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Sent: 7/14/2021 10:53:24 AM
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Subject: You aren't getting the entire picture about Wit & Wisdom

Attachments: [Screen Shot 2021-06-23 at 11.07.12 AM.png](#), [Screen Shot 2021-06-23 at 11.09.00 AM.png](#), [Screen Shot 2021-07-14 at 10.26.20 AM.png](#), [Screen Shot 2021-07-14 at 10.26.37 AM.png](#)

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County Commissioners,

Good morning. I am writing to you in direct response to the discussions about Wit & Wisdom at your meeting. The school board is aware of my thoughts on this subject, but I have not written to you before because I don't really see how this is in your lane. But given that didn't stop you from spending hours on it, I wanted to share my thoughts.

I live in district 3 and I have two girls who have gone through Williamson County Schools and are now entering [REDACTED]. While I do not have elementary-age children, I feel very strongly about advocating for WCS to continue to provide the best education for all kids. I have followed the WCS board for many years and am very thankful for all the hard work they've put in this past year. Also, I do not see the focus of these right-wing groups stopping at the elementary-age ELA curriculum. I want to make sure my own daughters' education is not corrupted by politics. I have faith in the WCS board to make sure that is the case, but the comments some of you made at your meeting are not helping.

It seemed like some of you were hearing about these issues for the first time. I find that hard to believe but wanted to share some things we've learned over the past months.

1. The focus of this group is race and their made-up definition of Critical Race Theory. They want to remove material from schools that seem to paint white people in an unfavorable light. They are attempting to muddy the waters by bringing up "age appropriateness" but that is a distraction technique. Robin Steeman is all over right-wing media making it quite clear what her true intentions are. This began with the county hiring Fostering Healthy Solutions. Every article they've been interviewed on focuses on CRT. The official complaint they sent to Commissioner Schwinn focuses on CRT. The second-grade books they are upset about are wonderful books that show kids how far we've come as a country. NO ONE wants to make any child feel guilty about who they are and no WCS educator would teach any of this in a way to blame a child for the sins of the past. Education is about making sure the mistakes of the past are not repeated. This is not a good faith effort to improve our schools. It's mass hysteria stirred up by Tucker Carlson and fanned by the likes of Barb Sturgeon and Gregg Lawrence.

2. The examples you are being shown of "inappropriateness" are out of context and misleading. Mr. Golden tried to make that clear but I want to give some specific examples. First of all, some of their examples were excerpts from the books at all, but just random phrases strung together to make it sound as dark as possible. The focus on "suicidal ideation" is very misleading. No one in these books dies by suicide. The word suicide is not mentioned. Moms For Liberty are showing small snippets of books and not showing the full story. Here is an example they showed you from the book "Brave Irene".

She was asking how long a small person could keep this struggle up, when she realized it was getting lighter. There was a soft glow coming from somewhere below her.



She waded toward this glow, and soon was gazing down a long slope at a brightly lit mansion. It had to be the palace!

Irene pushed forward with all her strength and—*sloosh! thwump!*— she plunged downward and was buried. She had fallen off a little cliff. Only her hat and the box in her hands stuck out above the snow.



Even if she could call for help, no one would hear her. Her body shook. Her teeth chattered. Why not freeze to death, she thought, and let all these troubles end. Why not? She was already buried.

They failed to show you the next page, where the character decides to push through the struggle and overcome the snowstorm.

And never see her mother's face again? Her good mother who smelled like fresh-baked bread? In an explosion of fury, she flung her body about to free herself and was finally able to climb up on her knees and look around.



How to get down to that glittering palace? As soon as she raised the question, she had the answer.

She laid the box down and climbed aboard. But it pressed into the snow and stuck. She tried again, and this time, instead of climbing out, she leaped. The box shot forward like a sled.



The wind raced after Irene but couldn't keep up. In a moment she would be with people again, inside where it was warm. The sled slowed and jerked to a stop on prong stones.

The time had come to break the bad news to the duchess. With the empty box clasped to her chest, Irene strode nervously toward the palace.

Many of these books have themes of overcoming obstacles and perseverance. But you wouldn't know that from listening to the brief snippets Moms For Liberty shares. Here is a quote from Hatchet.

"It had been a feast day, his first feast day, and a celebration of being alive and the new way he had of getting food. By the end of the day, when it became dark and he lay next to the fire with his stomach full of fish and grease from the meat smeared around his mouth, he could feel new hope building in him. Not hope that he would be rescued - that was gone. But hope in his knowledge. Hope in the fact that he could learn and survive and take care of himself. Tough hope, he thought that night. I am full of tough hope."

