

Superintendent Comments – Board of Education Meeting August 20, 2026

I believe I need to address our school opening. In virtually all respects, it was as successful and energetic as we've come to expect in one of the best school districts in the nation. However, because it is an election year - and things can often become a bit strange in election years - we do have some turbulence. So, because it is an election year - and I hate this - I have to do a special edition of mythbusters.

Here comes mythbust one. In the last two weeks, individuals campaigning for the school board are saying I told employees who to vote for in the school board elections. This is solely because addressed candidates criticize our District position that we should not give children unrestricted access to lewd, vulgar, and sexually explicit materials. That is not a political position - it is right versus wrong and, more fundamentally, it is our district policy and practice. And that's true regardless of whether someone tries to make it a political issue 3 years after we originally articulated it.

When a candidate or elected official - for whatever party - misrepresents or misstates this District's opposition to giving children unrestricted access to age-inappropriate, lewd, vulgar, and sexually explicit materials, a response is required.

This is particularly important when I am speaking to new employees after candidates suggest we do not have legal authority or this is solely a classroom decision.

This is particularly important when it is accompanied by assertions that the District wrongfully terminated a teacher just because she read a book to her students, and we are "banning books," and suggesting we are doing so to exclude a broad representation of our society. So, mythbust - in regard to our position on lewd, vulgar, and sexually explicit material, I clarified at the beginning of the year and will do so again –

One, this school district does not and will not use taxpayer dollars to provide children with unrestricted access to age-inappropriate materials that are lewd, vulgar, and sexually explicit. I have used this example before and will use it again - to what extent a parent allows their own child to watch rated "R" movies is a decision that occurs at home, not school. However, we could not and would not provide unrestricted access to Rated "R" movies in our schools. Simply because age-inappropriate lewd, vulgar, and sexually explicit materials do not have that parental notice does not remove that responsibility from us. That decision belongs to parents, not educators. As I said in the school opening - and stand by it - anyone who believes the school

district should misuse its authority and expose other parent's children to age-inappropriate, lewd, vulgar, or sexually explicit material should not be making those decisions for other people's children. And that is absolutely true regardless of who it is.

Mythbust two: Contrary to what is being suggested, the materials we removed from libraries are not being removed because they contain diverse perspectives. Our media centers literally have millions of books showing the vast array of the human experience.

We removed these particular books because we conducted a review of the books and discovered they were demonstrably inappropriate for children.

Just to remind you, the first books we removed contained approximately one instance of profanity per page and graphically described a recommended underage sex act - along with encouragement from one underage character to another to perform it, irrespective of a girl's consent.

The other materials we removed were in this vein. So regardless of what is being represented on political posts, we are not simply "banning books."

Mythbust three - contrary to what is now being suggested by some political campaigns, we do not fire educators simply because they read books to children. I encourage anyone believing this to read not only the case, but the Georgia State Board of Education's decision affirming the District's decision and the appeals affirming the decision. The teacher was fired for making a decision for parents and intentionally expose elementary-age students to content with which some families might disagree, intentionally misusing her authority and advocating to children who could not say no, refusing to follow District policy by consulting with her principal before introducing unapproved reading materials, and being untruthful in the investigation of it. Refusing to follow District policy with children will result in a recommendation for termination, regardless of what any candidate says. And if we were so wrong to do it, why did every level of appeal - from the State Board of Education to the courts - agree with the District's decision to terminate?

Look, just because a political candidate says he disagrees with the District's position does not mean it is a political issue. As I have said repeatedly, sexually explicit materials in schools is not a political issue, it is a student safety and protection issue. There is a national epidemic of underage sexual trafficking - also known as child trafficking. According to current data, a child is sold into trafficking every two minutes. Victims have said the sexualization of children often

begins with materials that treat them as sexual objects. Cobb is not immune, and in this school district, we will protect children.

I want to be very clear. This situation isn't about political posturing or attracting out-of-state campaign contributions. In Cobb County, it is still about right and wrong - good and evil. In the absence of good, evil just becomes more evil. There is no middle ground in this situation. You are either in favor of providing sexually explicit material to children or you are against it. I assure you, I am against it, and I will still not be moved.