



# JOINT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 2

1303 E. CENTRAL DRIVE  
MERIDIAN, IDAHO 83642

DR. LINDA CLARK  
SUPERINTENDENT

## SCHOOL BOARD MEETING MINUTES

April 1, 2014

Date, Place & Time	A special meeting of the Board of Trustees, Joint School District No. 2, convened on Tuesday, July 1, 2014, 6:00 p.m., at the District Service Center, 1303 E. Central Drive, Meridian, Idaho
Trustees in Attendance	Chairman Anne Ritter, Janet Calinsky, Tina Dean, Carol Sayles
Trustee Excused	Mike Vuittonet
Staff in Attendance	Dr. Linda Clark, Trish Duncan, Eric Exline, Cindy Sisson, Laura Gilchrist
Guests	Angela Ackerland, Michelle Watson, Nancy Cowles, Melissa Ebie Brady Kissel, Ann Faltin, Matt Edwards, Gretchen Caserotti, Justin Tharpe, Megan Egbert, Stacy Lacy, Lauren Dean, Rise Stoldt, Larry Stoldt, Justin Boatwright, Ami Peterson, Gabriella Hand, Bethany Cluff, Laurynda Williams, Marnie Kiehl, Bradford Dediuza, Lori Barney, Amy Baumgartner, Julie Saunders, Marlyn Walker, Lonnie Stiles, Bonnie Stiles, Nate Hines, Erika Clark, Rachel Moorhouse, Christy Ho, Crystal Harris, Tom Dayley, Weston Beal, Stacia Morgan, Ray Blair, Sharon Blair, Steven Blair, Charles Lloyd, Karina Leininger, Michele Anderson, KP Jenkins, Stacy Thrush, Nicole Hines, Brenda Young, Brent Ho, Brian Seidel, Kaila Ho, Rock Brown, Mike Moorhouse, Kelli Cullen, Lori Barney, Kim Riddoch, Tammy Cook, Audrey Tueller, Ro Parker, Kim Smith, Debbie McCrady, Gena Marker, Tracy Krichban, Christie Nichols, Gina Williams, Therese Kissel, Amy Armstrong, Nate Benjamin, Barbara Holmes, Vicky Moorhouse, Karol Clow, Melanie Fillmore, Camie Larsen, Missy Smith, Brenda Lovell, Crystal Harris, Shelly Brewer, Dawn Berjams, Sandi Stiles, Jerry Pollard, Keilani Ludlow, Monica Hopkins, Clay Long, Allia Tueller, Rochelle Lloyd, Jennifer Clark

### CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Anne Ritter at 6:01 p.m.

Public Hearing Regarding the book "The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian"

Dr. Clark reviewed Policy Code No. 602.22, *Reconsideration of Learning Resources*, stating the policy is intended for the reconsideration of library books and will undergo revisions to create a policy that addresses issues with both library books and books that are part of the supplemental reading list. The policy was followed for this book and although normally ends with the committee recommendation, was brought forward to the board for a decision since it is on the supplemental book list used by all schools.

Cindy Sisson, curriculum director, reviewed the recommendation of the reconsideration committee beginning with the background on how the book was selected for the supplemental reading list in 2010. Proposals

for the book list begin at the building level and a committee is formed utilizing a teacher, department chair and two parents. All members of the committee read the book and if they approve, the proposal goes to the district level. The English language arts curriculum coordinator, a representative from each school, parents and the district library coordinator all read the book and discuss placement and ties to curriculum. If they approve, the book proposal is placed on the supplemental reading list pending approval from the Board of Trustees. A formal complaint regarding the book was received on January 14, 2014 and following district policy, the reconsideration committee met on February 26, 2014 to hear patrons and staff comments. Following the meeting, the committee's recommendation was to keep the book on the list but require parental permission to read. The decision was given to Dr. Clark who recommended putting the book on hold and scheduling a special board meeting as the current decision would affect all high schools, not just the school the complaint was brought against.

Chairman Ritter opened the floor to public comment.

Brady Kissel - a junior at MVHS, collected 350 signatures from students who strongly disagree with removing the book. Removing the book would be censorship of education.

Anne Falton - an Eagle grandmother of four students in the district. Mrs. Falton stated she had read the book and it should not be banned.

Gretchen Caserotti - director of the Meridian Library District, spoke to the value of allowing students to choose books with rich themes that relate to common experiences. The parents' concerns are well intended and she understands that families have values and priorities. Libraries allow access for everyone, and this book gives the opportunity to make a strong impact. It teaches empathy and empowers young people to explore their own identities.

