CUSD libraries implementing responsive policy to book challenges

Published April 6, 2023

BY SHAYLA DUTTA

A Carmel Unified School District community member used the public comment portion of the board meeting on Nov. 16 to denounce books in the district’s libraries for having content that is “age-inappropriate” and focused on “sexual diversity,” while repeatedly referencing a nonprofit organization that has pushed to ban books addressing gender and sexuality issues nationwide.

Comments like this, coupled with national trends, have made attempts to ban books a more pressing concern than they ever were in the past, spurring district efforts to create manuals and implement policy across its libraries.

“The Library Collection Development Manual will have information about how libraries acquire books, ‘weed library materials’ and guidelines for reconsideration of library materials,” explains deputy superintendent Sharon Ofek, who notes that the manual currently in development will be the first CUSD has had so far. At this point, there is no timeline for the manual’s finalization.

In 2022, 2,751 unique books were challenged nationally, or targeted to be banned, according to the American Library Association. This was a 38% increase from 2021 and the highest number since the organization began collecting data more than 30 years ago. Although Carmel High School has not received any formal challenges to titles in its library, informal requests have been directed to the superintendent’s office and district board, according to CHS librarian Phil Crawford.

Ofek adds that she is not aware of any requests beyond one raised at a board meeting.

“With a formal challenge, ideally the person would come and express what their concerns were,” Crawford explains. “We would have a conversation, and if we weren’t able to resolve it during that conversation, then I would direct them to a reconsideration form so they’d fill out a form about what the material is. Then we would put together a reconsideration committee and that would comprise two librarians, one myself and another school administrator.”

Ofek says this process will be detailed in CUSD’s new manual, initially worked on in October by the CHS reconsideration committee. Separate from the interscholastic one, this committee consists of CHS teachers, administrators, students and Crawford himself and is also mobilized in response to challenges. Eventually, this committee will be absorbed into the singular districtwide committee, which will adapt to address challenges depending on the school. Librarians from the district’s middle and elementary schools have been working to adjust the manual to their own libraries.

While banning books has become more common nationwide, challenges can be unsuccessful due to the manner in which content is curated and evaluated in libraries.

“The process for school libraries in general is that you’re buying materials that are reviewed in professional journals,” Crawford says. “So they’re reviewed by librarians, for librarians.”
Not only are titles preemptively vetted in this way, but the manner in which reconsideration of a book is carried out specifically prevents cherry-picking of titles. When a book is challenged for containing a specific type of content, whether it be violent, sexual or as is common among books challenged today, LGBTQ+-themed, the library will then remove all the books deemed to contain that specific content at that level. For example, if a title was deemed inappropriate for depicting rape, the Bible would also have to be removed from the CHS library.

Similar processes have not yet been implemented for the CHS English department, which has also only seen informal requests regarding the curriculum thus far and as such have not yet become necessary.

"It's more often excusing a particular student from reading that specific book," explains CHS English department chair Barbara McBride, "and I think that for the most part, we've always accommodated that."

McBride notes that these specific requests are generally religiously motivated. Anything beyond has then been resolved with a conversation between the student or parent and the student’s English teacher, often to explain how the literary value outweighs any controversy the book may raise. Regardless, teachers have become more cautious in deciding what material to teach in recent years.

"For many years in the past, if a teacher read a book and said, 'This book was amazing, I want to teach it,' in the past, I'd be like, 'Sure, sure, just go teach it,'" McBride says. "Whereas now the process would be to get other teachers' viewpoints on that."

Books implemented into any CHS English curriculum are not only reviewed by multiple teachers, but often checked against the Department of Education's recommended reading list and piloted as a choice book for students before becoming assigned reading.

While challenges to books come from a variety of people, ideologies and motivations, recent trends according to the ALA have seen a rise in challenges toward books containing LGBTQ+ themes, critical race theory and intersectional feminism, a trend witnessed by Crawford himself through the informal requests he has been made aware of thus far.

The ALA, CUSD's main source for the manual's development according to the deputy superintendent, is referenced multiple times in the manual's appendix and takes a strong anti-censorship stance.

"It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions," reads its "Freedom to Read" statement, "including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority."
Good morning,

We are confirming receipt of your California Public Records Act Request numbered 2223_131.

The request is attached and posted on our website.

Thank you,
Allyson Cruz (she/her/hers)
Legal Support Specialist
Carmel Unified School District
4380 Carmel Valley Road, Carmel, CA 93923
acruz@carmelunified.org
office (831) 624-1546 ext. 2059
Submit a California Public Records Act Request to Carmel USD

The Carmel Unified School District (CUSD) is committed to transparency and providing easy access to public records pursuant to the California Public Records Act (CPRA). The California Public Records Act gives the public the right to access records created and maintained by public agencies in the course of their normal business.

Pursuant to Government Code Section 6252(e), a public record is defined as "any writing containing information relating to the conduct of the public's business prepared, owned, used, or retained by any state or local agency regardless of physical form or characteristics." Public records requests may be used to obtain "records," which include a wide variety of documents and other materials (including print, photographic, and electronic formats) that were created or obtained by the organization and are, at the time the request is filed, in the organization's possession and control.

Records subject to disclosure under the CPRA may include email or other communications from members of the public or which reference them. While the District reviews all responsive records to determine if this information should be disclosed, in many cases references to members of the public, or the content of their communications to the District are subject to disclosure. Permissible exemptions from disclosure include documents that invade an individual's right to privacy (e.g., privacy in certain personnel, medical, or student records) or hinder the government's need to perform its assigned functions in a reasonably efficient manner (e.g., maintaining confidentiality of investigative records, official information, records related to pending litigation, and preliminary notes or memoranda).

All requests will be posted to the District's CPRA webpage.

Name of requestor: *
First and last name
CUSD Lies
Email of requestor: (Responses will be provided to this email address) *

Mailing address of requestor:

Your request: (To enable staff to respond to your request as efficiently as possible, please include: The date range for the records requested; the department that holds the records (if known); and the types of records, including any important keywords. Please do not include any confidential information.)

All e-mails from 2022 to 2023 with the words: The Library Collection Development Manual

Are these books available in any library of Carmel Unified School District

• “Gender Queer: A Memoir” by Maia Kobabe
• “All Boys Aren’t Blue” by George M. Johnson
• “The Bluest Eye” by Toni Morrison
• “Flamer” by Mike Curato
• “Looking for Alaska” by John Green
• “The Perks of Being a Wallflower” by Stephen Chbosky
• “Lawn Boy” by Jonathan Evison
• “The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian” by Sherman Alexie
• “Out of Darkness” by Ashley Hope Perez
• “A Court of Mist and Fury” by Sarah J. Maas
• “Crank” by Ellen Hopkins
• “Me and Earl and the Dying Girl” by Jesse Andrews
• “This Book Is Gay” by Juno Dawson

If you have attachments or images to add to the request, please do so here.

This form was created inside of Carmel Unified School District.
Good morning,

You requested "All e-mails from 2022 to 2023 with the words: The Library Collection Development Manual". I am seeking further clarification so we are able to conduct a search as "all emails" is overbroad.

Who are the individuals you are requesting the email search, with the subject "The Library Collection Development Manual", to be conducted on? Please let me know.

Thank you,
Allyson Cruz (she/her/hers)
Legal Support Specialist
Carmel Unified School District
4380 Carmel Valley Road, Carmel, CA 93923
acruz@carmelunified.org
office (831) 624-1546 ext. 2059

On Mon, Jun 5, 2023 at 8:32 AM Allyson Cruz <acruz@carmelunified.org> wrote:
Good morning,

We are confirming receipt of your California Public Records Act Request numbered 2223_131.

The request is attached and posted on our website.

Thank you,
Allyson Cruz (she/her/hers)
Legal Support Specialist
Carmel Unified School District
4380 Carmel Valley Road, Carmel, CA 93923
acruz@carmelunified.org
office (831) 624-1546 ext. 2059
CUSD libraries implementing responsive policy to book challenges

Shayla Dutta
Apr 6

Published April 6, 2023

BY SHAYLA DUTTA

A Carmel Unified School District community member used the public comment portion of the board meeting on Nov. 16 to denounce books in the district’s libraries for having content that is “age-inappropriate” and focused on “sexual diversity,” while repeatedly referencing a nonprofit organization that has pushed to ban books addressing gender and sexuality issues nationwide.

Comments like this, coupled with national trends, have made attempts to ban books a more pressing concern than they ever were in the past, spurring district efforts to create manuals and implement policy across its libraries.