Moms For Liberty tries to paint "The Buffalo are Back" as a dark story, but in the end, people worked together to save the Buffalo.

People like the girl's father rounded up kids, parents, botanists, farmers, and merchants. They searched the places the plows had never reached—graveyards, old railroad beds, and crumbling fencerows. There they found small stands of the native grasses: bluestem, gamma, bunch, and buffalo grass. They raised them and sowed the seeds on abandoned farms and public lands. The grasses flourished, tall and graceful.

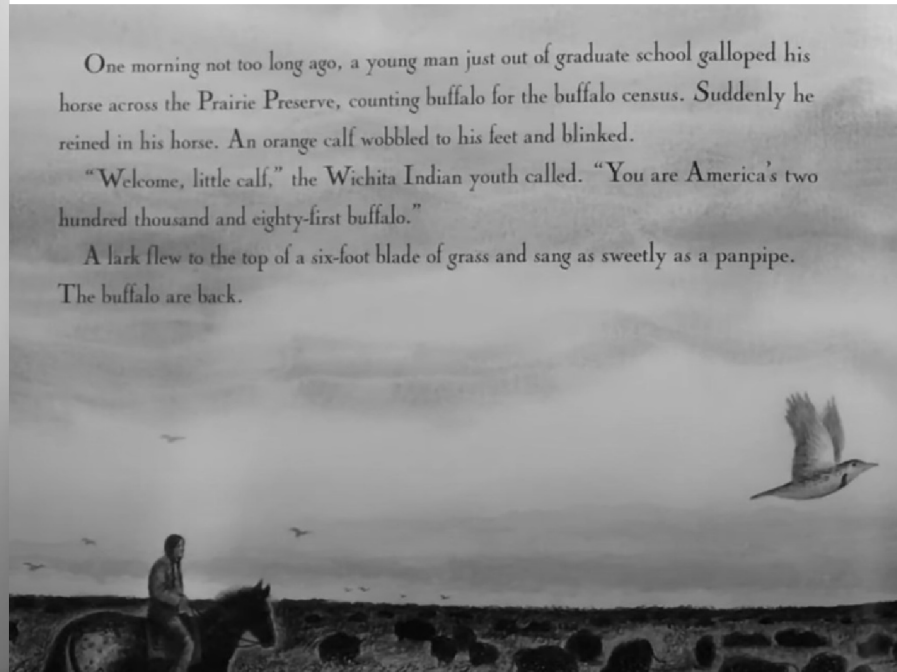
Groups that work to protect nature purchased thirty-thousand acres where native grasses had been grown. This nature preserve, in Oklahoma, is called the Tall Grass Prairie Preserve. Into the tall grass they released three hundred buffalo.



One morning not too long ago, a young man just out of graduate school galloped his horse across the Prairie Preserve, counting buffalo for the buffalo census. Suddenly he reined in his horse. An orange calf wobbled to his feet and blinked.

"Welcome, little calf," the Wichita Indian youth called. "You are America's two hundred thousand and eighty-first buffalo."

A lark flew to the top of a six-foot blade of grass and sang as sweetly as a panpipe. The buffalo are back.



The last words in "Separate is Never Equal" are "*When you fight for justice, others will follow.*". It's a wonderfully inspiring book.

Anyway, those are just a few examples of how you are being misled by not understanding the entire book.

3. **THIS IS A GREAT CURRICULUM AND WE NEED TO MAINTAIN ITS INTEGRITY.** I do not pretend to be a curriculum specialist. But I've studied this enough to see that Wit & Wisdom is a great improvement over Wonders. I've talked to teachers and I've watched all of Mr. Golden & Mr. Allen's presentations. I urge you to do the same. My kids never loved their ELA classes, where they read lots of boring excerpts and filled out worksheets. This is way better and more interesting. I encourage you to read [this article on the latest research on how kids learn to read](#). Studies show that kids learn better when they have a background understanding of the topic they are reading about. This is why Wit & Wisdom is designed the way it is. For 9 weeks, kids read books about the same general theme, with each book getting more advanced. Then each year builds upon those themes so that kids add to what they've learned, allowing them to build reading comprehension skills (not to mention making connections that excite them.) Mr. Golden said over and over to you all how complicated it is to teach a child to read. It didn't seem like you were getting that. I'm not against WCS EXPERTS tweaking the curriculum, as they've proven over and over that they are doing so very thoughtfully, with a focus on keeping the integrity of the entire reading system, and not pulling the wrong thread, as Mr. Allen has said.

I encourage you to be careful not to lend groups like this legitimacy if you aren't fully aware of the background. Let the school board and WCS administration do their job, which they are fantastic at doing.

Thanks,



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