Justin Tharpe - a parent of students attending the district and an English teacher at RMHS spoke in support of the book. He stated the book captures the cultural diversity standard of the new common core standards. This book has delicate subject matter and he is blessed to work with colleagues that are skilled professionals and he trusts them to teach the subject matter in the right way.

Megan Egbert - youth services supervisor at the Meridian Library, spoke about her own experience finding a book that really excited her, staying up and late and reading under the covers to finish. There is a need to get kids excited to read and they are working diligently to expose children to as many books as possible.

Stacy Lacy - a teacher who had taught the book during her tenure, recommended keeping the book on the list without parent permission to allow students to find themselves in literature.

Gabrielle Hand – a sophomore at MHS, was in a class that read this book earlier this year. Reading the book in class was an unusual process for her, the words were inappropriate and the teacher asked them to skip over several pages. The requirement to read this book was shocking, she had never been required to read anything like this. Gabrielle was okay to keep the book in the library, just wasn't appropriate for class and she was not given the option to read something else. She struggles each day with language and behavior of student, the curriculum is putting her in a difficult position.

Larinda Williams – parent of three students who have graduated from Meridian schools, who is in favor of keeping the book without the parent permission slip. Ms. Williams stated that life isn't all pretty and we are not doing children any favors if we don't show what the struggles can be. She was confident the book could be taught with sensitivity and that teachers are capable of handling the discussion. Her own son is not a reader but stayed up late to read this particular book. Ms. Williams appreciated the time to speak and understands the position the board is in, but sophomores are capable of reading and discerning value.

Julie Saunders – the parent of four children in the district, had read some of the book, was not impressed but was disgusted by the treatment of the subject. She felt good literature should be inspiring and uplifting and that parent involvement is paramount. Parents know their students better than the teacher and the subject was not handled with sensitivity.

Ron Stiles – a parent of students in the district, had read part of the book and wouldn't choose for home. His daughter was not given the option to read another book and was put in a position to go against teachers. Students that did not participate were made fun of and harassed by other students. His recommendation was to exclude the book from the curriculum.

Bonnie Stiles – her daughter is a sophomore at MVHS and was required to read the book. She trusted the teachers to choose a good book but in the future she will read the books prior to an assignment. Ms. Stiles spoke with the teacher who indicated the controversial parts were skipped over and other words were substituted for the inappropriate language. Her child was exposed to 133 offensive words they do not speak in their home and that were horrible for them to read in a class room setting. Ms. Stiles read a quote from another parent about the language and how shocked they were the teacher choose this book. The book needs to be taken out of the curriculum.

Amy Armstrong – the librarian at HMS read the book and really liked it. The young man in the book didn't let the things happening to him take him down, he is able to rise above the circumstances. This book shows students the way out of poverty is to get their education. Her recommendation is to keep the book.

Vickie Moorhouse – mother of five and grandmother of 24. Her suggestion is not to ban or burn any book, just a desire to have a higher moral value. Everyone is entitled to fill their mind with what they want and this is not a good choice for parents and students that want a more uplifting book. It is difficult for students because they become the target for ridicule and harassment. The District does not have the right or obligation to expose students to vulgar books and she puzzled why academics want to expose the underbelly of the world.

Melanie Fillmore – lives in Kuna and was raised on a South Dakota Indian reservation until her family was forced off the reservation to live in an urban setting. Melanie felt the book told the story of her life and what she went through growing up with an Indian father and white mother; and showed good examples of pushing to get an education.

Brenda Lovell – mother of three students raised her children in a conservative family. Ms. Lovell stated that literature is supposed to expand the mind, provoke thought and teach people to think out of the box. The book is relatable to children who have been bullied at school and they should have the right to read this kind of literature. She is in favor of keeping the book on the supplemental book list without parental permission to read.

Jerry Pollard – father of three graduates of Meridian schools and grandfather of six, found it appalling that this kind of literature has been introduced to children in the R-rated school they attend now. Mr. Pollard has been retired for three years and has read over 300 books since then, has not come across the verbal pornography that this book contains. The book doesn't belong in the district and if this is the best we can give children, we need to find a new board and a new superintendent that will do a better job.

Kelanie Ludlow, wished to address two words used in this situation, ban and censure. Starting last September she has talked with people at the school and district about this book and was not told there was anything she could do to change the book. Removal from the curriculum is not banning the book, it just wouldn't be part of what they teach. Parents have the right to censor the world around their children, even the teachers censored parts of the book while reading it in class. Remove the book from the curriculum.

