

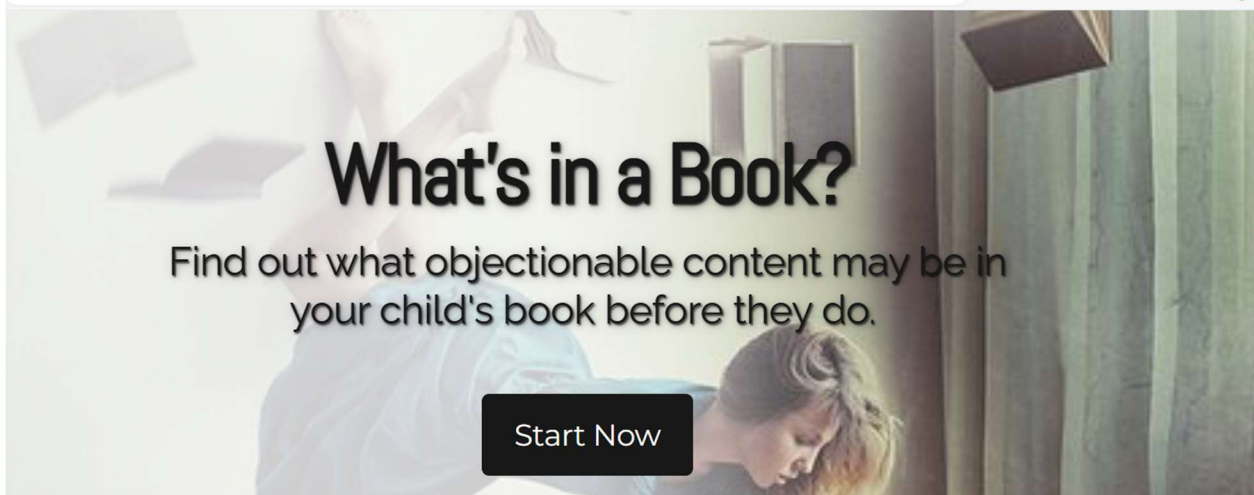
Love Makes a Family (LMAF) Removal Complaint

Policy 411 states: Discrimination is defined as any action, policy, or practice, including bias, stereotyping and pupil harassment, which is detrimental to a person or group of persons, and differentiates or distinguishes among persons, or which limits or denies a person or group of persons opportunities, privileges, roles or rewards

The below demonstrates how the action of the removal of LMAF was impacted by bias and is detrimental to the students impacted.

Policy/School District Mission

1. BookLooks (BookLooks rating system and review for LMAF attached)
 - a. The complaint focused on the only page highlighted in the BookLooks review and stated the exact contents that are highlighted in that review during the challenge process. This review states as fact that one male has breasts. This is not a fact and cannot be stated as such. There is no nudity nor mention of sexual acts in this book. The book simply highlights different things that family members do for each other to demonstrate love and show they care.
 - b. No other review sources were cited, and administrator and teacher expertise and knowledge of the policies were overridden in this decision. I did not receive an answer to the following question that I emailed to SDMF Board of Education President, Nina Christensen:
 2. In level 1, it seems that the principal and the teacher, the professionals at school with a diverse group of students each day and have robust training relative to educating students, shared the reasoning behind the inclusion of this material. So, I again ask why the board feels that they have more authority with determining the appropriateness of material with no background in education or classroom teaching experience vs. those that do. In addition, it says that it must meet criteria of policy 361. The following is included in policy 361:
 - Supplemental educational materials will be selected to support the standards-based core instructional programs of the District, provide a wide range of interests on all levels of difficulty, provide a diversity of appeal, and present different points of view.
 - Reputable and unbiased professional selection aids will be used in selecting and evaluating supplemental educational materials.
 - c. I also have not received an answer to this question: I still do not see where the word “objectionable” is a criteria for considering removal of the challenged content. This is the word that you cited when saying that you were voting to remove the book in order to follow policy. Can you please point me to where this is (in the policy)?
 - i. I did, however, find the word “objectionable” on the BookLooks home page:



2. The following question was also not answered: I am unsure why the challenging family was able to dictate whether they wanted the book to be removed entirely or moved to a higher grade. I do not see in the policy where the challenging family is granted this authority during the process. Can you please explain?
3. Another question that was unanswered: In addition to this removal not adhering to policies, it also does not adhere to the school district's "big aims," which I found on our website:
 - All students successfully transition to college and work prepared for their future.
 - All students and families feel they belong in our school community.
 - All students and adults are engaged, learning and improving.
 - All students, families and staff members feel we are a School District of Choice.

