



2/11/2020

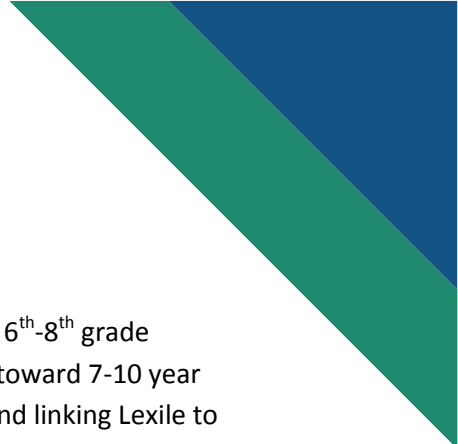
To Whom It May Concern:

It has been brought to our attention that certain members of the Baird Middle School community of Ludlow, Massachusetts have objected to the content of the book "Sex is a Funny Word", written by Cory Silverberg and illustrated by Fiona Smyth, a copy of which is currently in the collection of the Donna M. Hogan Library at the Baird Middle School. We understand that the Superintendent of Schools has convened a committee to reconsider the inclusion of this book in the school library collection under the established procedure laid out in policy statement IJLAA - RECONSIDERATION OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS, approved May 23, 2017 by the Ludlow School Committee.

The Massachusetts Library Association Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibilities Committee is charged with responding to requests for reconsideration of library materials in Massachusetts public and school libraries. We respect the right of members of the community to request reconsideration of material they find objectionable through locally established procedures and processes. Further, we respect the right of the reconsideration committee to remove the book from the collection should it find the content to be inappropriate for middle school students. Please consider the following in your review.

We write to express our support for retaining the book in the collection.

- I. In our opinion, the merit of the book is unquestionable and its selection was most certainly in keeping with both the letter and spirit of the criteria elaborated in Policy Statement IJL - LIBRARY RESOURCES, approved May 23, 2017 by the Ludlow School Committee. In the year of its publication the book was named a 2016 ALA Notable Children's Book and was named the 2016 Winner of the Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children's Non-Fiction as well as being named an Honor Book in the 2016 ALA Stonewall Book Awards. It earned many positive reviews in the journals used for selection of middle school library materials, including the starred reviews in School Library Journal and Publishers Weekly linked below and attached in hard copy.
<https://www.slj.com/?detailStory=sex-is-a-funny-word-a-book-about-bodies-feelings-and-you-by-cory-silverberg-slj-review>
<https://www.publishersweekly.com/paper-copy/reviews/single/978-1-60980-606-4>


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- II. In our opinion, the reading level of the book is entirely appropriate for all the 6th-8th grade students of the Baird Middle School. The book is written in language geared toward 7-10 year olds, and has been rated at a Lexile of 710L. Lexile is an imperfect measure and linking Lexile to grade level can be problematic. However, most comparison charts indicate that 710L is appropriate to a 4th-5th grade reading level. For another comparison, books also rated at 710L include middle school staples like “Eragon” by Christopher Paolini, “The Little Prince” by Antoine de St. Exupery, and “The Parable of the Sower” by Octavia Butler.
- III. In our opinion, library materials on the subject of sexual development are entirely appropriate for this age group and indeed are necessary to support the Massachusetts Comprehensive Health Curriculum Framework dated October 1999 linked below, and attached in hard copy. That document indicates that students should have already learned more detailed information about sexual development and sexuality than anything conveyed in “Sex is a Funny Word” by the end of the 5th grade.

While members of the community have presumably objected to cartoon pictures of human anatomy presented in the book, standard 4.1 states that [students will] “identify the components, functions, and processes of the reproductive system. Students label the functions and/or systems of the reproductive system on a blank diagram by the end of Grade 5. The book does not present anatomical information which a 6th grade student who is meeting curricular standards has not already learned.

While members of the community have presumably objected to discussions of sexuality presented in the book, standard 4.3 states that [students will] “define sexual orientation using the correct terminology (such as heterosexual, and gay and lesbian)” by the end of Grade 5. The book does not present any information about sexuality which a 6th grade student who is meeting curricular standards has not already learned.