Monica Hopkins – executive director of the ACLU, came in response to concerns from members and parents. Ms. Hopkins reviewed the difference between asking permission from parents to read the book and informing parents the book is on the list. Asking for parental permission removes the teacher's professionalism and may violate a student's first amendment rights. Their group recommends leaving the book in the curriculum and reconsidering the parental permission to read.

Jennifer Clark – has children in the district and explained the biggest issue was choice. The district is not meeting the purpose of the book

when students are harassed about their opinions or for not reading the book. There are other books that would be acceptable including the Life of Pi and Flag of Our Fathers. The requirement for parental permission would be a good thing. The book should not be required reading but could be encouraged to read as a supplemental book to the curriculum.

Nate Hines – a father of four children attending Meridian schools and representing a community of concerned citizens stated they agree with the Districts educational philosophy, which states in part “we see a community of well-informed citizens who support educational excellence and work in partnership with the school community to achieve quality educational results for all students.” Mr. Hines states, “this book does not support educational excellence and it does not achieve quality educational results, we are not asking to ban the book, we are asking that this book be removed from the school district curriculum”. Mr. Hines remarks continued with a discussion of unlawful censorship and how that does not apply to their children’s education. Citing District Policy 602.1 that dictates what can be shown in a classroom and the Children’s Internet Protection Act censoring children’s access to obscene content in the schools, Mr. Hines suggested the book has obscene content that should be censored for minors using the same guidelines as other media.

Rachel Moorhouse – thanked the board for calling a special meeting. Ms. Moorhouse is an educator and mother of five children attending schools in the Meridian district. Ms. Moorhouse addressed the committee’s recommendation as follows:

- Simply providing a permission slip for parents to sign does not educate them about the contents of a book
- There is no way to ensure that Idaho Code referring to harassment of students will not be violated
- What about the protection of students from harassment and ridicule from other students when they do not read the book
- Keeping the book doesn’t follow the teachers code of ethics
- Isn’t there another book that would address the themes taught in this book?

Christy Ho – former English teacher in the Meridian district representing her family and numerous community members read from a prepared statement. Ms. Ho thanked the Board for their willingness to listen and explained how citizens are protected by the Idaho Commission on Human Rights to ensure that all people within the state are treated with dignity and respect and protection from religious discrimination under state and federal law. Ms. Ho quoted lines from the Idaho Human Rights act which prohibits religious discrimination by educational institutions; the Idaho State Department of Education Code of Ethics for Idaho Professional Educators which provides principles by which to judge conduct; the Idaho State Department of Education statement regarding how a professional educator should act, speak and teach in a manner as to exemplify nondiscriminatory behavior and encourage respect for the other cultures and beliefs; the Meridian School District Protection of

Students Code that reads in part that District personnel have an obligation and duty to protect and safeguard every student and to conduct businesses in such a way that he/she does not expose or subject students unnecessary embarrassment or disparagement; and the student harassment code that reads in part that each student has the right to attend school in an atmosphere that promotes equal opportunities and that is free from all forms of discrimination and conduct that can be considered harassing, coercive or disruptive. She encouraged the board to remove the book from the curriculum based on these protections.

Crystal Harris – spoke for a friend who could not attend the meeting. Her friend is against the book finding it offensive and inappropriate. Although some themes are valuable, more uplifting books could be used in its place. Her student was ostracized and embarrassed by not reading the book in class with other students. She asked that they consider and respect her feelings even though they might not agree.

Representative Tom Daly – speaking because some of his constituents came to him about the book. Rep. Daly reviewed the book and found the material not appropriate to be repeated in this meeting. This book has been listed in the top ten challenged books list for the last three years and has been the center of several controversies regarding the depiction of sex and violence in books written for young adults. Rep. Daly stated “parents have the responsibility to help their children shape their moral and mental habits and that we should support how parents want to teach their children, not detract from it”. Positive issues that the district wants to teach can be found in many other books and materials that don’t contain such questionable material.

Sharon Blair – thanked the board for holding the special meeting. Mrs. Blair is grandmother to Stephen, a student at MVHS, and the person who filed the request to have this book reconsidered. She is a former teacher for Meridian and raised her children in our district. Mrs. Blair read the book following a comment her grandson made regarding the book and the report he was writing for a final grade. The content of the book tore her apart. It is not the schools responsibility to teach empathy, not their (district) responsibility to feel they are in control. Teachers have students for a small part of the day, parents have them for a lifetime. They do not want their children exposed to filth. Do the courageous thing and remove the book from the curriculum.