This does not make all students and families feel they belong in our school community. And, it has been proven that students will be more engaged if the content learned relates to their lives. If students do not see children who look like them and families that look like theirs in the lessons taught, they will likely be less engaged. I have also seen many comments from families that this removes the SDMF as a school district of choice.

State Standards/Recommendations

1. [Human Growth and Development: a resource guide to assist school districts in policy and program development and implementation \(wi.gov\)](#) (page 2 states that the state recommends HG&D curriculum for K-12; further review of the document states that concepts of family and gender identity are appropriate for early elementary, K-2)
 - a. Statutory support. Wisconsin Statute 118.019 encourages all school boards to provide students in grades Kindergarten to 12 with HG&D instruction. The purpose is “to promote accurate and comprehensive knowledge in this area and responsible decision making and to support and enhance the efforts of parents to provide moral guidance to their children.” (page 2)

- b. The statute requires the school board on an annual basis to provide parents of each pupil enrolled in the school district with an outline of the HG&D curriculum used in the pupil's grade level and information regarding how the parent may inspect the complete curriculum and instructional materials. In addition, the curriculum and instructional materials must be made available for inspection at any time upon request. Students can be exempted from HG&D instruction if the student's parent files a written request with the teacher or school principal. (page 14)
 - c. Early Elementary—The preschool and kindergarten years are characterized as the “play age” and “years of magic” as children move about, develop social skills, and express curiosity about their world. Children ages 5–8 years of age continue to be curious about many things, including their own bodies. Children become more aware of similarities and differences, and may express their curiosity by asking questions. Many are also curious about pregnancy and birth. (page 23)
2. Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards: [Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards Fifth Edition](#)
- a. I asked the following questions regarding these standards and did not receive a reply:
 - Can you please speak to how removal of this book is in line with supporting students in meeting the performance standards listed for emotional development, self-concept, and social competence as well as the performance standards for diversity in learning?
 - I am also wondering if you can share how the district handles it when the professionals in our district participate in CEUs required for their profession and rely on their initial training to become one of our wonderful educators and make a decision in line with these standards but then are told that it is too "objectionable." This is a difficult place to put teachers in when they do not feel their expertise is valued.

C. DIVERSITY IN LEARNING

Developmental Expectation

Children in Wisconsin will engage in diverse approaches to learning that reflect social and cultural contexts such as biology, family history, culture, and individual learning styles.

Performance Standard

During the early childhood period, children in Wisconsin will show evidence of developmentally appropriate abilities in the following areas:

- C. EL. 1 Experiences a variety of routines, practices, and languages.
- C. EL. 2 Learns within the context of his/her family and culture.
- C. EL. 3 Uses various styles of learning including verbal/linguistic, bodily/kinesthetic, visual/spatial, interpersonal, and intrapersonal.

Program Standard

Early care and education programs in Wisconsin will provide the environment, context, and opportunities for children to extend their learning through partnerships with parents to honor diversity and individual learning styles.

B. Self-concept (continued)

PERFORMANCE STANDARD: B.EL. 2 DEMONSTRATES SELF-AWARENESS (CONTINUED)

Developmental Continuum	Sample Behaviors of Children	Sample Strategies for Adults
<p>Identifies self as a member of a specific culture, group, or demographic that fits into a larger world picture.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child knows full name and is aware of unique family traditions and routines. • Child talks about whether he/she lives in a large city, small town, or rural area. • Child shows eagerness to learn about other ways to experience the world through dance, music, food, and conversation. • Child starts to learn that humans rely on plants, animals, and each other for food, clothing, medicines, and other needs. • Child shows curiosity about other geographic locations, oceans, rivers, lakes, clouds, stars, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the child to tell stories about his/her family traditions. • Model respect for diverse family types and customs. • Read books that describe all types of families, living styles, traditions, and situations. • Visit museums, festivals, stores, and restaurants to help the child become aware of the diversity in the world around them. • Explore the life cycle of plants and animals to help the child understand the interdependence between humans and the natural world. • Show the child world globes, maps, travel books, and science information. Talk about how people travel to different places and how they experience things that are different from where we live.

Example of standards in this document that I am referencing. This document is also listed on the SDMF website.

