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KIPP Beyond Charter School

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To: "Bruno, Kishena" <Kishena.Bruno@suny.edu>
Bcc: Bill Santiago <billsantiagocomedy@gmail.com>

Fri, Oct 6, 2023 at 3:11 PM

Kishena Bruno

Paralegal

SUNY Charter Schools Institute

H. Carl McCall SUNY Building

353 Broadway

Albany, NY 12246

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To the Attention of: Mr. Kishena Bruno and the SUNY Charter School Institute.

My name is William Santiago.

I am writing to file an official complaint that my underage child, Cielo Santiago, a 12-year-old girl in 7th grade at Kipps Beyond Middle School, in Harlem, NYC, has been presented with and exposed to and forced to engage in class discussion about egregiously explicit, highly-sexualized content since the start of the school year until now, as part of the ELA curriculum.

This rises well above mere impropriety and constitutes clear abuse of my child.

Parents were given no warning as to the actual explicit nature of the content on the reading list for this year - despite the school's false claim that parents were properly advised. Most parents had no idea and are only finding out now, to their astonishment and with great outrage.

We are furious. We are livid. We feel our trust has been betrayed, our parental rights violated and our children harmed by the school.

Examples of the content are attached below, along with two letters I have already written to the principal of the school, Mr. Negrón, the ELA director Jamie Axelrod, and ELA teacher Mr. Gilmartin.

"Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe," is the first book my child was assigned to read in 7th grade. The book includes explicit depictions of masturbation between two under age boys and the final highly sexualized last page where one of the characters trembles with ardent desire while fantasizing of the other boy after his shower.

Moreover, those scenes are just two of the most obviously objectionable highlights woven into a book that should never have been assigned to my child..

My little girl just turned 12. She has not only had to read the book, but to study for and take regular tests and quizzes on the subject matter and engage in class discussion of the same, to prove that she has read and understood it properly.

In any other context, be it at any job, corporate setting, sports league, church, etc., any discussion of such a nature would constitute sexual harassment, result in immediate firings and lawsuits against the organization. But somehow Kipps Beyond Middle School thinks it is proper to impose its will over parental judgment, values and objections to sexually harass my little girl with that same indefensible content.

Why shouldn't legal action be warranted here?

Myself and many other parents have suddenly found out about the extent of this and are up in arms about it. Despite pushback from the school, we have finally secured a preliminary meeting with Mr. Negron today.

But the damage has been done. The study unit on this book ends today.

ELA department director Jamie Axelrod called me to discuss, but her response was unsatisfactory and only more infuriating.

While I received patronizing assurances that the school understood my frustration, she did not understand what exactly I found so objectionable, and insisted that in her view there was no difference in the content of this book and that of works like, "To Kill A Mocking Bird," or "Romeo and Juliet."

There is no comparison. It is deliberately disingenuous to suggest so.

For starters, there are absolutely no explicit sexual depictions whatsoever in the books she cited. Not to mention the vast gulf in literary merit between the works she cited and the book my child was presented to read.

I was told that while there may be a chance to accommodate my child with an independent study option for alternate works in the future, she would still be in a class where the students will discuss this explicitly graphic, highly sexualized book and others of similar nature.

That feeble solution is unacceptable and another clear indication that the school is committed to presenting children with explicit sexualized content more than inappropriate for their age. If I had known this I would have never enrolled her at this school, which I held in high esteem until now.

Parents were told that their children's ELA curriculum in 7th grade would emphasize diversity.

None of the parents, myself included, understood that to mean virtual pornography.

Some parents may want their child to read such material. I am not one of them.

It is each parent's prerogative to decide. However, most parents of the 7th-grade students at Kipps Beyond Middle School are still not aware of the explicit nature of what their children are reading in class and many who have just found out demand an immediate response from the Kipps and the SUNY Charter School Institute to address this crisis.

There has been a continuous and undeniable pattern by the school to ignore parental implorations to cease and desist on forcing our children engage in this content.

Yesterday, I kept my daughter Cielo at home for the first part of the day so that she would miss ELA and not be asked to engage in yet more class discussion and take a test on the book in question.

I emailed Mr Negrón, Mr Gilmartin and Ms. Axlerod that I was keeping Cielo out of the class for the day and that in no way did I want her to participate in ELA yesterday.

Yet her ELA teacher, Mr. Gilmartin, after finding Cielo in the school library, gave her a test on the book anyway – over my express and clear parental objections as an outraged father of a 12-year-old daughter.

My wishes were flagrantly ignored once again.

This needs to stop. Parents need to know what is going on, the school needs to acknowledge the wrongs it is committing here and the curriculum needs to be changed.

Yes, I am strongly inclined to remove my daughter to another school immediately. I am on the verge of doing so.

But first we are finally meeting with the principal today to have our voices, and our anger heard.

And I am writing to you seeking sufficient and swift action.

Thank you for your time,

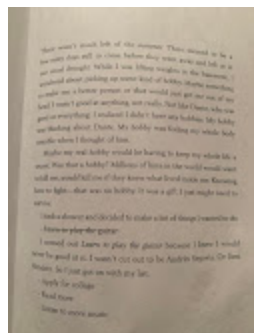
William Santiago
(outraged father of a 12-year-old, 7th-grade Kipps Beyond Middle School student)

[Quoted text hidden]

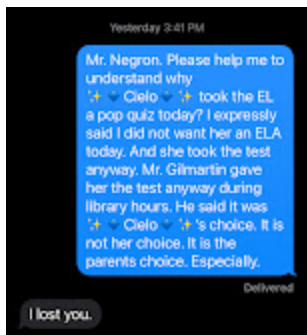
7 attachments



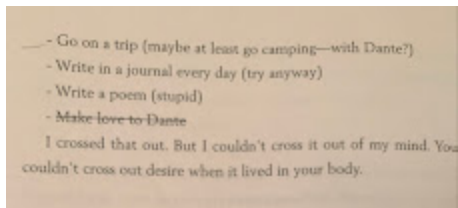
A - EXCERPT - IMG-8463.JPEG
287K



B - EXCERPT - .jpg
120K



TEXT - TO MR. NEGRON REGARDING VIOLATION OF TEACHER OVER MY EXPRESS WISHES FOR MY CHILKD NOT TO PARTICPIATE THAT DAY IN ELA 10-5-23 IMG-2775.jpg
467K



C - EXCERPT - -2748.jpg
483K



D - BOOK COVER - IMG-2750.JPG
3303K

 **2) 10-5-23 - Second Letter to Mr. Negrón regarding Inapprorpaite Sexual Content 7th Grade - Gmail - ELA.pdf**
170K

 **1) 10-3-23 First Letter to Mr. Negrón regarding - inappropriate content - "Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe." - Parental Rights -.pdf**
800K