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## Poet X Follow Up

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To: Joe Negron <jnegron@kippnyc.org>  
Bcc: Bill Santiago <billsantiagocomedy@gmail.com>

Mon, Mar 4, 2024 at 11:18 AM

Mr, Negron,

I will do my best to attend any meeting regarding the ongoing 7th-grade ELA book travesty at Kipp's Beyond. Either in person or virtually. Just let me know the date and time. Please text me as it's very hard to keep up with the endless emails on this topic alone.

As to why you haven't heard from many families yet about attending the meeting, I can't say.

I can only speak for myself to say that I am positively fatigued and disgusted by having to rehash the exact same problem over and over again for months now.

What else can we "brainstorm"? What more "concerns" do you have to hear?

How many times can families dredge up the exact same frustrations and or outrage?

Especially when the effective response from the school is to go ahead with its agenda anyway.

Maria told me she spoke with you and that your plan is basically to teach "Poet X" no matter what. All our previous protests, discussions and the history of this controversy notwithstanding.

So after so many countless meetings, what really is the point of another one?

Just how much time and energy do you think parents have to dedicate to this?

Seriously, you can't find another book? In the entire English language? Have you tried consulting Chat GPT? I'll suggest a possible prompt.

"Please provide a list of books appropriate for 7th graders that would be educationally rigorous, represent diversity of world authors and literary traditions, without containing any controversial, inappropriate, sexually explicit content."

You will get reams and reams of titles to choose from, most of which I would be absolutely fine with.

What on earth is so difficult about that? In fact, I am happy to run that prompt myself and send you the list in a separate email.

Where does the blind, deaf and dumb obstinacy from the school come from on this issue? What is the obsession with providing inappropriate, overly and explicitly sexual content to my under-aged child? As if there were no other options!

I honestly don't get it.

I had relished the temporary reprieve between books I had to worry about being assigned to Cielo.

But here we are again. I had hoped that we would not have to discuss this issue any more and be able to put it behind us.

Not that I am surprised it has resurfaced, and that my disappointment in Kipp's Beyond continues to go beyond what I could ever have imagined.

It's a shame because Kipp's Beyond was my top pick for Cielo's middle school – and her first year exceeded expectations.

Yet the disaster that has followed in 7th grade only snowballs further and further downhill.

Specifically, let me address the book, "Poet X," which Cielo is now going to be assigned next in her 7th-grade ELA class.

I am not going to restate my litany of objections to the last controversial, and sexually explicit book, "Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe," which the school managed to foist upon my child, with utter disregard if not contempt for my values, discretion and authority over my child's welfare as her parent.

But I will restate that in my view the multiple offenses committed by the school with regard to "Aristotle and Dante" were so egregious as to border on the criminal, as they clearly constitute a form of outright sexual abuse, defended by the school under the pretext of educational diversity.

Please go back and read all my emails to you, the teachers, the SUNY Charter School Institute, the NY Department of Education, and various journalists and lawyers, if you need a comprehensive review of my exact concerns.

Most vividly, I remember your crocodile tears at one of many meetings, where you emotionally stated that you had screwed up and vowed to fix the problem.

It was just one of many disingenuous gestures and empty promises from you and the school and the entire Kipps system on this matter.

The Kipps Beyond Book Committee, consequently formed by the school, is nothing but a diversionary token concession to pretend the school is now listening to parents and giving them a voice in what books our children are being assigned to read.

Yet the first book committee meeting was convened to discuss, "Romeo and Juliet," a book about which there was no controversy or parental objection.

Not only that, it's an 8th grade reading selection, while the controversy that erupted earlier this year at Kipp's was about sexually explicit, inappropriate books being assigned to our children in 7th grade.

And now my understanding is that you, Kipps Beyond and the ELA department are going to move forward in assigning "Poet X," another inappropriate, sexually explicit book to my 12-year-old child. (A book which I had already reviewed and expressed my clear and unambiguous objections about to you and the school.)

The school is hell-bent on accelerating the sexual maturation of my daughter before she has naturally awakened sexually on her own.

It IS NOT your place or the school's place to make that decision over my clear and repeated objections as Cielo's parent, over my values and judgment as her father.

It was quite striking, absurd and nauseating that the Kipps Beyond school, as represented by its ELA director, during a book committee meeting, openly questions whether it is still relevant to teach Shakespeare to its students but will champion without limit any book by any author that checks the sufficient number of politically correct social justice diversity boxes.

