

Committee Member's Vote	Reason for Vote	Other Comments
Remove	While I have no issue with the subject matter of this book, I do think some of the images are explicit and, left in a media center, would offer students an opportunity to engage with it without guidance and support.	I believe students should be exposed to this book, but with the support and guidance of strong instruction from an adult. If librarians will be hosting book clubs, discussion groups, and/or instruction around this book (or if it can be included in classroom instruction), then I will be more comfortable with its retention.
Remove	Inappropriate Illustrations	I do not believe this book is as bad as the hype makes it out to be. It is NOT pornographic. It does, however, cross the line of age-appropriateness on one or two occasions with its illustrations. One such illustration depicts oral sex. I do not have a problem with the text associated with this picture even though it is "sexting." When taken in context with the rest of the book, the highly publicized parts of this book are not nearly as scandalous as they originally seemed. The book definitely does not adhere to the idea that one simply does not talk about sex; it has a very cavalier approach to sex as opposed to private. But once you get passed this, there really isn't anything too shocking. The illustrations are what caused me concern. In the end, I based my recommendation on the movie industry. Movies cannot show the actual act of oral sex to a 14 year old. And for that, I recommend that the book be removed. What a shame.
Remove	<p>This book encourages minors to participate in the delinquent activity of accessing porn, praising it among high school students (p. 116-117) and directly providing a link to a porn website, kink.com (p. 157). Encouraging or aiding a minor to partake in a prohibited act or delinquent activity such as accessing porn is a crime.</p> <p>The book, Gender Queer, goes against HCPSS policy 1020, which states that providing sexually explicit cartoons and drawings to students constitutes prohibited visual sexual harassment. Multiple committee members expressed concern about the explicit nature of the images in this book.</p> <p>Under federal law any visual portrayals of sexually explicit behavior involving a minor are considered child pornography. This book contains multiple such images. The fact that they are cartoon drawings does not excuse them because "The illegal act of exposing a minor to obscene images occurs through the visual representation of any depiction such as drawings, photos, images in video, and even cartoons and paintings."</p> <p>HCPSS policy 8404 States that videos rated R or NC-17 may not be shown to students. Using this as a measure, the book, Gender Queer is not age appropriate because it's images would be rated higher than R or NC-17 if they were in movie form.</p> <p>It is important to evaluate this book not simply by its topic or title but by its content, keeping in mind that a book in a high school library means the school is offering this book to 14 year-olds.</p> <p>The book contains explicit illustrations of sexual encounters involving children (p.135, others), masturbation (p. 61, others) Portrays and normalizes minors using erotic gay fiction (p.116) and porn "I thought gay porn was universal." There are explicit drawings of individuals having sex (p. 167, p.61). There are drawings, discussion, and use of sex toys. Sexting (p.166), graphic illustrations of oral sex (p.167) and full frontal nudity.</p>	<p>A responsible decision on this book is not a vote up or down on its topic. It is simply a decision about the actual content and images inside the book. Sexually explicit content and links to porn are not age appropriate and are against HCPSS policy. There are numerous other books and writings available that address this topic in a more school appropriate way. Multiple parents expressed concern about this book in our schools, for good reason.</p>
Remove	(more detailed notes will be sent in email)	
Remove	The topic discussed in this book is very important. I learned something, which I was not aware of. However, I feel that some images are inappropriate.	Some text such as page 63 are not appropriate in my opinion.
Retain	Queer students need access to queer books. Queer books can help provide a lifeline for queer youth who are trying to find answers and information about their own identities. There is a lot of misinformation online and this personal story by Maia Kobabe may provide support for gender identity in the 21st century.	Thank you for the time to discuss the book in a calm, civilized manner.
Retain	It could be a good resource for people who is gender uncomfortable, also others a deeper understanding of genderqueers.	The book doesn't hold back but see the discomfort clearly on the page.
Retain	The book provides an alternate viewpoint of a memoir and represents an inclusive addition to a high school library collection	From Booklist: "Kobabe's path to understanding eir gender and sexuality comes into beautiful focus in this graphic memoir, expressively illustrated with retro colors and simple lines. Readers will recognize a kindred spirit in Kobabe and/or gain insight into what it's like to identify outside of the cisgender/heterosexual 'norm.'"
Retain	The book offers a story/voice/perspective/guidance for students, who like Maia are searching for answers. Our world is changing and these changes are often times difficult and confusing. This story acknowledges one of the changes in our society. It sheds light and can help students who are trying to find their identity. This book has great potential to help students.	N/A
Retain		N/A
Retain	It is good for our transgender and questioning students	n/a

**Title:** Gender Queer, A Memoir

**Author:** Maia Kobabe

**Grades:** High School

**Specific Object:** Explicit sexual content and illustrations

Instructional Materials/Criteria Review Committee

November 16, 2021

Verdict: This book should not be retained in Howard County School Libraries or as part of a school curriculum due to its sexually explicit content and illustrations. It also champions porn use among minors and provides the web address of a porn site.

