want our kids to be safe and for teachers and parents to have resources. But regardless of any parent's opinion on the propriety of teaching some of these things in school, I would think all parents can agree that we deserve to be advised of what sensitive and complicated issues are being taught and how they are being presented IN ADVANCE and be given the opportunity to provide consent and be prepared for questions that arise (for instance, I would assume that a parent with a child experiencing gender identity issues would especially want to know how that topic is being addressed before it happens).

Since my last email to you, I have been receiving information that has left me quite bewildered and confused. Many other parents seem to feel the same way. Conflicting information has been coming from Dr. Jobe and other school personnel regarding how Julian is a Mermaid and Call Me Max ended up being read to a 3rd grade class at Horizon without parental consent. One parent was told that the book was brought by a student or parent and read by the teacher to the class. Dr. Jobe said that "Call Me Max" was only read to help a student feel supported for a specific incident and she sent a parent an Equity book list that did not include Call Me Max or Julian is a Mermaid. Dr. Jobe also apparently said that she didn't believe LGBTQ+ issues should be discussed until 6th grade.

Another parent was told that those books were part of the curriculum and were part of the school and district's focus on equity work and Second Steps program. The 3rd grade teacher told another parent that reading these books were part of the school and district's focus on equity and antiracist work and she included copies of the school district's memoranda as proof that the materials were approved (inferring that advance notice to parents was not required). She said that the books were part of their equity lessons for the week. Dr. Jobe told another parent that the lessons are wonderful and developmentally appropriate and included a list of the equity books for the year, which DID include both Julian is a Mermaid and Call Me Max. In addition, Dr. Jobe apparently told at least one parent that the equity book bundles had been approved by the Murray School Board, but a member of the board has said that was not true. So parents are being told two different things by Dr. Jobe and others. Either it was an isolated incident or it was part of an approved plan. Either the books were approved by the Board or they weren't. Either the books are developmentally appropriate or should wait until 6th grade. It can't be both. So, Number One, there seems to be a problem with getting true and accurate information, and Number Two, parents were never given notice and never provided consent. Utah Code Section 53E-9-203 requires parental consent before topics involving "sexual behavior, orientation or attitudes" are discussed. This was acknowledged by the First Memorandum sent to District personnel, in August, before the Equity Council (as claimed in their video at the Utah Pride conference) successfully persuaded the District to send a revised Memorandum with an apology that substitutes "Equity" in place of Utah Law.

What I have been told is that these two books were part of the Equity Book Bundles program administered by Dr. Jobe. Parents became concerned after their children came home and mentioned the teacher had talked to them about how science has made it possible for women who want to become men to grow a beard after going through puberty. If I understand correctly, certain parents received a list from Dr. Jobe, after the fact, informing them that "Call Me Max" was part of the curriculum and book list for the 3rd grade equity book bundles program. See attachments from Dr. Jobe. Apparently, she provided the parents with a list of monthly topics and the October 2020 topic was Sexuality and Gender, so the books and topics appear to have been intentionally part of the 3rd grade curriculum from the outset of the school year, without parents' knowledge or consent. Moreover, Call Me Max was apparently incorporated into teacher trainings last summer.

Prior to Call Me Max, the 3rd Graders read and did an assignment on Julian is a Mermaid. The author Jessica Love says about this book that "As a genderfluid person, I didn't see this as a transgender book, but more about the freedom of gender expression," and originally it was about how Julian wanted to be a drag queen, but the author changed it to a mermaid because "there's something magical about how mermaids have no genitalia." Remember, this is for 3rd grade. The students then did an assignment where the worksheet says that Julian sees himself as a mermaid in the story, and asks them to draw a picture in a mirror of what they would like to become. Could it be that Julian is a Mermaid was preparing them for Call Me Max? Here is a link to Call Me Max where you can see that a child is looking in a mirror (like the assignment in Julian is a Mermaid) and sees herself as a boy who is transgender. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcrPnaCbKrY>. The book goes on to state that when a baby is born and parents call the baby a boy or girl, if the baby could talk the baby might say "NO I'M NO!" because the parents made a mistake. So without parents' consent or knowledge, the children are being taught at school that their parents may have made a mistake in calling them a boy or a girl. Again this is in 3rd grade.

So can you please clear this up? Were the books and Equity Bundles approved by the School District, only approved by Dr. Jobe, or implemented by the Equity Council? If the Equity Council, who formed the Equity Council and where does it derive its authority? I was sent a document with the Mission of the Equity Council. It is attached. One of the core beliefs is centering those impacted by marginalization in the curriculum. According to the document, marginalized include people of color, disabled, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer people, immigrants, etc. When I think of centering, it sounds like the curriculum and teaching will place these categories in the center, or the focus, or top priority. It also talks about an intersectional approach, which from the Utah Pride Center lectures we watched, means "unlearning all binaries" such as male and female. Based on Call Me Max and Dr. Jobe's involvement with the Equity Council, this centering and these teachings have been happening at least as early as 3rd grade. Nowhere in the document is there anything about seeking parental input, buy-in, or consent; instead, the "group norm" is to "call others out". Apparently, at least one parent has been told the Equity Council doesn't want any more "white-identifying" people on the council. Is that accurate?

I am not the only one seeking additional information. Many parents are concerned and many more than I realized. Can you please provide us with the real story on what has been happening and what the goals are going forward? I agree that those who may be "marginalized" may have unique challenges that need to be addressed in a sensitive manner. That is all the more reason to involve us in the process. At the same time, I am learning that according to the "Equity" agenda, Equity is not about "Equality". According to Ten Commitments for Equity-Literate Educators: "Equity is not about valuing every perspective. An equity view does not value heteronormativity," and "educational outcome disparities are the result of structural inequities and have nothing to do with students' grittiness, mindsets..." I fundamentally disagree with a philosophy that elevates victimhood and ignores individual choice and accountability.

Perhaps an in-person meeting with parents would be helpful - one that is calm and involves transparent discourse and explanations. The more transparency, the more understanding. Maybe then fewer bridges will be burned and more bridges can be built. We all want what is best for the kids, even if we see things from different perspectives. To find common ground we need to be able to trust that our rights as parents will be valued and respected. When things are hidden, it feels like we are somehow the enemy. We want to work together, PLEASE work with us and not in secret or behind our backs. You might ask, why do you care so much, your kids don't go to Horizon?? I watched the video from the Utah Pride Center conference and Dr. Jobe made it very clear that this is meant to be incorporated District-wide.

Thanks [REDACTED]

On Tue, Feb 2, 2021 at 4:45 PM Jennifer Covington <jcovington@murrayschools.org> wrote:

[REDACTED]

Thank you for your email. We value and appreciate your thoughts. We agree that it is important that students, employees and families in the Murray City School District are able to participate in a school system that values and respects each person. Transparency and communication are also essential to what we do and believe. We are committed to doing our best in both of these areas.

The Equity Council was started a little over a year ago with the mission of building a diverse, equitable, and inclusive district by providing all students, families, and employees with a community of care, respect, and belonging. At present, the council consists of educators, administrators, and parents. At this time, the Equity Council has been suspended while the district and School Board work to put measures in place to ensure the purpose of the council is clear, defined, and communicated to all parents and employees. You are correct that these are complicated issues with no easy answers and it is important that parents have a voice in the work that is being done as we work to support all students.

The Equity Book Bundles have also been placed on hold at this time while we work to put procedures in place to ensure transparency and communication. The district is working on an action plan where educators and then the School Community Council will review all equity materials. Parents will be fully informed of what is being used in the classroom and provided with additional information regarding the materials. Parents will also have the ability to opt their child out of any reading by simply notifying their teacher.

We want to be thoughtful and intentional as we work on both of these areas. All procedures and measures will be shared with our parents as we agree that transparency and communication are vital.

Thank you for your advocacy of not only your students but all students. As a district, we are committed to working to make sure parents are fully informed of what is happening in their child's classroom.

Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
Murray City School District
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Murray, UT 84107
801.264.7400



On Mon, Feb 1, 2021 at 4:50 PM [REDACTED] wrote:

To Members of the Board, Superintendent, and Chairs of Community Councils (at Viewmont, Riverview and Murray High):

My wife and I are parents of 4 students that each attend one of the above-referenced schools - and my wife is a former teacher who often substitute teaches at Viewmont Elementary at teacher's requests. She isn't involved in the drafting of this email and is seeing it for the first time along with you, though she was aware I would be sending it. Our children are good students and the Murray Schools have been a nice fit for our family. Our children are generally shy and sometimes have a hard time making new friends, but we try to help them through that as parents - and they have had good teachers. We would hope that all teachers and staff would look at them as individuals who need help, support, guidance, and skills-training - not because, or in spite of, their gender, sexual orientation, race, religion or any other category.

With that backdrop, I recently learned about the Murray School Equity Council that was apparently created some time ago. I don't believe parents have been told about this Council, have we? If we were, somehow I missed the memo. I watched two of many videos/lectures (that have now been taken down) from the Utah Pride Center's recent conference for Utah Educators. One video that was extremely concerning to me was the Keynote Speaker Dr. Kyl Myers. I also viewed the presentation by the Murray School District's Equity Council. As I said, the videos are no longer able to be viewed, but I did take some notes while watching the presentations. Based on those lectures, I would like to ask you some questions to find out more about the Equity Council, what their goals and objectives are, and how this will affect the children and our family.

1. In the Equity Council's video presentation a question was asked about how it has been received by the parents. The answer was basically that they need to do a better job getting the word out to the parents. I would agree with that. How do we find out about what the Equity Council is doing? Do they have open meetings? Are their agendas shared with the community councils? Are the community councils giving input? Can you please let me know the best way to obtain access to this information?

2. In the Equity Council's video presentation, they mentioned that one of their greatest "Successes" was that the council was able to get the District to rescind a Memorandum that went out to District personnel in August by issuing a revised Memorandum in November. I have now read all these memoranda (see attached) and the first one seemed to communicate that the School District would follow Utah law and could control political speech in the classroom. The last one apologizes for being "harmful to the community" and appears to put "Equity" as the overriding principle governing Educators. Was the council really the body that achieved this "Success"? How did they do it? Should parents have been informed? No one asked me whether the Memorandum was harmful - were other parents asked? A memorandum to personnel regarding what will be allowed in the classroom directly impacts all parents and children in the district. Should we draw any conclusions from the fact that the first memorandum was issued before the election and the last one was three weeks after the election?

3. I have been informed that a book called Call Me Max, dealing with transgenderism, was read in a 3rd grade class in our district without parental consent. When those parents objected, the teacher cited them to the 3rd memorandum that was apparently released due to the Equity Council's successful initiative. Is it true that parents do not need to be informed when subjects regarding sexual orientation, transgenderism, the Black Lives Matter organization, gender issues are taught to our children? We had to sign a consent form for our child to watch "Because of Winn Dixie", but if it is a book on transgenderism is subject matter for the 3rd grade classroom, no parental consent is required?

4. In the introduction to the keynote address at the Utah Pride Center's conference for Utah Educators, the speaker made the point that schools are not about "transferring knowledge," but should be about engaging in discussions that "bring about change." I would like to know what the Murray School District's view is with respect to that comment? Who agrees with that premise and who disagrees? Is Murray School District's primary objective to help our students engage in discussions that bring about change? If so, what change?

5. The Keynote Speaker made the point that she now teaches at a University where she doesn't have to deal with communications from parents. Does Murray School District value and appreciate and incorporate parental input? What is being done to be transparent about what our children are being taught? Does Murray District agree with me that there should be more transparency, not less? Do you agree that parents have a right to know what is being taught in the classroom regarding controversial subjects in society and how those issues are being presented? That we should focus more on educating our students to be productive, qualified, and skilled in the work force and being respectful citizens rather than on social engineering and political indoctrination? What is your stance?

6. The keynote speaker said that all students, parents and staff need to "unlearn all binaries" and to be retrained. In other words, no children should be looked at as male or female without the students first indicating what they want to be called. I assume this would also mean that if a student who is biologically a male says he is a female, he would be allowed to use the girls bathroom. Is this how the Equity Council and Murray School District view the world? If this is the direction we will go, will parental input be considered? An example she gave of improper gender bias was having a "Daddy Daughter Dance" or "Muffins with Mothers". We have had similar events in our children's schools, does the Equity Council aim to cancel these types of things?

7. Have you thought about whether the term "Equity" could really be a code word for opening the door to ignoring the Utah Constitution and the right of parents to have a say in their children's education? Are you in favor of the school system being revolutionized to incorporate political agendas and to replace basic and common sense teachings of mutual respect and courtesy with those political agendas? Are you in favor of using "Equity" to treat people differently based on certain "marginalized" categories with the goal of achieving equal outcomes rather than working toward providing equal opportunities? If yes to these questions, will you please let us know that in a transparent way? The Equity Council said something to the effect that one of their core beliefs is to center those most impacted by "marginalization" in the curriculum, policies, and practices. What does that mean?

8. The Equity Council mentioned some kind of an Equity Book bundle that is available or will become available. Do parents have access to this?

9. The Equity Council mentioned getting an equity director appointed at each school. Will we be informed before this happens? What is the criteria and what will they do? Will it be a paid position?

10. Jordan School District has Culture and Diversity Specialists who have begun doing training in classrooms. Will Murray School District have similar positions? Will parents be informed on what specifics are being taught?

Black Lives Matter and other people are trying to get a State School Board Member removed from the State Board of Education because she shared some of the lectures that were presented at the Utah Pride Center conference, including the two that I mention above, and because she is standing up for Utah families and the right of parents to know what their students are being taught. I'm attaching a copy of a message they sent to the Utah State School Board. To me it sounds anything but tolerant, anything but understanding, and anything but being willing to engage in a dialogue or conversation. Calling someone racist and homophobic because of differences of opinion does not sound like Equity to me, it kind of comes across more like bullying. Another group criticized her because she is advocating for the Golden Rule - doing unto others as we would have done unto us. To them, somehow that principle violates separation of church and state and is white supremacist.

I have not in the past been involved in Community Councils, but I can see that is a mistake because I had no idea that an Equity Council even existed, let alone that they are giving lectures on the changes that need to happen in our school system. Any information or answers you can provide to the questions raised in this email would be greatly appreciated and to each of us as parents going forward. My hope is that you will seek, consider, and appreciate the input of parents instead of only those groups who will scream, intimidate, threaten, and cancel.

Thanks, [REDACTED]

Date : 2/9/2021 1:28:02 AM

From :

To : "Jennifer Covington"

Cc : "Glo Merrill", "Kami Anderson", "Bellinda Johnson", "Elizabeth Payne", "Jaren Cooper", "Buck, Sarah"

"Jennifer King", "Kaufman, Earl", "mbar@murrayschools.org"

"itea@murrayschools.org", "ibutinside@murrayschools.org"

"itea@murrayschools.org", "Bojwman, Jim"

"jalliree@murrayschools.org", "nebiata@murrayschools.org"

Subject : Re: Murray School District Equity Council

Hello Ms. Covington-

I thank you for your reply and for the work being done surrounding these issues. As a Horizon parent who has more information about the Call Me Max incident, and having spoken with several other Horizon parents about it (as well as other community members and parents from other elementary schools), I am replying to your message to [redacted] and the others. I hope I got everyone who was on the first message - I just hit "Reply All." [redacted] respond to some of these issues already, but I may repeat some of what he's addressed since these questions and concerns are coming from multiple sources.

We're glad things are being investigated, but many parents don't feel satisfied with the answers (or lack of answers) we have received so far. We still don't understand why the Equity Council has power to correct district memos which state Utah law. The corrected memo came out from MCSD in November 2020 (nearly 3 months ago), so we can reasonably assume that as a district you would already know why the Equity Council was given that power at that time. We would like to understand how and why that happened. Additionally, parents and other community members have received no explanation as to why we weren't alerted of or invited to be part of the Equity Council from the beginning of its formation. We've received no explanation for why MCSD presented in the Utah Pride Center conference, which was advertised as being for all Utah educators, students, and caregivers, but no MCSD parents were informed by the district of thatolorhared so that we could take part in viewing it. We would appreciate direct answers to these questions.

We have heard the information from PTA meetings and the explanations principals were told to give parents about Call Me Max. According to them, the book was brought in by a student, and the teacher mistakenly read it to the whole class. Many parents do not believe this story, which is understandable considering that for 2 weeks they were told by the Horizon teacher and administrators that the book was part of the intended 3rd grade equity and Second Steps curriculum. We feel MCSD needs to explain why conflicting accounts were given to parents. We have been told the incident is currently under investigation and is now a "personnel issue," so that's why we can't have answers. But at the same time, administrators are conclusively telling all other district members that the book was brought in by a student and mistakenly read by the teacher, as if that is the factual conclusion before the investigation has apparently even been finished. That does not make sense to us, and it does not feel honest. Additionally, we would like an explanation for why that same book was seen in MCSD teacher trainings for other elementary schools back in Summer 2020. Honestly, it seems incredibly coincidental that the student at Horizon just happened to have that same book. But regardless of which version is true about how the book appeared, parents were told two different stories by the teacher and administrators, so we feel we deserve factual resolution on what is the real truth.

