

This is a letter sent Tuesday morning to Mr. Golden from a Sumner County ELA teacher of Wit & Wisdom. It's unfortunate that our teachers in Williamson County are so afraid to speak up. Why is that? Shouldn't it be of grave concern if our teachers are silent for fear of losing their job? Shouldn't it be of equal concern that the parents of Williamson County must overcome so many challenges to have their voices heard? Who else can advocate for the students? I hope the answer isn't SEIU and SCORE. I can only hope that the rumored recent teacher survey on the subject of Wit & Wisdom was anonymous. Otherwise, it is invalid.

Respectfully,
Robin Steenman

Sent with [ProtonMail](#) Secure Email.

----- Original Message -----

On Tuesday, June 8, 2021 10:40 AM, <@.com> wrote:

Dear Mr. Golden,

I am writing to you as a concerned parent and educator. I have taught English/Language Arts for 20 years. For the 2020-2021 school year in Sumner County, I had to teach Wit and Wisdom to eighth graders. I was appalled at the lack of thought that went into choosing this curriculum to be put on Tennessee's list of curriculums to be adopted by Tennessee schools. It is clear that this was a "money" deal and not a "let's do what is best for our students" deal! The following are many of the issues that surround this curriculum.

Problems with this curriculum:

*Scripted curriculum. (Scripted curriculums were made for teachers who need help. You can't tell me your entire county is full of teachers who need help.)

*Curriculum is not objective.

*This curriculum does have "Critical Race Theory" built into it.

*This curriculum does not teach students the concepts on the level they need to know them. It teaches students on the emotional surface.

*The pacing of this curriculum is not accurate.

*Teachers are not able to let students read entire texts because of inappropriate content. (As an ELA teacher, we want to read entire texts! Why choose a curriculum where teachers can't read the entire text with their students?)

*This curriculum **FAILED** twice before Commissioner Schwinn revamped the review process of state curriculums and had it brought back to be on the list for the state of Tennessee.

*The texts assigned to the curriculum are not developmentally appropriate for the grade level they are assigned to. Many texts contain content that is too mature for the grade level it is being used with.

Examples of how texts are inappropriate:

*These are examples of what students read in the 4th grade. As a parent and/or grandparent, are you o.k. with this?

- Hatchet – The main character Brian is going to see his dad, and his plane crashes. his parents' recent divorce weighs heavily on him, as does "The Secret" that his mother is having an **affair**. He must live with this secret. In his despair of being stranded and not being found, Brian also tries to commit **suicide** with the hatchet his mom had given him for a gift.
 - Subjects addressed – **secrets, suicide**
- Walk Two Moons - addresses **sex** (This book is told through the perspective of a 13-year-old. Why is it a nine and ten-year-old classroom?)
- George vs. George – A book about George Washington and King George III

*Quoted from the book that a 4th grader will be reading:

- "getting **drunk, chasing women**" (pg. 22)
- "Each side told a different tale about Lexington and Concord. Rebel newspapers reported that bloodthirsty redcoats burned houses, drove **naked women** into the streets, and **butchered** old men and infants. The King was told that rebel savages broke the rules of war by ambushing his army. Then they scalped fallen British infantry and cut off their ears." (pg. 30)
- "Meanwhile, the redcoats were trying to terrorize rebel supporters into giving up. Besides constantly stealing food and horses, they burned entire towns and villages, looted or seized people's houses, **raped** and **murdered** innocent civilians, and set fire to crops and timberland." (pg.48)

*6th Grade – Inappropriate content with mythology. The book Ramayana talks about a father **lusting** over his daughter. The word **lusting** is typed in this book for sixth graders to read.

*7th Grade – This grade reads The Canterbury Tales. Parts had to be eliminated due to specific **sexual content** that students would have been reading.

*8th Grade - All Quiet on the Western Front. Parts had to be eliminated due to specific **sexual content**.

*There are books in every grade level that address dark topics. Students stay on these topics for weeks at a time.

*Students are not mentally ready for many of the topics that are brought up in their grade level.

*The topics are not developmentally appropriate.

It is extremely concerning that those in charge do not see the problem with what this curriculum will do to our students in the counties that have chosen to use this. This curriculum is stealing our children's innocence! Does this matter at all to you and those making the decisions? Are our children not important enough? I pray the decision you make to get rid of this curriculum spreads across to Sumner County, and we will also choose to do right by our students and get rid of this!

Sincerely concerned parent and teacher,

E

----- Original Message -----

On Wednesday, June 9th, 2021 at 5:33 PM, M <> wrote:

> Dear Mr. Golden and Board Members,

>

> I am writing to inform you of my experience this year with Williamson County Schools. When we moved to TN, we were told WCS was the best place to send our children. Our first couple of years have been amazing. This year, I have seen a change in my children that has been extremely disturbing. The content of my daughter's (a junior) AP English class has been incredibly racially charged. To the point where my daughter has brought multiple assignments and reading excerpts to me questioning her value as a person.