It is important to evaluate this book not simply by its topic or title but by its content, keeping in mind that a book in a high school library means the school is offering this book to 14-year-olds.

The book contains:

1. Explicit illustrations of sexual encounters involving children p.135, others
2. Masturbation p. 61, others
3. Portrays and normalizes minors using erotic gay fiction p.116 "Interest In erotic gay fiction has been so prevalent in my friendships one could mistake it for a prerequisite" Refers to doujinshi with sexually explicit content.
4. P.117 "I thought gay porn was universal" Merits of gay porn vs lesbian porn.
5. Explicit drawings of individuals having sex p.167, p.61
6. Sex toys
7. Autoandrophilia
8. P. 157 Listing a porn website. According to Wikipedia: "Kink.com is a San Francisco-based bondage internet pornography company that runs a group of websites devoted to BDSM and related fetishes."
9. P. 166 Sexting between college students with the actual text of the sexts "I got a new strap on harness today. I can't wait to put it on you. It will fit my favorite dildo perfectly. You are going to look so hot. I can't wait to have your cock in my mouth -I'm going to give you the blow job of your life then I want you inside of me"
10. Graphic illustrations of oral sex P. 167
11. Full frontal nudity

Relevant laws and regulations:

Policy 1020

<https://policy.hcpss.org/1000/1020/>

"Students, employees, and third parties share responsibility for maintaining a school and work environment free from sexual discrimination, **sexual harassment**, and sexual misconduct. Employees, students, and third parties may be subject to disciplinary action or consequences for inappropriate behavior including that of a sexual nature, even when the behavior does not rise to the level of sexual discrimination as defined by prevailing federal and state law."

"Examples of sexual harassment include but are not limited to:"

“Visual harassment: ...posters, photography, **cartoons, drawings**, clothing, or gestures communicated in person or electronically.”

“**Sharing** or pressuring someone to share (including electronically) **sexually explicit material**.”

Policy 1060

<https://policy.hcpss.org/1000/1060/>

Prohibited: The display of symbols, images, language, materials, or items that demean an identifiable person or group or are reasonably perceived as promoting hatred, intimidation, or **harassment**

As noted above, sharing of sexually explicit material (including cartoons and drawing) is one of the specified categories of sexual harassment.

When the school provides a book on library shelves, it is sharing that book with minors. Sharing the book, Gender Queer is therefore within the category of sexual harassment, banned in our schools.

According to state law,

<https://lawrina.com/blog/contributing-to-the-delinquency-of-a-minor/>

Providing pornography or obscene material to a minor is illegal. Encouraging or aiding a minor to partake in a prohibited act or delinquent activity is also a crime.

<https://www.hg.org/legal-articles/showing-porn-to-a-minor-is-it-a-crime-48946>

The use of children’s material to entice a minor into [a porn] site is one way to violate these laws

Under federal law, any visual portrayals of sexually explicit behavior involving a minor are considered child pornography.

when child pornography is concerned, any depiction of a minor under the age of 18 engaging in sexually explicit conduct is unlawful.

The illegal act of exposing a minor to obscene images occurs through the visual representation of any depiction such as drawings, photos, images in video, and even cartoons and paintings. These images must show the minor some form of sexual activity in action.

If a website does not explicitly explain that graphic images or adult content are behind the agreement to enter the website, federal laws could hold the owner or admin of the site accountable for criminal activity

Policy 8040

<https://policy.hcpss.org/8000/8040/>

Videos rated R, NC-17, or non-rated feature videos produced after 1990, may not be shown to classes in HCPSS

Policy 8050

<https://policy.hcpss.org/8000/8050/>

- A. Controversial issues must be presented as follows:
  - 1. In an age appropriate manner.
  - 2. With a goal of encouraging discussion and building mutual understanding of the topic.
  - 3. With access to and respect for multiple perspectives and sources that are founded in relevant and credible information.
  - 4. In a learning environment that is safe, supportive, inclusive, and focused on an academic examination of the issue.
  - 5. In alignment with the school system's curriculum, mission, and vision.

MD law info

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/regulations/maryland/COMAR-13A-04-18-01>

The local school system shall establish policies, guidelines, and/or procedures for student opt-out regarding instruction related to family life and human sexuality objectives.

(iv) The local school system shall provide an opportunity for parents/guardians to view instructional materials to be used in the teaching of family life and human sexuality objectives.