Furthermore, in the interest of full transparency, parents would like access to the "Additional Resources" list for the Book Bundles. In January, some Horizon parents were told of this list and that possibly it was a list of resource books for school counselors, but no parent ever received it. Some parents were told that Call Me Max and other books of similar topics were found on this list, and it was taken from there to be read in the 3rd grade classroom. We are guessing these "Additional Resources" are probably in all the elementary schools, since at least one of the books found on that list was seen in teacher trainings last summer for other elementary schools.

We've been told by a parent who saw the full Book Bundles list that they have seen those books in their principal's office (in another elementary school besides Horizon). So we're suspecting this same book list was set to be used in all MCSD elementary schools soon. If any of these books are moved from the Book Bundles program, where will they go? Will they be allocated in elementary school libraries? Will they remain in our schools to be read independently by children? What about ALL books (not just Book Bundles or program-specific books) of similar topics and content? Will parents be made aware of these topics and books being brought into our children's schools, no matter the destination (library, counselor's office, etc.)? As stated previously, these books may bring up sensitive discussions, and parents want to (and have the legal right to) be informed about these topics being addressed with their children in schools, no matter how that may happen. Parents of all backgrounds and of all opinions and viewpoints want to feel prepared to cover these discussions with their children when they come home from school. We are all better prepared when we have complete transparency.

We are grateful for the district's help in working through these issues. We're glad the Equity Council and any corresponding programs, including the Book Bundles, will move forward with more transparency and more parent input from now on. We hope future parent meetings will help everyone to get more of their questions answered and will help ensure inclusivity for all. We feel it is important for our children to learn about and be kind and inclusive to all, and because these are such important issues and topics, as parents we want to be fully included in them. We want ALL students and employees to feel welcomed, loved, and safe in MCSD. We hope all members of the district can have a voice in how to best implement these programs and practices for everyone.

In summary, our questions are:

1. Why were parents not informed of or invited to be on the Equity Council?
2. How and why did the Equity Council have power to correct district memos and Utah law?
3. Why didn't the district invite parents to view the Equity Council's presentation in the Utah Pride conference?
4. Why were Horizon parents given conflicting accounts of how Call Me Max appeared in the classroom?
5. If the Call Me Max incident is still under investigation, why is the rest of the district receiving a conclusive answer while Horizon parents are not?
6. Will Horizon parents be given factual resolution on which story is true out of what the teacher and administrators told us?
7. If Call Me Max is not a district or school book, why was it seen in MCSD elementary trainings in Summer 2020?
8. How do parents access the "Additional Resources" list?
9. Where will Book Bundles books be moved if they don't remain in the program?
10. Will parents be made aware of all books of similar content and topics being brought into our schools, regardless of destination?

We look forward to receiving answers to these questions soon.

Thanks for all your help,

[redacted] and other MCSD Concerned Parents

On Monday, February 8, 2021, 11:08:05 AM MST [redacted]

Ms. Covington -

Thank you for the reply. I am glad that the materials will be re-evaluated, hopefully parents will be included in that conversation and that our input will be considered when deciding which materials are "developmentally appropriate". As parents, we sincerely seek a safe, tolerant, inclusive and understanding environment for every child in the classroom and to build and maintain trust between parents and administration. Bottom line is that hopefully we all can agree on the necessity of working together from here on out as a partnership and with full disclosure and transparency. To be blunt, it feels like parental rights have been secretly undermined. Regarding the incident at Horizon, I have forwarded your reply to parents at Horizon who can respond directly to that. They are more familiar with the specific facts of the Call Me Max incident and can better speak to the conversations, emails, and conflicting information received from teacher, principal, Dr. Jobb, Dr. Doan, etc.

That said, I do have some ongoing concerns: You have expressed a commitment to be "open and transparent." However, you didn't respond to my request for a parent meeting - can you tell me if that is on the table? Moreover, the Equity Council's presentation has been blocked from viewing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9L3irJS0LJpQ&list=PLR9ht-WdkR996vpcCv-0F2T-JLcWU-eyz8by&v=P25NA22BH-4&feature=youtu.be>. This does not seem to be moving toward

transparency? I did take notes and Dr. Jobe specifically said the books on the Equity Books Bundle had been approved by the School Board. Dr. Dean was part of that video presentation and he did not dispute her statement and has not replied to my emails. Parents were also told the Bundle had been approved and that the Book Bundles have been distributed to other schools in the District. In the interests of transparency, if this "personnel issue" is affecting our children and rights as parents, I think we deserve some additional explanation and clarification. In the interests of transparency, is Dr. Dean willing to explain why the Equity Council (that we did not know existed) was able to pressure him into apologizing for a memorandum that explained that pursuant to Utah law "a public-school classroom is reserved for its intended purpose of imparting relevant instructions and is not an open forum for employees to engage in their own political speech" and instead approved "equity-based curriculum, conversations, dialogue, and displays" without any notice to parents of this change in philosophy and approach. Before the Equity Council resumes full operation, will we be fully informed about its purposes, goals, and objectives and how our students' curriculum will be affected by its "core beliefs". Will parental involvement be permitted or will participants continue to be hand-picked?

Even if the Board did not approve the books on the Equity Books Bundle List, in the interests of transparency, why were parents not provided with the full book list and why was it not posted on the school or district website? If it was a student who brought in *Call Me Max*, did that student also bring in *Julian is a Mermaid* and the written assignment that went along with it? *Julian is a Mermaid* touches on gender-fluidity and was not on the Equity Book Bundles list sent to parents.

As part of the Equity Council's presentation, Dr. Dean said that the Equity Council was a grassroots movement. It was such a grassroots movement, that none of us knew about it. There is a grassroots movement of parents who are very concerned about what has happened and making sure it gets fixed. I am aware of dozens of parents who are concerned. It is not just me - as I am sure you are becoming aware. We look forward to a more open dialogue and that as "we show due regard" for teachers and students' feelings, rights, cultures, and traditions, there can also be due regard for parents' rights.

Most appreciately [REDACTED]

On Fri, Feb 5, 2021 at 3:39 PM Jennifer Covington <jcovington@murrayschools.com> wrote:

[REDACTED] Thank you for the follow up questions. I am happy to address them in hopes of providing the clarity you are asking for. Please know that we do value parents and parental input and never want anything to feel like it is being done in secret.

The book "Call Me Max" was an isolated incident in one 3rd grade classroom at Horizon Elementary School. It has not been used in any other schools or classrooms. It was not approved by the Murray City School District Board of Education. A Horizon student brought the book in and asked if the teacher would read the book to the class. The teacher read the book to the class and answered the question you mentioned brought up by the students in the class about growing a beard. The administration at Horizon Elementary was not aware of this book being read until it was brought to their attention by parents. The communication that followed with parents was unfortunate in that several different messages were sent with conflicting information. We understand and appreciate that this has caused concerns of trust with parents. This is a personnel matter that we as a district have addressed with the administration at Horizon Elementary to ensure it does not happen in the future. We have also spoken with all of our administrators so they are aware of what occurred.

With regard to the equity book bundles, a presentation was made to the school board by Dr. Jobe in the fall that listed the books the school would be using throughout the year. The board did not review or approve these - it was simply part of a presentation that was made to the board. Horizon Elementary is the only school that has implemented these equity book bundles at this time. As mentioned in my last email, all equity book bundle books have been suspended while we work to put a process in place where these books will be reviewed by educators and approved by the School Community Council. We are committed to being fully transparent with this process and ensure our parents are fully informed.

The Equity Council was formed by educators, who were feeling unsafe as employees in our school system, as a place where we could look at policy to ensure equal employment opportunity for all. When Trayvon Martin was killed and tensions in our state and country rose, the equity committee broadened their focus to ensure all of our students felt safe and welcomed in our schools. Another individual did let me know that a parent had been told that the Equity Council did not want any more "white-identifying" people on the council. Our Director of Human Services and Student Services serves on this council and was not aware of anyone being told this. I asked that parent who told me this to please have that individual, or any individual who was told that, to please contact me personally so I could hear their story and address it appropriately. At this time, all work with the equity council has been suspended while we work to ensure a solid direction and framework moving forward that will have many voices.

Our goals moving forward are to put policy and measures in place to ensure that we are open and transparent with books that are being read in the classroom and the mission, purpose and vision of Equity Council. We respect the rights and values of parents and do want to work together. As an education community, we want to show respect by acknowledging differences, looking for the good in everyone, and showing due regard for others' feelings, rights, cultures, and traditions. Our actions as educators and parents will demonstrate our belief that we are better when we are working together on behalf of every child.

Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
Murray City School District
5102 S. Commerce Drive
Murray, UT 84107
801.264.7400



On Thu, Feb 4, 2021 at 2:05 AM [REDACTED]

Dear Ms. Covington and Others,

Thank you for the replies, I appreciate your time and what appears to be your commitment to transparency going forward. I also appreciate that some of these issues are being discussed and re-evaluated. Although most of my questions weren't answered, that's understandable - there were a lot of them. Hopefully at some point they will be. I hate taking your time on this issue and, to be honest, I hate taking so much of my own time on it. But something is happening here in Murray that just doesn't seem right - and is causing many of us deep concern.

Transparency and parental involvement should be the biggest learning lesson. We all want our kids to be safe and for teachers and parents to have resources. But regardless of any parent's opinion on the propriety of teaching some of these things in school, I would think all parents can agree that we deserve to be advised of what sensitive and complicated issues are being taught and how they are being presented IN ADVANCE and be given the opportunity to provide consent and be prepared for questions that arise (for instance, I would assume that a parent with a child experiencing gender identity issues would especially want to know how that topic is being addressed before it happens).

Since my last email to you, I have been receiving information that has left me quite bewildered and confused. Many other parents seem to feel the same way. Conflicting information has been coming from Dr. Jobe and other school personnel regarding how *Julian is a Mermaid* and *Call Me Max* ended up being read to a 3rd grade class at Horizon without parental consent. One parent was told that the book was brought by a student or parent and read by the teacher to the class. Dr. Jobe said that "Call Me Max" was only read to help a student feel supported for a specific incident and she sent a parent an Equity book list that did not include *Call Me Max* or *Julian is a Mermaid*. Dr. Jobe also apparently said that she didn't believe LGBTQ+ issues should be discussed until 6th grade.

Another parent was told that those books were part of the curriculum and were part of the school and district's focus on equity work and Second Steps program. The 3rd grade teacher told another parent that reading these books were part of the school and district's focus on equity and anti-racist work and she included copies of the school district's memoranda as proof that the materials were approved (inferring that advance notice to parents was not required). She said that the books were part of their equity lessons for the week. Dr. Jobe told another parent that the lessons are wonderful and developmentally appropriate and included a list of the equity books for the year, which DID include both *Julian is a Mermaid* and *Call Me Max*. In addition, Dr. Jobe apparently told at least one parent that the equity book bundles had been approved by the Murray School Board, but a member of the board has said that was not true. So parents are being told two different things by Dr. Jobe and others. Either it was an isolated incident or it was part of an approved plan. Either the books were approved by the Board or they weren't. Either the books are developmentally

appropriate or should wait until 6th grade. It can't be both. So, Number One, there seems to be a problem with getting true and accurate information, and Number Two, parents were never given notice and never provided consent. Utah Code Section 53E-9-203 requires parental consent before topics involving 'sexual behavior, orientation or attitudes' are discussed. This was acknowledged by the First Memorandum sent to District personnel, In August, before the Equity Council (as claimed in their video at the Utah Pride conference) successfully persuaded the District to send a revised Memorandum with an apology that substitutes "Equity" in place of Utah Law.

What I have been told is that these two books were part of the Equity Book Bundles program administered by Dr. Jobe. Parents became concerned after their children came home and mentioned the teacher had talked to them about how science has made it possible for women who want to become men to grow a beard after going through puberty. If I understand correctly, certain parents received a list from Dr. Jobe, after the fact, informing them that "Call Me Max" was part of the curriculum and book list for the 3rd grade equity book bundles program. See attachments from Dr. Jobe. Apparently, she provided the parents with a list of monthly topics and the October 2020 topic was Sexuality and Gender, so the books and topics appear to have been intentionally part of the 3rd grade curriculum from the outset of the school year, without parents' knowledge or consent. Moreover, Call Me Max was apparently incorporated into teacher trainings last summer.

Prior to Call Me Max, the 3rd Graders read and did an assignment on Julian is a Mermaid. The author Jessica Love says about this book that "As a genderfluid person, I didn't see this as a transgender book, but more about the freedom of gender expression," and originally it was about how Julian wanted to be a drag queen, but the author changed it to a mermaid because "there's something magical about how mermaids have no genitalia." Remember, this is for 3rd grade. The students then did an assignment where the worksheet says that Julian sees himself as a mermaid in the story, and asks them to draw a picture in a mirror of what they would like to become. Could it be that Julian is a Mermaid was preparing them for Call Me Max? Here is a link to Call Me Max where you can see that a child is looking in a mirror (like the assignment in Julian is a Mermaid) and sees herself as a boy who is transgender. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icrPnaCbKfY>. The book goes on to state that when a baby is born and parents call the baby a boy or girl, if the baby could talk the baby might say "NO I'M NOT" because the parents made a mistake. So without parents' consent or knowledge, the children are being taught at school that their parents may have made a mistake in calling them a boy or a girl. Again this is in 3rd grade.

So can you please clear this up? Were the books and Equity Bundles approved by the School District, only approved by Dr. Jobe, or implemented by the Equity Council? If the Equity Council, who formed the Equity Council and where does it derive its authority? I was sent a document with the Mission of the Equity Council. It is attached. One of the core beliefs is centering those impacted by marginalization in the curriculum. According to the document, marginalized include people of color, disabled, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer people, immigrants, etc. When I think of centering, it sounds like the curriculum and teaching will place these categories in the center, or the focus, or top priority. It also talks about an intersectional approach, which from the Utah Pride Center lectures we watched, means "unlearning all binaries" such as male and female. Based on Call Me Max and Dr. Jobe's involvement with the Equity Council, this centering and these teachings have been happening at least as early as 3rd grade. Nowhere in the document is there anything about seeking parental input, buy-in, or consent; instead, the "group norm" is to "call others out". Apparently, at least one parent has been told the Equity Council doesn't want any more "white-identifying" people on the council. Is that accurate?

I am not the only one seeking additional information. Many parents are concerned and many more than I realized. Can you please provide us with the real story on what has been happening and what the goals are going forward? I agree that those who may be "marginalized" may have unique challenges that need to be addressed in a sensitive manner. That is all the more reason to involve us in the process. At the same time, I am learning that according to the "Equity" agenda, Equity is not about "Equality". According to Ten Commitments for Equity-Literate Educators: "Equity is not about valuing every perspective. An equity view does not value heteronormativity," and "educational outcome disparities are the result of structural inequities and have nothing to do with students' grittiness, mindsets..." I fundamentally disagree with a philosophy that elevates victimhood and ignores individual choice and accountability.

Perhaps an in-person meeting with parents would be helpful - one that is calm and involves transparent discourse and explanations. The more transparency, the more understanding. Maybe then fewer bridges will be burned and more bridges can be built. We all want what is best for the kids, even if we see things from different perspectives. To find common ground we need to be able to trust that our rights as parents will be valued and respected. When things are hidden, it feels like we are somehow the enemy. We want to work together, PLEASE work with us and not in secret or behind our backs. You might ask, why do you care so much, your kids don't go to Horizon?? I watched the video from the Utah Pride Center conference and Dr. Jobe made it very clear that this is meant to be incorporated District-wide.

Thanks [REDACTED]

On Tue, Feb 2, 2021 at 4:45 PM Jennifer Covington <jcovington@murrayschools.org> wrote:

Thank you for your email. We value and appreciate your thoughts. We agree that it is important that students, employees and families in the Murray City School District are able to participate in a school system that values and respects each person. Transparency and communication are also essential to what we do and believe. We are committed to doing our best in both of these areas.

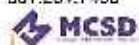
The Equity Council was started a little over a year ago with the mission of building a diverse, equitable, and inclusive district by providing all students, families, and employees with a community of care, respect, and belonging. At present, the council consists of educators, administrators, and parents. At this time, the Equity Council has been suspended while the district and School Board work to put measures in place to ensure the purpose of the council is clear, defined, and communicated to all parents and employees. You are correct that these are complicated issues with no easy answers and it is important that parents have a voice in the work that is being done as we work to support all students.

