

Agenda Item Details

Meeting	Sep 09, 2024 - School Board Meeting Agenda
Category	8. HOW - REQUEST (S) FOR APPROVAL - NEW BUSINESS
Subject	E. Determination regarding Contested Library Book - Dr. Chad Phillips
Type	Action
Recommended Action	Motion to Approve the determination regarding contested library book.

[2024.09.09.Proposed Findings.pdf \(110 KB\)](#)

Motion & Voting

Motion to amend approval item 8)e to include a requirement of a parental consent for a student to have access to contested library book (Push).

Motion by Logan Schulz, second by Jason Major.

Final Resolution: Motion Fails

Yea: Jason Major, Logan Schulz

Nay: Nicole Wheeldon, Rich Stenner, Todd Grimes, Pat Bryant, Dale Nowlin

Motion to Approve the determination regarding contested library book.

Motion by Todd Grimes, second by Dale Nowlin.

Final Resolution: Motion Carries

Yea: Nicole Wheeldon, Rich Stenner, Todd Grimes, Pat Bryant, Jason Major, Dale Nowlin, Logan Schulz

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BEFORE THE BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES
OF THE BARTHOLOMEW CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL CORPORATION

Mr. Mark Niemoeller submitted a Request for Review of Materials or Course Content (“Request”) regarding the book *Push* by Sapphire. Following the decision of an evaluation committee to retain the book in the Columbus East High School Media Center, Mr. Niemoeller appealed that decision to the Board of School Trustees of the Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporation (“Board”).

The Board has conducted its review pursuant to Policy 9130, “Public Complaints and Concerns.” The Board, having reviewed the original Request, the determination of the evaluation committee, and the book, now makes the following findings:

1. The Board is to determine whether the book is “obscene” or “harmful to minors” as the terms are defined in Indiana Code 35-49-2-1 and Indiana Code 35-49-2-2 respectively.
2. A book is considered “obscene” under the relevant definition if:
 - a. the average person, applying contemporary community standards, finds that the dominant theme of the matter or performance, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest in sex;
 - b. the matter or performance depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct; AND
 - c. the matter or performance, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.
3. A book is considered “harmful to minors” under the relevant definition if:
 - a. it describes or represents, in any form, nudity, sexual conduct, sexual excitement, or sado-masochistic abuse;
 - b. considered as a whole, it appeals to the prurient interest in sex of minors;
 - c. it is patently offensive to prevailing standards in the adult community as a whole with respect to what is suitable matter for or performance before minors; AND
 - d. considered as a whole, it lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value for minors.
4. No challenged material may be removed solely because it presents ideas that may be unpopular or offensive to some, without it being “obscene” or “harmful to minors” as the same are defined in Indiana Code.
5. *Push* is the story of a teenager, Claireece Precious Jones, from Harlem, New York. The novel shares her journey as she copes with the impacts of her own abuse and rape at the hands of family members while raising her own child and learning to read and write.
6. The novel is set in the late-1980’s as the country confronted the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The novel was written in the mid-1990’s as the country considered changes to federal criminal law and federal social welfare policy.
7. The Request sought the removal of the novel from the East Media Center, stating “[g]iven the extreme degree and large quantity of objectionable parts, the non-objectionable parts do not make this book appropriate.”
8. The Preface to the 25th Anniversary Edition of the novel states:
 - a. The novel is a “merciless indictment of a society that abandons its most vulnerable citizens.”

- b. “Sapphire wants us not to push *past* the pain, injustice, and trauma. Instead, we must push *through* it. We must feel it to be changed by it.” (emphasis in original)
9. The Afterword to the 25th Anniversary Edition of the novel states that “[t]he novel I wrote challenges the idea that for so-called marginalized communities the only hope is white intervention and/or escape. In the very environment where Precious is so horribly abused and neglected are the resources and spirit/souls capable of helping her survive.”
10. The novel has been the subject of at least one academic symposium and multiple essays. The novel also inspired the 2009 film *Precious*.
11. The dominant theme of the novel, taken as a whole, does not appeal to a prurient interest in sex of adults or minors.
12. The dominant theme of the book is the trauma and injustices suffered by the main character and the path that she takes in confronting them.
13. The novel, taken as a whole, does not lack serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.
14. The author, Sapphire, notes in a letter to the editor included in the novel’s Afterword, “I have talked to thousands of women who have been sexually abused, some of whom have had experiences that make what happened in *Push* [...] look like a walk in the park. I’m not a social scientist but a creative artist. I took and will continue to take the stories of women I have listened to and turn them into fiction.” As the evaluation committee noted, the novel “reflects uncomfortable truths about our society.” The work has additionally inspired other literary and artistic work.
15. The novel addresses political topics including how the country’s response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic impacted different communities and how changes to social welfare policies impact communities supported by those programs.

