

Climate Committee  
Board of Directors  
Nova Classical Academy

Dear Climate Committee,

We, the undersigned faculty, wish to express our support for the lower school's inclusion of the book *My Princess Boy* as a tool to expose students to the concept of gender non-conformity and to help proactively prevent the bullying that has been reported in conjunction with a student who so identifies. Doing so will allow Nova to fulfill its state and federal mandates in accordance with Title IX and the Minnesota anti-bullying statute.

It has been repeatedly asserted that neither Title IX nor the anti-bullying statute requires the use of *My Princess Boy*. While this is technically correct, we feel it represents a misunderstanding of the practical realities faced by our school. The book addresses the federal and state mandates mentioned above in the following ways:

1. Title IX prohibits public schools from discriminating on the basis of sex. This includes enforcing the dress code by gender. For this reason, dozens of girls at Nova have for years worn the slacks afforded to boys – the school cannot require girls to wear skirts. Likewise, the school cannot enforce the dress code for boys by requiring them to wear pants if their gender identity includes non-conformity to expected dress – i.e., if they should decide to wear a skirt.
2. Given that the above is a federally mandated reality, it then becomes the school's responsibility to ensure that students who are gender non-conforming feel safe and protected from bullying at school. This is where Minnesota's anti-bullying mandate comes in: it requires the school to protect students from bullying no matter the reason, but along with several other categories specified, makes note of "gender identity and expression." Part of the state's mandate to protect students includes "effective prevention and intervention programs." This is where the book *My Princess Boy* presents itself as a good tool for lower-school teachers to use as a prevention strategy.
3. It has also been asserted that Nova is singling out a specific student's "protected class" to be safe from bullying. But as made evident by the testimonials from many lower-school faculty, *My Princess Boy* is but one tool in the arsenal against bullying. It is intended to make students aware of the existence of gender-nonconforming students so that when such a student is encountered, behavior that can lead to bullying (laughing, pointing, etc.) can be avoided. More such books based on other traits that commonly lead to bullying are welcomed by our faculty.

4. Contrary to many concerns that have been raised, this does not require that students or their families wholeheartedly *accept* as normative the notion of gender nonconformity, any more than they must accept as correct or true the myriad religious, social, or political identities our diverse student body represents. Rather, its aims are narrow: to instruct students how to *virtuously interact* with someone who is gender non-conforming – that is, to avoid behavior that could be *objectively construed as bullying* as defined by the state statute.

5. The Book *My Princess Boy* does this and only this: it presents a boy who dresses as a princess, presents his experiences of being laughed at or shunned, and asks students how they should *treat* such a student. This is the book's sole aim. That both students and parents will continue to have differing beliefs regarding gender is inevitable, and free expression of those differences will of course remain protected; however, bullying a student as defined in the state statute cannot be tolerated.

6. We understand that there is a vocal group of parents who feel that the book strays from values they teach at home. While parents, as the primary educators of their children, are of course welcome to set guidelines and rules for their own children as to how they will dress, it does not mean that the school can ignore the reality that some students, and their parents, choose not to conform to traditional gender expectations, and must be treated with the same respect as other students. **We simply cannot pretend that gender non-conforming students do not exist.**

As educators, we use a variety of resources daily to explore and discuss the world around our students. *My Princess Boy* – a book that takes approximately five minutes to read – is but one of those resources. The use of the book does not single out one set of students for protection. Teachers are continually adopting books to address the concerns of their students, and in fact, do so without those materials ever coming to the attention of the climate committee. This book was not singled out by the faculty, it was singled out for special consideration by those who are sensitive to a particular set of ascribed gender roles.

We understand those concerns. But as a public school, we must be guided by the law and by the evidence-based disciplines that inform it, and us, on the scholarly consensus of a given issue. That is how public schools can remain unbiased participants in the various cultural conversations that arise in class. Parents are welcome, and in fact encouraged, to continue at home the discussions sparked here, but we simply cannot ignore the experiences of our students who are gender non-conforming.

It is for these reasons we join in support of the administration in its decision to incorporate *My Princess Boy* into the curriculum of the lower school.

Sincerely,