“The Library Collection Development Manual will have information about how libraries acquire books, ‘weed library materials’ and guidelines for reconsideration of library materials,” explains deputy superintendent Sharon Ofek, who notes that the manual currently in development will be the first CUSD has had so far. At this point, there is no timeline for the manual’s finalization.

In 2022, 2,751 unique books were challenged nationally, or targeted to be banned, according to the American Library Association. This was a 38% increase from 2021 and the highest number since the organization began collecting data more than 30 years ago. Although Carmel High School has not received any formal challenges to titles in its library, informal requests have been directed to the superintendent’s office and district board, according to CHS librarian Phil Crawford.

Ofek adds that she is not aware of any requests beyond one raised at a board meeting.

“With a formal challenge, ideally the person would come and express what their concerns were,” Crawford explains. “We would have a conversation, and if we weren’t able to resolve it during that conversation, then I would direct them to a reconsideration form so they’d fill out a form about what the material is. Then we would put together a reconsideration committee and that would comprise two librarians, one myself and another school administrator.”

Ofek says this process will be detailed in CUSD’s new manual, initially worked on in October by the CHS reconsideration committee. Separate from the interscholastic one, this committee consists of CHS teachers, administrators, students and Crawford himself and is also mobilized in response to challenges. Eventually, this committee will be absorbed into the singular districtwide committee, which will adapt to address challenges depending on the school. Librarians from the district’s middle and elementary schools have been working to adjust the manual to their own libraries.

While banning books has become more common nationwide, challenges can be unsuccessful due to the manner in which content is curated and evaluated in libraries.

“The process for school libraries in general is that you’re buying materials that are reviewed in professional journals,” Crawford says. “So they’re reviewed by librarians, for librarians.”
Not only are titles preemptively vetted in this way, but the manner in which reconsideration of a book is carried out specifically prevents cherry-picking of titles. When a book is challenged for containing a specific type of content, whether it be violent, sexual or as is common among books challenged today, LGBTQ+-themed, the library will then remove all the books deemed to contain that specific content at that level. For example, if a title was deemed inappropriate for depicting rape, the Bible would also have to be removed from the CHS library.

Similar processes have not yet been implemented for the CHS English department, which has also only seen informal requests regarding the curriculum thus far and as such have not yet become necessary.

"It's more often excusing a particular student from reading that specific book," explains CHS English department chair Barbara McBride, "and I think that for the most part, we've always accommodated that."

McBride notes that these specific requests are generally religiously motivated. Anything beyond has then been resolved with a conversation between the student or parent and the student’s English teacher, often to explain how the literary value outweighs any controversy the book may raise. Regardless, teachers have become more cautious in deciding what material to teach in recent years.

"For many years in the past, if a teacher read a book and said, 'This book was amazing, I want to teach it,' in the past, I'd be like, 'Sure, sure, just go teach it,'" McBride says. "Whereas now the process would be to get other teachers' viewpoints on that."

Books implemented into any CHS English curriculum are not only reviewed by multiple teachers, but often checked against the Department of Education's recommended reading list and piloted as a choice book for students before becoming assigned reading.

While challenges to books come from a variety of people, ideologies and motivations, recent trends according to the ALA have seen a rise in challenges toward books containing LGBTQ+ themes, critical race theory and intersectional feminism, a trend witnessed by Crawford himself through the informal requests he has been made aware of thus far.

The ALA, CUSD’s main source for the manual’s development according to the deputy superintendent, is referenced multiple times in the manual’s appendix and takes a strong anti-censorship stance.

"It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions," reads its “Freedom to Read” statement, “including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority.”
A Carmel Unified School District community member used the public comment portion of the board meeting on Nov. 16 to denounce books in the district’s libraries for having content that is “age-inappropriate” and focused on “sexual diversity,” while repeatedly referencing a nonprofit organization that has pushed to ban books addressing gender and sexuality issues nationwide.

Comments like this, coupled with national trends, have made attempts to ban books a more pressing concern than they ever were in the past, spurring district efforts to create manuals and implement policy across its libraries.

“The Library Collection Development Manual will have information about how libraries acquire books, ‘weed library materials’ and guidelines for reconsideration of library materials,” explains deputy superintendent Sharon Ofek, who notes that the manual currently in development will be the first CUSD has had so far. At this point, there is no timeline for the manual’s finalization.

In 2022, 2,751 unique books were challenged nationally, or targeted to be banned, according to the American Library Association. This was a 38% increase from 2021 and the highest number since the organization began collecting data more than 30 years ago. Although Carmel High School has not received any formal challenges to titles in its library, informal requests have been directed to the superintendent’s office and district board, according to CHS librarian Phil Crawford.

Ofek adds that she is not aware of any requests beyond one raised at a board meeting.

“With a formal challenge, ideally the person would come and express what their concerns were,” Crawford explains. “We would have a conversation, and if we weren’t able to resolve it during that conversation, then I would direct them to a reconsideration form so they’d fill out a form about what the material is. Then we would put together a reconsideration committee and that would comprise two librarians, one myself and another school administrator.”

Ofek says this process will be detailed in CUSD’s new manual, initially worked on in October by the CHS reconsideration committee. Separate from the interscholastic one, this committee consists of CHS teachers, administrators, students and Crawford himself and is also mobilized in response to challenges. Eventually, this committee will be absorbed into the singular districtwide committee, which will adapt to address challenges depending on the school. Librarians from the district’s middle and elementary schools have been working to adjust the manual to their own libraries.

While banning books has become more common nationwide, challenges can be unsuccessful due to the manner in which content is curated and evaluated in libraries.

“The process for school libraries in general is that you’re buying materials that are reviewed in professional journals,” Crawford says. “So they’re reviewed by librarians, for librarians.”
Not only are titles preemptively vetted in this way, but the manner in which reconsideration of a book is carried out specifically prevents cherry-picking of titles. When a book is challenged for containing a specific type of content, whether it be violent, sexual or as is common among books challenged today, LGBTQ+-themed, the library will then remove all the books deemed to contain that specific content at that level. For example, if a title was deemed inappropriate for depicting rape, the Bible would also have to be removed from the CHS library.

Similar processes have not yet been implemented for the CHS English department, which has also only seen informal requests regarding the curriculum thus far and as such have not yet become necessary.

"It's more often excusing a particular student from reading that specific book," explains CHS English department chair Barbara McBride, "and I think that for the most part, we've always accommodated that."

McBride notes that these specific requests are generally religiously motivated. Anything beyond has then been resolved with a conversation between the student or parent and the student's English teacher, often to explain how the literary value outweighs any controversy the book may raise. Regardless, teachers have become more cautious in deciding what material to teach in recent years.

"For many years in the past, if a teacher read a book and said, 'This book was amazing, I want to teach it,' in the past, I'd be like, 'Sure, sure, just go teach it,'" McBride says. "Whereas now the process would be to get other teachers' viewpoints on that."

Books implemented into any CHS English curriculum are not only reviewed by multiple teachers, but often checked against the Department of Education's recommended reading list and piloted as a choice book for students before becoming assigned reading.

While challenges to books come from a variety of people, ideologies and motivations, recent trends according to the ALA have seen a rise in challenges toward books containing LGBTQ+ themes, critical race theory and intersectional feminism, a trend witnessed by Crawford himself through the informal requests he has been made aware of thus far.

The ALA, CUSD's main source for the manual's development according to the deputy superintendent, is referenced multiple times in the manual's appendix and takes a strong anti-censorship stance.

"It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions," reads its "Freedom to Read" statement, "including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority."
CUSD libraries implementing responsive policy to book challenges

BY SHAYLA DUTTA

A Carmel Unified School District community member used the public comment portion of the board meeting on Nov. 16 to denounce books in the district’s libraries for having content that is “age-inappropriate” and focused on “sexual diversity,” while repeatedly referencing a nonprofit organization that has pushed to ban books addressing gender and sexuality issues nationwide.

Comments like this, coupled with national trends, have made attempts to ban books a more pressing concern than they ever were in the past, spurring district efforts to create manuals and implement policy across its libraries.

“The Library Collection Development Manual will have information about how libraries acquire books, ‘weed library materials’ and guidelines for reconsideration of library materials,” explains deputy superintendent Sharon Ofek, who notes that the manual currently in development will be the first CUSD has had so far. At this point, there is no timeline for the manual’s finalization.

In 2022, 2,751 unique books were challenged nationally, or targeted to be banned, according to the American Library Association. This was a 38% increase from 2021 and the highest number since the organization began collecting data more than 30 years ago. Although Carmel High School has not received any formal challenges to titles in its library, informal requests have been directed to the superintendent’s office and district board, according to CHS librarian Phil Crawford.