3. I asked about WI DPI’s 4K/5K transition guidance and did not receive a response: [4K/5K Transition: Guidance | Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction](#). Some of the guidance applicable to this complaint is as follows:

- *Individuality*—the characteristics and experiences unique to each child, within the context of their family and community, that have implications for how best to support their development and learning.
 - Early childhood educators have the responsibility of getting to know *each* child well, understanding each child as an individual and as a family and community member.
 - Early childhood educators recognize the diversity among children and the opportunities it offers to support all children’s learning by recognizing each child as a unique individual with assets and strengths to contribute to the early childhood education learning environment (DAP Position Statement, 2020, p.7).
- *Context*—everything discernible about the social and cultural contexts for each child, each educator, and the program as a whole.
 - Context includes both one’s personal cultural context (the complex set of ways of knowing the world that reflect one’s family and other primary caregivers and their traditions and values) and the broader multifaceted and intersecting (for example, social, racial, economic, historical, and political) cultural contexts in which each of us live.
 - By recognizing that children’s experiences may vary by their social identities (for example, by race or ethnicity, language, gender, class, ability, family composition, and economic status, among others), with different and intersecting impacts on their development and learning, educators can make adaptations to affirm and support positive development of each child’s multiple social identities (DAP Position Statement, 2020, p.7).

4. In a review of neighboring school districts' curriculum, the HG&D curriculum from K-12 is fully available for two school districts for grades K-12 (Elmbrook and Wauwatosa), and in three others, learning about the family unit was mentioned in the social studies curriculum. In the districts where the full HG&D curriculum is listed, the concepts that were challenged within LMAF are addressed beginning in kindergarten or 1st grade with state guidelines listed next to their curriculum goals. The HG&D curriculum in the SDMF is not established until grade 3, putting our district behind others in relation to state standards and leading to increased confusion among district leaders, staff, and families in situations like this. While the HG&D curriculum is not available until grade 3 in the SDMF, Unit 1 for first grade social studies is listed as the following on the district website: Flags and Families.
 - a. If our district were more developed in this area, point b. for #1 above would have been most appropriate vs. removing content entirely for all students that is in line with state standards.
 - b. The removal cannot be based on our district's lack of developed curriculum in this area for through 2nd grade, as it is clear that state standards do exist for these younger grades and are formally documented as curriculum for younger grades in neighboring districts.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

1. The first purpose of IDEA listed is as follows: to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living;
 - a. Concerns related to a child in the challenging family having a diagnosis of autism and difficulties with meeting milestones related to pronoun acquisition secondary to that were mentioned during the challenge meeting. This concern would likely be addressed through accommodations provided under IDEA, though I cannot speak to the specific child's educational needs and skills. This would not affect the curriculum and supplemental materials provided to the whole class. Pronoun acquisition milestones are below:

When do children develop pronouns?

Children learn pronouns as part of their overall speech and language development. Pronouns, such as "I," "you," "he," "she," "it," "we," and "they," are used to refer to people, animals, and things in a sentence. As children learn to speak, pronoun errors are part of the learning process. Most of the time, these errors are age-appropriate. Some children will not fully master all pronouns until the age of 4. Pronouns typically develop in a predictable order. See the pronoun ages of acquisition below for the age ranges in which children typically develop pronouns.

12-26 months: I, it

27-30 months: my, me, mine, you

31-34 months: your, she, he, your, we

35-40 months: they, us, hers, his, them, her

41-46 months: its, our, him, myself, yourself, ours, their, theirs

47+ months: herself, himself, itself, ourselves, yourselves

With all of the above information and resources, I am left to wonder why this book was removed entirely from the SDMF. The following are concerns that I have related to bias and discrimination due to being in conflict with the above:

Email Exchange

1. In response to the questions in my initial email to the school board and superintendent (when should a student learn their family structure is valued and should family pictures be removed from the classroom), I received the following answer from Ms. Christensen:
 - a. As for your other questions, I cannot answer them. As issues arise, I will decide on a case-by-case basis with reference to our district's policies and procedures. As of now, there are no concerns or issues that have been brought to the board's attention.
 - b. I am concerned about this answer that these questions cannot be answered but are easily answered by all of the resources provided below and also because she states that she will decide, as one person.
2. Ms. Christensen stated the following: As I explained in the meeting, my decision was based strictly on policy and procedure, leaving my emotion and personal views aside. Policies are intended to set guidelines for our district and should be followed with fidelity. Although the outcome was not what you preferred, this process was thorough, and our policy was followed. The Curriculum and Learning Committee's decision was based on the criteria established for Policy 361 and the supplemental material form/checklist.
 - a. It is clear in this complaint that policy was not followed.
3. Ms. Christensen stated the following: I applaud your daughter for being able to read and that she enjoys reading. It is important to learning and it sounds like her teacher did an

amazing job in her reading growth. I am sure that did not come about with just this one book.

