



## **Message from the Chair**

### **February 2, 2022**

As Chair of the Pitt County Board of Education, I understand that there has been recent sensationalized and inaccurate reporting regarding a parent's challenges to three books: *Forged By Fire* and *Darkness Before Dawn* by Sharon Draper and *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely.

The three books were assigned to an eighth grade class at Ayden Middle School along with *To Kill A Mockingbird*, *Night*, and *Tears of a Tiger*. Of the six books assigned, only *Tears of a Tiger* was read in its entirety by the class. A parent objected to the syllabus and in accordance with Pitt County Board of Education Policy 3210, the parent submitted challenges to the school's MTAC regarding *Forged by Fire* and *Darkness Before Dawn* on November 4, 2021. Prior to the school's MTAC meeting, the 8th grade ELA team at Ayden Middle School revisited assigned reading for the 2021-2022 school year and decided to assign short reading passages instead of the novels outlined on the syllabus. The book *All American Boys* was never read, and as a result of the multi-step process set out in Policy 3210, the book was removed as required reading in all middle schools.

Ultimately, it is my belief that the existing process provided in Policy 3210 which provides parents with the ability to request alternate assignments for their children works and should be utilized when parents have concerns.

Because the books have been inaccurately characterized as promoting profanity, underage drinking, pedophilia, and rape, I refer parents to a Q&A document which provides summaries of the books, clarification as to how the books are utilized in Pitt County Schools, and the process for requesting an alternate assignment.

Sincerely,

James Tripp, Jr.  
Chair  
Pitt County Board of Education