CONCLUSION

After reviewing this matter, the Board concludes that *Push* by Sapphire is not “obscene” or “harmful to minors” as the terms are defined in Indiana Code. The decision of the evaluation committee is upheld and the book may remain on the shelves of the Columbus East High School Media Center.

SO DETERMINED THIS 9th day of September, 2024.

Board President

Secretary

A NOVEL

"Affecting and engrossing . . . tells
on the strength of pure, stirring feeling."

—The New York Times Book Review

S A P P H I R E

Profanity	Count
Bitch	42
Fuck	26
Motherfucker	14
Shit	59

Page	Content
1	I was left back when I was twelve because I had a baby for my fahver.
6	I don't know how many months pregnant I am. I don't wanna stand here 'n hear Mama call me slut. Holler 'n shout on me all day like she the last time. Slut! Nasty ass tramp!
7	"Slut! Goddamn slut! You fuckin' cow! I don't believe this, right under my nose. You been high tailing it round here." Pain hit me again, then she hit me. I'm on the floor groaning, "Mommy please, Mommy please, please Mommy! Mommy! Mommy! MOMMY!" Then she kick me side of my face! "Whore! Whore!" She screamin'.
9	I been knowing a man put his dick in you, gush white stuff in your booty you could get pregnant. I'm twelve now, I been knowing about that since I was five or six, maybe I always known about pussy and dick. I can't remember not knowing.
9	"No, that fat bitch is crying ugly."
10	"Father," she say. "What's your daddy's name?" "Carl Kenwood Jones, born in the Bronx." She say, "What's the baby's father's name?" I say, "Carl Kenwood Jones, born in the same Bronx."
12	"White bitch from school." ...This bitch crazy. I ws going to school everyday till her honky ass snatch me out the hall, fuck with my mind, make me go off on her, suspend me from school jus' because I'm pregnant- you know, end up my education. Now her white ass out on Lenox Avenue... ...My muver don't want no white shit like Mrs Lichenstein social worker teacher ass nosing around here. ...And that's what white shit like Mrs Lichenstein comin' to visit result in. ...I run down and kick her ass. My muver say, "Eighty-six that bitch." ...but when niggers say it, it's like, kiss my ass. ..."Git outta here Mrs Lichenstein 'fore I kick your ass."
15	I look at her but see Mama's shoe coming at the side of my head like a bullet, Carl's dick dangle dangle in my face and now the flat-face baby with eyes like Koreans.
15	Daddy put his pee-pee smelling thing in my mouth, my pussy, but never hold me. I see me, first grade, pink dress dirty sperm stuffs on it. No one comb my hair. Second grade, third grade, fourth grade seem like one dark night.
16	About three months after baby born, I'm still twelve when all this happen, Mama slap me. HARD. Then she pick up cast-iron skillet, thank god it was no hot grease in it, and she hit me so hard on back I fall on floor. Then she kick me in ribs. Then she say, "Thank you Miz Claireece Precious Jones for fucking my husband you nasty little slut!" I feel like I'm gonna die, can't breathe, from where I have baby start to hurt. "Fat cunt bucket slut! Nigger pig bitch! He done quit me! He done left me 'cause of you. What you tell them mutherfuckers at the damn hospital? I should KILL you!" she screaming at me. I'm lying on the floor shaking, crying, scared she gonna kill me. "Get up Miss Hot-to-Trot," Mama say. "Git your Jezebel ass up and fix some dinner 'fore I give you something to cry about."

Page	Content
	<p>9: my fingers</p> <p>10: my tongue but this time I put it in her where he tried to put it in me</p> <p>13: I am pressed close to her against the wall in her room we will fall on the still pink in some places chenille bedspread. My fingers A trains howling thru her dark tunnel we will- DADDY! DADDY! Come LOOK what Mary-Mae and Jermaine is doing! ...it is Mary-Mae's father who catches me one night to me what a MAN is. What a woman is when I get up from my new knowledge. One of my front teeth is gone. The doctor will tell my mother damage is done. I won't tell her by who. ...BEFORE any all that I had slid my fingers up the sweet stink of another child and knelt down to lick her thighs. ...wake up, go to sleep, jack off.</p>
149	<p>And his arm flew out like a jack-in-the-box and snatched the Bible from her and threw it in her face HARD. Hitting her in the eye. A blood red spot grew and spread across her eye for seven days.</p>
150	<p>I'm 17: when she walks in on me and Mary-Mae fucking.</p>
152	<p>...I'm 19: by then. What can I say except I fought back. And when it's six men that means you put your fist up and try to hit at least one of 'em 'fore they kill you. I'm with Rita. On that some things don't need to be written about. For example, how it sounds when a fist with two hundred pounds behind it connects solidly with your eye. Or the way concrete does not yield to lip cheek nostril when they met. And a razor, the closest thing it feels like is extreme cold. Cold so cold it's hot. A laser separating.</p>