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/health/1999/1099.pdf>

The need for middle school library books on the subject of sexual development is demonstrated by the presence of other books on sex in the library collection. It is certainly possible the members of the Baird Middle School community have objected in the past to “It’s perfectly normal : changing bodies, growing up, sex, and sexual health” by Robie Harris and “Will puberty last my whole life? : real answers to real questions from preteens about body changes, sex, and other growing-up stuff” by Julie Giesy Metzger, but those books are not being reviewed for reconsideration at this point.

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- IV. We appreciate the courage of Baird Middle School Librarian Jordan Funke in advocating for this book and in advocating for the proper reconsideration process to be followed.

 - V. And finally, we sincerely hope that the reconsideration committee will recommend that the book be retained in the collection of the Donna M. Hogan Library at the Baird Middle School.

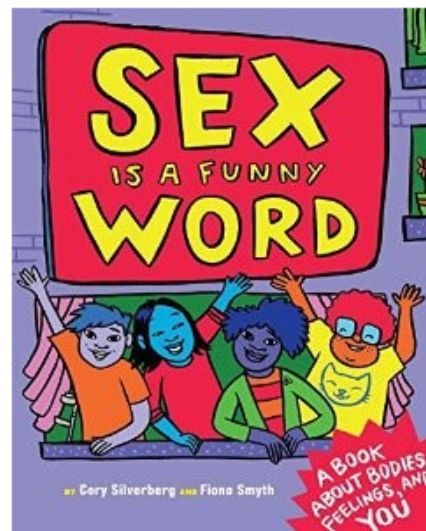
Respectfully,

Matthew Amory, Librarian for Information and Technology
Canton Public Library
786 Washington St.
Canton, MA 02021

On behalf of the Massachusetts Library Association Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibilities
Committee

★SILVERBERG, Cory. *Sex Is a Funny Word: A Book About Bodies, Feelings, and You*. illus. by Fiona Smyth. 160p. glossary. Seven Stories. 2015. Tr \$23.95. ISBN 9781609806064.

Gr 2-6 –Silverberg and Smyth follow up their book for younger readers, *What Makes a Baby* (Triangle Square, 2013), with this engaging introduction to gender, bodies, and relationships. A diverse cast of cartoon kids—in terms of appearance, ability, and point of view—explore the multiple meanings of the word *sex* with their teacher, friends, and family members. There is a heavy emphasis on the importance of thinking for oneself and developing one’s own opinions. The language is conversational and accessible, as well as direct, fastidiously accurate, and entirely gender-neutral. Each section ends with conversation-provoking questions, reinforcing the suggestion that the book be read and shared in conversation with a trusted adult. What makes this volume exceptional is its



introduction of the subjects of transgender identity, intersex conditions, and masturbation. The quality text is enhanced and brought to life by comics drawn with bold lines on bright, full-bleed pages. Smyth’s illustrations are interactive, fun, and edifying, presenting a range of body types and diversity. Despite the title, the topic of sexual intercourse is not covered; but Silverberg prepares readers for this information by introducing concepts such as respect, trust, and joy.

VERDICT Exciting, enlightening, and innovative, this book addresses timeless questions about sex for a new generation of kids who are increasingly aware of the broad spectrum of gender and sexual identities.—Clara Hendricks, Cambridge Public Library, MA

This review was published in the School Library Journal March 2016 issue.

Elementary Nonfiction

nonfiction

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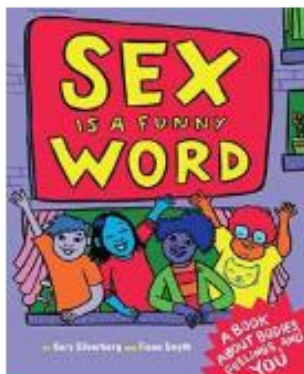
BEST BOOKS

AUTHORS

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

WILLIAMS SONOMA

SHOP COOKS' TOOLS



BUY THIS BOOK

★ Sex Is a Funny Word: A Book About Bodies, Feelings, and You

Cory Silverberg, illus. by Fiona Smyth. Seven Stories/Triangle Square, \$23.95 (160p) ISBN 978-1-60980-606-4

