

Requester: Richard Price

“Call Me Max”

From : "Vanessa Jobe"
To : [REDACTED] "Whitney Anderson" , "Sarah Paul"
Subject : Book List

Hi [REDACTED]

Thank you for reaching out with your concern. We appreciate all that you do for your child at Horizon and we appreciate your questions.

Ms. Paul teaches second steps and equity work once a week on Wednesdays. You are welcome to zoom in if you would like. The lessons are wonderful and developmentally appropriate. If we film them more often our online students will also have the opportunity to view the lessons. Let us know if this is something you would be interested in.

I have included a schedule of the equity work and second steps below along with the equity books that will be used this year.

August	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safety, Respect and Race
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being Assertive and Language
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Empathy, Sexuality & Gender and Understanding Differences
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Managing Learning Challenges and Ability
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Problem Solving and Class
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Handling Name Calling and Equity Issue that pertains to your class.
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Black History Month and Being Responsible
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Circle back on whichever topic your class could use more support on
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Circle back on whichever topic your class could use more support on
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Celebrating Cultures

Here is a comprehensive list of the books that 3rd grade reads during their second steps lessons.

Julian is a Mermaid: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E44zjYyxnWg>

Call me Max: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcrPnaCbKrY>

Fry Bread: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tWdEz0ptvbc>

The Bell Rang: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vwbrVy48qw>

Of thee I sing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldCuEB8gohl>

Little Leaders: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ugjITietvsU&t=378s>

Enemy Pie: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FTM8Cccl1xs>

Thank you,
Dr. Jobe

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

From : "Vanessa Jobe"
To : "Whitney Anderson" , "Sarah Paul"

Here is our schedule for equity work and our Wednesday Second Steps Curriculum.

August	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safety, Respect and Race
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being Assertive and Language
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Empathy, Sexuality & Gender and Understanding Differences
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Managing Learning Challenges and Ability
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Little Leaders: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ugilTietvsU&t=378s>

Enemy Pie: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FTM8Cccl1xs>

Thank you,

Vanessa

--

Vanessa Jobe, Ed.D.

Horizon Elementary Assistant Principal

(she/her/ hers)

801.264.7420

From : "Vanessa Jobe"
To : "Whitney Anderson"
Subject : Fwd: Equity Bundles

This parent understands. :)

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

From: [REDACTED]
Date: Mon, Jan 11, 2021 at 8:51 AM
Subject: Equity Bundles
To: <vjobe@murrayschools.org>

Dear Dr. Jobe,

First of all, thank you for all you do at Horizon. What a year to come in new! In the few times I have interacted with you, I have been impressed with your gentleness and your desire to understand and to help.

I'm sure you know there has been a flurry of messaging amongst 3rd grade dual immersion parents about the books that were read last week ("Julian is a Mermaid" and "Call Me Max"). I want to say that I really appreciate you letting parents know in advance about the Equity Bundles. I think that kind of exposure to anti-racist and anti-prejudiced literature is a really great idea, especially in Murray, where kids don't have as many opportunities to interact with minorities.

Would it be possible for me to know what specific books were included in the equity bundles for the 3rd grade? Honestly, I would love to know the titles in the 6th grade bundle (as I have another child in that grade), if not all the grades' bundles, as they are clearly well thought out (thank you!) and great for initiating discussion in my family.

Sincerely,
[REDACTED]

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

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 get 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 <jcovington@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 <distadmin@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 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 "intersectional 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 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=jcrPnaCbKRY>*
- 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 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

From : "Whitney Anderson"
To : "Caryn Waterman"
Subject : Fwd: Parent Email Regarding Equity Concerns

Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



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

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Date: Sun, Feb 7, 2021 at 12:33 PM
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To: Elementary Principals <elementaryprincipals@murrayschools.org>, Secondary Principals <secondaryprincipals@murrayschools.org>, District Admin <distadmin@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>

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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

