



# FIGHTING

# CENSORSHIP

## Northtown Speaks Against Book Ban

**N**orth Kansas City High School students believed the district's removal of two library books was against policy and wanted to do something about it. Students filled spots to speak to the board during the meeting Nov. 22. Visit [StaleyNews.com](https://www.staleynews.com) to read or watch the other speeches.



**Lynh Nguyen, 12**

“When I first read *Fences*, it was one of the most life-changing books for me. Even though the book discusses the African-American identity, I could emotionally relate to the literature piece because I was

also a Person-of-Color. These literature pieces offer a voice for me, the Asian Student Union, People of Color, and marginalized groups. These pieces offer a voice that historically wasn't there before. Banning books is the means by which dictators and totalitarian governments convince masses of their truths when you eliminate information, it can not be used to justify a point of view and thus no opposing argument can be made. This is even more dangerous, as sheltering inevitably breeds ignorance.”



**Charles Moloney, 12**

“The Northland Parents Association has become a prevalent force at our school board meetings. I have seen them disrupt and ridicule our administration and pursue legal action with our schools. They claim the attempts to censor

these books is to protect our youth, as the exposure to explicit or taboo content is desensitizing or grooming us to such acts. They've made the baseless claim that the district's emphasis on diversity has pulled us away from a proper education. This is not the first time an organization has attempted to compromise the integrity of our education, and I'm certain it won't be the last. The students of this district, the learning majority, will continue to fight for the quality learning experience we deserve, and on this, we stand together.”

# CHALLENGE

# ACCEPTED

## *District Removed Books, Reverses Decision*

**F**or the first time in district history, officials mandated that all North Kansas City School District high schools pull two books from the shelves of their libraries.

North Kansas City School District board meeting Oct. 26, James Richmond, president of The Northland Parent Association, read what he considered offensive passages from two books and presented a list of 25 books the group wanted removed from North Kansas City schools. The board mandated removal of “All Boys Aren’t Blue: A Memoir Manifesto” and “Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic.” Oct. 28. In doing so, the district bypassed the formal process of withdrawing books from school libraries.

“When they asked us to remove the books, I said that I disagreed with that,” Library Media Specialist Elizabeth Ferguson said. “We have a procedure in place that says the books would stay on the shelf, and since I refused to pull them, they sent someone over and took one of the books, ‘All Boys Aren’t Blue’ from the library.”

Board President Jan Kauk said the books were removed so the administration could take a look at the concerns, consider the policies and

make a decision about what action should be taken going forward.

“We believed that was the right thing to do,” Kauk said. “We had to look at our policies and our practices, and we always have to make sure that we follow our protocol. We realized, in this case, we had some conflicting protocols.”

**“I DON’T THINK  
THAT WE SHOULD  
ONLY GIVE PEOPLE  
WHAT IS EASY  
TO DIGEST WITH  
THESE BOOKS.”**

**JAY SCHMIDTLEIN,  
12**

Kauk said the district had a policy allowing an administrator to pull a book for review before taking action, and other policies indicated they would remain in circulation until district procedures determined they should be removed.

Senior Jay Schmidtlein said “Fun House” shouldn’t be deemed inappropriate or explicit for high school readers.

“I have read books with explicit heterosexual sex that came from our school’s library, and it has never received any complaints as far as I know,” Schmidtlein said. “I get how since it is a graphic novel it is explicitly showing it, however, it’s not fair that it’s being targeted because it is two women and not a man and a woman.”

On Nov. 19, the district reversed the ban, sending an email addressing the error they made by removing the books without following protocol, and said they would be returned to shelves Nov. 22.

“After further looking at it and listening and hearing the student’s presentations and considering all points, we felt it was important to bring them back,” Kauk said.

The following board meeting also Nov. 22, students from North Kansas City High School spoke out and presented their cases about the book removal. District administration saw flaws within the book removal process and discussed how they will approach the situation going forward.

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