The Equity Book Bundles have also been placed on hold at this time while we work to put procedures in place to ensure transparency and communication. The district is working on an action plan where educators and then the School Community Council will review all equity materials. Parents will be fully informed of what is being used in the classroom and provided with additional information regarding the materials. Parents will also have the ability to opt their child out of any reading by simply notifying their teacher.

We want to be thoughtful and intentional as we work on both of these areas. All procedures and measures will be shared with our parents as we agree that transparency and communication are vital.

Thank you for your advocacy of not only your students but all students. As a district, we are committed to working to make sure parents are fully informed of what is happening in their child's classroom.

Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
Murray City School District
5102 S. Commerce Drive
Murray, UT 84107
801.264.7400



On Mon, Feb 1, 2021 at 4:50 PM [REDACTED]

To Members of the Board, Superintendent, and Chairs of Community Councils (at Viewmont, Riverview and Murray High):

My wife and I are parents of 4 students that each attend one of the above-referenced schools - and my wife is a former teacher who often substitute teaches at Viewmont Elementary at teacher's requests. She isn't involved in the drafting of this email and is seeing it for the first time along with you, though she was aware I would be sending it. Our children are good students and the Murray Schools have been a nice fit for our family. Our children are generally shy and sometimes have a hard time making new friends, but we try to help them through that as parents - and they have had good teachers. We would hope that all teachers and staff would look at them as individuals who need help, support, guidance, and skills-training - not because, or in spite of, their gender, sexual orientation, race, religion or any other category.

With that backdrop, I recently learned about the Murray School Equity Council that was apparently created some time ago. I don't believe parents have been told about this Council, have we? If we were, somehow I missed the memo. I watched two of many videos/lectures (that have now been taken down) from the Utah Pride Center's recent conference for Utah Educators. One video that was extremely concerning to me was the Keynote Speaker Dr. Kyl Myers. I also viewed the

presentation by the Murray School District's Equity Council. As I said, the videos are no longer able to be viewed, but I did take some notes while watching the presentations. Based on those lectures, I would like to ask you some questions to find out more about the Equity Council, what their goals and objectives are, and how this will affect the children and our family.

1. In the Equity Council's video presentation a question was asked about how it has been received by the parents. The answer was basically that they need to do a better job getting the word out to the parents. I would agree with that. How do we find out about what the Equity Council is doing? Do they have open meetings? Are their agendas shared with the community councils? Are the community councils giving input? Can you please let me know the best way to obtain access to this information?
2. In the Equity Council's video presentation, they mentioned that one of their greatest 'Successes' was that the council was able to get the District to rescind a Memorandum that went out to District personnel in August by issuing a revised Memorandum in November. I have now read all those memoranda (see attached) and the first one seemed to communicate that the School District would follow Utah law and could control political speech in the classroom. The last one apologizes for being "harmful to the community" and appears to put "Equity" as the overriding principle governing Educators. Was the council really the body that achieved this 'Success'? How did they do it? Should parents have been informed? No one asked me whether the Memorandum was harmful - were other parents asked? A memorandum to personnel regarding what will be allowed in the classroom directly impacts all parents and children in the district. Should we draw any conclusions from the fact that the first memorandum was issued before the election and the last one was three weeks after the election?
3. I have been informed that a book called Call Me Max, dealing with transgenderism, was read in a 3rd grade class in our district without parental consent. When three parents objected, the teacher cited them to the 3rd memorandum that was apparently released due to the Equity Council's successful initiative. Is it true that parents do not need to be informed when subjects regarding sexual orientation, transgenderism, the Black Lives Matter organization, gender issues are taught to our children? We had to sign a consent form for our child to watch 'Because of Winn Dixie', but if it is a book on transgenderism is subject matter for the 3rd grade classroom, no parental consent is required?
4. In the introduction to the keynote address at the Utah Pride Center's conference for Utah Educators, the speaker made the point that schools are not about "transferring knowledge," but should be about engaging in discussions that "bring about change." I would like to know what the Murray School District's view is with respect to that comment? Who agrees with that premise and who disagrees? Is Murray School District's primary objective to help our students engage in discussions that bring about change? If so, what change?
5. The Keynote Speaker made the point that she now teaches at a University where she doesn't have to deal with communications from parents. Does Murray School District value and appreciate and incorporate parental input? What is being done to be transparent about what our children are being taught? Does Murray District agree with me that there should be more transparency, not less? Do you agree that parents have a right to know what is being taught in the classroom regarding controversial subjects in society and how those issues are being presented? That we should focus more on educating our students to be productive, qualified, and skilled in the work force and being respectful citizens rather than on social engineering and political indoctrination? What is your stance?
6. The keynote speaker said that all students, parents and staff need to 'unlearn all binaries' and to be retrained. In other words, no children should be looked at as male or female without the students first indicating what they want to be called. I assume this would also mean that if a student who is biologically a male says he is a female, he would be allowed to use the girls bathroom. Is this how the Equity Council and Murray School District view the world? If this is the direction we will go, will parental input be considered? An example she gave of improper gender bias was having a 'Daddy Daughter Dance' or 'Mutins with Mothers'. We have had similar events in our children's schools, does the Equity Council aim to cancel these types of things?
7. Have you thought about whether the term 'Equity' could really be a code word for opening the door to ignoring the Utah Constitution and the right of parents to have a say in their children's education? Are you in favor of the school system being revolutionized to incorporate political agendas and to replace basic and common sense teachings of mutual respect and courtesy with those political agendas? Are you in favor of using 'Equity' to treat people differently based on certain 'marginalized' categories with the goal of achieving equal outcomes rather than working toward providing equal opportunities? If yes to these questions, will you please let us know that in a transparent way? The Equity Council said something to the effect that one of their core beliefs is to center those most impacted by 'marginalization' in the curriculum, policies, and practices. What does that mean?
8. The Equity Council mentioned some kind of an Equity Book bundle that is available or will become available. Do parents have access to this?
9. The Equity Council mentioned getting an equity director appointed at each school. Will we be informed before this happens? What is the criteria and what will they do? Will it be a paid position?
10. Jordan School District has Culture and Diversity Specialists who have begun doing training in classrooms. Will Murray School District have similar positions? Will parents be informed on what specifics are being taught?

Black Lives Matter and other people are trying to get a State School Board Member removed from the State Board of Education because she shared some of the lectures that were presented at the Utah Pride Center conference, including the two that I mention above, and because she is standing up for Utah families and the right of parents to know what their students are being taught. I'm attaching a copy of a message they sent to the Utah State School Board. To me it sounds anything but relevant, anything but understanding, and anything but being willing to engage in a dialogue or conversation. Calling someone racist and homophobic because of differences of opinion does not sound like Equity to me, it kind of comes across more like bullying. Another group criticized her because she is advocating for the Golden Rule - doing unto others as we would have done unto us. To them, somehow that principle violates separation of church and state and is white supremacist.

I have not in the past been involved in Community Councils, but I can see that is a mistake because I had no idea that an Equity Council even existed, let alone that they are giving lectures on the changes that need to happen in our school system. Any information or answers you can provide to the questions raised in this email would be greatly appreciated and to each of us as parents going forward. My hope is that you will seek, consider, and appreciate the input of parents instead of only those groups who will scream, intimidate, threaten, and cancel.

Thanks

Date : 2/9/2021 3:58:53 PM

From : "Jennifer Covington"

To :

Co: "Glo Merrill", "Kami Anderson", "Belinda Johnson", "Elizabeth Payne", "Jaren Cooper", "Buck, Sarah", "Jennifer King", "Kauffman, Earl", "Scott Wihongi", "Darren Dean",

wanders@murrrayschools.org, mbair@murrayschools.org,

"rteo@murrayschools.org", jurnside@murrayschools.org,

"Bouwman, Jim",

jaired@murrayschools.org", hoolata@murrayschools.org", "Heather Nicholas", "Kay Oborn", "Vanessa Jobo"

Subject: Re: Murray School District Equity Council

Below are the answers to your questions.

1. Why were parents not informed of or invited to be on the Equity Council?

The Equity Council was formed by MCSD educators in mid-2019 to address and review policies and practices that ensure our educators feel safe in our school system. When George Floyd was killed a year later, tensions were elevated and the Equity Council broadened their focus to that of an advisory role to also ensure all students feel safe and welcome in our schools. The council has only met a half-dozen times since its inception and is still very new and evolving as a fixture of the district. There has never been any intent not to have parents as part of the council. The council just never made it to the point where we could actively engage employees and parents in equity work to benefit the district. We have shared information on our website and social media about the Equity Committee in the past year. We have pushed pause on the Council at this time so that its mission, vision, and participants are better defined, inclusive, and representative.

2. How and why did the Equity Council have power to correct district memos and Utah law?

The first memo was sent to employees to remind them of the First Amendment and Political Speech. The second memo sought to clarify the first memo by specifically attempting to identify political speech. After this memo was sent, concern was immediately expressed to the district by many employees that some of the examples of political speech that were outlined were viewed by others as human rights. This memo also, unfortunately, served to disenfranchise marginalized employee groups within the district. The district determined it was prudent to retract this second memo at the time and work on more clarification for employees. At this point in time, the Equity Council became involved in helping craft a memo that would recognize and support all employees and students. This final memo was worked on in collaboration with district administration and was reviewed by the school board before being sent. We regret that assumptions about the Council's role and responsibility at the district have been misunderstood. This is why we have pushed pause on the Council at this time so that its mission, vision, and participants are better defined, inclusive, and representative.

3. Why didn't the district invite parents to view the Equity Council's presentation in the Utah Pride conference?

Representatives from Murray City School District were invited to present information about the work of the Equity Council at the Utah Pride Conference. Educators from the Murray City School District have been invited to share and participate at a wide range of educational conferences over the years. The district has not made it a practice to invite parents to participate in conferences geared for educators.

4. Why were Horizon parents given conflicting accounts of how Call Me Max appeared in the classroom?

Unfortunately, there was a lot of confusion in the days and weeks that followed the incident at Horizon Elementary School. That means different people (both in the district and outside the district) were told different things and that is something we as a district regret and will work to improve as we train our teachers and administrators districtwide. The administration of Horizon Elementary will be sending a letter to all third grade parents with further clarification. Parents are also encouraged to contact Horizon Principal Whitney Anderson to discuss concerns they have.

5. If the Call Me Max incident is still under investigation, why is the rest of the district receiving a conclusive answer while Horizon parents are not?

The incident surrounding the book Call Me Max is not still under investigation. The following information has been provided to parents who have inquired. This information has also been shared with all school principals and our school board. The 'personnel' matter referenced in this message is in regards to the district working with the administration of Horizon Elementary to ensure complete transparency when communicating with parents.

Information Sent in Email on February 5, 2021 in response to email from Greg Marchant:

The book "Call Me Max" was an isolated incident in one 3rd grade classroom at Horizon Elementary School. It has not been used in any other schools or classrooms. It was not approved by the Murray City School District Board of Education. A Horizon student brought the book in and asked if the teacher would read the book to the class. The teacher read the book to the class and answered the question you mentioned brought up by the students in the class about growing a beard. The administration at Horizon Elementary was not aware of this book being read until it was brought to their attention by parents. The communication that followed with parents was unfortunate in that several different messages were sent with conflicting information. We understand and appreciate that this has caused concerns of trust with parents. This is a personnel matter that we as a district have addressed with the administration of Horizon Elementary to ensure it does not happen in the future. We have also spoken with all of our administrators so they are aware of what occurred.

6. Will Horizon parents be given factual resolution on which story is true out of what the teacher and administrators told us?

The information we have shared as a district with you has been factual. We acknowledge that things were not handled as well as they could or should have been. The administration of Horizon Elementary will be sending a letter to all third grade parents with the factual information. Parents are also encouraged to contact Horizon Principal Whitney Anderson to discuss concerns they have.

7. If Call Me Max is not a district or school book, why was it seen in MCSD elementary trainings in Summer 2020?

Educators are given all kinds of training so we would need to know specifically which training this is in reference to. Please have the employees who have shared this with you contact Superintendent Covington so that we can further look into what took place and the context of the training.

8. How do parents access the "Additional Resources" list?

If this question is in reference to additional resources lists at Horizon Elementary, the school administration will address that in their forthcoming letter. We are unaware of any other school having an additional resource list. Exhaustive lists of teacher resources used in a classroom are not commonly posted publicly. However, we are happy to provide resource lists and other content upon request. We would ask that you reach out to your school principal to facilitate this.

9. Where will Book Bundles books be moved if they don't remain in the program?

We have pushed pause on the Book Bundle program at the moment to assess protocols and policies around it. We need more time to evaluate the processes and how to best communicate with parents. It is untenable for us to answer this question until that work has been completed.

10. Will parents be made aware of all books of similar content and topics being brought into our schools, regardless of destination?

As we have pushed pause on the Book Bundle program, we recognize we need to review and evaluate our book selection and approval process. We also need to understand the best manner in which to communicate this information to parents to avoid the recent confusion. As we work through these considerations and reach conclusions we will inform parents.

Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
Murray City School District
5102 S. Commerce Drive

On Monday, February 8, 2021, 10:09:05 AM MST [REDACTED]

Ms. Covington -

Thank you for the reply. I am glad that the materials will be re-evaluated, hopefully parents will be included in that conversation and that our input will be considered when deciding which materials are "developmentally appropriate". As parents, we sincerely seek a safe, tolerant, inclusive and understanding environment for every child in the classroom and to build and maintain trust between parents and administration. Bottom line is that hopefully we all can agree on the necessity of working together from here on out as a partnership and with full disclosure and transparency. To be blunt, it feels like parental rights have been secretly undermined. Regarding the incident at Horizon, I have forwarded your reply to parents at Horizon who can respond directly to that. They are more familiar with the specific facts of the Call Me Max incident and can better speak to the conversations, emails, and conflicting information received from teacher, principal, Dr. Jobe, Dr. Dean, etc.

That said, I do have some ongoing concerns: You have expressed a commitment to be "open and transparent." However, you didn't respond to my request for a parent meeting - can you tell me if that is on the table? Moreover, the Equity Council's presentation has been blocked from viewing: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7b0ld-lwAR13oi_9L3lnJS0l_JoQ_FRI_Pnh-WdkR96Fvpc0cV-0F2T-JLcWfuyzNbw&v=P29NAz2RH-4&feature=youtu.be. This does not seem to be moving toward transparency? I did take notes and Dr. Jobe specifically said the books on the Equity Books Bundle had been approved by the School Board. Dr. Dean was part of that video presentation and he did not dispute her statement and has not replied to my emails. Parents were also told the Bundle had been approved and that the Book Bundles have been distributed to other schools in the District. In the interests of transparency, if this "personnel issue" is affecting our children and rights as parents, I think we deserve some additional explanation and clarification. In the interests of transparency, is Dr. Dean willing to explain why the Equity Council (that we did not know existed) was able to pressure him into apologizing for a memorandum that explained that pursuant to Utah law "a public-school classroom is reserved for its intended purpose of importing relevant instructions and is not an open forum for employees to engage in their own political speech" and instead approved "equity-based curriculum, conversations, dialogue, and displays" without any notice to parents of this change in philosophy and approach. Before the Equity Council resumes full operation, will we be fully informed about its purposes, goals, and objectives and how our students' curriculum will be affected by its "core beliefs". Will parental involvement be permitted or will participants continue to be hand-picked?

Even if the Board did not approve the books on the Equity Books Bundle List, in the interests of transparency, why were parents not provided with the full book list and why was it not posted on the school or district website? If it was a student who brought in Call Me Max, did that student also bring in Julian is a Mermaid and the written assignment that went along with it? Julian is a Mermaid touches on gender-fluidity and was not on the Equity Book Bundles List sent to parents.

As part of the Equity Council's presentation, Dr. Dean said that the Equity Council was a grassroots movement. It was such a grassroots movement, that none of us knew about it. There is a grassroots movement of parents who are very concerned about what has happened and making sure it gets fixed. I am aware of dozens of parents who are concerned. It is not just me - as I am sure you are becoming aware. We look forward to a more open dialogue and that as "we show due regard" for teachers and students' feelings, rights, cultures, and traditions, there can also be due regard for parents' rights.

Most appreciately [REDACTED]

On Fri, Feb 5, 2021 at 3:39 PM Jennifer Covington <jcovington@murrayschools.org> wrote:

[REDACTED] Thank you for the follow up questions. I am happy to address them in hopes of providing the clarity you are asking for. Please know that we do value parents and parent input and never want anything to feel like it is being done in secret.