So what happens now to Cielo?

I don't want her reading "Poet X," or doing any classwork on the book or related topics.

So she will be isolated from her class and classmates for the entire time that unit is taught.

This will only alienate and ostracize her and make her feel self-conscious about being separated from the rest of the students, and create tension and awkwardness between herself and her teachers.

Believe me, if it were an easy thing to do, I would have simply switched her to another school immediately after finding out about the "Aristotle and Dante," violation.

But it's a complicated matter to find another school in the middle of the year, not to mention the prospect of separating our child from her group of very close friends at Kipps.

Moreover, we were willing to be a part of the process to steer the school toward change, toward books and reading assignments of high educational rigor and value that we would find acceptable.

But the fact is there has been no actual change. Just lip service and empty distractions.

We parents were insultingly labeled at the Kipps regional office meeting as "Educational Content Consumers." And we have received nothing but dismissive, "tough luck," customer service runarounds from the school. Oh and some crocodile tears.

More broadly, I have many other concerns about our daughter's 7th-grade experience at the school.

Cielo recently told me that she will not compete in the contest this year at the school to see which student can recite the post digits of Pi.

She said that because she won last year, she did not want to win again this year.

She added that you commented to her that it was probably a good idea for her not to compete this year so as to give other students a chance.

Is that true?

Am I getting an accurate story here?

Because that would be quite astounding for the principal of the school to discourage my child from competing in a skill she so excels at.

This year, Cielo's motivation and enthusiasm for her school, her school work and teachers at Kipps Beyond, pale in comparison to the unbridled passion she had for everything at the school last year as a 6th grader. It's puzzling. It's concerning.

Mind you, she couldn't wait to start 7th grade and showed up the first day of class with even more enthusiasm than she had in 6th grade.

But, as you know, she ended that day in tears.

Why? Because even though you and the school had made such a point of leading Cielo and her friends to believe that this special group of high-achieving girls would be kept together in 7th grade, they were not. Instead, they were deliberately separated and devastated without any warning. Another unkept promise. Yes, adjustments were made to pair up some of the girls in class retroactively, after weeks of tears. But the damage was done.

Yes, the school decided to not continue teaching "Dante and Aristotle" this year. But only after all the students had read the sexually explicit book, after the protests and ... after the damage was done.

The overall series of serious missteps by the school seems to have had a negative impact on Cielo's motivation, enthusiasm and interest, including not wanting to participate in any extracurricular activities this year.

It doesn't look like that trend is going to correct before the year is up.

One other thing, while we're at it.

Cielo has mentioned to myself and her mother, as indelicate as it may be to bring this up, that you have been regularly and deliberately farting in front of her and other students, and or joking about doing so. Seriously?

If this is true, it strikes me as highly inappropriate and unbecoming of a school principal. That is not the behavior I want adults modeling for my child. A school leader should set a better example than that for personal behavior.

If it is true, it's just one more disappointment.

The entire experience at Kipps has been a colossal bait and switch. We are exploring options. But as I said, it's a complicated matter.

There are frequent calls by you to go forth and sing the praises of Kipps Beyond to prospective parents considering a middle school for their child.

As a "Consumer of Educational Content" that has been so let down by Kipps Beyond, I am more inclined to do the exact opposite.

I think what's needed is a vigorous public awareness campaign pointing out exactly why, when it comes to Kipps Beyond, prospective parents should heed the warning: caveat emptor.

- Bill Santiago

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**A** **ajidente** Parent of 13-year-old

1 year ago

age 18+

**Good, relatable for high school kids and immigrants, however, parental consent should be required because of the sexual stuff**

Too much sexual stuff, masturbation, heavy petting, gay relationships. While I'm liberal and a teacher, I feel like many parents would frown at this, because of the sexual parts. I wouldn't give it to anyone under 18

**A** **Aspen03161**  
Adult

4 years ago  
age 17+

**Poet X not for younger teens**

It has a lot of mature information in it. Standing up against religious ideas, masturbation, first experiences with heavy petting as a young teen, mature language. While it has a great message for older young adults as it deals with difficult situations and things that teens go through, it should be first read by a parent then talked with your child about.

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This title has: Too much sex

3 people found this helpful.

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