Like 135 Share Tweet

MORE BY AND ABOUT THIS AUTHOR

Silverberg and Smyth follow *What Makes a Baby* with a highly visual introduction to sex education for older readers, featuring four characters between the ages of eight and 10 with skin in a rainbow of crayon-box colors. Full-page artwork and comics sequences follow the students as they react to discussions of gender, bodies (including what Silverberg calls “middle parts”), touching, and the emotions that lead to sexual contact; the book stops short of getting into the mechanics of intercourse. Throughout, Silverberg invites readers to consider their own feelings through activities and questions (“Why do you think people want to know if a baby is a boy or a girl?”). Emphasizing the importance of trust, respect, justice, and joy—as well as open communication—it’s a thoughtful and affirming exploration of relationships, gender identity, and growing sexual awareness. Ages 7–10. (July)

DETAILS

Reviewed on: 06/22/2015

Release date: 05/05/2015

Genre: Children's

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Reproduction/Sexuality:

Reproduction/Sexuality involves physical development, emotions, and social elements. Instruction incorporates aspects of biology, psychology, sociology, literature, the arts, and philosophy.

The study of Reproduction/Sexuality provides young people with the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed choices. It addresses decisions about abstaining from and postponing sexual intercourse. Knowledge about how to avoid sexually transmitted infections that endanger one's health and well being as well as that of a partner is an important component of instruction. Communication skills can support such decisions. Addressing Reproduction/Sexuality in an appropriate and factual fashion leads to informed young people, increasing the likelihood of students making healthy decisions. It is particularly important in Reproduction/Sexuality to consider developmental appropriateness. Topics generally covered in Reproduction/Sexuality include: Development and Wellness.

Note: Please see parental notification law in Appendix B.

PreK–12 Standard 4: Reproduction/Sexuality

Students will acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to make effective personal decisions that promote their emotional, sexual, and reproductive health.

Reproduction/Sexuality

PreK–12 STANDARD 4: Reproduction/Sexuality

Students will acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to make effective personal decisions that promote their emotional, sexual, and reproductive health.

GRADE LEVEL	LEARNING STANDARDS
By the end of grade 5	<p>Through the study of Development students will</p> <p>4.1 Identify the components, functions, and processes of the reproductive system <i>Students label the functions and/or systems of the reproductive system on a blank diagram</i></p> <p>4.2: Identify the physical changes as related to the reproductive system during puberty <i>Invite the school nurse or a health care professional who specializes in children to discuss the changes that take place in boys and girls at puberty</i></p> <p>4.3 Define sexual orientation using the correct terminology (such as heterosexual, and gay and lesbian)</p>
	<p>Through the study of Wellness students will</p> <p>4.4 Recognize that diet, exercise, rest, and avoidance of risk behaviors such as smoking, drinking, and other substance use contribute to the health of a mother and fetus <i>Students write short answers to define the types of sexual orientation</i></p>
By the end of grade 8	<p>Through the study of Development students will</p> <p>4.5 Recognize the emotional and physical changes as related to the reproductive system during puberty</p> <p>Through the study of Wellness students will</p> <p>4.6 Explain the benefits of abstinence, postponing sexual behavior, and setting limits on sexual behavior</p> <p>4.7 Describe short- and long-term consequences of sexuality-related risk behaviors and identify barriers and supports for making health-enhancing decisions <i>Students discuss consequences around sexuality decisions. Determine and role-play steps that improve decision-making (such as with whom to consult, information overlooked)</i></p> <p>4.8 Describe behaviors and methods for pregnancy prevention, including abstinence</p> <p>4.9 Define the types of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS, and how they are prevented <i>Students report on the policies of various states and countries regarding STIs prevention among youth</i></p> <p>4.10: Identify sexual discrimination and harassment <i>Students use current events or media portrayal to discuss the consequences of discrimination based on sexual orientation</i></p>
By the end	<p>Through the study of Development students will</p>