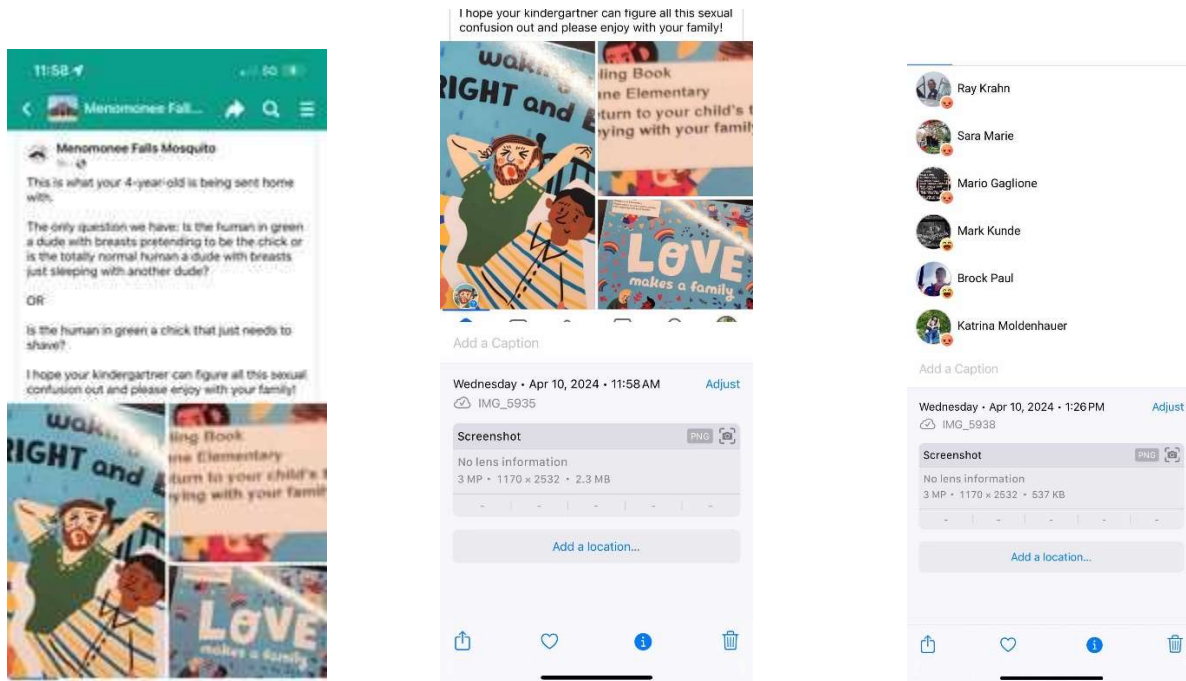
- a. The fact that this supplemental material could have been looked at in a student's backpack or that the student would be disappointed if a parent decided not to read the book with them was a focus of the meeting. However, Ms. Christensen stated the following when I shared that this book was important to my daughter in the reasons shared in a video from my daughter. If this is the sentiment, then I am unsure why the board would vote to remove the book with the thought that family values and pronoun knowledge would be established with a read through of just this one book.
4. Ms. Christensen declined to meet with myself and my daughter when I offered several times to discuss these concerns.

