

Date: 1/13/2022

To: Board of Education

From: Dr. Keri Skeeters

Re: Challenged Material - *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison

The committee reviewed and voted to retain *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison. Feedback from all committee members is attached.

We ask the board to approve the recommendation of the committee to retain *The Bluest Eye*.

## **Challenged Material Information**

**Type of Material:** Library Book

**Title:** *The Bluest Eye*

**Author:** Toni Morrison

**Person Challenging:** Amber Crawford

### **Description of objectionable aspects of the material:**

**Pages 84-85:** “He must enter her surreptitiously, lifting the hem of her nightgown only to her navel. He must rest his weight on his elbows when they make love, to avoid hurting her breasts...When she senses some spasm about to grip him, she will make rapid movements with her hips, press her fingernails into his back, suck in her breath, and pretend she is having an orgasm. She might wonder again, for the six hundredth time, what it would be like to have that feeling while her husband’s penis is inside her.”

**Pages 130-131:** “Then he will lean his head down and bite my t\*\* . . . I want him to put his hand between my legs, I want him to open them for me. . . I stretch my legs open, and he is on top of me...He would die rather than take his thing out of me. Of me. I take my fingers out of his and put my hands on his behind...”

Pages 148-149: “With a violence born of total helplessness, he pulled her dress up, lowered his trousers and underwear. ‘I said get on wid it. An’make it good, n\*\*\*\*\*, Come on c\*\*\*. Faster. You ain’t doing nothing for her.’ He almost wished he could do it—hard, long, and painfully, he hated her so much.”

**Pages 162-163:** “A bolt of desire ran down his genitals...and softening the lips of his anus. . . . He wanted to f\*\*\* her— tenderly. But the tenderness would not hold. The tightness of her vagina was more than he could bear. His soul seemed to slip down his guts and fly out into her, and the gigantic thrust he made into her then provoked the only sound she made. Removing himself from her was so painful to him he cut it short and snatched his genitals out of the dry harbor of her vagina. She appeared to have fainted.”

**Page 174:** “He further limited his interests to little girls. They were usually manageable . . . His sexuality was anything but lewd; his patronage of little girls smacked of innocence and was associated in his mind with cleanliness.” And later, this same pedophile notes, “I work only through the Lord. He sometimes uses me to help people.”

**Page 181:** “The little girls are the only things I’ll miss. Do you know that when I touched their sturdy little t\*\*\* and bit them —just a little—I felt I was being friendly?—If I’d been hurting them, would they have come back? . . . they’d eat ice cream with their legs open while I played with them. It was like a party.”

**Rationale for objection:**

Pediphilla, incest, rape

**Committee Decision**

**Committee Decision:** Retain

**Committee Vote (anonymous ballot):**

*In-person votes:*

3 Retain

1 Retain with Restriction

1 Not Retained

*Votes submitted virtually:*

3 Retain

1 Retain with Restriction

**Definitions**

**Retained:** No change

**Retained with Restriction:** Parents can request a restriction be placed in their student's Destiny account for the work. This is already available to all parents in the district.

**Not Retained:** Book removed. No access for any students.

**Committee Rationale/Comments**

**Retain with NO change:**

The majority opinion of the committee is to retain the book with no change. The committee was asked to consider the question: **What is the appropriateness of the work for its intended educational purpose?** Based on the fact that the book is a part of the library, committee members believe that removing the work would infringe on the rights of parents and students to decide for themselves if they want to read this work of literature.

- Students are not assigned this book, but rather it is a choice that is one of thousands of books in the library.

- As part of an AP choice reading list, it is important for the library to retain this book so students can have access.
- Parents who choose to provide additional guidance for their child in selecting books fitting with their families values can communicate with the librarian to collaboratively assist that specific student.
- The referenced paragraphs are but a few of the passages of this book that allows us to see into this world and are not written for sexual gratification.
- This novel has value towards a supportive WSD curriculum and students' growth as readers and learners. This novel helps the reader step into and understand 1941 (pre WWII, pre civil rights movement), small town black culture in a way no textbook can do. There is also value for the reader in reading and being exposed to Toni Morrison's prose and manner of writing, which is unique to her.
- The themes are provocative, yes, but in a thoughtful way. The reader is left thinking and formulating their own opinions about them long after the book is finished. The themes are parallel to ones still being experienced today- such as racial relations, good vs. evil, who decides the standards set for beauty, and how complex we humans are. I do not believe restrictions are needed because there is already a process in place for a parent to exert individual control for their own child.
- I do not want this banned for my children. I want to be able to be the decider, caregiver and director of my own family. If I decide a book is not appropriate for my child, then I would contact a librarian. This book is not just five quotes, it is a bigger picture and shouldn't be able to ban a book from an entire district of students because of their own personal beliefs. People are welcome to make decisions for their own children.
- I see no reason to restrict on a high school level.
- We should not ban books.

### **Retain with Restriction:**

Parents can request a restriction be placed in their student's Destiny account for the work. ***This is already available to all parents in the district.***

- I believe banning books is anti-American. I believe individual parents should be allowed to make decisions for their kids and request particular titles be off-limits for their students. What happens or what will we do when a parent requests the banning of the Bible or Christian literature?
- Books that are banned are "forbidden". If you want the book to become popular and read by many, the fastest way to accomplish that is to ban it. As of now this book is available only to students in AP classes and any parent has the right to not allow their child to read it simply by contacting the school library. My recommendation is to keep the book with restrictions thereby not drawing attention to it.

**Not Retained:**

One committee member voted to not retain the book.

- Graphic Content- low reader usage, low demand