Ofek adds that she is not aware of any requests beyond one raised at a board meeting.

“With a formal challenge, ideally the person would come and express what their concerns were,” Crawford explains. “We would have a conversation, and if we weren’t able to resolve it during that conversation, then I would direct them to a reconsideration form so they’d fill out a form about what the material is. Then we would put together a reconsideration committee and that would comprise two librarians, one myself and another school administrator.”

Ofek says this process will be detailed in CUSD’s new manual, initially worked on in October by the CHS reconsideration committee. Separate from the interscholastic one, this committee consists of CHS teachers, administrators, students and Crawford himself and is also mobilized in response to challenges. Eventually, this committee will be absorbed into the singular districtwide committee, which will adapt to address challenges depending on the school. Librarians from the district's middle and elementary schools have been working to adjust the manual to their own libraries.

While banning books has become more common nationwide, challenges can be unsuccessful due to the manner in which content is curated and evaluated in libraries.

“The process for school libraries in general is that you’re buying materials that are reviewed in professional journals,” Crawford says. “So they’re reviewed by librarians, for librarians.”
Not only are titles preemptively vetted in this way, but the manner in which reconsideration of a book is carried out specifically prevents cherry-picking of titles. When a book is challenged for containing a specific type of content, whether it be violent, sexual or as is common among books challenged today, LGBTQ+-themed, the library will then remove all the books deemed to contain that specific content at that level. For example, if a title was deemed inappropriate for depicting rape, the Bible would also have to be removed from the CHS library.

Similar processes have not yet been implemented for the CHS English department, which has also only seen informal requests regarding the curriculum thus far and as such have not yet become necessary.

“It’s more often excusing a particular student from reading that specific book,” explains CHS English department chair Barbara McBride, “and I think that for the most part, we’ve always accommodated that.”

McBride notes that these specific requests are generally religiously motivated. Anything beyond has then been resolved with a conversation between the student or parent and the student’s English teacher, often to explain how the literary value outweighs any controversy the book may raise. Regardless, teachers have become more cautious in deciding what material to teach in recent years.

“For many years in the past, if a teacher read a book and said, 'This book was amazing, I want to teach it,' in the past, I'd be like, 'Sure, sure, just go teach it,’” McBride says. “Whereas now the process would be to get other teachers’ viewpoints on that.”

Books implemented into any CHS English curriculum are not only reviewed by multiple teachers, but often checked against the Department of Education’s recommended reading list and piloted as a choice book for students before becoming assigned reading.

While challenges to books come from a variety of people, ideologies and motivations, recent trends according to the ALA have seen a rise in challenges toward books containing LGBTQ+ themes, critical race theory and intersectional feminism, a trend witnessed by Crawford himself through the informal requests he has been made aware of thus far.

The ALA, CUSD’s main source for the manual’s development according to the deputy superintendent, is referenced multiple times in the manual’s appendix and takes a strong anti-censorship stance.

“It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions,” reads its “Freedom to Read” statement, “including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority.”
A Carmel Unified School District community member used the public comment portion of the board meeting on Nov. 16 to denounce books in the district's libraries for having content that is "age-inappropriate" and focused on "sexual diversity," while repeatedly referencing a nonprofit organization that has pushed to ban books addressing gender and sexuality issues nationwide.

Comments like this, coupled with national trends, have made attempts to ban books a more pressing concern than they ever were in the past, spurring district efforts to create manuals and implement policy across its libraries.

"The Library Collection Development Manual will have information about how libraries acquire books, 'weed library materials' and guidelines for reconsideration of library materials," explains deputy superintendent Sharon Ofek, who notes that the manual currently in development will be the first CUSD has had so far. At this point, there is no timeline for the manual's finalization.

In 2022, 2,751 unique books were challenged nationally, or targeted to be banned, according to the American Library Association. This was a 38% increase from 2021 and the highest number since the organization began collecting data more than 30 years ago. Although Carmel High School has not received any formal challenges to titles in its library, informal requests have been directed to the superintendent's office and district board, according to CHS librarian Phil Crawford.

Ofek adds that she is not aware of any requests beyond one raised at a board meeting.

"With a formal challenge, ideally the person would come and express what their concerns were," Crawford explains. "We would have a conversation, and if we weren’t able to resolve it during that conversation, then I would direct them to a reconsideration form so they’d fill out a form about what the material is. Then we would put together a reconsideration committee and that would comprise two librarians, one myself and another school administrator."

Ofek says this process will be detailed in CUSD's new manual, initially worked on in October by the CHS reconsideration committee. Separate from the interscholastic one, this committee consists of CHS teachers, administrators, students and Crawford himself and is also mobilized in response to challenges. Eventually, this committee will be absorbed into the singular districtwide committee, which will adapt to address challenges depending on the school. Librarians from the district's middle and elementary schools have been working to adjust the manual to their own libraries.

While banning books has become more common nationwide, challenges can be unsuccessful due to the manner in which content is curated and evaluated in libraries.

"The process for school libraries in general is that you're buying materials that are reviewed in professional journals," Crawford says. "So they’re reviewed by librarians, for librarians."
Not only are titles preemptively vetted in this way, but the manner in which reconsideration of a book is carried out specifically prevents cherry-picking of titles. When a book is challenged for containing a specific type of content, whether it be violent, sexual or as is common among books challenged today, LGBTQ+-themed, the library will then remove all the books deemed to contain that specific content at that level. For example, if a title was deemed inappropriate for depicting rape, the Bible would also have to be removed from the CHS library.

Similar processes have not yet been implemented for the CHS English department, which has also only seen informal requests regarding the curriculum thus far and as such have not yet become necessary.

“It's more often excusing a particular student from reading that specific book,” explains CHS English department chair Barbara McBride, “and I think that for the most part, we've always accommodated that.”

McBride notes that these specific requests are generally religiously motivated. Anything beyond has then been resolved with a conversation between the student or parent and the student’s English teacher, often to explain how the literary value outweighs any controversy the book may raise. Regardless, teachers have become more cautious in deciding what material to teach in recent years.

“For many years in the past, if a teacher read a book and said, 'This book was amazing, I want to teach it,' in the past, I'd be like, 'Sure, sure, just go teach it,’” McBride says. “Whereas now the process would be to get other teachers’ viewpoints on that.”

Books implemented into any CHS English curriculum are not only reviewed by multiple teachers, but often checked against the Department of Education's recommended reading list and piloted as a choice book for students before becoming assigned reading.

While challenges to books come from a variety of people, ideologies and motivations, recent trends according to the ALA have seen a rise in challenges toward books containing LGBTQ+ themes, critical race theory and intersectional feminism, a trend witnessed by Crawford himself through the informal requests he has been made aware of thus far.

The ALA, CUSD’s main source for the manual’s development according to the deputy superintendent, is referenced multiple times in the manual’s appendix and takes a strong anti-censorship stance.

“It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions,” reads its “Freedom to Read” statement, “including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority.”
A Carmel Unified School District community member used the public comment portion of the board meeting on Nov. 16 to denounce books in the district’s libraries for having content that is “age-inappropriate” and focused on “sexual diversity,” while repeatedly referencing a nonprofit organization that has pushed to ban books addressing gender and sexuality issues nationwide.

Comments like this, coupled with national trends, have made attempts to ban books a more pressing concern than they ever were in the past, spurring district efforts to create manuals and implement policy across its libraries.

“The Library Collection Development Manual will have information about how libraries acquire books, ‘weed library materials’ and guidelines for reconsideration of library materials,” explains deputy superintendent Sharon Ofek, who notes that the manual currently in development will be the first CUSD has had so far. At this point, there is no timeline for the manual’s finalization.

In 2022, 2,751 unique books were challenged nationally, or targeted to be banned, according to the American Library Association. This was a 38% increase from 2021 and the highest number since the organization began collecting data more than 30 years ago. Although Carmel High School has not received any formal challenges to titles in its library, informal requests have been directed to the superintendent’s office and district board, according to CHS librarian Phil Crawford.

Ofek adds that she is not aware of any requests beyond one raised at a board meeting.

“With a formal challenge, ideally the person would come and express what their concerns were,” Crawford explains. “We would have a conversation, and if we weren’t able to resolve it during that conversation, then I would direct them to a reconsideration form so they’d fill out a form about what the material is. Then we would put together a reconsideration committee and that would comprise two librarians, one myself and another school administrator.”

Ofek says this process will be detailed in CUSD’s new manual, initially worked on in October by the CHS reconsideration committee. Separate from the interscholastic one, this committee consists of CHS teachers, administrators, students and Crawford himself and is also mobilized in response to challenges. Eventually, this committee will be absorbed into the singular districtwide committee, which will adapt to address challenges depending on the school. Librarians from the district’s middle and elementary schools have been working to adjust the manual to their own libraries.