Religion/Personal Views

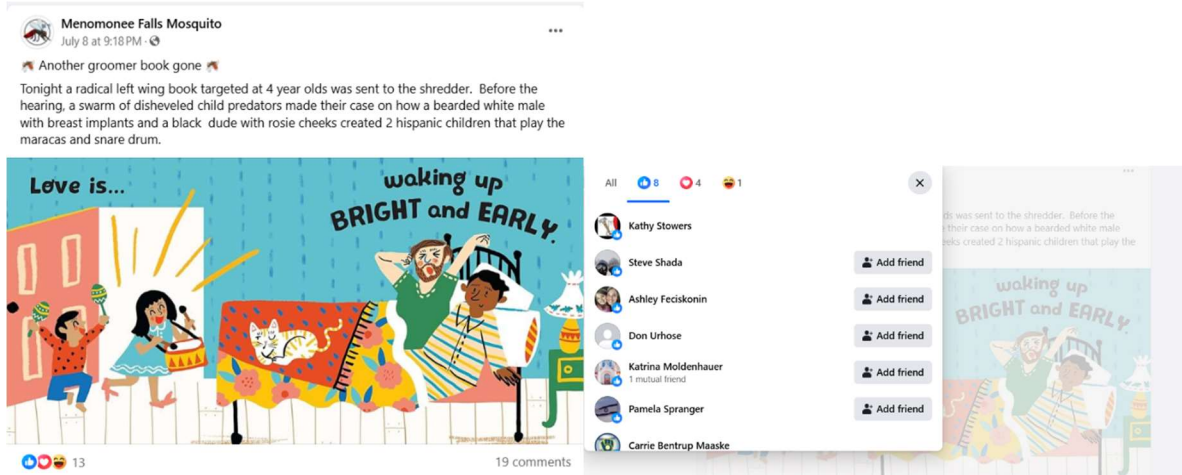
1. Religion was brought up several times in the challenge meeting, which has no place in the discussion of if this book should be included or removed in a public school setting. Here are examples of religion and personal views stated during the meeting or that are available to the public:
 - a. God Makes a Family was a book presented by challenging family that they would prefer were included as a supplemental material. While they acknowledged that this would not be appropriate due to it being a public school, this does openly note their personal views and biases related to this challenge. Additionally, the inclusion of this book does not have any religious affiliation, so its inclusion is not comparable to the inclusion of God Makes a Family.
 - b. The challenging family and their family/friends present were reported to call families concerned about the decision "Godless," which speaks to their personal religious beliefs being a motivator for the challenge and a wish to impose their views on all other families in the district.
 - c. The challenging family and members of the school board referred to family structures outside of them consisting of a mom, dad, and child(ren) "alternative" throughout the meeting. Merriam-Webster defines "alternative" as "different from the usual or conventional," when in reality, all families are just families, and it is not appropriate in the public school setting to label one student's family as "conventional" vs. another being "alternative." This impacts their family view and how they participate in their education vs. students who have a "conventional" family structure.
 - d. Social media/public appearances for members of school board and challenging family
 - I. Ms. Christensen: [Trump campaigns in Waukesha: Hundreds flock to Waukesha County Expo Center for rally | Waukesha Co. News | gmtoday.com](#). This states that she led an opening prayer at a rally for former president Trump, so at the very least, her religious views align with those of the challenging family.
 - II. This profile picture clearly shows the challenging family's view related to "alternative lifestyles."



III. The following was posted on an area page on April 10th 2024, which focuses on judgmental and hateful comments regarding the picture. The challenging family supported these sentiments.



IV. The following was posted on an area page after the decision on July 8th, and the challenging family liked this inflammatory and hateful post toward other groups of people, which reflects their motivation in making the challenge:



- e. Ms. Christensen shared that “objectionable material” (which they stated LMAF is a part of) is not taught for the same reason that Creation vs. Evolution is not taught. This again is a moot point, as one is religious in nature, and one is not.
- f. Ms. Christensen stating that this action by the school board should not be considered as discriminatory in the attached Facebook post and email thread does not mean that it is not. In addition, stating that policy was followed does not make it true.
- g. Ms. Christensen stated that because it was “objectionable” to the family that she voted to remove. Any content can be considered “objectionable” to any family. It is clear that the reasons that the content is considered “objectionable” are due to personal beliefs and family/student factors that can be addressed in other ways (family making their beliefs known at the beginning of the year so that the teacher can screen materials for their student or through the IEP process if appropriate).
- h. Ms. Christensen stated it is not the place of the board to impose values upon students/families. However, removing material that is in line with state standards and recommendations is discriminatory against students whose family wants them to receive an education that is in line with those standards, as now their educations are being impacted by the religious and personal beliefs of a few.
- i. In discussion with a 4K teacher, there are no other supplemental or primary classroom materials outside of family pictures provided that include pictures of different family structures. This is discriminatory against students who have “alternative family structures” and are not able to see families like their own within their educational materials. The teacher stated that students are comforted by their family photos when they are missing home during the day, and to not have content available to them that shows families like their own impacts their education and connection of participating in their education with their families.
- j. The following is stated in policy 411. The challenging family was able to request alternative assignments based on their beliefs if their beliefs were made known to the teacher/administrator ahead of time. This should have been used vs. impacting content available for all students.
 - I. **RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND EDUCATION** The District shall provide for reasonable accommodations of a student’s sincerely held religious beliefs with regard to all

examinations and other academic requirements, confidential requests for any such accommodations will be made in writing and approved by the building principal/designee. Accommodations may include, but not be limited to, exclusion from participation in an activity, alternative assignments, and release time from school to participate in religious activities and opportunities to make up work due to attendance at religious observances