From : "Whitney Anderson"
To : "Vanessa Jobe"
Subject : Fwd: Transgender discussions 3rd grade DLI

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

From: [REDACTED]
Date: Sun, Jan 10, 2021 at 10:41 PM
Subject: Transgender discussions 3rd grade DLI
To: Whitney Anderson <wanderson@murrayschools.org>, spaul@murrayschools.org <spaul@murrayschools.org>, mluna@murrayschools.org <mluna@murrayschools.org>

Hi there-

It was brought to my attention this weekend by another parent whose child is in the 3rd grade DLI program that a couple of books on transgender topics have been read and discussed in Ms. Paul's class. I believe these books are "Julian is a Mermaid" and "Call Me Max". I was also told that the students discussed and asked questions about transgender ideas, and the question was asked about how the transgender male grew a beard (in Call Me Max), so Ms. Paul explained that people can take medication to grow a beard or not grow a beard, if they want to change their gender. I'm just paraphrasing what I heard through the grapevine, so if I'm wrong on any of these details, feel free to correct me.

I'm concerned that these books are being read and these discussions are taking place without parents' knowledge. (I heard from several other moms in the class and it was a surprise to each one.) I was aware that our students were reading books about diversity and equality, and I think those are important topics and discussions, and I'm grateful that you teachers are taking them on and helping our kids learn to be kind and accepting of others, no matter our differences. However, I did not realize that these books and discussions would also include LGBTQ+ issues, and I feel that's something that parents should be formally informed about before it happens. I do realize LGBTQ+ issues are important, and I want my son and all my children to be informed, aware, kind and accepting. I am just concerned that topics which involve sexuality are more sensitive, especially for children this young. These are topics I would like to address with my son, and I want to be fully aware of what is being said about them in his classroom, so that I can be involved in the discussion with him and be there to answer his questions and help him understand these issues.

As I've thought about this over the weekend, the ideas I've had is that I would like to have a formal list of all the diversity books being read to our students and the topics these books cover, as well as a basic time frame of when they will be read and discussed. I would like if parents had a form to sign, stating we are aware of what gender/sexuality books and topics will be addressed, so every parent is consciously on board with the program. I would also like to have the option to attend (via zoom or in-person) these discussions, especially on topics that veer into sensitive and/or sexuality issues. That way we, as parents, can be better aware of what is being talked about and more prepared to address these topics with our children when they come home from school. Would these ideas be doable? Please let me know your thoughts.

As always, thank you for all you do for our children. I know all of you teachers work tirelessly, and I appreciate it so much. Thank you also for listening to my concerns as a parent. I look forward to hearing from you.

[REDACTED]

From : "Jennifer Covington"
To : "Vanessa Jobe" , "Whitney Anderson"
Subject : Meeting Request

Whitney and Vanessa:

I would like to schedule a meeting with you to discuss the reading of the book "Call Me Max" in Ms. Paul's 3rd grade classroom. While I know we met a few weeks back, many additional questions have been asked of me by parents, community members, and our school board regarding this situation that I simply cannot answer. I would like to meet with you to discuss these questions so I am better prepared to address the continued concerns.

I am available Tuesday from 1:00 - 3:30 p.m., Wednesday anytime before 11:00 a.m., and Thursday anytime before 12:30 p.m. I do not want to leave your building without an administrator so I am happy to come over to Horizon. Please let me know which day/time would work best for you. I anticipate we will need 30 - 45 minutes.

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



FROM : Sarah Paul via ParentSquare
To : wanderson@murrayschools.org
Subject : New message from Sarah Paul in Horizon Elementary School

Sarah Paul sent you a message.

Hello,

I understand there are concerns with two of the books read during our equity lessons last week, "Julian is a Mermaid" and "Call me Max". As a school and district, we are focusing on equity and antiracist work. Reading books about all people is part of this. Additionally, we learn about equity during our Wednesday Second Steps curriculum. Learning about transgender, gay and straight people in developmentally appropriate ways is part of our district and school.