The book "Call Me Max" was an isolated incident in one 3rd grade classroom at Horizon Elementary School. It has not been used in any other schools or classrooms. It was not approved by the Murray City School District Board of Education. A Horizon student brought the book in and asked if the teacher would read the book to the class. The teacher read the book to the class and answered the question you mentioned brought up by the students in the class about growing a beard. The administration at Horizon Elementary was not aware of this book being read until it was brought to their attention by parents. The communication that followed with parents was unfortunate in that several different messages were sent with conflicting information. We understand and appreciate that this has caused concerns of trust with parents. This is a personnel matter that we as a district have addressed with the administration at Horizon Elementary to ensure it does not happen in the future. We have also spoken with all of our administrators so they are aware of what occurred.

With regard to the equity book bundles, a presentation was made to the school board by Dr. Jobe in the fall that listed the books the school would be using throughout the year. The board did not review or approve these - it was simply part of a presentation that was made to the board. Horizon Elementary is the only school that has implemented these equity book bundles at this time. As mentioned in my last email, all equity book bundle books have been suspended while we work to put a process in place where these books will be reviewed by educators and approved by the School Community Council. We are committed to being fully transparent with this process and ensure our parents are fully informed.

The Equity Council was formed by educators, who were feeling unsafe as employees in our school system, as a place where we could look at policy to ensure equal employment opportunity for all. When Trayvon Martin was killed and tensions in our state and country rose, the equity committee broadened their focus to ensure all of our students felt safe and welcomed in our schools. Another individual did let me know that a parent had been told that the Equity Council did not want any more "white-identifying" people on the council. Our Director of Human Services and Student Services serves on this council and was not aware of anyone being told this. I asked that parent who told me this to please have that individual, or any individual who was told that, to please contact me personally so I could hear their story and address it appropriately. At this time, all work with the equity council has been suspended while we work to ensure a solid direction and framework moving forward that will have many voices.

Our goals moving forward are to put policy and measures in place to ensure that we are open and transparent with books that are being read in the classroom and the mission, purpose and vision of Equity Council. We respect the rights and values of parents and do want to work together. As an education community, we want to respect by acknowledging differences, looking for the good in everyone, and showing due regard for others' feelings, rights, cultures, and traditions. Our actions as educators and parents will demonstrate our belief that we are better when we are working together on behalf of every child.

Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
Murray City School District
5102 S. Commerce Drive
Murray, UT 84107
801.264.7400



On Thu, Feb 4, 2021 at 2:05 AM [REDACTED]

Dear Ms. Covington and Others,

Thank you for the replies. I appreciate your time and what appears to be your commitment to transparency going forward. I also appreciate that some of these issues are being discussed and re-evaluated. Although most of my questions weren't answered, that's understandable - there were a lot of them. Hopefully at some point they will be. I hate taking your time on this issue and, to be honest, I hate taking so much of my own time on it. But something is happening here in Murray that just doesn't seem right - and is causing many of us deep concern.

Transparency and parental involvement should be the biggest learning lesson. We all want our kids to be safe and for teachers and parents to have resources. But regardless of any parent's opinion on the propriety of teaching some of these things in school, I would think all parents can agree that we deserve to be advised of what sensitive and complicated issues are being taught and how they are being presented IN ADVANCE and be given the opportunity to provide consent and be prepared for

questions that arise (for instance, I would assume that a parent with a child experiencing gender identity issues would especially want to know how that topic is being addressed before it happens).

Since my last email to you, I have been receiving information that has left me quite bewildered and confused. Many other parents seem to feel the same way. Conflicting information has been coming from Dr. Jobe and other school personnel regarding how Julian is a Mermaid and Call Me Max ended up being read to a 3rd grade class at Horizon without parental consent. One parent was told that the book was brought by a student or parent and read by the teacher to the class. Dr. Jobe said that "Call Me Max" was only read to help a student feel supported for a specific incident and she sent a parent an Equity book list that did not include Call Me Max or Julian is a Mermaid. Dr. Jobe also apparently said that she didn't believe LGBTQ+ issues should be discussed until 6th grade.

Another parent was told that those books were part of the curriculum and were part of the school and district's focus on equity work and Second Steps program. The 3rd grade teacher told another parent that reading these books were part of the school and district's focus on equity and antiracist work and she included copies of the school district's memoranda as proof that the materials were approved (implying that advance notice to parents was not required). She said that the books were part of their equity lessons for the week. Dr. Jobe told another parent that the lessons are wonderful and developmentally appropriate and included a list of the equity books for the year, which DID include both Julian is a Mermaid and Call Me Max. In addition, Dr. Jobe apparently told at least one parent that the equity book bundles had been approved by the Murray School Board, but a member of the board has said that was not true. So parents are being told two different things by Dr. Jobe and others. Either it was an isolated incident or it was part of an approved plan. Either the books were approved by the Board or they weren't. Either the books are developmentally appropriate or should wait until 6th grade. It can't be both. So, Number One, there seems to be a problem with getting true and accurate information, and Number Two, parents were never given notice and never provided consent. Utah Code Section 53E-9-203 requires parental consent before topics involving "sexual behavior, orientation or attitudes" are discussed. This was acknowledged by the First Memorandum sent to District personnel, in August, before the Equity Council (as claimed in their video at the Utah Pride conference) successfully persuaded the District to send a revised Memorandum with an apology that substitutes "Equity" in place of Utah Law.

What I have been told is that these two books were part of the Equity Book Bundles program administered by Dr. Jobe. Parents became concerned after their children came home and mentioned the teacher had talked to them about how science has made it possible for women who want to become men to grow a beard after going through puberty. If I understand correctly, certain parents received a list from Dr. Jobe, after the fact, informing them that "Call Me Max" was part of the curriculum and book list for the 3rd grade equity book bundles program. See attachments from Dr. Jobe. Apparently, she provided the parents with a list of monthly topics and the October 2020 topic was Sexuality and Gender, so the books and topics appear to have been intentionally part of the 3rd grade curriculum from the outset of the school year, without parents' knowledge or consent. Moreover, Call Me Max was apparently incorporated into teacher trainings last summer.

Prior to Call Me Max, the 3rd Graders read and did an assignment on Julian is a Mermaid. The author Jessica Love says about this book that "As a genderfluid person, I didn't see this as a transgender book, but more about the freedom of gender expression," and originally it was about how Julian wanted to be a drag queen, but the author changed it to a mermaid because "there's something magical about how mermaids have no genitalia." Remember, this is for 3rd grade. The students then did an assignment where the worksheet says that Julian sees himself as a mermaid in the story, and asks them to draw a picture in a mirror of what they would like to become. Could it be that Julian is a Mermaid was preparing them for Call Me Max? Here is a link to Call Me Max where you can see that a child is looking in a mirror (like the assignment in Julian is a Mermaid) and sees herself as a boy who is transgender. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icrFnaCbKRY>. The book goes on to state that when a baby is born and parents call the baby a boy or girl, if the baby could talk the baby might say "NO I'M NOT" because the parents made a mistake. So without parents' consent or knowledge, the children are being taught at school that their parents may have made a mistake in calling them a boy or a girl. Again this is in 3rd grade.

So can you please clear this up? Were the books and Equity Bundles approved by the School District, only approved by Dr. Jobe, or implemented by the Equity Council? If the Equity Council, who formed the Equity Council and where does it derive its authority? I was sent a document with the Mission of the Equity Council. It is attached. One of the core beliefs is centering those impacted by marginalization in the curriculum. According to the document, marginalized include people of color, disabled, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer people, immigrants, etc. When I think of centering, it sounds like the curriculum and teaching will place those categories in the center, or the focus, or top priority. It also talks about an intersectional approach, which from the Utah Pride Center lectures we watched, means "unlearning all binaries" such as male and female. Based on Call Me Max and Dr. Jobe's involvement with the Equity Council, this centering and these teachings have been happening at least as early as 3rd grade. Nowhere in the document is there anything about seeking parental input, buy-in, or consent; instead, the "group norm" is to "call others out". Apparently, at least one parent has been told the Equity Council doesn't want any more "white-identifying" people on the council. Is that accurate?

I am not the only one seeking additional information. Many parents are concerned and many more than I realized. Can you please provide us with the real story on what has been happening and what the goals are going forward? I agree that those who may be "marginalized" may have unique challenges that need to be addressed in a sensitive manner. That is all the more reason to involve us in the process. At the same time, I am learning that according to the "Equity" agenda, Equity is not about "Equality". According to Ten Commitments for Equity-Literate Educators: "Equity is not about valuing every perspective. An equity view does not value heteronormativity," and "educational outcome disparities are the result of structural inequities and have nothing to do with students' grittiness, mindsets..." I fundamentally disagree with a philosophy that elevates victimhood and ignores individual choice and accountability.

Perhaps an in-person meeting with parents would be helpful - one that is calm and involves transparent discourse and explanations. The more transparency, the more understanding. Maybe then fewer bridges will be burned and more bridges can be built. We all want what is best for the kids, even if we see things from different perspectives. To find common ground we need to be able to trust that our rights as parents will be valued and respected. When things are hidden, it feels like we are somehow the enemy. We want to work together, PLEASE work with us and not in secret or behind our backs. You might ask, why do you care so much, your kids don't go to Horizon?? I watched the video from the Utah Pride Center conference and Dr. Jobe made it very clear that this is meant to be incorporated District-wide.

Thanks [REDACTED]

On Tue, Feb 2, 2021 at 4:45 PM Jennifer Covington <jcovington@murrayschools.org> wrote:

Thank you for your email. We value and appreciate your thoughts. We agree that it is important that students, employees and families in the Murray City School District are able to participate in a school system that values and respects each person. Transparency and communication are also essential to what we do and believe. We are committed to doing our best in both of these areas.

The Equity Council was started a little over a year ago with the mission of building a diverse, equitable, and inclusive district by providing all students, families, and employees with a community of care, respect, and belonging. At present, the council consists of educators, administrators, and parents. At this time, the Equity Council has been suspended while the district and School Board work to put measures in place to ensure the purpose of the council is clear, defined, and communicated to all parents and employees. You are correct that these are complicated issues with no easy answers and it is important that parents have a voice in the work that is being done as we work to support all students.

The Equity Book Bundles have also been placed on hold at this time while we work to put procedures in place to ensure transparency and communication. The district is working on an action plan where educators and then the School Community Council will review all equity materials. Parents will be fully informed of what is being used in the classroom and provided with additional information regarding the materials. Parents will also have the ability to opt their child out of any reading by simply notifying their teacher.

We want to be thoughtful and intentional as we work on both of these areas. All procedures and measures will be shared with our parents as we agree that transparency and communication are vital.

Thank you for your advocacy of not only your students but all students. As a district, we are committed to working to make sure parents are fully informed of what is happening in their child's classroom.

Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
Murray City School District
5102 S. Commerce Drive
Murray, UT 84107
801.264.7400

On Mon, Feb 1, 2021 at 4:50 PM [REDACTED]

To Members of the Board, Superintendent, and Chairs of Community Councils (at Viewmont, Riverview and Murray High):

My wife and I are parents of 4 students that each attend one of the above-referenced schools - and my wife is a former teacher who often substitute teaches at Viewmont Elementary at teacher's requests. She isn't involved in the drafting of this email and is seeing it for the first time along with you, though she was aware I would be sending it. Our children are good students and the Murray Schools have been a nice fit for our family. Our children are generally shy and sometimes have a hard time making new friends, but we try to help them through that as parents - and they have had good teachers. We would hope that all teachers and staff would look at them as individuals who need help, support, guidance, and skills-training - not because, or in spite of, their gender, sexual orientation, race, religion or any other category.

With that backdrop, I recently learned about the Murray School Equity Council that was apparently created some time ago. I don't believe parents have been told about this Council, have we? If so, were, somehow I missed the memo. I watched two of many videos/lectures (that have now been taken down) from the Utah Pride Center's recent conference for Utah Educators. One video that was extremely concerning to me was the Keynote Speaker Dr. Kyi Myers. I also viewed the presentation by the Murray School District's Equity Council. As I said, the videos are no longer able to be viewed, but I did take some notes while watching the presentations. Based on those lectures, I would like to ask you some questions to find out more about the Equity Council, what their goals and objectives are, and how this will affect the children and our family.

1. In the Equity Council's video presentation a question was asked about how it has been received by the parents. The answer was basically that they need to do a better job getting the word out to the parents. I would agree with that. How do we find out about what the Equity Council is doing? Do they have open meetings? Are their agendas shared with the community councils? Are the community councils giving input? Can you please let me know the best way to obtain access to this information?
2. In the Equity Council's video presentation, they mentioned that one of their greatest 'Successes' was that the council was able to get the District to rescind a Memorandum that went out to District personnel in August by issuing a revised Memorandum in November. I have now read all these memoranda (see attached) and the first one seemed to communicate that the School District would follow Utah law and could control political speech in the classroom. The last one apologizes for being 'harmful to the community' and appears to put "Equity" as the overriding principle governing Educators. Was the council really the body that achieved this 'Success'? How did they do it? Should parents have been informed? No one asked me whether the Memorandum was harmful - were other parents asked? A memorandum to personnel regarding what will be allowed in the classroom directly impacts all parents and children in the district. Should we draw any conclusions from the fact that the first memorandum was issued before the election and the last one was three weeks after the election?
3. I have been informed that a book called Call Me Max, dealing with transgenderism, was read in a 3rd grade class in our district without parental consent. When those parents objected, the teacher cited them to the 3rd memorandum that was apparently released due to the Equity Council's successful initiative. Is it true that parents do not need to be informed when subjects regarding sexual orientation, transgenderism, the Black Lives Matter organization, gender issues are taught to our children? We had to sign a consent form for our child to watch "Because of Winn Dixie", but if it is a book on transgenderism is subject matter for the 3rd grade classroom, no parental consent is required?
4. In the introduction to the keynote address at the Utah Pride Center's conference for Utah Educators, the speaker made the point that schools are not about 'transferring knowledge,' but should be about engaging in discussions that 'bring about change.' I would like to know what the Murray School District's view is with respect to that comment? Who agrees with that premise and who disagrees? Is Murray School District's primary collective to help our students engage in discussions that bring about change? If so, what change?
5. The Keynote Speaker made the point that she now teaches at a University where she doesn't have to deal with communications from parents. Does Murray School District value and appreciate and incorporate parental input? What is being done to be transparent about what our children are being taught? Does Murray District agree with me that there should be more transparency, not less? Do you agree that parents have a right to know what is being taught in the classroom regarding controversial subjects in society and how those issues are being presented? That we should focus more on educating our students to be productive, qualified, and skilled in the work force and being respectful citizens rather than on social engineering and political indoctrination? What is your stance?
6. The keynote speaker said that all students, parents and staff need to 'unlearn all binaries' and to be retrained. In other words, no children should be looked at as male or female without the students first indicating what they want to be called. I assume this would also mean that if a student who is biologically a male says he is a female, he would be allowed to use the girls bathroom. Is this how the Equity Council and Murray School District view the world? If this is the direction we will go, will parental input be considered? An example she gave of improper gender bias was having a "Daddy Daughter Dance" or "Muffins with Mothers". We have had similar events in our children's schools, does the Equity Council aim to cancel these types of things?
7. Have you thought about whether the term 'Equity' could really be a code word for opening the door to ignoring the Utah Constitution and the right of parents to have a say in their children's education? Are you in favor of the school system being revolutionized to incorporate political agendas and to replace basic and common sense teachings of mutual respect and courtesy with those political agendas? Are you in favor of using 'Equity' to treat people differently based on certain 'marginalized' categories with the goal of achieving equal outcomes rather than working toward providing equal opportunities? If yes to these questions, will you please let us know that in a transparent way? The Equity Council said something to the effect that one of their core beliefs is to center those most impacted by 'marginalization' in the curriculum, policies, and practices. What does that mean?
8. The Equity Council mentioned some kind of an Equity Book bundle that is available or will become available. Do parents have access to this?
9. The Equity Council mentioned getting an equity director appointed at each school. Will we be informed before this happens? What is the criteria and what will they do? Will it be a paid position?
10. Jordan School District has Culture and Diversity Specialists who have begun doing training in classrooms. Will Murray School District have similar positions? Will parents be informed on what specifics are being taught?

Black Lives Matter and other people are trying to get a State School Board Member removed from the State Board of Education because she shared some of the lectures that were presented at the Utah Pride Center conference, including the two that I mention above, and because she is standing up for Utah families and the right of parents to know what their students are being taught. I'm attaching a copy of a message they sent to the Utah State School Board. To me it sounds anything but tolerant, anything but understanding, and anything but being willing to engage in a dialogue or conversation. Calling someone racist and homophobic because of differences of opinion does not sound like Equity to me, it kind of comes across more like bullying. Another group criticized her because she is advocating for the Golden Rule - doing unto others as we would have done unto us. To them, somehow that principle violates separation of church and state and is white supremacist.