While banning books has become more common nationwide, challenges can be unsuccessful due to the manner in which content is curated and evaluated in libraries.

“The process for school libraries in general is that you’re buying materials that are reviewed in professional journals,” Crawford says. “So they’re reviewed by librarians, for librarians.”
Not only are titles preemptively vetted in this way, but the manner in which reconsideration of a book is carried out specifically prevents cherry-picking of titles. When a book is challenged for containing a specific type of content, whether it be violent, sexual or as is common among books challenged today, LGBTQ+-themed, the library will then remove all the books deemed to contain that specific content at that level. For example, if a title was deemed inappropriate for depicting rape, the Bible would also have to be removed from the CHS library.

Similar processes have not yet been implemented for the CHS English department, which has also only seen informal requests regarding the curriculum thus far and as such have not yet become necessary.

"It’s more often excusing a particular student from reading that specific book," explains CHS English department chair Barbara McBride, "and I think that for the most part, we’ve always accommodated that."

McBride notes that these specific requests are generally religiously motivated. Anything beyond has then been resolved with a conversation between the student or parent and the student’s English teacher, often to explain how the literary value outweighs any controversy the book may raise. Regardless, teachers have become more cautious in deciding what material to teach in recent years.

"For many years in the past, if a teacher read a book and said, ‘This book was amazing, I want to teach it,’ I’d be like, ‘Sure, sure, just go teach it,’” McBride says. "Whereas now the process would be to get other teachers’ viewpoints on that."

Books implemented into any CHS English curriculum are not only reviewed by multiple teachers, but often checked against the Department of Education’s recommended reading list and piloted as a choice book for students before becoming assigned reading.

While challenges to books come from a variety of people, ideologies and motivations, recent trends according to the ALA have seen a rise in challenges toward books containing LGBTQ+ themes, critical race theory and intersectional feminism, a trend witnessed by Crawford himself through the informal requests he has been made aware of thus far.

The ALA, CUSD’s main source for the manual’s development according to the deputy superintendent, is referenced multiple times in the manual’s appendix and takes a strong anti-censorship stance.

"It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions,” reads its “Freedom to Read” statement, “including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority.”
A Carmel Unified School District community member used the public comment portion of the board meeting on Nov. 16 to denounce books in the district’s libraries for having content that is “age-inappropriate” and focused on “sexual diversity,” while repeatedly referencing a nonprofit organization that has pushed to ban books addressing gender and sexuality issues nationwide.

Comments like this, coupled with national trends, have made attempts to ban books a more pressing concern than they ever were in the past, spurring district efforts to create manuals and implement policy across its libraries.

“The Library Collection Development Manual will have information about how libraries acquire books, ‘weed library materials’ and guidelines for reconsideration of library materials,” explains deputy superintendent Sharon Ofek, who notes that the manual currently in development will be the first CUSD has had so far. At this point, there is no timeline for the manual’s finalization.

In 2022, 2,751 unique books were challenged nationally, or targeted to be banned, according to the American Library Association. This was a 38% increase from 2021 and the highest number since the organization began collecting data more than 30 years ago. Although Carmel High School has not received any formal challenges to titles in its library, informal requests have been directed to the superintendent’s office and district board, according to CHS librarian Phil Crawford.

Ofek adds that she is not aware of any requests beyond one raised at a board meeting.

“With a formal challenge, ideally the person would come and express what their concerns were,” Crawford explains. “We would have a conversation, and if we weren’t able to resolve it during that conversation, then I would direct them to a reconsideration form so they’d fill out a form about what the material is. Then we would put together a reconsideration committee and that would comprise two librarians, one myself and another school administrator.”

Ofek says this process will be detailed in CUSD’s new manual, initially worked on in October by the CHS reconsideration committee. Separate from the interscholastic one, this committee consists of CHS teachers, administrators, students and Crawford himself and is also mobilized in response to challenges. Eventually, this committee will be absorbed into the singular districtwide committee, which will adapt to address challenges depending on the school. Librarians from the district’s middle and elementary schools have been working to adjust the manual to their own libraries.

While banning books has become more common nationwide, challenges can be unsuccessful due to the manner in which content is curated and evaluated in libraries.

“The process for school libraries in general is that you’re buying materials that are reviewed in professional journals,” Crawford says. “So they’re reviewed by librarians, for librarians.”
Not only are titles preemptively vetted in this way, but the manner in which reconsideration of a book is carried out specifically prevents cherry-picking of titles. When a book is challenged for containing a specific type of content, whether it be violent, sexual or as is common among books challenged today, LGBTQ+-themed, the library will then remove all the books deemed to contain that specific content at that level. For example, if a title was deemed inappropriate for depicting rape, the Bible would also have to be removed from the CHS library.

Similar processes have not yet been implemented for the CHS English department, which has also only seen informal requests regarding the curriculum thus far and as such have not yet become necessary.

"It’s more often excusing a particular student from reading that specific book,” explains CHS English department chair Barbara McBride, “and I think that for the most part, we’ve always accommodated that.”

McBride notes that these specific requests are generally religiously motivated. Anything beyond has then been resolved with a conversation between the student or parent and the student’s English teacher, often to explain how the literary value outweighs any controversy the book may raise. Regardless, teachers have become more cautious in deciding what material to teach in recent years.

“For many years in the past, if a teacher read a book and said, ‘This book was amazing, I want to teach it,’ in the past, I’d be like, ‘Sure, sure, just go teach it,’” McBride says. “Whereas now the process would be to get other teachers’ viewpoints on that.”

Books implemented into any CHS English curriculum are not only reviewed by multiple teachers, but often checked against the Department of Education’s recommended reading list and piloted as a choice book for students before becoming assigned reading.

While challenges to books come from a variety of people, ideologies and motivations, recent trends according to the ALA have seen a rise in challenges toward books containing LGBTQ+ themes, critical race theory and intersectional feminism, a trend witnessed by Crawford himself through the informal requests he has been made aware of thus far.

The ALA, CUSD’s main source for the manual’s development according to the deputy superintendent, is referenced multiple times in the manual’s appendix and takes a strong anti-censorship stance.

"It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions,” reads its “Freedom to Read” statement, “including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority.”
CUSD libraries implementing responsive policy to book challenges

Shayla Dutta
Apr 6

Published April 6, 2023

BY SHAYLA DUTTA

A Carmel Unified School District community member used the public comment portion of the board meeting on Nov. 16 to denounce books in the district’s libraries for having content that is “age-inappropriate” and focused on “sexual diversity,” while repeatedly referencing a nonprofit organization that has pushed to ban books addressing gender and sexuality issues nationwide.

Comments like this, coupled with national trends, have made attempts to ban books a more pressing concern than they ever were in the past, spurring district efforts to create manuals and implement policy across its libraries.

“The Library Collection Development Manual will have information about how libraries acquire books, ‘weed library materials’ and guidelines for reconsideration of library materials,” explains deputy superintendent Sharon Ofek, who notes that the manual currently in development will be the first CUSD has had so far. At this point, there is no timeline for the manual’s finalization.

In 2022, 2,751 unique books were challenged nationally, or targeted to be banned, according to the American Library Association. This was a 38% increase from 2021 and the highest number since the organization began collecting data more than 30 years ago. Although Carmel High School has not received any formal challenges to titles in its library, informal requests have been directed to the superintendent’s office and district board, according to CHS librarian Phil Crawford.

Ofek adds that she is not aware of any requests beyond one raised at a board meeting.

"With a formal challenge, ideally the person would come and express what their concerns were," Crawford explains. "We would have a conversation, and if we weren’t able to resolve it during that conversation, then I would direct them to a reconsideration form so they’d fill out a form about what the material is. Then we would put together a reconsideration committee and that would comprise two librarians, one myself and another school administrator."

Ofek says this process will be detailed in CUSD’s new manual, initially worked on in October by the CHS reconsideration committee. Separate from the interscholastic one, this committee consists of CHS teachers, administrators, students and Crawford himself and is also mobilized in response to challenges. Eventually, this committee will be absorbed into the singular districtwide committee, which will adapt to address challenges depending on the school. Librarians from the district’s middle and elementary schools have been working to adjust the manual to their own libraries.

While banning books has become more common nationwide, challenges can be unsuccessful due to the manner in which content is curated and evaluated in libraries.