Here is a link to Julian is a Mermaid: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E44zjYyxnWg>

Here is a link to Call Me Max: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jcrPnaCbKrY>

Class discussions with these books were intended to teach students to feel confidence in themselves as well as accepting others. We also talked about gender norms like in clothing or colors and how you should be able to like any color or wear any clothes despite your gender. I answered student questions as they arose honestly and in developmentally appropriate ways.

I would like to clarify that there was no discussion on puberty. One student asked how they grew a beard. I replied by stating that science has found ways to help them, to which another student replied, "like medicine." I felt the need to clarify with students that this is not something that happens until they are an adult. Again, one student replied, "oh after puberty." A few students began repeating the word puberty because they thought it was funny. I quickly shut that down and we moved on.

Despite the sidetracked conversations, I feel students benefited from these books with a sense of confidence in who they are and an ability to accept others.

I follow state administrative code and guidelines around transgender issues: I attached some of the guidelines below as well as the district's memo on equity.

Principal Anderson and Vice Principal Jobe are happy to answer any further questions or concerns you may have.

Sarah Paul

Message sent on Monday, Jan 11 at 8:23 AM to Whitney Anderson

[View or Reply](#)

Please do not reply directly to this email. Click the "View or Reply" button to send a reply to Sarah Paul.

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



This message is intended for wanderson@murrayschools.org. If you received this email in error or wish to disable your account, [click here to unsubscribe](#).

ParentSquare Inc • 3905 State St, Suite 7502 • Santa Barbara, CA 93105

From : "Jennifer Covington"
To : "Elementary Principals" , "Secondary Principals" , "District Admin" , "Belinda Johnson" , "Elizabeth Payne" , "Glo Merrill" , "Jaren Cooper" , "Kami Anderson"
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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=icrPnaCbKY>
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, 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 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 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 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

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,

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....whoaza. 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



From : "Vanessa Jobe"
To : "Whitney Anderson"
Subject : Re: Equity Bundles

Oh that's an idea! I could share it with [REDACTED] (so help me if I spelled her name wrong)? I could also pull all the titles and put the ones that have digital links in there.

On Mon, Jan 11, 2021 at 9:22 AM Whitney Anderson <wanderson@murrayschools.org> wrote:
I wonder if we can get the list published on our website.

On Mon, Jan 11, 2021, 9:04 AM Vanessa Jobe <vjobe@murrayschools.org> wrote:
This parent understands. :)

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

From: [REDACTED]
Date: Mon, Jan 11, 2021 at 8:51 AM
Subject: Equity Bundles
To: <vjobe@murrayschools.org>

Dear Dr. Jobe,

First of all, thank you for all you do at Horizon. What a year to come in new! In the few times I have interacted with you, I have been impressed with your gentleness and your desire to understand and to help.

I'm sure you know there has been a flurry of messaging amongst 3rd grade dual immersion parents about the books that were read last week ("Julian is a Mermaid" and "Call Me Max"). I want to say that I really appreciate you letting parents know in advance about the Equity Bundles. I think that kind of exposure to anti-racist and anti-prejudiced literature is a really great idea, especially in Murray, where kids don't have as many opportunities to interact with minorities.

Would it be possible for me to know what specific books were included in the equity bundles for the 3rd grade? Honestly, I would love to know the titles in the 6th grade bundle (as I have another child in that grade), if not all the grades' bundles, as they are clearly well thought out (thank you!) and great for initiating discussion in my family.

Sincerely,
[REDACTED]

--
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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Sincerely,
[REDACTED]

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

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.

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



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?

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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.

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-Vanessa

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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.

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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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:

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

From : "Vanessa Jobe"
To : "Jennifer Covington"
Cc : "Whitney Anderson"
Subject : Re: Meeting Request

Yes, that works great. Thank you.

On Tue, Feb 2, 2021 at 8:08 AM Jennifer Covington <jcovington@murrayschools.org> wrote:

Thanks Whitney. Today works great and we can meet over here at the district. Vaness - does this work for you? I would like to meet with both of you together.