I have not in the past been involved in Community Councils, but I can see that is a mistake because I had no idea that an Equity Council even existed, let alone that they are giving lectures on the changes that need to happen in our school system. Any information or answers you can provide to the questions raised in this email would be greatly appreciated and to each of us as parents going forward. My hope is that you will seek, consider, and appreciate the input of parents instead of only those groups who will scream, intimidate, threaten, and cancel.

Thanks [REDACTED]

Date : 2/9/2021 2:10:30 AM

From :

To : "Jennifer Covington",

Cc : "Glo Merrill", "Kami Anderson", "Belinda Johnson", "Elizabeth Payne", "Jaren Cooper", "Buck, Sarah", "Jennifer King", "Kauffman, Earl", "Scott Wihongi", "Barren Dean",

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Subject : Re: Murray School District Equity Council

Attachment : MCS D Equity Council.pdf; Memo 1.pdf; Memo 2.pdf; Memo 3.pdf; Book Bundles List.pdf; Horizon Elementary Equity Topics.pdf;

Ms. Covington and others-

I have added the following forwarded message and the attachments that came with it in an effort to clarify these issues and their timeline. This message was composed by many concerned parents, and I both addressed a lot of information in our emails, so hopefully this message helps break it down for everyone to better understand...

Follow Murray friends- I'm forwarding a message from several Murray parents. If you are receiving this it's because I thought you would want to read it. I added some email addresses on the bottom if you want to contact someone.

Dear MCS D parents, caregivers and community members,

You may have heard in the news recently about some issues going on in Murray City School District. As fellow parents in Murray, and knowing that the news does not always represent topics accurately, we wanted to share some of the information we have received from parents and the district about these issues:

1. Last year MCS D formed an Equity Council. The majority of parents were not informed about the formation of this council nor invited to join. Attached to this email is the Council's mission, goals, and group norms. We encourage you to look into the words or phrases you may not understand on this sheet, such as "equity" (it does NOT mean equality) and "intersectional approach," etc. (See attached: MCS D Equity Council.)
2. In August 2020, MCS D sent out two district memos reminding all educators of Utah laws, code § 53E-9-203, regarding political speech. The MCS D Equity Council found these memos to be harmful and requested that the district apologize and write a new memo updating their stance. (See attached: Memos 1 and 2.)
3. As a result of the Equity Council's request, MCS D did write a new memo which was released in November 2020. In this memo, MCS D claimed that the first two memos harmed the community and were not in line with MCS D equity values. This new memo then encouraged educators to center equity in their daily teaching, with equity-based curriculum, dialogue and displays. (See attached: Memo 3.)
4. As a result of this corrected memo, political speech and signs in classrooms have been deemed appropriate and acceptable in all Murray schools, and the Utah laws, cited in the first two memos, which prohibited such speech and signs were deemed outdated and irrelevant.
5. As part of the new equity-centered curriculum encouraged by MCS D, an "Equity Book Bundles" program was started at Horizon Elementary School in conjunction with their Second Steps program. This Book Bundles program focused on marginalized groups and contained books accordingly. However, at no time was a full book list sent out to parents, nor was it posted on the school or district website.
6. On January 8, 2021, at Horizon Elementary School, a 3rd grade teacher read a transgender children's book titled "Call Me Max" to her entire class, without informing parents nor seeking their approval or consent. The author of this book, Kyle Lukoff, is a transgender male. The back of the book contains an "About the Author" section with a photograph of the author, which was read to the students. This prompted discussion on how Lukoff grew a beard since he used to be a girl. The teacher informed students that science has provided a way for this to be done, and students began discussing taking medicine after puberty if they want to change their gender. Here is a link to a video of this book (the "About the Author" section is not read in this video): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icrPnaCbKtY>
7. When parents found out this book was read and discussed with their children (who came home after school and told them), some parents expressed concern about why they were not informed and why consent was not needed. In addition, parents asked where this book was found on the district or school's website or on any book list sent home.
8. In reply to concerned parents, the 3rd grade teacher and the administrators of Horizon Elementary sent a copy of the Equity Council's MCS D revised memo (Memo 3) stating that curriculum was to be equity-centered, inferring that as a result of this memo they did not need parental approval to read and discuss the book with 3rd grade classes. They also told parents the book was "wonderful and developmentally appropriate" for 3rd graders.
9. Also in reply to concerned parents, Horizon administrators acknowledged that the book bundles list was not posted anywhere for parents to access. Concerned parents were then sent several book lists with different books on different lists. Some parents were told of an "Additional Resources" list, where the transgender children books could be found, but no parents ever received that list. All of this prompted parents to involve the superintendent and Murray School Board in trying to figure out the facts. (See attached: Book Bundles List.)
10. As administrator of the Equity Book Bundles program and co-chair of the MCS D Equity Council, Dr. Vanessa Jobe (vice-principal at Horizon Elementary) claimed in a Utah Pride Center conference video, on Jan 23, 2021, that the Murray School Board approved the entire book list for the Book Bundles Program. When parents who viewed this conference went to their representatives on the school board, they were told that, in fact, that was misinformation and the school board had not seen or approved any list of books. Horizon's principal, Mrs. Whitney Anderson, then informed parents that Dr. Jobe had actually chosen the books herself from her personal friend's bookstore in SLG. (If you would like to view the MCS D Equity Council's presentation in "Pride, Not Prejudice: An LGBTQIA+ Conference for Utah Educators, Students, and Caregivers," we encourage you to contact the Utah Pride Center on Facebook, as they informed attendees that all videos would be available until April 1st, but for unclear reasons have since removed the videos so no one can access them.)
11. For two weeks, parents were told by both the teacher and administrators that these books and topics were part of Horizon's 3rd grade curriculum. Parents were even sent a topic calendar for the Equity/Second Steps program which showed "Sexuality and Gender" as the October 2020 topic for all grades, which was three months prior to this incident. (Parents still do not know what was taught or discussed in October 2020 regarding that topic.) However, as the issue was pressed further, suddenly MCS D began telling parents that "Call Me Max" was never part of the curriculum, and "Sexuality and Gender" were not intended to be 3rd grade equity topics, and in fact "Call Me Max" was brought into the classroom by a student, not the teacher or administrators. (See attached: Horizon Elementary Equity Topics.)
12. This new story is confusing to parents, since on January 8, 2021, Horizon 3rd graders also read and discussed "Julian is a Mermaid" (a children's book about gender-fluidity) and completed an assignment in conjunction with that book, which assignment was brought home to parents. "Julian is a Mermaid" was also not found on the Equity Book Bundles list sent to parents. No teacher or administrator has explained what list "Julian is a Mermaid" came from. Did the student who brought in "Call Me Max" also bring in "Julian"? Did the student also bring in the assignments for "Julian"? In addition, why was "Sexuality and Gender" found on the October 2020 topics list for 3rd grade (and all grades) if this was not intended to be part of the curriculum? Utah law, code § 53E-9-203, states that these topics are not to be in the curriculum of children without explicit parental consent. Why was "Sexuality and Gender" included in the Equity book topics without parental consent? Why won't MCS D answer these questions clearly and directly?
13. As members of MCS D, please be aware that the Equity Book Bundles program is set to roll out in all elementary schools district wide in the near future.

In summary, parents are still trying to find answers to these questions and others. We have asked the superintendent and other MCS D representatives about these issues, and most of our questions have gone unanswered. We have requested a public parent meeting with Superintendent Jen Covington regarding these issues, but she did not respond.

We feel these are important topics to be addressed publicly by MCS D with ALL parents. We want EVERY student in MCS D to feel welcomed and loved. We want to be involved in these equity discussions with our children. As parents, we have the legal right to be involved in the choices of these books, discussions, and curricula. We encourage all parents to get involved in these issues if they are important to you. Please look through the Book Bundles book list (attached to this email), find the books on YouTube and read all of them, and see for yourselves if you feel they are "developmentally appropriate" for your children. There are many books on this list (not just the ones discussed in this email) that are considered political and highly controversial. We feel that topics found in the Equity Book Bundles program would be considered sensitive to most parents and students, regardless of differing opinions on those topics. For this reason, we believe parents deserve complete honesty and full transparency from Murray City School District regarding all of these books and issues. If you feel the same, please get involved. Please start asking questions to your teachers, administrators, and MCS D about the Equity Council and its corresponding programs. Please feel free to forward this email (and all attachments) to anyone who may have a vested interest.

Thank you,
Concerned Parents

Some emails to contact with questions:

Jen Covington (Superintendent): jcovington@murrayschools.org
Gin Merrill (Precinct 1) gmerrill@murrayschools.org
Kari Anderson (Precinct 2) kanderson@murrayschools.org
Belinda Johnson (Precinct 3) bjohnson@murrayschools.org
Elizabeth Payne (Precinct 4) epayne@murrayschools.org
Jaren Cooper (Precinct 5) jcooper@murrayschools.org

On Monday, February 8, 2021, 10:09:05 AM MST [REDACTED]

Ms. Covington -

Thank you for the reply. I am glad that the materials will be re-evaluated, hopefully parents will be included in that conversation and that our input will be considered when deciding which materials are "developmentally appropriate". As parents, we sincerely seek a safe, tolerant, inclusive and understanding environment for every child in the classroom and to build and maintain trust between parents and administration. Bottom line is that hopefully we all can agree on the necessity of working together from here on out as a partnership and with full disclosure and transparency. To be blunt, it feels like parental rights have been secretly undermined. Regarding the incident at Horizon, I have forwarded your reply to parents at Horizon who can respond directly to that. They are more familiar with the specific facts of the Call Me Max incident and can better speak to the conversations, emails, and conflicting information received from teacher, principal, Dr. Jobe, Dr. Dean, etc.

That said, I do have some ongoing concerns: You have expressed a commitment to be "open and transparent". However, you didn't respond to my request for a parent meeting - can you tell me if that is on the table? Moreover, the Equity Council's presentation has been blocked from viewing: https://www.youtube.com/watch?fbclid=IwAR13oi_8I_3InJStII_JpQ_FRLRnh-WdkR96Evp0eV-0F2T-JLcWluyvzNbw&v=P28NAz2BH-4&feature=youtu.be. This does not seem to be moving toward transparency? I did take notes and Dr. Jobe specifically said the books on the Equity Books Bundle had been approved by the School Board. Dr. Dean was part of that video presentation and he did not dispute her statement and has not replied to my emails. Parents were also told the Bundle had been approved and that the Book Bundles have been distributed to other schools in the District. In the interests of transparency, if this "personnel issue" is affecting our children and rights as parents, I think we deserve some additional explanation and clarification. In the interests of transparency, is Dr. Dean willing to explain why the Equity Council (that we did not know existed) was able to pressure him into apologizing for a memorandum that explained that pursuant to Utah law "a public-school classroom is reserved for its intended purpose of imparting relevant instructions and is not an open forum for employees to engage in their own political speech" and instead approved "equity-based curriculum, conversations, dialogue, and displays" without any notice to parents of this change in philosophy and approach. Before the Equity Council resumes full operation, will we be fully informed about its purposes, goals, and objectives and how our students' curriculum will be affected by its "core beliefs". Will parental involvement be permitted or will participants continue to be hand-picked?

Even if the Board did not approve the books on the Equity Books Bundle list, in the interests of transparency, why were parents not provided with the full book list and why was it not posted on the school or district website? If it was a student who brought in Call Me Max, did that student also bring in Julian is a Mermaid and the written assignment that went along with it? Julian is a Mermaid touches on gender-fluidity and was not on the Equity Book Bundles list sent to parents.

As part of the Equity Council's presentation, Dr. Dean said that the Equity Council was a grassroots movement. It was such a grassroots movement, that none of us know about it. There is a grassroots movement of parents who are very concerned about what has happened and making sure it gets fixed. I am aware of dozens of parents who are concerned. It is not just me - as I am sure you are becoming aware. We look forward to a more open dialogue and that as "we show due regard" for teachers and students' feelings, rights, cultures, and traditions, there can also be due regard for parents' rights.

Most appreciately [REDACTED]

Date : 2/11/2021 5:26:43 PM

From :

To : "Jennifer Covington"

Cc : "Glo Morrill" , "Kami Anderson" , "Belinda Johnson" , "Elizabeth Payne" , "Jaren Cooper" , "Buck, Sarah" , "Jennifer King" , "Kauffman Earl" , "Scott Wihongi" , "Darren Dean" ,

"wanderson@murrayschools.org" , "journisid@murrayschools.org" , "mball@murrayschools.org" , "rdo@murrayschools.org" , "Bouwman, Jim"

"jairec@murrayschools.org" , "kdotata@murrayschools.org" , "Heather Nicholas" , "Kay Odom" , "Vanessa Jobe"
Subject : Re: Murray School District Equity Council

I am the one writing this email, but on behalf of many parents. We were advised of the Trib article this morning. I can't express how betrayed we feel. This is inexcusable and incredibly HARMFUL (ironic considering that was the reason you gave for rescinding the memorandum). The District did a one-sided, false, and self-preserving article with the Tribune WITHOUT ANY WARNING. The last thing I heard from Ms. Covington was that mistakes had been made, the District would acknowledge the mistakes and do better. We were told that our concerns would be considered and addressed - and you would work toward restoring trust. We were promised more transparency, we were promised parental input. We were promised parent meetings. For two days now, it has been radio silence.

Then you send your email below stating that you will handle the personnel issue, but only to ensure transparency in communications despite written email evidence that it was not only lack of transparency, they were FALSEHOODS. Next, a message goes out district-wide saying a committee will be formed to review materials, we aren't given any information about whether parents will have any input on that Committee.

Then you don't even give us any heads up that there will be an article in the paper and parents are given no voice in that article, just like they were given NO voice or even notice before Call Me Max was read in a 3rd Grade Classroom. You told YOUR side to protect YOURSELF. The article also hides and twists the facts to make the District look good and portrays and characterizes us as parents (and it's not just me, it's many of us) as racists and homophobes. Why? Utah law states that parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children and requires that we have notice and consent before these types of things are taught. How you have handled this is NOT ok! Your expressed reason for rescinding Memorandum 1 was because some had communicated they didn't feel safe either because of the Trayvon Martin or George Floyd incidents (one email said the former and one the latter). Apparently you don't care whether we or our children feel SAFE or STRESSED. The fact is that you were willing to hang us out to dry to protect yourselves, while we were merely seeking answers, transparency and for our rights as parents to be protected.

There is nothing in the article explaining that for 2 weeks when parents asked why Call Me Max was read in the classroom without their consent, they were told that it was because the District and Equity Council had approved it via the Memoranda and did NOT tell the parents it was because a student had brought the book in. No mention of the fact that Call Me Max and the Equity Book Bundles had been delivered to other schools. No mention of the fact that no investigation was ever done despite parents having emails proving they were not being told the truth. No mention that Dr. Jobe sent an email, after the books had already been read and discussed, to parents specifically listing Julian is a Mermaid and Call Me Max as part of the Equity Book Bundle List. No mention that some parents were told that Julian is a Mermaid and Call Me Max were part of an Additional Resources list, but no parent ever saw that list. No mention of the District deciding, without parental consent or notice, to rescind a memorandum requiring staff to follow Utah law and provide consent and notice to parents before reading sensitive materials. In fact, at the Conference when someone asked if there had been any pushback, the answer was no (Dr. Jobe and Dr. Dean knew that was not true). No mention of the fact that Julian is a Mermaid was read in the classroom before Call Me Max (again without parental notice or consent) was introduced. No mention of the fact that Julian is a Mermaid was not on the Equity Book Bundles List either. Was Julian is a Mermaid also brought in by a student?? No mention that the students were given an assignment regarding Julian is a Mermaid by their teacher. No mention that the Julian is a Mermaid assignment served to prepare the students for Call Me Max by having the students draw a picture of what they want to be in a mirror and Call Me Max opens up with a transgender boy looking in the mirror. No mention of how coincidental it is that the student brought in the same book that Dr. Jobe said was on the Equity Book Bundles List. No mention that Call Me Max specifically tells 3rd Graders that their parents may have made a mistake when they called them a boy or a girl - and parents had no notice or ability to prepare for that type of discussion. No mention of parents' rights being completely undermined. Mr. Perry says in the article that the student's questions were about puberty. There is no mention that the students read the About the Author Section which led to the students asking how the author was able to grow a beard or the discussion that followed regarding adults being able to take medicine to make that happen. According to the article, the "district has removed the page on its website explaining the [equity books] program." When was it ever there?? Teachers and administrators have said it was never there.

