

Dear Parents,

This letter is to inform you of the reading your child has been doing in Reading 8, the last three weeks. We started the year focusing on the theme "Identity". To encompass this theme, I assigned the novel The Perks of Being a Wallflower. Along with identity, other themes the book touch on include drug abuse, alcohol abuse, physical abuse, date rape, mental health, and coping. I realize some of these themes seem daunting for eighth-grade students, but none of the topics are glorified. In fact, it's quite the opposite.

The main point of the novel is that all of these behaviors are sought out by Charlie (the main character) as solutions to the pain he's feeling, but in fact, they lead to more pain. Instead, he can't begin to solve his problems until he opens up and starts talking to his parents about what happened. I believe this novel encourages students to talk to trusted adults if they ever feel they need to talk instead of using drugs or alcohol to cope.

I chose to read this novel because I believe we have a mature group of eighth-graders who can handle the content. I only ever heard positive comments about how much they enjoyed reading it! I also wanted to create a safe environment for students to be able to have conversations about difficult topics instead of hearing negative comments online. Although the conversations we had were eye-opening for some students, others felt they could relate to different parts of the novel.

Potosi is focusing heavily on Social Emotional Learning this year, which ties in significantly to another major theme of the novel: healing. Students need to learn how to deal with their emotions and find healthy ways to heal from and cope with any trauma they encounter, no matter how big or small. The author, Stephen Chbosky, said about the controversy of his novel, "I wrote this book as a blueprint for healing. I wrote this book to end the silence." He believes the classroom is the perfect setting for students to be introduced to this novel and these themes because it creates dialogue they might not otherwise receive.

Though this novel choice has a deep and meaningful purpose, it has been brought to my attention that the explicit content of some parts of the book is something that parents and possibly students are uneasy with. For this, I am sincerely sorry. Moving forward, I will be reviewing book choices more carefully with the administration and my professional learning community. I am aware that some topics in this book may have triggered traumatic experiences for some of our students. The pupil services team (Mrs. Cooley, Ms. Foote, and Mrs. Helmke) will be following up with students and provide any support needed.

I hope I was able to clear up any concerns you may have had. If any others arise, please feel free to contact me at meinckee@potosisd.k12.wi.us.

Sincerely,



Ms. Meincke, English 8



Mr. Uppena, 4k-12 Principal



Mr. Cohen, Superintendent