Jennifer Covington - Superintendent
Murray City School District
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On Tue, Feb 2, 2021 at 8:06 AM Whitney Anderson <wanderson@murrayschools.org> wrote:

I can do today from 1:30-2:15. I can have Jamie and Susannah cover dismissal. I'd prefer to meet at the District Office, if that's ok?

Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



On Mon, Feb 1, 2021 at 7:59 PM Jennifer Covington <jcovington@murrayschools.org> wrote:

Whitney and Vanessa:

I would like to schedule a meeting with you to discuss the reading of the book "Call Me Max" in Ms. Paul's 3rd grade classroom. While I know we met a few weeks back, many additional questions have been asked of me by parents, community members, and our school board regarding this situation that I simply cannot answer. I would like to meet with you to discuss these questions so I am better prepared to address the continued concerns.

I am available Tuesday from 1:00 - 3:30 p.m., Wednesday anytime before 11:00 a.m., and Thursday anytime before 12:30 p.m. I do not want to leave your building without an administrator so I am happy to come over to Horizon. Please let me know which day/time would work best for you. I anticipate we will need 30 - 45 minutes.

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

From : "Whitney Anderson"
To : "Jennifer Covington"
Cc : "Vanessa Jobe"
Subject : Re: Meeting Request

I can do today from 1:30-2:15. I can have Jamie and Susannah cover dismissal. I'd prefer to meet at the District Office, if that's ok?

Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



On Mon, Feb 1, 2021 at 7:59 PM Jennifer Covington <jcovington@murrayschools.org> wrote:

Whitney and Vanessa:

I would like to schedule a meeting with you to discuss the reading of the book "Call Me Max" in Ms. Paul's 3rd grade classroom. While I know we met a few weeks back, many additional questions have been asked of me by parents, community members, and our school board regarding this situation that I simply cannot answer. I would like to meet with you to discuss these questions so I am better prepared to address the continued concerns.

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



From : "Jennifer Covington"
To : "Whitney Anderson"
Cc : "Vanessa Jobe"
Subject : Re: Meeting Request

Thanks Whitney. Today works great and we can meet over here at the district. Vaness - does this work for you? I would like to meet with both of you together.

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



On Tue, Feb 2, 2021 at 8:06 AM Whitney Anderson <wanderson@murrayschools.org> wrote:

I can do today from 1:30-2:15. I can have Jamie and Susannah cover dismissal. I'd prefer to meet at the District Office, if that's ok?

Mrs. Whitney Anderson
Principal - Horizon Elementary
801.264.7420



On Mon, Feb 1, 2021 at 7:59 PM Jennifer Covington <icovington@murrayschools.org> wrote:

Whitney and Vanessa:

I would like to schedule a meeting with you to discuss the reading of the book "Call Me Max" in Ms. Paul's 3rd grade classroom. While I know we met a few weeks back, many additional questions have been asked of me by parents, community members, and our school board regarding this situation that I simply cannot answer. I would like to meet with you to discuss these questions so I am better prepared to address the continued concerns.

I am available Tuesday from 1:00 - 3:30 p.m., Wednesday anytime before 11:00 a.m., and Thursday anytime before 12:30 p.m. I do not want to leave your building without an administrator so I am happy to come over to Horizon. Please let me know which day/time would work best for you. I anticipate we will need 30 - 45 minutes.

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



From : [REDACTED]
To : "Jennifer Covington"
Cc : "Glo Merrill", "Kami Anderson", "Belinda Johnson", "Elizabeth Payne", "Jaren Cooper", [REDACTED] "Buck, Sarah", "Jennifer King", "Kauffman,Earl", [REDACTED] "Scott Wihong", [REDACTED] "Darren Dean", [REDACTED] region19@utahpta.org, [REDACTED] mbail@murrayschools.org, [REDACTED] anderson@murrayschools.org, [REDACTED] journalside@murrayschools.org, [REDACTED] rteo@murrayschools.org, [REDACTED] ndorata@murrayschools.org, [REDACTED] "Bouwman, Jim", [REDACTED]

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?fbclid=IwAR13qj_9L3lnJS0l_JpQ_FRLRnh-WdkR96Evp0cV-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, Greg [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 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
5102 S. Commerce Drive
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?

