

From Interim Superintendent Michael Goar:

I have become aware that there is great concern among some parents and other stakeholders in the Minneapolis Public School district about an early childhood literacy curriculum MPS is launching this school year. I'd like to take this opportunity to address these concerns and share in the outrage of our diverse communities.

In July, the Minneapolis Board of Education approved a contract for a literacy curriculum and related support. This program has the potential to help our kids become stronger readers, and kids who read grow up to succeed.

The contract included the curriculum, excellent coaching and training support and optional, supplemental materials. Among those materials is what is called the Little Book library.

Due to staffing shifts and the desire to get a program in place for the new school year, the books were not comprehensively vetted. We now know this was a mistake. We regret that this happened. We will do better.

During an early training session it became apparent that some of the books contained culturally insensitive and unacceptable material. As soon as we became aware of the issue, we were thoroughly incensed and immediately took action. It is not acceptable that in 2015 reading materials for children would contain language and imagery that perpetuate stereotypes that are hurtful and insulting.

The books were instantly collected from the teachers and will be returned to the publisher. In addition we received a guarantee from Reading Horizons that they would revise the books to our satisfaction before they would be utilized in the literacy curriculum.

**No children were ever exposed to the books**, and only a small number of teachers were. But again, we took immediate action when we became aware of what was clearly painfully offensive material.

It was MPS, and our teachers, who recognized culturally insensitive content in the supplemental books. This shows the professional development work the district is doing on cultural competency is working.

For the time being we continue working with Reading Horizons to revise the books, and teachers will be central in that conversation. These revisions won't just be for Minneapolis, but for districts across the country, which means we are having a national impact.

Here is an important consideration. Reading Horizons works. Research shows this program has been successful in improving student outcomes across the country, including outcomes in diverse districts like ours.

But we are as concerned about the culturally inappropriate material as everyone else and we quickly addressed and removed the materials, as we should have. We will continue to explore options regarding this issue.

Let me say again, kids who read grow up to succeed, and early literacy is key to the future of our kids. Please don't hesitate to let me know if you have further questions or concerns.

Michael Goar  
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Minneapolis Public Schools