"The process for school libraries in general is that you’re buying materials that are reviewed in professional journals," Crawford says. "So they’re reviewed by librarians, for librarians."
Not only are titles preemptively vetted in this way, but the manner in which reconsideration of a book is carried out specifically prevents cherry-picking of titles. When a book is challenged for containing a specific type of content, whether it be violent, sexual or as is common among books challenged today, LGBTQ+-themed, the library will then remove all the books deemed to contain that specific content at that level. For example, if a title was deemed inappropriate for depicting rape, the Bible would also have to be removed from the CHS library.

Similar processes have not yet been implemented for the CHS English department, which has also only seen informal requests regarding the curriculum thus far and as such have not yet become necessary.

"It's more often excusing a particular student from reading that specific book," explains CHS English department chair Barbara McBride, "and I think that for the most part, we've always accommodated that."

McBride notes that these specific requests are generally religiously motivated. Anything beyond has then been resolved with a conversation between the student or parent and the student’s English teacher, often to explain how the literary value outweighs any controversy the book may raise. Regardless, teachers have become more cautious in deciding what material to teach in recent years.

"For many years in the past, if a teacher read a book and said, 'This book was amazing, I want to teach it,' in the past, I'd be like, 'Sure, sure, just go teach it,'" McBride says. "Whereas now the process would be to get other teachers’ viewpoints on that."

Books implemented into any CHS English curriculum are not only reviewed by multiple teachers, but often checked against the Department of Education's recommended reading list and piloted as a choice book for students before becoming assigned reading.

While challenges to books come from a variety of people, ideologies and motivations, recent trends according to the ALA have seen a rise in challenges toward books containing LGBTQ+ themes, critical race theory and intersectional feminism, a trend witnessed by Crawford himself through the informal requests he has been made aware of thus far.

The ALA, CUSD's main source for the manual's development according to the deputy superintendent, is referenced multiple times in the manual’s appendix and takes a strong anti-censorship stance.

"It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions," reads its “Freedom to Read” statement, “including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority.”
A Carmel Unified School District community member used the public comment portion of the board meeting on Nov. 16 to denounce books in the district’s libraries for having content that is “age-inappropriate” and focused on “sexual diversity,” while repeatedly referencing a nonprofit organization that has pushed to ban books addressing gender and sexuality issues nationwide.

Comments like this, coupled with national trends, have made attempts to ban books a more pressing concern than they ever were in the past, spurring district efforts to create manuals and implement policy across its libraries.

“The Library Collection Development Manual will have information about how libraries acquire books, ‘weed library materials’ and guidelines for reconsideration of library materials,” explains deputy superintendent Sharon Ofek, who notes that the manual currently in development will be the first CUSD has had so far. At this point, there is no timeline for the manual’s finalization.

In 2022, 2,751 unique books were challenged nationally, or targeted to be banned, according to the American Library Association. This was a 38% increase from 2021 and the highest number since the organization began collecting data more than 30 years ago. Although Carmel High School has not received any formal challenges to titles in its library, informal requests have been directed to the superintendent’s office and district board, according to CHS librarian Phil Crawford.

Ofek adds that she is not aware of any requests beyond one raised at a board meeting.

“With a formal challenge, ideally the person would come and express what their concerns were,” Crawford explains. “We would have a conversation, and if we weren’t able to resolve it during that conversation, then I would direct them to a reconsideration form so they’d fill out a form about what the material is. Then we would put together a reconsideration committee and that would comprise two librarians, one myself and another school administrator.”

Ofek says this process will be detailed in CUSD’s new manual, initially worked on in October by the CHS reconsideration committee. Separate from the interscholastic one, this committee consists of CHS teachers, administrators, students and Crawford himself and is also mobilized in response to challenges. Eventually, this committee will be absorbed into the singular districtwide committee, which will adapt to address challenges depending on the school. Librarians from the district’s middle and elementary schools have been working to adjust the manual to their own libraries.

While banning books has become more common nationwide, challenges can be unsuccessful due to the manner in which content is curated and evaluated in libraries.

“The process for school libraries in general is that you’re buying materials that are reviewed in professional journals,” Crawford says. “So they’re reviewed by librarians, for librarians.”
Not only are titles preemptively vetted in this way, but the manner in which reconsideration of a book is carried out specifically prevents cherry-picking of titles. When a book is challenged for containing a specific type of content, whether it be violent, sexual or as is common among books challenged today, LGBTQ+-themed, the library will then remove all the books deemed to contain that specific content at that level. For example, if a title was deemed inappropriate for depicting rape, the Bible would also have to be removed from the CHS library.

Similar processes have not yet been implemented for the CHS English department, which has also only seen informal requests regarding the curriculum thus far and as such have not yet become necessary.

"It’s more often excusing a particular student from reading that specific book," explains CHS English department chair Barbara McBride, "and I think that for the most part, we've always accommodated that."

McBride notes that these specific requests are generally religiously motivated. Anything beyond has then been resolved with a conversation between the student or parent and the student’s English teacher, often to explain how the literary value outweighs any controversy the book may raise. Regardless, teachers have become more cautious in deciding what material to teach in recent years.

“For many years in the past, if a teacher read a book and said, 'This book was amazing, I want to teach it,' in the past, I'd be like, 'Sure, sure, just go teach it,'” McBride says. “Whereas now the process would be to get other teachers’ viewpoints on that.”

Books implemented into any CHS English curriculum are not only reviewed by multiple teachers, but often checked against the Department of Education's recommended reading list and piloted as a choice book for students before becoming assigned reading.

While challenges to books come from a variety of people, ideologies and motivations, recent trends according to the ALA have seen a rise in challenges toward books containing LGBTQ+ themes, critical race theory and intersectional feminism, a trend witnessed by Crawford himself through the informal requests he has been made aware of thus far.

The ALA, CUSD’s main source for the manual’s development according to the deputy superintendent, is referenced multiple times in the manual’s appendix and takes a strong anti-censorship stance.

“It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions,” reads its “Freedom to Read” statement, “including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority.”
CUSD libraries implementing responsive policy to book challenges

Published April 6, 2023

BY SHAYLA DUTTA

A Carmel Unified School District community member used the public comment portion of the board meeting on Nov. 16 to denounce books in the district’s libraries for having content that is “age-inappropriate” and focused on “sexual diversity,” while repeatedly referencing a nonprofit organization that has pushed to ban books addressing gender and sexuality issues nationwide.

Comments like this, coupled with national trends, have made attempts to ban books a more pressing concern than they ever were in the past, spurring district efforts to create manuals and implement policy across its libraries.

“The Library Collection Development Manual will have information about how libraries acquire books, ‘weed library materials’ and guidelines for reconsideration of library materials,” explains deputy superintendent Sharon Ofek, who notes that the manual currently in development will be the first CUSD has had so far. At this point, there is no timeline for the manual’s finalization.

In 2022, 2,751 unique books were challenged nationally, or targeted to be banned, according to the American Library Association. This was a 38% increase from 2021 and the highest number since the organization began collecting data more than 30 years ago. Although Carmel High School has not received any formal challenges to titles in its library, informal requests have been directed to the superintendent’s office and district board, according to CHS librarian Phil Crawford.

Ofek adds that she is not aware of any requests beyond one raised at a board meeting.

“With a formal challenge, ideally the person would come and express what their concerns were,” Crawford explains. “We would have a conversation, and if we weren’t able to resolve it during that conversation, then I would direct them to a reconsideration form so they’d fill out a form about what the material is. Then we would put together a reconsideration committee and that would comprise two librarians, one myself and another school administrator.”

Ofek says this process will be detailed in CUSD’s new manual, initially worked on in October by the CHS reconsideration committee. Separate from the interscholastic one, this committee consists of CHS teachers, administrators, students and Crawford himself and is also mobilized in response to challenges. Eventually, this committee will be absorbed into the singular districtwide committee, which will adapt to address challenges depending on the school. Librarians from the district’s middle and elementary schools have been working to adjust the manual to their own libraries.

While banning books has become more common nationwide, challenges can be unsuccessful due to the manner in which content is curated and evaluated in libraries.

“The process for school libraries in general is that you’re buying materials that are reviewed in professional journals,” Crawford says. “So they’re reviewed by librarians, for librarians.”
Not only are titles preemptively vetted in this way, but the manner in which reconsideration of a book is carried out specifically prevents cherry-picking of titles. When a book is challenged for containing a specific type of content, whether it be violent, sexual or as is common among books challenged today, LGBTQ+-themed, the library will then remove all the books deemed to contain that specific content at that level. For example, if a title was deemed inappropriate for depicting rape, the Bible would also have to be removed from the CHS library.

Similar processes have not yet been implemented for the CHS English department, which has also only seen informal requests regarding the curriculum thus far and as such have not yet become necessary.