From : [REDACTED]
 To : "Jennifer Covington"
 Cc : "Glo Merrill", "Kami Anderson", "Belinda Johnson", "Elizabeth Payne", "Jaren Cooper", "Buck, Sarah", "Jennifer King", "Kauffman, Earl", "Scott Wihongi", "Darren Dean", "wanderson@murrayschools.org", "Rebecca Ted", "Bouwman, Jim", "jallred@murrayschools.org", "ndolata@murrayschools.org", "journside@murrayschools.org", "mbair@murrayschools.org"

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, [REDACTED]

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?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 parental input and never want anything to feel like it is being done in secret.

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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.

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 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' attitudes, mindsets," and "fundamentally disagree with a philosophy that elevates victimhood and ignores individual choice and

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
5102 S. Commerce Drive
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

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 

From : [REDACTED]
To : "Jennifer Covington"
Cc : "Glo Merrill", "Kami Anderson", "Belinda Johnson", "Elizabeth Payne", "Jaren Cooper", [REDACTED], "Buck, Sarah",
"Jennifer King", "Kauffman, Earl", [REDACTED], "Scott Wihongi", [REDACTED], "Christen Bezoski", "Darren Dean", [REDACTED],
[REDACTED], jburnside@murrayschools.org, [REDACTED], wanderson@murrayschools.org,
ndorata@murrayschools.org, [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], "Rebecca Te'o"
[REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED],
jallred@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 [REDACTED]

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_9L3lnJS0l_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 [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.

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 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?

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Thanks [REDACTED]

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

[REDACTED]

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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.

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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
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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

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]

From [REDACTED]
To : "Jennifer Covington"
Cc : "Glo Merrill" , "Kami Anderson" , "Belinda Johnson" , "Elizabeth Payne" , "Jaren Cooper" , "Buck, Sarah"
"Jennifer King" , "Kauffman, Earl" , "Scott Wihongi" , "Darren Dean"
[REDACTED] , "mball@murrayschools.org"
wanderson@murrayschools.org , "iburnside@murrayschools.org"
"rteo@murrayschools.org" , [REDACTED] , "Bowman, Jim"
[REDACTED] , "jenbeckstead@utahpta.org"
[REDACTED] , "ndoiata@murrayschools.org"
Subject : Re: Murray School District Equity Council

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 Greg 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 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 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] 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?>

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, 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 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] 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.

I, 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 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
Murray City School District
5102 S. Commerce Drive
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. Kid Mure. I also viewed 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,

From : [REDACTED]
To : "Jennifer Covington"
Cc : "Glo Merrill", "Kami Anderson", "Belinda Johnson", "Elizabeth Payne", "Jaren Cooper", "Buck, Sarah", "Jennifer King", "Kauffman, Earl", "Scott Wihongi", "Darren Dean", "mbair@murrayschools.org", "wanderson@murrayschools.org", "jburnside@murrayschools.org", "rteo@murrayschools.org", "hdolata@murrayschools.org", "Bouwman, Jim", "jaired@murrayschools.org"
Subject: Re: Murray School District Equity Council
Attachment : MCSD 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. Greg and I both addressed a lot of information in our emails, so hopefully this message helps break it down for everyone to better understand...

Fellow 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 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 "intersectional 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 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=jcrFnaCbKrY>
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, 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 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 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.

Some emails to contact with questions:

Jen Covington (Superintendent): jcovington@murrayschools.org
Glo Merrill (Precinct 1) gmerrill@murrayschools.org
Kami 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] 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_9L3lnJS0l_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, [REDACTED]