



HARLEM MIDDLE SCHOOL

Georgia Title I High Progress Reward School

424 Hawes Branch Parkway

Harlem, Georgia 30814



Website:

www.harlemms.ccboe.net

Telephone: 706.556.5990

Fax: 706.854.5817

Marlo Leatherwood, Principal

Christie Mattison, Assistant Principal

Patra Griffitt, Assistant Principal

██████████

The Harlem Middle School Media Committee has discussed your concerns and recommendations in regards to Raina Telgemeier's novel *Drama*. The committee studied material relevant to the book as outlined by CCBOE Procedure IFBD. The instructional relevance, intended use, age and maturity level of the intended audience, professional reviews, and its literary merit were all examined.

Common Sense Media has *Drama* listed as a five-star review and approved for ages 10 and older. School Library Journal reviewed this book for grades 5-8, while the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund recommends it for ages 9-14. Destiny/Follett, our county-wide library system, has listed the book with an interest grade level between 3rd and 9th grade. Meryl Jaffe, author of "Using Graphic Novels in Education: *Drama*", reviewed *Drama* as "a coming-of-age story as a young teenager learns to follow her passions, navigate friendships and crushes, and learns, along with her friends and peers, how to feel comfortable within one's skin while embracing personal strengths, weaknesses, and quirks." Common Sense Media reviewed *Drama* as "a detailed and realistic picture of what it takes, onstage and backstage, to produce an ambitious piece of musical theater". Since the book's publication in 2012, *Drama* has received numerous literary prizes with the most notable prize coming from Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) as a Top Ten Great Graphic Novels for Teens. The committee determined that this book fits within the age and maturity level of the middle school students we serve at Harlem Middle.

Per the CCBOE Procedure IFBD, the intended use of any and all free-reading material is to meet the diverse needs of individual students and provide access to resources that range in interest, perspective, and differing points of view. In accordance with the American Library Association, the Library Bill of Rights, and the Freedom to Read Statement, the school library has a responsibility to serve every member of their designated community and represent both minority and majority beliefs.

The committee has concluded that *Drama* by Raina Telgemeier will remain in the school library as well as teacher classroom libraries. Harlem Middle School is unable to meet the request to update CCBOE Board Policy and Procedure IFBD as it is a county-wide policy. The committee has also decided that creating a restricted section in the library and/or labeling books as containing “controversial content” is not a reasonable request. Restricting and labeling material based on the values and beliefs of one individual, significantly limits the freedoms of others and is counterproductive to The Freedom to Read Statement and the Library Bill of Rights.

Upon further discussion of potential solutions, the committee has agreed to implement the following:

1. Teachers who have a classroom library will compile a list of novels available for students as free-reads in their room. This list will be made available on the teachers’ website and through the class syllabus.

2. If a parent requests that their student be limited to checking out certain books, then a note will be placed in the student’s Destiny account. This note will alert the Media Specialist and Media Clerk of the specific content/topics/etc. that the student is prohibited from checking out based on parent request.

Although your recommendations were not approved by the committee at this time, we appreciate the opportunity to develop safeguards to support the student population at Harlem Middle School. If you wish to appeal this decision, you must do so within ten school days following this letters postmark. A

letter requesting an appeal shall be mailed to the district media contact person for review by the district media committee (Procedure IFBD).

Sincerely,

Marlo Leatherwood, Principal