“It’s more often excusing a particular student from reading that specific book,” explains CHS English department chair Barbara McBride, “and I think that for the most part, we’ve always accommodated that.”

McBride notes that these specific requests are generally religiously motivated. Anything beyond has then been resolved with a conversation between the student or parent and the student’s English teacher, often to explain how the literary value outweighs any controversy the book may raise. Regardless, teachers have become more cautious in deciding what material to teach in recent years.

“For many years in the past, if a teacher read a book and said, ‘This book was amazing, I want to teach it,’ in the past, I’d be like, ‘Sure, sure, just go teach it,’” McBride says. “Whereas now the process would be to get other teachers’ viewpoints on that.”

Books implemented into any CHS English curriculum are not only reviewed by multiple teachers, but often checked against the Department of Education’s recommended reading list and piloted as a choice book for students before becoming assigned reading.

While challenges to books come from a variety of people, ideologies and motivations, recent trends according to the ALA have seen a rise in challenges toward books containing LGBTQ+ themes, critical race theory and intersectional feminism, a trend witnessed by Crawford himself through the informal requests he has been made aware of thus far.

The ALA, CUSD’s main source for the manual’s development according to the deputy superintendent, is referenced multiple times in the manual’s appendix and takes a strong anti-censorship stance.

“It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions,” reads its “Freedom to Read” statement, “including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority.”
A Carmel Unified School District community member used the public comment portion of the board meeting on Nov. 16 to denounce books in the district's libraries for having content that is "age-inappropriate" and focused on "sexual diversity," while repeatedly referencing a nonprofit organization that has pushed to ban books addressing gender and sexuality issues nationwide.

Comments like this, coupled with national trends, have made attempts to ban books a more pressing concern than they ever were in the past, spurring district efforts to create manuals and implement policy across its libraries.

"The Library Collection Development Manual will have information about how libraries acquire books, 'weed library materials' and guidelines for reconsideration of library materials," explains deputy superintendent Sharon Ofek, who notes that the manual currently in development will be the first CUSD has had so far. At this point, there is no timeline for the manual's finalization.

In 2022, 2,751 unique books were challenged nationally, or targeted to be banned, according to the American Library Association. This was a 38% increase from 2021 and the highest number since the organization began collecting data more than 30 years ago. Although Carmel High School has not received any formal challenges to titles in its library, informal requests have been directed to the superintendent's office and district board, according to CHS librarian Phil Crawford.

Ofek adds that she is not aware of any requests beyond one raised at a board meeting.

"With a formal challenge, ideally the person would come and express what their concerns were," Crawford explains. "We would have a conversation, and if we weren't able to resolve it during that conversation, then I would direct them to a reconsideration form so they'd fill out a form about what the material is. Then we would put together a reconsideration committee and that would comprise two librarians, one myself and another school administrator."

Ofek says this process will be detailed in CUSD's new manual, initially worked on in October by the CHS reconsideration committee. Separate from the interscholastic one, this committee consists of CHS teachers, administrators, students and Crawford himself and is also mobilized in response to challenges. Eventually, this committee will be absorbed into the singular districtwide committee, which will adapt to address challenges depending on the school. Librarians from the district's middle and elementary schools have been working to adjust the manual to their own libraries.

While banning books has become more common nationwide, challenges can be unsuccessful due to the manner in which content is curated and evaluated in libraries.

"The process for school libraries in general is that you're buying materials that are reviewed in professional journals," Crawford says. "So they're reviewed by librarians, for librarians."
Not only are titles preemptively vetted in this way, but the manner in which reconsideration of a book is carried out specifically prevents cherry-picking of titles. When a book is challenged for containing a specific type of content, whether it be violent, sexual or as is common among books challenged today, LGBTQ+-themed, the library will then remove all the books deemed to contain that specific content at that level. For example, if a title was deemed inappropriate for depicting rape, the Bible would also have to be removed from the CHS library.

Similar processes have not yet been implemented for the CHS English department, which has also only seen informal requests regarding the curriculum thus far and as such have not yet become necessary.

"It's more often excusing a particular student from reading that specific book," explains CHS English department chair Barbara McBride, "and I think that for the most part, we've always accommodated that."

McBride notes that these specific requests are generally religiously motivated. Anything beyond has then been resolved with a conversation between the student or parent and the student's English teacher, often to explain how the literary value outweighs any controversy the book may raise. Regardless, teachers have become more cautious in deciding what material to teach in recent years.

"For many years in the past, if a teacher read a book and said, 'This book was amazing, I want to teach it,' in the past, I'd be like, 'Sure, sure, just go teach it,'" McBride says. "Whereas now the process would be to get other teachers' viewpoints on that."

Books implemented into any CHS English curriculum are not only reviewed by multiple teachers, but often checked against the Department of Education's recommended reading list and piloted as a choice book for students before becoming assigned reading.

While challenges to books come from a variety of people, ideologies and motivations, recent trends according to the ALA have seen a rise in challenges toward books containing LGBTQ+ themes, critical race theory and intersectional feminism, a trend witnessed by Crawford himself through the informal requests he has been made aware of thus far.

The ALA, CUSD's main source for the manual's development according to the deputy superintendent, is referenced multiple times in the manual's appendix and takes a strong anti-censorship stance.

"It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions," reads its "Freedom to Read" statement, "including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority."
CUSD libraries implementing responsive policy to book challenges

BY SHAYLA DUTTA

A Carmel Unified School District community member used the public comment portion of the board meeting on Nov. 16 to denounce books in the district’s libraries for having content that is “age-inappropriate” and focused on “sexual diversity,” while repeatedly referencing a nonprofit organization that has pushed to ban books addressing gender and sexuality issues nationwide.

Comments like this, coupled with national trends, have made attempts to ban books a more pressing concern than they ever were in the past, spurring district efforts to create manuals and implement policy across its libraries.

“The Library Collection Development Manual will have information about how libraries acquire books, ‘weed library materials’ and guidelines for reconsideration of library materials,” explains deputy superintendent Sharon Ofek, who notes that the manual currently in development will be the first CUSD has had so far. At this point, there is no timeline for the manual’s finalization.

In 2022, 2,751 unique books were challenged nationally, or targeted to be banned, according to the American Library Association. This was a 38% increase from 2021 and the highest number since the organization began collecting data more than 30 years ago. Although Carmel High School has not received any formal challenges to titles in its library, informal requests have been directed to the superintendent’s office and district board, according to CHS librarian Phil Crawford.

Ofek adds that she is not aware of any requests beyond one raised at a board meeting.

"With a formal challenge, ideally the person would come and express what their concerns were," Crawford explains. "We would have a conversation, and if we weren’t able to resolve it during that conversation, then I would direct them to a reconsideration form so they’d fill out a form about what the material is. Then we would put together a reconsideration committee and that would comprise two librarians, one myself and another school administrator."

Ofek says this process will be detailed in CUSD’s new manual, initially worked on in October by the CHS reconsideration committee. Separate from the interscholastic one, this committee consists of CHS teachers, administrators, students and Crawford himself and is also mobilized in response to challenges. Eventually, this committee will be absorbed into the singular districtwide committee, which will adapt to address challenges depending on the school. Librarians from the district’s middle and elementary schools have been working to adjust the manual to their own libraries.

While banning books has become more common nationwide, challenges can be unsuccessful due to the manner in which content is curated and evaluated in libraries.

"The process for school libraries in general is that you’re buying materials that are reviewed in professional journals," Crawford says. "So they’re reviewed by librarians, for librarians."
Not only are titles preemptively vetted in this way, but the manner in which reconsideration of a book is carried out specifically prevents cherry-picking of titles. When a book is challenged for containing a specific type of content, whether it be violent, sexual or as is common among books challenged today, LGBTQ+-themed, the library will then remove all the books deemed to contain that specific content at that level. For example, if a title was deemed inappropriate for depicting rape, the Bible would also have to be removed from the CHS library.

Similar processes have not yet been implemented for the CHS English department, which has also only seen informal requests regarding the curriculum thus far and as such have not yet become necessary.

“It's more often excusing a particular student from reading that specific book,” explains CHS English department chair Barbara McBride, “and I think that for the most part, we've always accommodated that.”

McBride notes that these specific requests are generally religiously motivated. Anything beyond has then been resolved with a conversation between the student or parent and the student’s English teacher, often to explain how the literary value outweighs any controversy the book may raise. Regardless, teachers have become more cautious in deciding what material to teach in recent years.

“For many years in the past, if a teacher read a book and said, 'This book was amazing, I want to teach it,' in the past, I'd be like, 'Sure, sure, just go teach it,'” McBride says. “Whereas now the process would be to get other teachers' viewpoints on that.”