Comments on the Trib article are ranting about how close-minded, intolerant, and homophobic any parent must be who raised any concerns. They are drawing these conclusions from the misinformation, half-truths, and falsehoods you provided to the Tribune. They have been intentionally misled and that is wrong. To be honest, this is total BS and there is no excuse or justification for it. How do people sleep at night when they are willing to do this to parents to protect themselves from criticism. We teach our kids to love everyone, to be tolerant of others viewpoints, to be kind and understanding. We are involved in their education. We try to serve in the community. All we wanted was some transparency, some straight answers, a partnership with teachers and the administration, and to protect our kids. Others with an adult, political agenda have secretly done things without notice to parents and then tell conflicting stories after the fact to parents and the media - and willingly pull the rug out from under us and put OUR SAFETY at risk.

I have tried to be calm and I have tried to be reasonable. I thought we were making progress. Not only are we not making progress, but I can't even process what is happening right now. I don't even know how trust can be repaired. I don't even know how we fix this. I am sure an apology won't be forthcoming and would be meaningless anyway. But something needs to be done and it better be thoughtful and it better be fair. It better have the interests of ALL kids at heart and not your reputations and not your jobs and not certain interest groups who make threats and call names and have a pipeline to the press and act as BULLIES.

I don't know what else there is to say or what else can be done. If you have an idea, send it our way.

On Tue, Feb 9, 2021 at 3:58 PM Jennifer Covington <jcovington@murrayschools.org> wrote:

Below are the answers to your questions.

1. Why were parents not informed of or invited to be on the Equity Council?

The Equity Council was formed by MCS D educators in mid-2019 to address and review policies and practices that ensure our educators feel safe in our school system. When George Floyd was killed a year later, tensions were elevated and the Equity Council broadened their focus to that of an advisory role to also ensure all students feel safe and welcome in our schools. The council has only met a half-dozen times since its inception and is still very new and evolving as a fixture at the district. There has never been any intent not to have parents as part of the council. The council just never made it to the point where we could actively engage employees and parents in equity work to benefit the district. We have shared information on our website and social media about the Equity Committee in the past year. We have pushed pause on the Council at this time so that its mission, vision, and participants are better defined, inclusive, and representative.

2. How and why did the Equity Council have power to correct district memos and Utah law?

The first memo was sent to employees to remind them of the First Amendment and Political Speech. The second memo sought to clarify the first memo by specifically

attempting to identify political speech. After this memo was sent, concern was immediately expressed to the district by many employees that some of the examples of political speech that were outlined were viewed by others as human rights. This memo also, unfortunately, served to disenfranchise marginalized employee groups within the district. The district determined it was prudent to retract this second memo at the time and work on more clarification for employees. At this point in time, the Equity Council became involved in helping craft a memo that would recognize and support all employees and students. This final memo was worked on in collaboration with district administration and was reviewed by the school board before being sent. We regret that assumptions about the Council's role and responsibility at the district have been misunderstood. This is why we have pushed pause on the Council at this time so that its mission, vision, and participants are better defined, inclusive, and representative.

3. Why didn't the district invite parents to view the Equity Council's presentation in the Utah Pride conference?

Representatives from Murray City School District were invited to present information about the work of the Equity Council at the Utah Pride Conference. Educators from the Murray City School District have been invited to share and participate at a wide range of educational conferences over the years. The district has not made it a practice to invite parents to participate in conferences geared for educators.

4. Why were Horizon parents given conflicting accounts of how Call Me Max appeared in the classroom?

Unfortunately, there was a lot of confusion in the days and weeks that followed the incident at Horizon Elementary School. That means different people (both in the district and outside the district) were told different things and that is something we as a district regret and will work to improve as we train our teachers and administrators districtwide. The administration of Horizon Elementary will be sending a letter to all third grade parents with further clarification. Parents are also encouraged to contact Horizon Principal Whitney Anderson to discuss concerns they have.

5. If the Call Me Max incident is still under investigation, why is the rest of the district receiving a conclusive answer while Horizon parents are not?

The incident surrounding the book Call Me Max is not still under investigation. The following information has been provided to parents who have inquired. This information has also been shared with all school principals and our school board. The 'personnel' matter referenced in this message is in regards to the district working with the administration of Horizon Elementary to ensure complete transparency when communicating with parents.

Information Sent in Email on February 5, 2021 in response to email from Greg Marchant:

The book "Call Me Max" was an isolated incident in one 3rd grade classroom at Horizon Elementary School. It has not been used in any other schools or classrooms. It was not approved by the Murray City School District Board of Education. A Horizon student brought the book in and asked if the teacher would read the book to the class. The teacher read the book to the class and answered the question you mentioned brought up by the students in the class about growing a beard. The administration at Horizon Elementary was not aware of this book being read until it was brought to their attention by parents. The communication that followed with parents was unfortunate in that several different messages were sent with conflicting information. We understand and appreciate that this has caused concerns of trust with parents. This is a personnel matter that we as a district have addressed with the administration at Horizon Elementary to ensure it does not happen in the future. We have also spoken with all of our administrators so they are aware of what occurred.

6. Will Horizon parents be given factual resolution on which story is true out of what the teacher and administrators told us?

The information we have shared as a district with you has been factual. We acknowledge that things were not handled as well as they could or should have been. The administration of Horizon Elementary will be sending a letter to all third grade parents with the factual information. Parents are also encouraged to contact Horizon Principal Whitney Anderson to discuss concerns they have.

7. If Call Me Max is not a district or school book, why was it seen in MCSD elementary trainings in Summer 2020?

Educators are given all kinds of training so we would need to know specifically which training this is in reference to. Please have the employees who have shared this with you contact Superintendent Covington so that we can further look into what took place and the context of the training.

8. How do parents access the "Additional Resources" list?

If this question is in reference to additional resources lists at Horizon Elementary, the school administration will address that in their forthcoming letter. We are unaware of any other school having an additional resource list. Exhaustive lists of teacher resources used in a classroom are not commonly posted publicly. However, we are happy to provide resource lists and other content upon request. We would ask that you reach out to your school principal to facilitate this.

9. Where will Book Bundles books be moved if they don't remain in the program?

We have pushed pause on the Book Bundle program at the moment to assess protocols and policies around it. We need more time to evaluate the processes and how to best communicate with parents. It is untenable for us to answer this question until that work has been completed.

10. Will parents be made aware of all books of similar content and topics being brought into our schools, regardless of destination?

As we have pushed pause on the Book Bundle program, we recognize we need to review and evaluate our book selection and approval process. We also need to understand the best manner in which to communicate this information to parents to avoid the recent confusion. As we work through these considerations and reach conclusions we will inform parents.

Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
Murray City School District
5102 S. Commerce Drive
Murray, UT 84107
801.264.7400



----- Forwarded message -----

From: [REDACTED]
Date: Tue, Feb 9, 2021 at 1:28 AM
Subject: Re: Murray School District Equity Council
To: Jennifer Covington <jcovington@murrayschools.org>
Cc: Glo Merrill <gmerrill@murrayschools.org>, Kami Anderson <kanderson@murrayschools.org>, Belinda Johnson <bjohnson@murrayschools.org>, Elizabeth Payne <epayne@murrayschools.org>, Jaren Cooper <jcooper@murrayschools.org>, Buck, Sarah <sbuck@murrayschools.org>, Jennifer King <jking@murrayschools.org>, Kaulman, Earl <erkaulman@murrayschools.org>, Scott Wihongi <swihongi@murrayschools.org>, Darren Dean <ddean@murrayschools.org>, [REDACTED] <mhall@murrayschools.org>, [REDACTED] <wanderson@murrayschools.org>, [REDACTED] <jburnside@murrayschools.org>, [REDACTED] <rteo@murrayschools.org>, [REDACTED] <jbowman@murrayschools.org>, [REDACTED] <allred@murrayschools.org>, [REDACTED] <hdolata@murrayschools.org>

Hello Ms. Covington-

Thank you for your reply and for the work being done surrounding these issues. As a Horizon parent who has more information about the Call Me Max incident, and having spoken with several other Horizon parents about it (as well as other community members and parents from other elementary schools), I am replying to your message to [redacted] and the others. (I hope I got everyone who was on the first message - I just hit "Reply All.") [redacted] did respond to some of these issues already, but I may repeat some of what he's addressed since these questions and concerns are coming from multiple sources.

We're glad things are being investigated, but many parents don't feel satisfied with the answers (or lack of answers) we have received so far. We still don't understand why the Equity Council has power to correct district memos which state Utah law. The corrected memo came out from MCSD in November 2020 (nearly 3 months ago), so we can reasonably assume that as a district you would already know why the Equity Council was given that power at that time. We would like to understand how and why that happened. Additionally, parents and other community members have received no explanation as to why we weren't alerted of or invited to be part of the Equity Council from the beginning of its formation. We've received no explanation for why MCSD presented in the Utah Pride Center conference, which was advertised as being for all Utah educators, students, and caregivers, but no MCSD parents were informed by the district of that beforehand so that we could take part in viewing it. We would all appreciate direct answers to these questions.

We have heard the information from PTA meetings and the explanations principals were told to give parents about Call Me Max. According to them, the book was brought in by a student, and the teacher mistakenly read it to the whole class. Many parents do not believe this story, which is understandable considering that for 2 weeks they were told by the Horizon teacher and administrators that the book was part of the intended 3rd grade equity and Second Steps curriculum. We feel MCSD needs to explain why conflicting accounts were given to parents. We have been told the incident is currently under investigation and is now a "personnel issue," so that's why we can't have answers. But at the same time, administrators are conclusively telling all other district members that the book was brought in by a student and mistakenly read by the teacher, as if that is the factual conclusion before the investigation has apparently even been finished. That does not make sense to us, and it does not feel honest. Additionally, we would like an explanation for why that same book was seen in MCSD teacher trainings for other elementary schools back in Summer 2020. Honestly, it seems incredibly coincidental that the student at Horizon just happened to have that same book. But regardless of which version is true about how the book appeared, parents were told two different stories by the teacher and administrators, so we feel we deserve factual resolution on what is the real truth.

Furthermore, in the interest of full transparency, parents would like access to the 'Additional Resources' list for the Book Bundles. In January, some Horizon parents were told of this list and that possibly it was a list of resource books for school counselors, but no parent ever received it. Some parents were told that Call Me Max and other books of similar topics were found on this list, and it was taken from there to be read in the 3rd grade classroom. We are guessing these 'Additional Resources' are probably in all the elementary schools, since at least one of the books found on that list was such in teacher trainings last summer for other elementary schools.

We've been told by a parent who saw the full Book Bundles list that they have seen these books in their principal's office (in another elementary school besides Horizon). So we're suspecting this same book list was set to be used in all MCSD elementary schools soon. If any of these books are moved from the Book Bundles program, where will they go? Will they be allocated to elementary school libraries? Will they remain in our schools to be read independently by children? What about ALL books (not just Book Bundles or program-specific books) of similar topics and content? Will parents be made aware of these topics and books being brought into our children's schools, no matter the destination (library, counselor's office, etc.)? As stated previously, these books may bring up sensitive discussions, and parents want to (and have the legal right to) be informed about these topics being addressed with their children in schools, no matter how that may happen. Parents of all backgrounds and of all opinions and viewpoints want to feel prepared to cover these discussions with their children when they come home from school. We are all better prepared when we have complete transparency.

We are grateful for the district's help in working through these issues. We're glad the Equity Council and any corresponding programs, including the Book Bundles, will move forward with more transparency and more parent input from now on. We hope future parent meetings will help everyone to get more of their questions answered and will help ensure inclusivity for all. We feel it is important for our children to learn about and be kind and inclusive to all, and because those are such important issues and topics, as parents we want to be fully included in them. We want ALL students and employees to feel welcomed, loved, and safe in MCSD. We hope all members of the district can have a voice in how to best implement these programs and practices for everyone.

In summary, our questions are:

1. Why were parents not informed of or invited to be on the Equity Council?
2. How and why did the Equity Council have power to correct district memos and Utah law?
3. Why didn't the district invite parents to view the Equity Council's presentation in the Utah Pride conference?
4. Why were Horizon parents given conflicting accounts of how Call Me Max appeared in the classroom?
5. If the Call Me Max incident is still under investigation, why is the rest of the district receiving a conclusive answer while Horizon parents are not?
6. Will Horizon parents be given factual resolution on which story is true out of what the teacher and administrators told us?
7. If Call Me Max is not a district or school book, why was it seen in MCSD elementary trainings in Summer 2020?
8. How do parents access the 'Additional Resources' list?
9. Where will Book Bundles books be moved if they don't remain in the program?
10. Will parents be made aware of all books of similar content and topics being brought into our schools, regardless of destination?

We look forward to receiving answers to these questions soon.

Thanks for all your help,

[redacted] and other MCSD Concerned Parents

On Monday, February 8, 2021, 10:09:05 AM MST [redacted]

Ms. Covington -

Thank you for the reply. I am glad that the materials will be re-evaluated, hopefully parents will be included in that conversation and that our input will be considered when deciding which materials are "developmentally appropriate". As parents, we sincerely seek a safe, tolerant, inclusive and understanding environment for every child in the classroom and to build and maintain trust between parents and administration. Bottom line is that hopefully we all can agree on the necessity of working together from here on out as a partnership and with full disclosure and transparency. To be blunt, it feels like parental rights have been secretly undermined. Regarding the incident at Horizon, I have forwarded your reply to parents at Horizon who can respond directly to that. They are more familiar with the specific facts of the Call Me Max incident and can better speak to the conversations, emails, and conflicting information received from teacher, principal, Dr. Jobe, Dr. Dean, etc.

That said, I do have some ongoing concerns: You have expressed a commitment to be "open and transparent." However, you didn't respond to my request for a parent meeting - can you tell me if that is on the table? Moreover, the Equity Council's presentation has been blocked from viewing: https://www.youtube.com/watch?fbclid=IwAR13qi_9L3inJ50i_JpQ_FRLRnh-WdtkR96Eypc0cV-0F2T-JLcWUayzNhw3v-F29NAz2RH-48&feature=youtu.be. This does not seem to be moving toward transparency? I did take notes and Dr. Jobe specifically said the books on the Equity Books Bundle had been approved by the School Board. Dr. Dean was part of that video presentation and he did not dispute her statement and has not replied to my emails. Parents were also told the Bundle had been approved and that the Book Bundles have been distributed to other schools in the District. In the interests of transparency, if this "personnel issue" is affecting our children and rights as parents, I think we deserve some additional explanation and clarification. In the interests of transparency, is Dr. Dean willing to explain why the Equity Council (that we did not know existed) was able to pressure him into apologizing for a memorandum that explained that pursuant to Utah law "a public-school classroom is reserved for its intended purpose of imparting relevant instructions and is not an open forum for employees to engage in their own political speech" and instead approved "equity-based curriculum, conversations, dialogue, and displays" without any notice to parents of this change in philosophy and approach. Before the Equity Council resumes full operation, will we be fully informed about its purposes, goals, and objectives and how our students' curriculum will be affected by its "core beliefs". Will parental involvement be permitted or will participants continue to be hand-picked?

Even if the Board did not approve the books on the Equity Books Bundle List, in the interests of transparency, why were parents not provided with the full book list and why was it not posted on the school or district website? If it was a student who brought in *Call Me Max*, did that student also bring in *Julian is a Mermaid* and the written assignment that went along with it? *Julian is a Mermaid* touches on gender-fluidity and was not on the Equity Book Bundles list sent to parents.

As part of the Equity Council's presentation, Dr. Jobe said that the Equity Council was a grassroots movement. It was such a grassroots movement, that none of us knew about it. There is a grassroots movement of parents who are very concerned about what has happened and making sure it gets fixed. I am aware of dozens of parents who are concerned. It is not just me - as I am sure you are becoming aware. We look forward to a more open dialogue and that as "we show due regard" for teachers and students' feelings, rights, cultures, and traditions, there can also be due regard for parents' rights.

Most appreciately, [REDACTED]

On Fri, Feb 5, 2021 at 3:39 PM Jennifer Covington <jcovington@murrayschools.org> wrote:

[REDACTED] Thank you for the follow up questions. I am happy to address them in hopes of providing the clarity you are asking for. Please know that we do value parents and parental input and never want anything to feel like it is being done in secret.

