



## Curriculum & Library Processes: A Summary of KSD's February 2022 Board Work Session

The following email was sent to KFEI.org subscribers on 2/22/2022:

Hello, KFEI Subscribers!

We aren't going to make a habit of recapping board meetings or work sessions but this one gets special treatment! We realize this is a long email, but we think it is worth your time.

In case you missed it, on Wednesday, February 9, 2022 the KSD Board of Education and Senior Administration had a **Work Session and discussed the approval/selection process for curriculum resources & library books.**

The agenda is available on BoardDocs [here](#) and the recording is [here](#). The KSD Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction gave two presentations and discussion followed.

First, the good news! **KSD leaders are productively discussing the concerns about profane and sexually explicit materials in our schools, and the gaps in the selection processes. This is an important step towards transparency and accountability.**

Some other **takeaways** from this meeting:

- The KSD policies and procedures surrounding resource selection are likely not being followed. *Looks like we are all on the same page here.*
- Resource approval by the Board has been rolled into the budget approval process. The Board is not given the opportunity to review the resources before approving the accompanying curriculum and/or the resource as a budget item. *Yikes! Why is the Board being asked to approve a curriculum without knowing what the primary resources for it will be? And why is the Board being asked to approve a budget without knowing what exactly that budget is buying?*
- Teachers are expected to pull class choice books (like for a book club) from an approved list and to notify parents of the choice books, some of which indicate parental permission required. *Unfortunately, this is not always happening, and it is unclear if all teachers even know that this is the expectation.*

- There is a lot of "assuming" and "trusting" going on without documentation. When asked by a Board Member (2:19:00) what the paper trail looks like for the review prior to purchase of a book, the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction replied, "... I do not believe there is a paper trail beyond, um, just honestly knowing that they are professionals that are adhering to the policies and practices that we have in place." *What would it take to get a system of checks and balances in place?*
- The KSD leadership cannot or will not define "age appropriate," even though multiple District policies, procedures, emails and expectations refer to that standard.
- Kirkwood Public Library has better controls on what children are allowed to access or check out than our schools do. *Actually, so does Hollywood. Could we adopt similar standards as a simple way to help the community navigate controversial content in materials?*
- There was emphasis on KSD relying on librarians "knowing their students" and ordering/suggesting books based on that. Regarding controversial or sexually explicit material, it was stated that if a librarian didn't think it was appropriate for the specific child, they would redirect the child from that book. *This is too much to expect from our librarians. I mean, have you ever mixed up your own kids' names?!*
- The official KSD expectation is that librarians consult community members, staff and administrators in the selection of books. But then Administrators stated that books, regardless of content, are chosen solely on the librarian's judgement. *Why are the librarians responsible for all this? Are they comfortable being liable for these decisions?*
- Reviews are cited as the basis for book selection. At times these are in conflict, and this is a red flag in book selection.

An example was provided (2:10:39) in which two reviews of the same book available to KSD students conflicted: one review source describes it as "a must read and the illustrations are ethereal & beautiful art," while another described it as "Disturbing, violent and has graphic sex scenes." *Perhaps this would be a sign to find a different book?*

- It was stated that parents have the ability to flag inappropriate books on their child's account in the Destiny Discover library database to avoid access. *If you succeed with this, please let us know.*

A Board Member did respond that "the onus cannot always be on the parents... We have to do our due diligence as leaders & professionals to do our work in complying with current policies and doing the right thing and not just assuming it is being done." (2:24:40). *This supports KFEI's goal of ensuring that KSD transparently & honestly follows existing policies and processes.*

- The question of: *When is the right time to keep information about a child from the parent?* continues to surface. A Board Member asked at 2:25:43: "... when you mention the system where parents can see what kids check out, are there instances like sometimes kids are going through identity issues **or want to research things that they don't want their parents to know about; do we have things in place to protect those kids and their rights?**"

The Superintendent stated that this is a question they do not currently have an answer for, and that they did not want to provide an answer that makes it sound like they are trying to hide things from parents. *Wait, **do not want to try to hide**, OR **do not want to SOUND like trying to hide?** Anyone else feel nervous? Does it start to feel like it is possible that the school **is** trying to hide things from parents?*

Please continue listening through 2:28:30. **The discussion indicates that they do not want it called "hiding things from parents," but *what exactly does it mean then? Is it acceptable for a school to keep information from a family?*** This same question was answered by a KSD elementary school librarian a couple years ago stating that he/she would not necessarily inform the parents if their child was going through identity struggles.

***Let's remember that the long-term health and responsibility of a child rests with the family.***

**Are you okay with the District deciding what you deserve to know about your child?**

In summary: It is wonderful to see District leaders beginning to talk about the issues. There are some gaps that need to be addressed. This is moving in the right direction towards more transparency and ultimately academic integrity.

This conversation highlighted the District's internal struggle with embracing parents as true partners in education and as the primary caregivers to their children.

Change can be hard, but these are our children and our community's future that we are talking about.

What the community of KFEI asks is for KSD to follow their policies and processes, and to be transparent with parents.

So, [what can you do?](#)

Consider submitting an [opt-out](#) for your child or a [community values statement](#).

Attend/watch board meetings. This summary was a freebie. Next one is on your own!

Email your thoughts and concerns to the KSD [Administrators](#) and [Board Members](#).

Inquire about:

- Defining **CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES**
- Defining **AGE APPROPRIATE**
- How are teachers and librarians equipped to meet expectations?
- Can we get a policy with guidelines for dealing with controversial issues?
- Will parents be able to trust that their children won't be proffered potentially disturbing materials without their permission?

Keep an eye on your child's schoolwork. Have conversations with them: What do you like at school? What do you and your friends talk about at recess or lunch? Where did that discussion start?

You can inform yourself by reading reviews from reliable sites about the books your kids are assigned or reading. Or read the books yourselves.

**We all know that there is sexually explicit content available to kids in KSD schools all the way down to 5 years old.** Will we see a change in how it is made available and how parents and the community are engaged and informed?

This discussion is a start but there are some important steps ahead. Send in a message to KSD leaders to keep momentum going!

In Partnership,  
The KFEI Team

p.s. You are receiving this email as a subscriber of KFEI.org. Help other parents & community members stay informed by suggesting they [sign up](#) as well!

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