Books implemented into any CHS English curriculum are not only reviewed by multiple teachers, but often checked against the Department of Education's recommended reading list and piloted as a choice book for students before becoming assigned reading.

While challenges to books come from a variety of people, ideologies and motivations, recent trends according to the ALA have seen a rise in challenges toward books containing LGBTQ+ themes, critical race theory and intersectional feminism, a trend witnessed by Crawford himself through the informal requests he has been made aware of thus far.

The ALA, CUSD's main source for the manual's development according to the deputy superintendent, is referenced multiple times in the manual’s appendix and takes a strong anti-censorship stance.

"It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions," reads its “Freedom to Read” statement, “including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority.”
CUSD libraries implementing responsive policy to book challenges

BY SHAYLA DUTTA

A Carmel Unified School District community member used the public comment portion of the board meeting on Nov. 16 to denounce books in the district’s libraries for having content that is “age-inappropriate” and focused on “sexual diversity,” while repeatedly referencing a nonprofit organization that has pushed to ban books addressing gender and sexuality issues nationwide.

Comments like this, coupled with national trends, have made attempts to ban books a more pressing concern than they ever were in the past, spurring district efforts to create manuals and implement policy across its libraries.

“The Library Collection Development Manual will have information about how libraries acquire books, ‘weed library materials’ and guidelines for reconsideration of library materials,” explains deputy superintendent Sharon Ofek, who notes that the manual currently in development will be the first CUSD has had so far. At this point, there is no timeline for the manual’s finalization.

In 2022, 2,751 unique books were challenged nationally, or targeted to be banned, according to the American Library Association. This was a 38% increase from 2021 and the highest number since the organization began collecting data more than 30 years ago. Although Carmel High School has not received any formal challenges to titles in its library, informal requests have been directed to the superintendent’s office and district board, according to CHS librarian Phil Crawford.

Ofek adds that she is not aware of any requests beyond one raised at a board meeting.

"With a formal challenge, ideally the person would come and express what their concerns were," Crawford explains. "We would have a conversation, and if we weren’t able to resolve it during that conversation, then I would direct them to a reconsideration form so they’d fill out a form about what the material is. Then we would put together a reconsideration committee and that would comprise two librarians, one myself and another school administrator."

Ofek says this process will be detailed in CUSD’s new manual, initially worked on in October by the CHS reconsideration committee. Separate from the interscholastic one, this committee consists of CHS teachers, administrators, students and Crawford himself and is also mobilized in response to challenges. Eventually, this committee will be absorbed into the singular districtwide committee, which will adapt to address challenges depending on the school. Librarians from the district’s middle and elementary schools have been working to adjust the manual to their own libraries.

While banning books has become more common nationwide, challenges can be unsuccessful due to the manner in which content is curated and evaluated in libraries.

"The process for school libraries in general is that you’re buying materials that are reviewed in professional journals," Crawford says. "So they’re reviewed by librarians, for librarians."
Not only are titles preemptively vetted in this way, but the manner in which reconsideration of a book is carried out specifically prevents cherry-picking of titles. When a book is challenged for containing a specific type of content, whether it be violent, sexual or as is common among books challenged today, LGBTQ+-themed, the library will then remove all the books deemed to contain that specific content at that level. For example, if a title was deemed inappropriate for depicting rape, the Bible would also have to be removed from the CHS library.

Similar processes have not yet been implemented for the CHS English department, which has also only seen informal requests regarding the curriculum thus far and as such have not yet become necessary.

“It’s more often excusing a particular student from reading that specific book,” explains CHS English department chair Barbara McBride, “and I think that for the most part, we’ve always accommodated that.”

McBride notes that these specific requests are generally religiously motivated. Anything beyond has then been resolved with a conversation between the student or parent and the student’s English teacher, often to explain how the literary value outweighs any controversy the book may raise. Regardless, teachers have become more cautious in deciding what material to teach in recent years.

“For many years in the past, if a teacher read a book and said, ‘This book was amazing, I want to teach it,’ in the past, I’d be like, ‘Sure, sure, just go teach it,’” McBride says. “Whereas now the process would be to get other teachers’ viewpoints on that.”

Books implemented into any CHS English curriculum are not only reviewed by multiple teachers, but often checked against the Department of Education’s recommended reading list and piloted as a choice book for students before becoming assigned reading.

While challenges to books come from a variety of people, ideologies and motivations, recent trends according to the ALA have seen a rise in challenges toward books containing LGBTQ+ themes, critical race theory and intersectional feminism, a trend witnessed by Crawford himself through the informal requests he has been made aware of thus far.

The ALA, CUSD’s main source for the manual’s development according to the deputy superintendent, is referenced multiple times in the manual’s appendix and takes a strong anti-censorship stance.

“It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions,” reads its “Freedom to Read” statement, “including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority.”
CUSD libraries implementing responsive policy to book challenges

Shayla Dutta

Apr 6

Published April 6, 2023

BY SHAYLA DUTTA

A Carmel Unified School District community member used the public comment portion of the board meeting on Nov. 16 to denounce books in the district’s libraries for having content that is “age-inappropriate” and focused on “sexual diversity,” while repeatedly referencing a nonprofit organization that has pushed to ban books addressing gender and sexuality issues nationwide.

Comments like this, coupled with national trends, have made attempts to ban books a more pressing concern than they ever were in the past, spurring district efforts to create manuals and implement policy across its libraries.

“The Library Collection Development Manual will have information about how libraries acquire books, ‘weed library materials’ and guidelines for reconsideration of library materials,” explains deputy superintendent Sharon Ofek, who notes that the manual currently in development will be the first CUSD has had so far. At this point, there is no timeline for the manual’s finalization.

In 2022, 2,751 unique books were challenged nationally, or targeted to be banned, according to the American Library Association. This was a 38% increase from 2021 and the highest number since the organization began collecting data more than 30 years ago. Although Carmel High School has not received any formal challenges to titles in its library, informal requests have been directed to the superintendent’s office and district board, according to CHS librarian Phil Crawford.

Ofek adds that she is not aware of any requests beyond one raised at a board meeting.

"With a formal challenge, ideally the person would come and express what their concerns were," Crawford explains. "We would have a conversation, and if we weren’t able to resolve it during that conversation, then I would direct them to a reconsideration form so they’d fill out a form about what the material is. Then we would put together a reconsideration committee and that would comprise two librarians, one myself and another school administrator."

Ofek says this process will be detailed in CUSD’s new manual, initially worked on in October by the CHS reconsideration committee. Separate from the interscholastic one, this committee consists of CHS teachers, administrators, students and Crawford himself and is also mobilized in response to challenges. Eventually, this committee will be absorbed into the singular districtwide committee, which will adapt to address challenges depending on the school. Librarians from the district’s middle and elementary schools have been working to adjust the manual to their own libraries.

While banning books has become more common nationwide, challenges can be unsuccessful due to the manner in which content is curated and evaluated in libraries.

“The process for school libraries in general is that you’re buying materials that are reviewed in professional journals,” Crawford says. “So they’re reviewed by librarians, for librarians.”
Not only are titles preemptively vetted in this way, but the manner in which reconsideration of a book is carried out specifically prevents cherry-picking of titles. When a book is challenged for containing a specific type of content, whether it be violent, sexual or as is common among books challenged today, LGBTQ+–themed, the library will then remove all the books deemed to contain that specific content at that level. For example, if a title was deemed inappropriate for depicting rape, the Bible would also have to be removed from the CHS library.

Similar processes have not yet been implemented for the CHS English department, which has also only seen informal requests regarding the curriculum thus far and as such have not yet become necessary.

"It’s more often excusing a particular student from reading that specific book," explains CHS English department chair Barbara McBride, “and I think that for the most part, we’ve always accommodated that.”

McBride notes that these specific requests are generally religiously motivated. Anything beyond has then been resolved with a conversation between the student or parent and the student’s English teacher, often to explain how the literary value outweighs any controversy the book may raise. Regardless, teachers have become more cautious in deciding what material to teach in recent years.

“For many years in the past, if a teacher read a book and said, ‘This book was amazing, I want to teach it,’ in the past, I’d be like, ‘Sure, sure, just go teach it,’” McBride says. “Whereas now the process would be to get other teachers’ viewpoints on that.”

Books implemented into any CHS English curriculum are not only reviewed by multiple teachers, but often checked against the Department of Education’s recommended reading list and piloted as a choice book for students before becoming assigned reading.

