

**STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**STATE OF GEORGIA**

<b>TINA BROWNING,</b>	:	
	:	
<b>Appellant,</b>	:	
	:	
<b>vs.</b>	:	<b>CASE NO. 2008-37</b>
	:	
<b>BERRIEN COUNTY</b>	:	
<b>BOARD OF EDUCATION,</b>	:	
	:	
<b>Appellee.</b>	:	<b>DECISION</b>

This is an appeal by Tina Browning (Appellant) from a decision by the Berrien County Board of Education (Local Board) not to remove the novel A Separate Peace, by John Knowles, from the required reading list. Appellant claims that the book contains inappropriate language that high school students should not be required to read. The Local Board's decision is sustained.

A Separate Peace is one of the books on the required reading list at Berrien High School. Appellant challenged the book because she claims it contains inappropriate language. Appellant points out that if students in the school voiced the language contained in the book, they would be subject to disciplinary action, yet the students are required to read the book aloud in class, thus requiring them to break the rules established by the Local Board, all of which establishes a confusing message for the students.

The Local Board has a process to address complaints regarding books that begins with a School Media Committee review of the complaint. The complainant can appeal the decision of the School Media Committee to a Systems Committee composed of administrators, teachers, and community representatives. If the Systems Committee decides against removing the book, the complainant can appeal to the Local Board. All of these steps were followed in the instant case when Appellant challenged the book as a part of the required reading curriculum, with each committee voting to retain the book and the Local Board voting to uphold the decision of the Systems Committee. Appellant then filed an appeal to the State Board of Education.

Local Boards of Education have broad authority and discretion in the control and management of schools within their jurisdiction. GA. CONST. ART. 8, § 5, ¶ 1; *Colston v. Hutchinson*, 208 Ga. 559, 560, 67 S.E.2d 763, 764 (1951); *Boney v. County Bd. of Educ. of Telfair County*, 203 Ga. 152, 45 S.E.2d 442 (1947). Appellant has not presented any evidence that the Local Board failed to follow its procedures in addressing her complaint, nor has she shown that the Local Board abused its discretion, or that there has been any violation of school law.

In the absence of any abuse of discretion or the violation of any rule or regulation by the Local Board, the State Board of Education will not interfere with the Local Board's decision. Accordingly, the Local Board's decision is SUSTAINED.

This \_\_\_\_\_ day of April 2008.

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William Bradley Bryant  
Vice Chairman for Appeals