Nichole Hines – a parent in the district read the book and found it obscene and vulgar. When teachers read the book in class they are violating the code of ethics and students are embarrassed and ridiculed for not participating. The book encourages masturbation, racism and speaks against women. Keeping this book will not allow the district to achieve academic excellence.

Brandy Young – mother of six, hopes the book will be removed. Children do not have to be taught in this manner, need to be exposed to good reading material.

Brent Ho – stated “I am motivated by my religious belief and find this book offensive. According to PewResearch.org, 85% of the communities in Idaho believe in God. It is reasonable to conclude that the book would be offensive to the majority of the communities as well. Though the book attempts to achieve a positive virtue of hope and endeavors to bring to light a person’s ability to overcome adversity, the literature is blanketed with obscene material. There are many other books that would accomplish the same purpose with less obscenity.” Mr. Ho continued “I and the rest of the community that have arrived tonight to speak in opposition of this book are equally justified to be offended. There is reasonable presupposition that if this book, or any other for that matter, were to depict Allah, Mohamed, or Buddha in the same manner in which Christ and God are in this book, this issue would not be local but global in offensiveness. The obscenity is beyond acceptance for the youth in our community. With regard to the statues addressed in Idaho Code, this book is beyond acceptable for the children of our schools. You have the ability and authority to remove this publication and others that may come along in the future from the district curriculum”.

Brian Sidale – representing a colleague who could not attend read the following statement. “Hello, My name is Josh Wageman and I am a physical therapist as well as Youth Pastor at Heritage Bible Church, a non-denominational Christian church in Boise, I have recently been alerted to the propagation of the aforementioned book in the public school system. As an individual who invests much of my time in the lives of children who attend the schools in the valley, I feel that I must voice my concern regarding the subject material of this book.

The subject material is lewd and pornographic as well as sacrilegious. Although our society is rapidly spiraling into moral depravity, I feel that the public school system should at least attempt to stanch this proverbial bleeding of conscience rather than pump it full of anticoagulants. Public schools should focus on enriching the live of students and at least provide some sort of moral compass through its literature. By condoning sexually explicitly material, the system is essentially paving the way for increased teen pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and increased promiscuity among our already precocious teenagers.

I implore you, as individuals who share an ostensible common concern for our youth, please remove this book from the school system. It would be a simple, yet overwhelmingly beneficial act for our community, for our children, and for the parents that are already facing an uphill battle in raising this generation.

Kilah Ho – a sophomore at MVHS spoke on behalf of a friend who could not attend the meeting. Ms. Ho stated this curriculum encourages dishonor and exposes students to inappropriate language, racism and mockery of God. She asked the board to consider what they are exposing the students to.

Rock Brown – father of four students attending MHS, has the highest praise for administrators, teachers and staff. The inappropriateness of the book is what is in question, not with the themes but with the vulgarity of the language. Mr. Brown referred to Idaho Code regarding obscene materials and is morally and legally out of bounds and should not be in our schools.

Steven Blair – sophomore at MVHS, thought the book was funny at certain parts but he is bi-racial and he was offended by certain references in the book. Steven read a statement from his mom who felt caring parents would not allow the use of profanity as seen in the book and that it shouldn't be read by anyone under the age of 18.

Luke Moorhouse – sophomore at MVHS read a statement for his friend Catelyn Barnes. Catelyn has loved reading and writing, however, this was not an uplifting book and wouldn't make her feel good. She distances herself from lewd language and behavior but read the book as part of the class assignment. Catelyn expressed her opinion about the book in class and was embarrassed by other student's reactions. Now she does not speak out in discussions about delicate material.

Laurie Barney – has a daughter in middle school and has strong feelings against the book. Students have choices every day, they should have the choice of a morally uplifting book. Good uplifting teachers are being demoralized by having to use the book and parents are the ones who should be teaching morals.

Tammy Cook – has six children in the district, and asked the board to consider the responsibility of parents and educators in protecting young adults. Reading about masturbation condones and promotes the behavior and makes the reader think this is normal behavior. Ms. Cook further stated that no theme can overcome the language in the book.

Ro Parker – an Idaho native and a person of color, commented on the valid reality of the book. Students need to recognize the reality of students that are different and gain a deeper understanding of the tools used to learn inclusion. Ms. Parker supported leaving the book on the reading list as an opportunity for youth.

Debbie McCrady – has four children in the district and recommended the book be removed from the supplemental reading list but leaving it in the high school libraries. Citing the book as unhealthy and pornographic, she was disappointed in the school district for putting it on the reading list.