>

> Most notably, my 7 year old (first grader) has shown the most tragic changes. We went from a normal functioning, sweet child to one who will literally crumble at the slightest challenge and word. My daughter started coming home asking very pointed questions about who she is and if she is a bad person. She came home extremely upset. She told me "Mom, I'm white. My friend is brown. I need to apologize to him for being white because white people have done bad things to people with brown skin." This was a result of several books that were presented to the class from the Wits and Wisdom curriculum. This curriculum has destroyed my daughter's self esteem and created a world in which she is fraught with anxiety and is now in treatment for OCD caused by the constant thoughts being represented by this material. What you don't see is that these children are impressionable. They will take what you say and turn it over and over in their minds until it consumes them. It starts other conversations in their minds about themselves, their self worth, their identity and those they spend time with. My child doesn't sleep, we don't sleep. She is extremely anxious, to the point that some days she can't go to school. She has struggled making friends and feels alone. She has outbursts of extreme anger and tells us "she doesn't deserve anything because she is bad". This IS NOT the climate that we create or things that we teach our children in our home. Children her age ARE NOT equipped to emotionally work through the subjects and curriculum that are being presented. We are now having to obtain counseling to help my daughter work through these awful thoughts and feelings of self hate that border on suicidal. A 7 YEAR OLD. Let that sink in. A 7 year old should not come home and be able to describe acts of the civil war as if they had been there experiencing it. A 7 year old should not be made to feel that she had any part in the oppression of others simply because she was born with white skin.

>

> Now moving forward, I have a special needs daughter that will be moving up to kindergarten this coming school year. She most certainly is not equipped to work through the Wits and Wisdom curriculum or the climate which is being created in your schools. If the Wits and Wisdom curriculum is allowed to stand in your schools or ANY type of CRT remains whether in name or the teaching of ideals, I will be pulling my children from your school system. This curriculum destroys our children's innocence and lies to them about who they are and their value to this world and has NO PLACE in the classroom.

>

> Sincerely,

>

> M

>

>

Problems with this curriculum:

*Scripted curriculum. (Scripted curriculums were made for teachers who need help. You can't tell me your entire county is full of teachers who need help.)

*Curriculum is not objective.

*This curriculum does have "Critical Race Theory" built into it.

*This curriculum does not teach students the concepts on the level they need to know them. It teaches students on the emotional surface.

*The pacing of this curriculum is not accurate.

*Teachers are not able to let students read entire texts because of inappropriate content. (As an ELA teacher, we want to read entire texts! Why choose a curriculum where teachers can't read the entire text with their students?)

*This curriculum **FAILED** twice before Commissioner Schwinn revamped the review process of state curriculums and had it brought back to be on the list for the state of Tennessee.

*The texts assigned to the curriculum are not developmentally appropriate for the grade level they are assigned to. Many texts contain content that is too mature for the grade level it is being used with.

Examples of how texts are inappropriate:

*These are examples of what students read in the 4th grade. As a parent and/or grandparent, are you o.k. with this?

- Hatchet – The main character Brian is going to see his dad, and his plane crashes. his parents' recent divorce weighs heavily on him, as does "The Secret" that his mother is having an **affair**. He must live with this secret. In his despair of being stranded and not being found, Brian also tries to commit **suicide** with the hatchet his mom had given him for a gift.
 - Subjects addressed – **secrets, suicide**
- Walk Two Moons - addresses **sex** (This book is told through the perspective of a 13-year-old. Why is it a nine and ten-year-old classroom?)
- George vs. George – A book about George Washington and King George III

*Quoted from the book that a 4th grader will be reading:

- "getting **drunk, chasing women**" (pg. 22)
- "Each side told a different tale about Lexington and Concord. Rebel newspapers reported that bloodthirsty redcoats burned houses, drove **naked women** into the streets, and **butchered** old men and infants. The King was told that rebel savages broke the rules of war by ambushing his army. Then they scalped fallen British infantry and cut off their ears." (pg. 30)
- "Meanwhile, the redcoats were trying to terrorize rebel supporters into giving up. Besides constantly stealing food and horses, they burned entire towns and villages, looted or seized people's houses, **raped** and **murdered** innocent civilians, and set fire to crops and timberland." (pg.48)

*6th Grade – Inappropriate content with mythology. The book Ramayana talks about a father **lusting** over his daughter. The word **lusting** is typed in this book for sixth graders to read.

*7th Grade – This grade reads The Canterbury Tales. Parts had to be eliminated due to specific **sexual content** that students would have been reading.

*8th Grade - All Quiet on the Western Front. Parts had to be eliminated due to specific **sexual content**.

*There are books in every grade level that address dark topics. Students stay on these topics for weeks at a time.

*Students are not mentally ready for many of the topics that are brought up in their grade level.

*The topics are not developmentally appropriate.

It is extremely concerning that those in charge do not see the problem with what this curriculum will do to our students in the counties that have chosen to use this. This curriculum is stealing our children's innocence! Does this matter at all to you and those making the decisions? Are our children not important enough? I pray the decision you make to get rid of this curriculum spreads across to Sumner County, and we will also choose to do right by our students and get rid of this!

Sincerely concerned parent and teacher,