

Book Review Committee for *Gender Queer*

The committee's purpose, meeting dates, and members are shown below. Mr. CM originally brought the complaint to the WCASD but since work responsibilities prohibited him from attending the meetings, Ms. Jenifer MacFarland attended in his place.

At the time the committee met, Wesley Hiester was a freshman in the WCASD and is a biological female who identifies as a male (*trans*-male). Jeannine Hiester, Wesley's mother, was one of two parents on the committee. Dr. Kalia Reynolds was the Asst. Superintendent of the WCASD. Except for Wesley, his mother, another student (Ella Prieto), community members (Diane Masar and Jenifer MacFarland), and one school board member (Dr. Kate Shaw), the remaining 10 of the 16 total voting members were district employees [either administrators (5, including Reynolds), principals (1), teachers (1) or librarians(3)].



West Chester Area School District
Book Review Committee
Gender Queer: A Memoir

Committee Purpose

The initial internal committee met on December 13, 2021 in response to a book complaint submitted in December; this meeting resulted in forming a book review committee. The book review committee met on February 22, 2022 and March 3, 2022 to discuss the high school library book, *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe, in light of the Board policies and points of challenge in the submitted complaint.

- Review 906AG2: Guidelines for Complaints about Instructional Materials
- Review 109.1AG1: Guidelines for School Libraries
- Read the book - *Gender Queer: A Memoir*
- Consider the book with the expectations of the policies given the presented points of challenge
- Share feedback with the committee and present a recommendation to the superintendent

February 22 Meeting slides
March 3 Meeting slides

Committee Members

This committee is a representative group of diverse stakeholders that are a part of the WCASD.

Name	Role
Jeannine Hiester, Mr. CM	WCASD Parents
Diane Masar, Jenifer MacFarland	WCASD Community Members
Wesley Hiester, Ella Prieto	WCASD Students
Mike Marano	WCASD High School Principal
Kristen Barnello, Rebecca Eberly, Tammi Florio, Dawn Mader	WCASD District Administrators
Kara Bailey	WCASD Teacher
Caitlin Boyle, Adrienne Matjasic, Rita Vandergast	WCASD Librarians
Kate Shaw	WCASD Board Member
Kalia Reynolds	WCASD Superintendent Designee

Two Questions Regarding Committee Selection, Operations and Biases

Question #1: Did the selection of members truly represent a diverse group of objective stakeholders?

Dr. Kate Shaw was the only school board member on the committee. The following is an excerpt from her remarks after the school board's vote [LINK](#)

Excerpt: "*I sat on this committee, participated in the conversations on this committee, and I want to make it very clear that this committee was not monolithic. There were many opinions expressed in this committee both in full conversation and in small groups. So I don't want anybody to think that this committee was rigged or stacked with people who are going to automatically vote to approve this book. That is NOT true!*"

AUTHOR'S OPINION: Upon examining the "credentials" of the selected members

Dr. Shaw's statement is, in a word, unbelievable. This Review Committee was NOT IN ANY WAY a "representative group of diverse stakeholders." This is evidenced by information enumerated below.

1. There were **ten WCASD educators (employees) on the Committee**. It is a virtual certainty that most, if not all, of them were heavily invested in, and strongly supported DEI issues which would surely translate to a vote for retention of *Gender Queer*.
2. **Wesley Hiester**, a student member of the committee and self-proclaimed *trans*-male, publicly praised *Gender Queer* prior to the school board's vote and implied that this book had saved his life. Wesley's vote would unquestionably be for retention.
3. **Wesley's mother, Jeannine Hiester**, was selected to be one of the two parents on the Committee. Why was this mother of the child who indicated that reading *Gender Queer* had saved "his" life chosen to serve on the Committee of the thousands of other parents available in the WCASD community?
4. **Diane Masar**, one of the two community members, said in the Public Comments prior to the vote that **not keeping the book in our libraries would be an "act of violence."** No one making such an extreme statement could possibly have objectively reviewed this book.

I don't doubt that the Committee discussed the book at length, nor do I doubt that varying viewpoints were presented during these discussions. The Committee might not have been "monolithic" in that there of course were variations to some degree, however minimal. However, considering the above information, it should be obvious to any rational individual that the majority of the Review Committee was unquestionably stacked with those who would ultimately vote in accordance with the district's desired outcome which was to retain *Gender Queer*. For an intelligent and skilled school board member such as Dr. Shaw to insist otherwise not only lessens her credibility but is an insult to those of us who are quite capable of checking most of the members' credentials.