The book "Call Me Max" was an isolated incident in one 3rd grade classroom at Horizon Elementary School. It has not been used in any other schools or classrooms. It was not approved by the Murray City School District Board of Education. A Horizon student brought the book in and asked if the teacher would read the book to the class. The teacher read the book to the class and answered the question you mentioned brought up by the students in the class about growing a beard. The administration at Horizon Elementary was not aware of this book being read until it was brought to their attention by parents. The communication that followed with parents was unfortunate in that several different messages were sent with conflicting information. We understand and appreciate that this has caused concerns of trust with parents. This is a personnel matter that we as a district have addressed with the administration at Horizon Elementary to ensure it does not happen in the future. We have also spoken with all of our administrators so they are aware of what occurred.

With regard to the equity book bundles, a presentation was made to the school board by Dr. Jobe in the fall that listed the books the school would be using throughout the year. The board did not review or approve these - it was simply part of a presentation that was made to the board. Horizon Elementary is the only school that has implemented these equity book bundles at this time. As mentioned in my last email, all equity book bundle books have been suspended while we work to put a process in place where these books will be reviewed by educators and approved by the School Community Council. We are committed to being fully transparent with this process and ensure our parents are fully informed.

The Equity Council was formed by educators, who were feeling unsafe as employees in our school system, as a place where we could look at policy to ensure equal employment opportunity for all. When Trayvon Martin was killed and tensions in our state and country rose, the equity committee broadened their focus to ensure all of our students felt safe and welcomed in our schools. Another individual did let me know that a parent had been told that the Equity Council did not want any more 'white-identifying' people on the council. Our Director of Human Services and Student Services serves on this council and was not aware of anyone being told this. I asked that parent who told me this to please have that individual, or any individual who was told that, to please contact me personally so I could hear their story and address it appropriately. At this time, all work with the equity council has been suspended while we work to ensure a solid direction and framework moving forward that will have many voices.

Our goals moving forward are to put policy and measures in place to ensure that we are open and transparent with books that are being read in the classroom and the mission, purpose and vision of Equity Council. We respect the rights and values of parents and do want to work together. As an education community, we want to show respect by acknowledging differences, looking for the good in everyone, and showing due regard for others' feelings, rights, cultures, and traditions. Our actions as educators and parents will demonstrate our belief that we are better when we are working together on behalf of every child.

Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
Murray City School District
5102 S. Commerce Drive
Murray, UT 84107
801.264.7400



On Thu, Feb 4, 2021 at 2:05 AM [REDACTED]

Dear Ms. Covington and Others:

Thank you for the replies, I appreciate your time and what appears to be your commitment to transparency going forward. I also appreciate that some of these issues are being discussed and re-evaluated. Although most of my questions weren't answered, that's understandable - there were a lot of them. Hopefully at some point they will be. I hate taking your time on this issue and, to be honest, I hate taking so much of my own time on it. But something is happening here in Murray that just doesn't seem right - and is causing many of us deep concern.

Transparency and parental involvement should be the biggest learning lesson. We all want our kids to be safe and for teachers and parents to have resources. But regardless of any parent's opinion on the propriety of teaching some of these things in school, I would think all parents can agree that we deserve to be advised of what sensitive and complicated issues are being taught and how they are being presented IN ADVANCE and be given the opportunity to provide consent and be prepared for questions that arise (for instance, I would assume that a parent with a child experiencing gender identity issues would especially want to know how that topic is being addressed before it happens).

Since my last email to you, I have been receiving information that has left me quite bewildered and confused. Many other parents seem to feel the same way. Conflicting information has been coming from Dr. Jobe and other school personnel regarding how *Julian is a Mermaid* and *Call Me Max* ended up being read to a 3rd grade class at Horizon without parental consent. One parent was told that the book was brought by a student or parent and read by the teacher to the class. Dr. Jobe said that "*Call Me Max*" was only read to help a student feel supported for a specific incident and she sent a parent an Equity book list that did not include *Call Me Max* or *Julian is a Mermaid*. Dr. Jobe also apparently said that she didn't believe LGBTQ+ issues should be discussed until 6th grade.

Another parent was told that those books were part of the curriculum and were part of the school and district's focus on equity work and Second Steps program. The 3rd grade teacher told another parent that reading these books were part of the school and district's focus on equity and antiracist work and she included copies of the school district's memoranda as proof that the materials were approved (implying that advance notice to parents was not required). She said that the books were part of their equity lessons for the week. Dr. Jobe told another parent that the lessons are wonderful and developmentally appropriate and included a list of the equity books for the year, which DID include both *Julian is a Mermaid* and *Call Me Max*. In addition, Dr. Jobe apparently told at least one parent that the equity book bundles had been approved by the Murray School Board, but a member of the board has said that that was not true. So parents are being told two different things by Dr. Jobe and others. Either it was an isolated incident or it was part of an approved plan. Either the books were approved by the Board or they weren't. Either the books are developmentally appropriate or should wait until 6th grade. It can't be both. So, Number One, there seems to be a problem with getting true and accurate information, and Number Two, parents were never given notice and never provided consent. Utah Code Section 53C-9-203 requires parental consent before topics involving "sexual behavior, orientation or attitudes" are discussed. This was acknowledged by the First Memorandum sent to District personnel, in August, before the Equity Council (as claimed in their video at the Utah Pride conference) successfully persuaded the District to send a revised Memorandum with an apology that substitutes "Equity" in place of Utah Law.

What I have been told is that these two books were part of the Equity Book Bundles program administered by Dr. Jobe. Parents became concerned after their children came home and mentioned the teacher had talked to them about how science has made it possible for women who want to become men to grow a beard after going through puberty. If I understand correctly, certain parents received a list from Dr. Jobe, after the fact, informing them that "*Call Me Max*" was part of the curriculum and book list for the 3rd grade equity book bundles program. See attachments from Dr. Jobe. Apparently, she provided the parents with a list of monthly topics and

the October 2020 topic was Sexuality and Gender, so the books and topics appear to have been intentionally part of the 3rd grade curriculum from the outset of the school year, without parents' knowledge or consent. Moreover, Call Me Max was apparently incorporated into teacher trainings last summer.

Prior to Call Me Max, the 3rd Graders read and did an assignment on Julian is a Mermaid. The author Jessica Lowe says about this book that "As a genderfluid person, I don't see this as a transgender book, but more about the freedom of gender expression," and originally it was about how Julian wanted to be a drag queen, but the author changed it to a mermaid because "there's something magical about how mermaids have no genitalia." Remember, this is for 3rd grade. The students then did an assignment where the worksheet says that Julian sees himself as a mermaid in the story, and asks them to draw a picture in a mirror of what they would like to become. Could it be that Julian is a Mermaid was preparing them for Call Me Max? Here is a link to Call Me Max where you can see that a child is looking in a mirror (like the assignment in Julian is a Mermaid) and sees herself as a boy who is transgender. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icrPnaCbKkY>. The book goes on to state that when a baby is born and parents call the baby a boy or girl, if the baby could talk the baby might say "NO I'M NOT" because the parents made a mistake. So without parents' consent or knowledge, the children are being taught at school that their parents may have made a mistake in calling them a boy or a girl. Again this is in 3rd grade.

So can you please clear this up? Were the books and Equity Bundles approved by the School District, only approved by Dr. Jobe, or implemented by the Equity Council? If the Equity Council, who formed the Equity Council and where does it derive its authority? I was sent a document with the Mission of the Equity Council. It is attached. One of the core beliefs is centering those impacted by marginalization in the curriculum. According to the document, marginalized include people of color, disabled, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer people, immigrants, etc. When I think of centering, it sounds like the curriculum and teaching will place these categories in the center, or the focus, or top priority. It also talks about an intersectional approach, which from the Utah Pride Center lectures we watched, means "unlearning all binaries" such as male and female. Based on Call Me Max and Dr. Jobe's involvement with the Equity Council, this centering and those teachings have been happening at least as early as 3rd grade. Nowhere in the document is there anything about seeking parental input, buy-in, or consent; instead, the "group norm" is to "call others out". Apparently, at least one parent has been told the Equity Council doesn't want any more "white-identifying" people on the council. Is that accurate?

I am not the only one seeking additional information. Many parents are concerned and many more than I realized. Can you please provide us with the real story on what has been happening and what the goals are going forward? I agree that those who may be "marginalized" may have unique challenges that need to be addressed in a sensitive manner. That is all the more reason to involve us in the process. At the same time, I am learning that according to the "Equity" agenda, Equity is not about "Equality". According to Ten Commitments for Equity-Literate Educators: "Equity is not about valuing every perspective. An equity view does not value heteronormativity," and "educational outcome disparities are the result of structural inequities and have nothing to do with students' grittiness, mindsets..." I fundamentally disagree with a philosophy that elevates victimhood and ignores individual choice and accountability.

Perhaps an in-person meeting with parents would be helpful - one that is calm and involves transparent discourse and explanations. The more transparency, the more understanding. Maybe then fewer bridges will be burned and more bridges can be built. We all want what is best for the kids, even if we see things from different perspectives. To find common ground we need to be able to trust that our rights as parents will be valued and respected. When things are hidden, it feels like we are somehow the enemy. We want to work together, PLEASE work with us and not in secret or behind our backs. You might ask, why do you care so much, your kids don't go to Horizon?? I watched the video from the Utah Pride Center conference and Dr. Jobe made it very clear that this is meant to be incorporated District-wide.

Thanks, [REDACTED]

On Tue, Feb 2, 2021 at 4:45 PM Jennifer Covington <ccovington@murrayschools.org> wrote:

Thank you for your email. We value and appreciate your thoughts. We agree that it is important that students, employees and families in the Murray City School District are able to participate in a school system that values and respects each person. Transparency and communication are also essential to what we do and believe. We are committed to doing our best in both of these areas.

The Equity Council was started a little over a year ago with the mission of building a diverse, equitable, and inclusive district by providing all students, families, and employees with a community of care, respect, and belonging. At present, the council consists of educators, administrators, and parents. At this time, the Equity Council has been suspended while the district and School Board work to put measures in place to ensure the purpose of the council is clear, defined, and communicated to all parents and employees. You are correct that these are complicated issues with no easy answers and it is important that parents have a voice in the work that is being done as we work to support all students.

The Equity Book Bundles have also been placed on hold at this time while we work to put procedures in place to ensure transparency and communication. The district is working on an action plan where educators and then the School Community Council will review all equity materials. Parents will be fully informed of what is being used in the classroom and provided with additional information regarding the materials. Parents will also have the ability to opt their child out of any reading by simply notifying their teacher.

We want to be thoughtful and intentional as we work on both of these areas. All procedures and measures will be shared with our parents as we agree that transparency and communication are vital.

Thank you for your advocacy of not only your students but all students. As a district, we are committed to working to make sure parents are fully informed of what is happening in their child's classroom.

Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
Murray City School District
5102 S. Commerce Drive
Murray, UT 84107
801.264.7400



On Mon, Feb 1, 2021 at 4:50 PM [REDACTED]

To Members of the Board, Superintendent, and Chairs of Community Councils (at Viewmont, Riverview and Murray High):

My wife and I are parents of 4 students that each attend one of the above-referenced schools - and my wife is a former teacher who often substitute teaches at Viewmont Elementary at teacher's requests. She isn't involved in the drafting of this email and is seeing it for the first time along with you, though she was aware I would be sending it. Our children are good students and the Murray Schools have been a nice fit for our family. Our children are generally shy and sometimes have a hard time making new friends, but we try to help them through that as parents - and they have had good teachers. We would hope that all teachers and staff would look at them as individuals who need help, support, guidance, and skills-training - not because, or in spite of, their gender, sexual orientation, race, religion or any other category.

With that backdrop, I recently learned about the Murray School Equity Council that was apparently created some time ago. I don't believe parents have been told about this Council, have we? If we were, somehow I missed the memo. I watched two of many videos/lectures (that have now been taken down) from the Utah Pride Center's recent conference for Utah Educators. One video that was extremely concerning to me was the Keynote Speaker Dr. Kyl Myers. I also viewed the presentation by the Murray School District's Equity Council. As I said, the videos are no longer able to be viewed, but I did take some notes while watching the presentations. Based on those lectures, I would like to ask you some questions to find out more about the Equity Council, what their goals and objectives are, and how this will affect the children and our family.

1. In the Equity Council's video presentation a question was asked about how it has been received by the parents. The answer was basically that they need to do a better job getting the word out to the parents. I would agree with that. How do we find out about what the Equity Council is doing? Do they have open meetings? Are their agendas shared with the community councils? Are the community councils giving input? Can you please let me know the best way to

obtain access to this information?

2. In the Equity Council's video presentation, they mentioned that one of their greatest "Successes" was that the council was able to get the District to rescind a Memorandum that went out to District personnel in August by issuing a revised Memorandum in November. I have now read all these memoranda (see attached) and the first one seemed to communicate that the School District would follow Utah law and could control political speech in the classroom. The last one apologizes for being "harmful to the community" and appears to put "Equity" as the overriding principle governing Educators. Was the council really the body that achieved this "Success"? How did they do it? Should parents have been informed? No one asked me whether the Memorandum was harmful - were other parents asked? A memorandum to personnel regarding what will be allowed in the classroom directly impacts all parents and children in the district. Should we draw any conclusions from the fact that the first memorandum was issued before the election and the last one was three weeks after the election?
3. I have been informed that a book called Call Me Max, dealing with transgenderism, was read in a 3rd grade class in our district without parental consent. When those parents objected, the teacher cited them to the 3rd memorandum that was apparently released due to the Equity Council's successful initiative. Is it true that parents do not need to be informed when subjects regarding sexual orientation, transgenderism, the Black Lives Matter organization, gender issues are taught to our children? We had to sign a consent form for our child to watch "Because of Winn Dixie", but if it is a book on transgenderism is subject matter for the 3rd grade classroom, no parental consent is required?
4. In the introduction to the keynote address at the Utah Pride Center's conference for Utah Educators, the speaker made the point that schools are not about "transferring knowledge," but should be about engaging in discussions that "bring about change." I would like to know what the Murray School District's view is with respect to that comment? Who agrees with that premise and who disagrees? Is Murray School District's primary objective to help our students engage in discussions that bring about change? If so, what change?
5. The Keynote Speaker made the point that she now teaches at a University where she doesn't have to deal with communications from parents. Does Murray School District value and appreciate and incorporate parental input? What is being done to be transparent about what our children are being taught? Does Murray District agree with me that there should be more transparency, not less? Do you agree that parents have a right to know what is being taught in the classroom regarding controversial subjects in society and how those issues are being presented? That we should focus more on educating our students to be productive, qualified, and skilled in the work force and being respectful citizens rather than on social engineering and political indoctrination? What is your stance?
6. The keynote speaker said that all students, parents and staff need to "unlearn all binaries" and to be retrained. In other words, no children should be looked at as male or female without the students first indicating what they want to be called. I assume this would also mean that if a student who is biologically a male says he is a female, he would be allowed to use the girls bathroom. Is this how the Equity Council and Murray School District view the world? If this is the direction we will go, will parental input be considered? An example she gave of improper gender bias was having a "Daddy Daughter Dance" or "Muffins with Mothers". We have had similar events in our children's schools, does the Equity Council aim to cancel these types of things?
7. Have you thought about whether the term "Equity" could really be a code word for opening the door to ignoring the Utah Constitution and the right of parents to have a say in their children's education? Are you in favor of the school system being revolutionized to incorporate political agendas and to replace basic and common sense teachings of mutual respect and courtesy with those political agendas? Are you in favor of using "Equity" to treat people differently based on certain "marginalized" categories with the goal of achieving equal outcomes rather than working toward providing equal opportunities? If yes to these questions, will you please let us know that in a transparent way? The Equity Council said something to the effect that one of their core beliefs is to center those most impacted by "marginalization" in the curriculum, policies, and practices. What does that mean?
8. The Equity Council mentioned some kind of an Equity Book bundle that is available or will become available. Do parents have access to this?
9. The Equity Council mentioned getting an equity director appointed at each school. Will we be informed before this happens? What is the criteria and what will they do? Will it be a paid position?
10. Jordan School District has Culture and Diversity Specialists who have begun doing training in classrooms. Will Murray School District have similar positions? Will parents be informed on what specifics are being taught?

Black Lives Matter and other people are trying to get a State School Board Member removed from the State Board of Education because she shared some of the lectures that were presented at the Utah Pride Center conference, including the two that I mention above, and because she is standing up for Utah families and the right of parents to know what their students are being taught. I'm attaching a copy of a message they sent to the Utah State School Board. To me it sounds anything but tolerant, anything but understanding, and anything but being willing to engage in a dialogue or conversation. Calling someone racist and homophobic because of differences of opinion does not sound like Equity to me, it kind of comes across more like bullying. Another group criticized her because she is advocating for the Golden Rule - doing unto others as we would have done unto us. To them, somehow that principle violates separation of church and state and is white supremacy.