Gena Marker – the librarian at CHS, stated she was not part of the committee that choose the book but stands with the district's decision. She believes in teens and the power of young adult literature. The books teaches students how to handle rough situations and to understand that others have endured a far worst life than we. Ms. Marker hopes the board will put no barriers on this book.

Alexis Chandler – a senior at MVHS stated that our school system is failing. Ms. Chandler feels the book should be removed, and asked the board, is this what we want our students to learn? Books should be used to increase knowledge, not to fill student's minds with filth. The board should listen to parents because they have the best view of what students should and should not learn.

Matt Edwards – an English teacher at MVHS, stated that removing or banning the book was not a symptom of a healthy community. Complainants' have the right to be offended but there are students that read the book and liked it, what about their rights. Mr. Edwards has taught the book for four years and has always given students a choice.

Rachel Wood – parent of five children, stated it was okay to promote the vulgarity, swearing, and obscene material in the book. Some teachers did not censor the material which made the students feel horrible. It is against the teacher's code of ethics to read this kind of material to students, and school districts need to be more responsible in choosing materials.

David Newman – who has sons in the district, asked how we determine what is appropriate. The Supreme Court has decided that student's first amendment rights can be limited by school districts. Parents have a constitutional right to determine the upbringing of their children and he urged the board to protect children.

Vickie Morrison – had sent an email to the board and stressed the good themes in the book do not outweigh the bad language.

Tiffany Chandler – has four children in the district. Ms. Chandler stated she herself had come from poverty and had fought through harassment based on her Hispanic heritage. She did not want her daughter exposed to this kind of stuff and thought the board should promote things that are good for the student. The book needs to be removed from the curriculum.

Chairman Ritter closed the public hearing at 8:13 p.m. and thanked everyone for expressing their opinions in a respectful way.

Dr. Clark reviewed the recommendation from the reconsideration committee to leave the book on the list and require parent permission to read. A second choice would be to leave the book on the list with the notation regarding language and a third alternative would be to remove the book from the supplemental list and look for another book.

The board discussed the merits of the book and the testimony heard during the public hearing. Laura Gilchrist was asked the following questions for clarification:

- What does Unit 2 cover – embracing our cultures, students look at different cultures and within our own culture. Classroom teachers

use literature and non-fiction to explore that idea. This was the only book that related to Native Americans.

- How often is the list reviewed and updated – the list is updated when a book is approved, they usually get one or two requests per year to add a book. Although some books are not read anymore, generally no books have been taken off the list.

Trustee Dean questioned the reading level of the book, which is well below a sixth grade reading level and why it was used in 10<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms. Putting herself in the position of a classroom teacher and how uncomfortable students would be with content and discussion of the material, she made a motion to remove the book from the supplemental reading list.

The motion died for lack of a second.

Trustee Calinsky made a motion to uphold the committee's recommendation with two addendums. (1) A permission slip will be issued for parent approval with more information regarding the book, (2) explore the possibility of an additional book to provide information about the Indian culture (3) continue the hold recommended by Dr. Clark.

Following additional discussion by the board, Trustee Calinsky withdrew the motion and continued with a new motion that stated "the list will be held as it stands and we will give teachers time to find an acceptable book, do not replace the book.

The motion died for lack of a second.

Trustee Sayles made a motion to leave the book on the supplemental reading list as it is right now (without permission).

The motion died for lack of a second.

Chairman Ritter deferred the Chairman's seat to Vice Chairman Calinsky.

Trustee Ritter made a motion to keep the book "The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian" off the district's supplemental reading list for the remainder of the school year allowing time to find a book that conveys the cultural message of the "The Absolutely True Diary of Part Time Indian" and is more appropriate to a tenth grade reading level; and to begin a complete review of the Supplemental Reading List. The motion was seconded by Trustee Dean. Trustee Dean voted yes, Trustee Ritter voted yes and Trustee Sayles voted no.

Vice Chairman Calinsky deferred the role of chairman back to Trustee Ritter.

## **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Chairman Ritter took a roll call vote of the board at 9:00 p.m. to move into executive session for consider acquiring an interest in real property

which is not owned by a public agency. Trustee Calinsky voted yes, Trustee Dean voted yes, Trustee Sayles voted yes, Trustee Ritter voted yes, and Trustee Vuittonet voted yes.

The board recessed from executive session at 9:17 p.m. and continued in regular session.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Trustee Calinsky moved, Trustee Sayles seconded and the vote was unanimous to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 p.m.

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Chairman

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Clerk