Page	Content
18	<p>I feel Mama's hand between my legs, moving up my thigh. Her hand stop, she getting ready to pinch me if I move. I just lay still still, keep my eyes close. I can tell Mama's other hand between her legs now 'cause the smell fill room. Mama can't fit into the bathtub no more. Go sleep, go sleep, go to sleep. I tell myself. Maman's hand creepy spider, up my legs, in my pussy. ...I'm twelve, no I was twelve, when that shit happened.</p>
20	<p>This is my second baby for my daddy... ...This time I know Mama know. Umm hmmm, she know. She bring him to me. I ain' crazy, that stinky hoe give me to him. Probably thas' what he require to fuck her, some of me. Got to where he jus' come in my room any ole time, not jus' night. He climb on me. Shut up! He say. He slap my ass, You wide as the Mississippi, don't tell me a little bit of dick hurt you heifer. Git usta it, he laff, you is usta it. I fall back on bed, he fall on top of me. Then I change stations, change bodies... ..."I'm gonna marry you," he be saying. Hurry up, nigger, shut up! He mess up dream talkin' 'n gruntin'. First he mess up my life fucking me, then he mess up the fucking talkin'. I wanna scream, Oh shut up! Nigger, how you gonna marry me and you is my daddy. I'm your daughter, fucking me illegal. But I keep my mouf shut so's the fucking don't turn into a beating. I start to feel goo; stop being a video dancer and start coming. I try to go back to video but coming now, rocking under Carl now, my twat jumping juicy, it feel good. I feel shamed. "See, see," he slap my thigh like cowboys do horses on TV, then he squeeze my nipple, bit down on it. I come some more. "See, you LIKE it! You jus' like your mama- you die for it!" He pull his dick out, the white cum stuff pour out my hole wet up the sheets.</p>
27	<p>If he did he would know I was like a white girl, a real person, inside. He would not climb on me from forever and stick his dick in me 'n get me inside on fire, bleed, I bleed then he slap me.</p>
29	<p>Carl come over fuck us'es. Go from room to room, slap me on my ass when he through, haller WHEE WHEE!</p>
29	<p>He is against crack addicts and crackers. Crackers is the cause of everything bad. It why my father ack like he do. He has forgot he is the Original Man! So he fuck me, fuck me, beat me, have a chile by me.</p>
31	<p>When I git up they snort snort hog grunt sounds. So I jus' stop getting up. What for? That's when I start to pee on myself. I just sit there, it's like I paralyze or some shit.</p>
32	<p>I wet myself. Don't know why I don't get up, but I don't. I jus' sit there and pee.</p>
33	<p>Seven, he on me almost every night. First it's just in my mouth. Then it's more more. He is intercoursing me. Say I can take it. Look you don't even bleed, virgin girls bleed. You not virgin, I'm seven.</p>
46	<p>I see TVs I hear rap music I want something to eat I want fuck feeling from Daddy I want die I want die.</p>
49	<p>I don't fucks boyz but I'm pregnant. May fahver fuck me. And she know it. She kick me in my head when I'm pregnant. She take my money.</p>
50	<p>Hurt. Now again. I think my daddy. He stink, the white shit drip off his dick. Lick it lick it. I HATE that. But then I feel the hot sauce hot cha cha feeling when he be</p>