I have not in the past been involved in Community Councils, but I can see that is a mistake because I had no idea that an Equity Council even existed, let alone that they are giving lectures on the changes that need to happen in our school system. Any information or answers you can provide to the questions raised in this email would be greatly appreciated and to each of us as parents going forward. My hope is that you will seek, consider, and appreciate the input of parents instead of only those groups who will scream, intimidate, threaten, and cancel.

Thanks

Date : 1/15/2021 2:55:04 PM
From : "Michelle Christie"
To : "Whitney Anderson"
Subject : Re: New supports to Equity book bundles: please read

Thank you, Whitney. We will wait until we are all on the same page.

MC

On Fri, Jan 15, 2021 at 1:45 PM Whitney Anderson <wanderson@murrayschools.org> wrote:

Teachers,

As I reflect on our equity work and book bundles I want to say thank you for knowing your students and needs of your classroom. Thank you for braving the unknown and being willing to have new conversations with students.

With that being said, I want to make sure that each of you feel confident in the material. Please know that if you do not feel comfortable (for any reason or at anytime) I would like to be able to navigate that with you. These topics and these books are in no way, shape or form meant to put pressure on teachers, students, or parents. If you have hesitations, I want to listen and work through it with you.

With this reflection I would like to put our book bundles on hold until I am able to make sure we are being proactive and not being reactive. First, I want to have conversations with teachers and make sure I understand where everyone is in this process. I would like to brainstorm ways we can make things better. Second, I would like to put a process in place to make sure we are transparent and communicating clearly with teachers, parents, and other community members. I'd like to discuss this plan with each of you in our grade level PLC.

Please know that I am always available to talk and meet you where you are. Thank you for being part of HORIZON!

Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



Date : 1/15/2021 9:15:40 PM
From : "Karen Peterson"
To : "Whitney Anderson"
Subject : Re: New supports to Equity book bundles: please read

10 thumbs up, WAY up!

On Fri, Jan 15, 2021, 1:45 PM Whitney Anderson <wanderson@murrayschools.org> wrote:

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Please know that I am always available to talk and meet you where you are. Thank you for being part of HORIZON!

Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



Date : 2/11/2021 4:46:36 PM
From : "Whitney Anderson"
To : [REDACTED]
Subject : Re: Re: Re: Equity Book Bundles and Equity Committee

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for reaching out to me. It looks like you communicated briefly with our District Communications Director. In response to your question, you can find the book bundle titles and lesson slides at this website link <https://horizon.murrayschools.org/pta/>. I am hopeful that our equity work will continue very soon. I know it is very important. We are currently on pause to shore up communication issues with our community members. It is an unfortunate halt, but I do believe we will come out stronger and with better procedures and policies.

Thank you for being a part of our community. Please let me know if you have any additional questions or thoughts.

Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



On Tue, Feb 9, 2021 at 8:40 PM [REDACTED] wrote:

Good evening, Mrs. Anderson:

I can only imagine what you are facing these days. Diversity and inclusion are the hallmark of education but too many times we fall short. Whatever event led to the suspension of your initiative must be overblown and exactly based on the preconceptions that need to be overcome. All I know, you can see in the email conversation below. I would be really interested in what is contained in the book bundle.

Thanks and Blessings

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Forwarded email

From: "Doug Perry" <dperry@murrayschools.org>
Date: February 9, 2021
To: [REDACTED]
Cc:
Subject: Re: Re: Equity Book Bundles and Equity Committee

What is a Book Bundle?

The Book Bundle program was initiated by one of our principals (at Horizon Elementary). She wanted to ensure that books emphasizing differences (race, impairments, gender, culture, etc.) were included among our literary resources at schools. The Murray Board of Education has pushed pause on that effort to make sure we have adequate controls and reviews in place before we proceed further.

What is the Equity Council?

The Equity Council was formed by MCSD educators in 2019 to address and review policies and practices that ensure our educators feel safe in our school system. When George Floyd was killed a year later, tensions were elevated and the Equity Council broadened their focus to that of an advisory role to also ensure all students feel safe and welcome in our schools. The Council consists of MCSD educators, administrators, district personnel, and a parent. We have pushed pause on the Council at this time so that its mission, vision, and participants are better defined, inclusive, and representative.

On Mon, Feb 8, 2021 at 4:52 PM [REDACTED] wrote:

Good afternoon,
as a professional in ethics and an elementary school dad I need to know what "equity book bundles" are, please.

Blessings

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

On 2/8/21 at 16:00, Doug Perry via ParentSquare wrote:

From: "Doug Perry via ParentSquare" <donotreply@parentsquare.com>
Date: February 8, 2021
To: [REDACTED]
Cc:
Subject: Equity Book Bundles and Equity Committee



Murray City School District

Doug Perry posted in All Elementary Parents and Staff, All Secondary Parents

Equity Book Bundles and Equity Committee



February 8, 2021

MCS D Parents and Families:

Recently, concerns were brought forward regarding books read aloud in a classroom at one of our elementary schools along with questions regarding our District Equity Council.

As a district, we recognize and acknowledge the concerns. Since these concerns have been brought forward, we have taken the following steps:

- Suspended the equity book bundles in order to review further.
- Placed a hold on the District Equity council until the mission, vision, and participants are better defined and to ensure it is inclusive and representative.
- Reviewing of policy, procedures, and practices.
- Reviewing of transparency and communication related to books that are being used outside of the adopted curriculum.

We value and embrace full student, family, and employee participation at MCS D to ensure our schools are safe, transparent, and welcoming. We are committed to learning from this experience and doing better. The district and School Board are committed to listening to our stakeholders as we move forward and to taking the time for the thoughtful consideration that is needed.

Respectfully,

Jennifer Covington, Superintendent of Schools

Jaren Cooper, MCS D Board of Education President

Belinda Johnson, MCS D Board of Education Vice-President

[View in ParentSquare](#) [Appreciate](#)

Please do not reply to this email.

Stay involved with your child's learning and activities at school.



You received this email because you are a ParentSquare user in Murray City School District. If you received this email in error or wish to disable your account, [click here to unsubscribe](#).

ParentSquare Inc. • 3505 Blaine St, Suite 7502 • Santa Barbara, CA 93109



Murray City School District

801.264.7400 office | 888.847.6288 cell

[Website](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#)

Date : 2/9/2021 8:40:28 AM

From : "Vanessa Jobe"

To :

Cc : Whitney Anderson , "Jamie Booth" ,

Subject : Re: Thank You for the Equity Book Bundles

Shelly!

Thank you so much for this message. I am also looking forward to future ways that Horizon celebrates and welcomes all students. This message is so appreciated.

Vanessa

On Tue, Feb 9, 2021 at 8:30 AM [REDACTED] wrote:

Hi Mrs. Anderson & Dr. Jobe,

My son [REDACTED] is in your 5th grade DLI program. I received the letter yesterday from the district saying that the equity book bundles have been suspended pending further review.

I have heard great things about the equity book bundles, and I've been so grateful (and jealous!) of Horizon's initiative to include those in [REDACTED] education.

As a parent I wanted to thank you for your initiative to be a more equitable and inclusive school. If the equity book bundles can't be continued, I'm looking forward to the future ways that Horizon celebrates and welcomes all students.

Please let me know if there is any way I can help and support these important initiatives.

Thanks again,

--
Vanessa Jobe, Ed.D.

Horizon Elementary Assistant Principal

(she/her/hers)

801.264.7420

Date : 2/9/2021 9:00:51 AM

From : [REDACTED]

To : [REDACTED]

Cc : wanderson@murrayschools.org, vjobe@murrayschools.org, jbooth@murrayschools.org

Subject : Re: Thank You for the Equity Book Bundles

Seconded!

[REDACTED]

On Tue, Feb 9, 2021 at 8:30 AM [REDACTED] wrote:
Hi Mrs. Anderson & Dr. Jobe,

My son [REDACTED] is in your 5th grade DLI program. I received the letter yesterday from the district saying that the equity book bundles have been suspended pending further review.

I have heard great things about the equity book bundles, and I've been so grateful (and jealous!) of Horizon's initiative to include those in [REDACTED] education.

As a parent I wanted to thank you for your initiative to be a more equitable and inclusive school. If the equity book bundles can't be continued, I'm looking forward to the future ways that Horizon celebrates and welcomes all students.

Please let me know if there is any way I can help and support these important initiatives.

Thanks again,
[REDACTED]

Date : 2/9/2021 5:13:45 PM
From : "Whitney Anderson"
To : [REDACTED]
Cc : "Vanessa Jobe" , "Jamie Booth"
Subject : Re: Thank You for the Equity Book Bundles

[REDACTED]
I'm happy to hear that you have had a positive experience with our attempt to be inclusive and celebrate all. I'm hopeful that we can continue to support [REDACTED] and all other students at Horizon. We want everyone to feel seen and included. Your words of encouragement mean a lot to us. Thank you so much for being a part of our community.

Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



On Tue, Feb 9, 2021 at 9:00 AM [REDACTED] wrote:
Seconded!

[REDACTED]
On Tue, Feb 9, 2021 at 8:30 AM [REDACTED]
Hi Mrs. Anderson & Dr. Jobe,

My son [REDACTED] is in your 5th grade DLI program. I received the letter yesterday from the district saying that the equity book bundles have been suspended pending further review.

I have heard great things about the equity book bundles, and I've been so grateful (and jealous!) of Horizon's initiative to include those in [REDACTED] education.

As a parent I wanted to thank you for your initiative to be a more equitable and inclusive school. If the equity book bundles can't be continued, I'm looking forward to the future ways that Horizon celebrates and welcomes all students.

Please let me know if there is any way I can help and support these important initiatives.

Thanks again,
[REDACTED]

Date : 1/12/2021 3:59:03 PM
From : "Vanessa Jobe"
To : [REDACTED]
Cc : "Mandy Anderson" , "Jennifer Covington"
Subject : Re: Transparency in the Equity Program

Yes, it is a great idea to have the equity topic announced on teacher's weekly communication. We will work on doing that as a school! We appreciate the support of all of our students and furthering these conversations at home.

On Tue, Jan 12, 2021 at 12:42 PM [REDACTED] wrote:

Thank you for this. Yes, I would love to know if there is something I'm missing as far as communication home from each of my children's teachers. And the last thing I need to know, will there be better disclosure in the future for every other class when these touchy subjects come into play?

On Tue, Jan 12, 2021, 10:32 AM Vanessa Jobe <vjobe@murrayschools.org> wrote:

Hi [REDACTED]

We are so sorry you have lost sleep over this and we greatly appreciate your continued communication. As educators we are always working to see how we can continue to improve our practice and our communication. Ms. Paul still sends out the weekly calendars that you received in the beginning of the year. Do you need help accessing those?

This month's equity theme on second steps was: Handling Name Calling and Equity Issue that pertains to your class. The Max book was specifically needed for an incident in the other class. Max was not needed in your son's class. Those books in particular (Julian is a mermaid and Max) are not listed because they are not in the original equity book bundles. I will add those books to the list as well under "additional resources." We used them due to needed support for current transgender students.

All of the other books we have on LGBTQIA+ or trans student support are listed in our book bundles. You will see our pacing guide with the months to see which equity topics will be taught at which time.

We are proud of the equity work and student support that is happening in our school and district and want you to feel that you also have access to the work. We have many students and families that have felt seen, heard and loved through this work. Thank you for supporting everyone as well.

Let us know if there are further steps we can take to ensure your comfort.

Dr. Jobe

On Tue, Jan 12, 2021 at 9:25 AM [REDACTED] wrote:

Thank you for your response and for the time you have taken to help me and at this point, I prefer to communicate over email so that I have a record of things that were said and can also discuss this with my husband. Thank you for recognizing my comfort, because I have lost a lot of sleep over this whole thing. This is hard for me as I am not one to want to rock the boat but I feel that this needs addressing.

I am aware that "Call Me Max" was not read to my son but that it was read in the other class. I was assuming that he would be hearing it as well, as Ms. Paul is also one of his teachers. I am all for trying to help build awareness and empathy for any situation, but why were parents not informed about this book being read initially? That's where all this goes for me. If they were not informed, what is to stop me not being informed about these specific lessons as well as any other sensitive matters? I have been a teacher and I was always drilled that you stick to the state curriculum and do not deviate without full disclosure to everyone involved in order to protect myself as an educator for incidents just like this. There are other children's books that can discuss these matters, just like "Julian is a Mermaid", that promote self expression and make a great conversation leading into being accepting of others and their preferences without needing to specifically define terms. Anytime sensitive, specific gender-related words or discussions are had with younger students, I feel as a parent, I need to be informed so that I can best support what is happening at the school or be there so it makes my discussion with my child easier. Legally, this is my right as a parent. Again, I understand the intention. I don't know anyone who hasn't had some incident of discrimination, no matter who you are, so I fully am for supporting children. But I also need to know what is going on with my own children, their comfort levels are just as important and believe me, my son was confused initially by what he was hearing from other kids.

I used to get calendars and messages on Parentsquare all the time letting me know the week's plans in each of my children's classes and I was thrilled that this school-home communication was happening, but it has dropped off for awhile now and for me to find anything, I have to log in as my children and search through their classwork or calendars to find this information, if at all. It would be so much easier to have a paper in my hands each week that shows me, again, what is going on. I can't tell you how much I miss that and I know that teachers are overloaded right now and I wish I could bring them lunch and coffee every day because I know how much work goes into this profession. I am also feeling uncomfortable with the fact that the book list you sent me yesterday does not have these 2 books on it but that a list sent to other parents, also yesterday, does have these books listed. I am feeling like, "Are they being fully open with me here?" I promise, all I want is to know about things and with sensitive items that may need further discussion at home, notice of this happening beforehand. Even if it is about something I'm totally cool with, if other parents may find that to be sensitive, disclose it. Being proactive on any matter is so much more appreciated. And if a topic does not fall under the "needing consent" idea but as educators, you feel it may cause problems, address that. Disclose it. All we want as parents is transparency here. Any communication with the school is greatly appreciated. Even if I'm completely overloaded by it, I will still greatly appreciate it because that tells me that I am valued as a parent. Too much is better than none at all and right now, we get nothing about what is going on and we feel like we are floundering.

Again, I really honestly do appreciate the help I have received on this matter. I do not want you to walk away and think that I do not appreciate you. I really truly do. I am grateful for the steps that are being taken to ensure all children feel comfortable and safe at the school and I am grateful you are making sure to follow all regulations. That makes me as a parent feel comfort as well. Thank you for caring about them. I hope you have a wonderful day!

--
Vanessa Jobe, Ed.D.
Horizon Elementary Assistant Principal

⋮ | (*she/her/hers*)
⋮ | 801.264.7420

--
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Horizon Elementary Assistant Principal
(*she/her/hers*)
801.264.7420

Date : 1/12/2021 10:32:45 AM
From : "Vanessa Jobe"
To : [REDACTED]
Cc : "Mindy Anderson" , "Jennifer Covington"
Subject : Re: Transparency in the Equity Program

Hi [REDACTED]

We are so sorry you have lost sleep over this and we greatly appreciate your continued communication. As educators we are always working to see how we can continue to improve our practice and our communication. Ms. Paul still sends out the weekly calendars that you received in the beginning of the year. Do you need help accessing those?

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Let us know if there are further steps we can take to ensure your comfort.

Dr. Jobe

On Tue, Jan 12, 2021 at 9:25 AM [REDACTED] wrote:

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Vanessa Jobe, Ed.D.
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(she/her/hers)
801.264.7420

Date : 2/3/2021 4:35:50 PM

From : "Darren Dean"

To : "Whitney Anderson"

Subject : Survey Results

Attachment : Teacher-Staff Survey Results - Whitney Anderson.pdf; Student Survey Results - Whitney Anderson.pdf; Parent Survey Results - Whitney Anderson.pdf;

Attached :)

Darren Dean

Director of Personnel & Student Services

Title IX Coordinator

Murray City School District

Office: 801-264-7466

Cell: 801-647-0339

Date : 2/9/2021 8:30:51 AM

From :

To : wanderson@murrayschools.org, vjobe@murrayschools.org

Cc : jbooth@murrayschools.org, "Chris Gearheart"

Subject : Thank You for the Equity Book Bundles

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Thanks again,

[REDACTED]

Date : 1/12/2021 12:42:25 PM
From : [REDACTED]
To : "Vanessa Jobe", "Whitney Anderson"
Cc : jcovington@murrayschools.org
Subject : Transparency in the Equity Program

Thank you for this. Yes, I would love to know if there is something I'm missing as far as communication home from each of my children's teachers. And the last thing I need to know, will there be better disclosure in the future for every other class when these touchy subjects come into play?

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