While challenges to books come from a variety of people, ideologies and motivations, recent trends according to the ALA have seen a rise in challenges toward books containing LGBTQ+ themes, critical race theory and intersectional feminism, a trend witnessed by Crawford himself through the informal requests he has been made aware of thus far.

The ALA, CUSD’s main source for the manual’s development according to the deputy superintendent, is referenced multiple times in the manual’s appendix and takes a strong anti-censorship stance.

"It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions,” reads its “Freedom to Read” statement, “including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority.”
CUSD libraries implementing responsive policy to book challenges

Shayla Dutta
Abr 6

Published April 6, 2023

BY SHAYLA DUTTA

A Carmel Unified School District community member used the public comment portion of the board meeting on Nov. 16 to denounce books in the district's libraries for having content that is “age-inappropriate” and focused on “sexual diversity,” while repeatedly referencing a nonprofit organization that has pushed to ban books addressing gender and sexuality issues nationwide.

Comments like this, coupled with national trends, have made attempts to ban books a more pressing concern than they ever were in the past, spurring district efforts to create manuals and implement policy across its libraries.

"The Library Collection Development Manual will have information about how libraries acquire books, 'weed library materials' and guidelines for reconsideration of library materials," explains deputy superintendent Sharon Ofek, who notes that the manual currently in development will be the first CUSD has had so far. At this point, there is no timeline for the manual's finalization.

In 2022, 2,751 unique books were challenged nationally, or targeted to be banned, according to the American Library Association. This was a 38% increase from 2021 and the highest number since the organization began collecting data more than 30 years ago. Although Carmel High School has not received any formal challenges to titles in its library, informal requests have been directed to the superintendent's office and district board, according to CHS librarian Phil Crawford.

Ofek adds that she is not aware of any requests beyond one raised at a board meeting.

"With a formal challenge, ideally the person would come and express what their concerns were," Crawford explains. "We would have a conversation, and if we weren’t able to resolve it during that conversation, then I would direct them to a reconsideration form so they’d fill out a form about what the material is. Then we would put together a reconsideration committee and that would comprise two librarians, one myself and another school administrator."

Ofek says this process will be detailed in CUSD's new manual, initially worked on in October by the CHS reconsideration committee. Separate from the interscholastic one, this committee consists of CHS teachers, administrators, students and Crawford himself and is also mobilized in response to challenges. Eventually, this committee will be absorbed into the singular districtwide committee, which will adapt to address challenges depending on the school. Librarians from the district's middle and elementary schools have been working to adjust the manual to their own libraries.

While banning books has become more common nationwide, challenges can be unsuccessful due to the manner in which content is curated and evaluated in libraries.

"The process for school libraries in general is that you’re buying materials that are reviewed in professional journals," Crawford says. "So they’re reviewed by librarians, for librarians."
Not only are titles preemptively vetted in this way, but the manner in which reconsideration of a book is carried out specifically prevents cherry-picking of titles. When a book is challenged for containing a specific type of content, whether it be violent, sexual or as is common among books challenged today, LGBTQ+-themed, the library will then remove all the books deemed to contain that specific content at that level. For example, if a title was deemed inappropriate for depicting rape, the Bible would also have to be removed from the CHS library.

Similar processes have not yet been implemented for the CHS English department, which has also only seen informal requests regarding the curriculum thus far and as such have not yet become necessary.

"It's more often excusing a particular student from reading that specific book," explains CHS English department chair Barbara McBride, "and I think that for the most part, we've always accommodated that."

McBride notes that these specific requests are generally religiously motivated. Anything beyond has then been resolved with a conversation between the student or parent and the student’s English teacher, often to explain how the literary value outweighs any controversy the book may raise. Regardless, teachers have become more cautious in deciding what material to teach in recent years.

"For many years in the past, if a teacher read a book and said, 'This book was amazing, I want to teach it,' in the past, I'd be like, 'Sure, sure, just go teach it,'" McBride says. "Whereas now the process would be to get other teachers' viewpoints on that."

Books implemented into any CHS English curriculum are not only reviewed by multiple teachers, but often checked against the Department of Education's recommended reading list and piloted as a choice book for students before becoming assigned reading.

While challenges to books come from a variety of people, ideologies and motivations, recent trends according to the ALA have seen a rise in challenges toward books containing LGBTQ+ themes, critical race theory and intersectional feminism, a trend witnessed by Crawford himself through the informal requests he has been made aware of thus far.

The ALA, CUSD's main source for the manual's development according to the deputy superintendent, is referenced multiple times in the manual's appendix and takes a strong anti-censorship stance.

"It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions," reads its "Freedom to Read" statement, "including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority."
A Carmel Unified School District community member used the public comment portion of the board meeting on Nov. 16 to denounce books in the district’s libraries for having content that is “age-inappropriate” and focused on “sexual diversity,” while repeatedly referencing a nonprofit organization that has pushed to ban books addressing gender and sexuality issues nationwide.

Comments like this, coupled with national trends, have made attempts to ban books a more pressing concern than they ever were in the past, spurring district efforts to create manuals and implement policy across its libraries.

“The Library Collection Development Manual will have information about how libraries acquire books, ‘weed library materials’ and guidelines for reconsideration of library materials,” explains deputy superintendent Sharon Ofek, who notes that the manual currently in development will be the first CUSD has had so far. At this point, there is no timeline for the manual’s finalization.

In 2022, 2,751 unique books were challenged nationally, or targeted to be banned, according to the American Library Association. This was a 38% increase from 2021 and the highest number since the organization began collecting data more than 30 years ago. Although Carmel High School has not received any formal challenges to titles in its library, informal requests have been directed to the superintendent’s office and district board, according to CHS librarian Phil Crawford.

Ofek adds that she is not aware of any requests beyond one raised at a board meeting.

“With a formal challenge, ideally the person would come and express what their concerns were,” Crawford explains. “We would have a conversation, and if we weren’t able to resolve it during that conversation, then I would direct them to a reconsideration form so they’d fill out a form about what the material is. Then we would put together a reconsideration committee and that would comprise two librarians, one myself and another school administrator.”

Ofek says this process will be detailed in CUSD’s new manual, initially worked on in October by the CHS reconsideration committee. Separate from the interscholastic one, this committee consists of CHS teachers, administrators, students and Crawford himself and is also mobilized in response to challenges. Eventually, this committee will be absorbed into the singular districtwide committee, which will adapt to address challenges depending on the school. Librarians from the district’s middle and elementary schools have been working to adjust the manual to their own libraries.

While banning books has become more common nationwide, challenges can be unsuccessful due to the manner in which content is curated and evaluated in libraries.

“The process for school libraries in general is that you’re buying materials that are reviewed in professional journals,” Crawford says. “So they’re reviewed by librarians, for librarians.”
Not only are titles preemptively vetted in this way, but the manner in which reconsideration of a book is carried out specifically prevents cherry-picking of titles. When a book is challenged for containing a specific type of content, whether it be violent, sexual or as is common among books challenged today, LGBTQ+-themed, the library will then remove all the books deemed to contain that specific content at that level. For example, if a title was deemed inappropriate for depicting rape, the Bible would also have to be removed from the CHS library.

Similar processes have not yet been implemented for the CHS English department, which has also only seen informal requests regarding the curriculum thus far and as such have not yet become necessary.

“It’s more often excusing a particular student from reading that specific book,” explains CHS English department chair Barbara McBride, “and I think that for the most part, we’ve always accommodated that.”

McBride notes that these specific requests are generally religiously motivated. Anything beyond has then been resolved with a conversation between the student or parent and the student’s English teacher, often to explain how the literary value outweighs any controversy the book may raise. Regardless, teachers have become more cautious in deciding what material to teach in recent years.

“For many years in the past, if a teacher read a book and said, ‘This book was amazing, I want to teach it,’ in the past, I’d be like, ‘Sure, sure, just go teach it,’” McBride says. “Whereas now the process would be to get other teachers’ viewpoints on that.”

Books implemented into any CHS English curriculum are not only reviewed by multiple teachers, but often checked against the Department of Education’s recommended reading list and piloted as a choice book for students before becoming assigned reading.

While challenges to books come from a variety of people, ideologies and motivations, recent trends according to the ALA have seen a rise in challenges toward books containing LGBTQ+ themes, critical race theory and intersectional feminism, a trend witnessed by Crawford himself through the informal requests he has been made aware of thus far.

The ALA, CUSD’s main source for the manual’s development according to the deputy superintendent, is referenced multiple times in the manual’s appendix and takes a strong anti-censorship stance.

“It is in the public interest for publishers and librarians to make available the widest diversity of views and expressions,” reads its “Freedom to Read” statement, “including those that are unorthodox, unpopular, or considered dangerous by the majority.”