Page	Content
	fucking me. I get so confuse. I HATE him. But my pussy be popping. He say that, "Bif Mama your pussy is popping!" I hate myself when I feel good.
51	I walk to my muver's room but it look different, she look different. I look like little baby almost. She is talkin' sweet to me like sometimes Daddy talks. I am choking between her legs A HUH A HUH. She is smelling big woman smell. She say suck it, lick me Precious. Her hand is like a mountain pushing my head down. I squeeze my eyes shut but choking don't stop, it get worse. Then I open my eyes and look. I look at little Precious and big Mama and feel hit feeling, feel like killing Mama.
54	Muver kicking me, pains whipping me. Who gonna believe some shit like that?
54	I'm so busy getting beat, cooking, cleaning, pussy and asshole either hurting or popping. ...It such a small thing compare to your daddy climb on you, your muver kick you, slave you, feel you up. ...Mama give me orders, Daddy porno talk me, school never did learn me.
76	Since I was little her husband fuck me beat me. My daddy. ...Carl come in the night, take food, what money they is, fuck us bofe.
84	...Rita been on street selling pussy since she was twelve. ...Then Rhonda's brother raping her since she was a chile, her mother fine out and put Rhonda, not brother, out.
99	Daddy sick me, disgust me, but still he sex me up. I nawshus in my stomach but hot tight in my twat and I think I want it back, the smell of the bedroom, the hurt- he slap my face till it sting and my ears sing separate songs from each other, call me names, pump my pussy in out in out in out awww I come. He bite me hard. A hump! A hump! He slam his hips into me HARD. I scream pain he come. He slap my thighs like cowboys do horses on TV. Shiver. Orgasm in me, his body shaking, grab me, call me Fat Mama, Big Hole! You LOVE it! Say you love it! I wanna say I DON"T. I wanna say I'm a chile. But my pussy popping like grease in frying pan. He slam in me again. His dick soft. He start sucking my tittie. ...Then my body take me over again, like shocks after earthquake, shiver me, I come again. My body nto mine, I hate it coming. Afterward I go bafroom. I smear shit on my face. ...If I go to insect support group what will I hear from other girls. I bite my fingernails till they look like disease, pull strips o my skin away. Get Daddy's razor out cabinet. Cut cut cut arm wrist, not trying to die, trying to plug myself back in.
101	I would be tight pussy girl no stretch marks and torn pussy from babies's head bust me open.
104	I already know what I'm gonna recover, the smell of Mama's pussy in my face.
115	A girl have her father's dick in her mouth know things the other girls don't know but it's not what you want to know.
116	My hand is going up through the smell of Mama, my hand is pushing Daddy's dick out my face. "I was raped by my father. And beat." No one is talking except me. "Mama push my head down in her..." I can't talk no more.
117	Sweet talk you suck his dick.

Page	Content
119	<p>he put his ball in my face. ...mama jaw open like evil wolf. The smell deeper than toilet. Her fingers pick apart my pussy.</p>
121	<p>"I bottle her, tittie him. Bottle more better for kidz. Sanitary. But I never get dried up 'cause Carl always on me. It's like that you know. Chile, man- a woman got bofe. What you gonna do? So we in bed. I put her on one side of me on pillow, Carl on the other side me." Ms Weiss look like she done stopped breathing. "Carl got my tittie in hi mouf. Nuffin' wron wif that, it's natural. But I think thas the day IT start. I don't never remember noting before that. I hot. He sucking my tittie. My eyes closed. I know he getting hard I can see wifout my eyes, I love him so much." Umm hmm, I was raised by a psycho maniac fool. "He climb on me, you know. You unnderstand?" No, tell us some more stupid bitch. "So he on me. Then he reach over to Precious! Start wif his finger between her legs. I say Car what you doing! He say shut your big ass up! This is good for her. Then he git off me, take off her Pampers and try to stick his thing in Precious. You what trip me out is it almost can go in Precious! I think she some kinda freak baby then. I say stop Carl stop! I want him on me! I never wanted him to hurt her. I didn't want him doing anything to her. I wanted my man for myself. Sex me up, not my chile. So you cain't blame all that shit happen to Precious on me. I love Carl, I love him. He her daddy, but he was my man!"</p>
132	<p>He say Bitch! You think I'm crazy. I KNOW que tu puede. I KNOW PUTA! And he pull gun from his pants. Shoot Mami- bang bang bang. Her brains fly out her head her mouth open blood blood blood everywhere. It look like one olive is hanging out her head like a man off a cliff. She never speak nothing. Fall out chair. Go gurgle sound. More blood fall out her mouth. Her dress. Hair. The carpart is red. ...what life? Foster care, rape, drugs, prostitution, HIV, jail, rehab.</p>
136	<p>"Kimberton is...is molesting with me at night." I don't know how to say it. I can't say rape. That's not what brothers do to sisters. ..."He come over my side of the room at night and intercourse me."</p>
138	<p>he is dentist. Was a dentist. Maybe he is. Maybe he beat the case- he get charged by young girl's parents of trying to stick his finger (and who knows what else) up her pussy while he spozed to be fixing teeth!</p>
139	<p>Everywhere is a hand rubbing a dick going psst psst come her come here.</p>
142	<p>...white devil's throat. ...Want me to wash his penis and carry on.</p>
144	<p>Rage hot fill me. Kimberton's eyes glowing like radioactive in my mind, his fly eyes. His hands pushing me down on the bed, years.</p>
148	<p>I'm still 7: a boy holds me down under the stairwell that smells like urine (pee I woulda said at seven) tries to push his dick into me. I am 8: When I put my tongue in Mary-Mae's mouth for the first time (under the same steps)</p>

“...Hurt. Now again. I think my daddy. He stink, the white shit drip off his dick. Lick it lick it. I HATE that. But then I feel the hot sauce hot cha cha feeling when he be fucking me. I get so confuse. I HATE him. But my pussy be popping. He say that, "Big Mama your pussy is popping!" I hate myself when I feel good.”

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