



Collier County
Public Schools

District School Board
of Collier County

June 8, 2021

Mr. John Lynch
President, CEO and Director
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt
125 High Street
Boston, MA 02110

Dear Mr. Lynch:

On April 7, 2021, The District School Board of Collier County ("the Board"), held a hearing in accordance with Florida law and Board Policy on objections to Houghton Mifflin Harcourt ("HMH") K-5 ELA instructional materials previously adopted by the Board at its April 13, 2021, Board Meeting. The Board deferred voting on the objections until a Special Board Meeting is held because of serious concerns raised, and discussed below, that we will need HMH to provide us with a response before we can go forward with a final vote. It is anticipated that the meeting will be held on Monday, June 14, 2021.

In its review of the instructional materials and related issues at the hearing, Board Members expressed considerable concern about postings on HMH's blog site submitted by Dr. Tyrone Howard and one submitted by HMH itself. The Board made it clear that it was opposed to teaching Critical Race Theory ("CRT") in its schools or having CRT content in the textbooks it has adopted for instruction. While neither the District staff nor Board Members found CRT content, reference to CRT, or language that would imply its usage, the District would like confirmation from HMH that the K-5 ELA instructional materials do not contain or imply CRT in them.

Moreover, a review of the community blog site shows that HMH has not posted any disclaiming language that the ideas expressed by Dr. Howard and other blog contributors, are their ideas and viewpoints and do not reflect the ideas and viewpoints of HMH. The Board would need such a disclaimer and an assurance that such viewpoints will not be imbedded in the K-5 ELA textbooks and the Board would like to be apprised by HMH accordingly. In this context, Board Members were also concerned of an unauthored blog post entitled "Black Lives Matter: A Commitment from HMH," dated June 11, 2020. The article contains the following language:

It's also important that the teachers, schools, and readers we serve have no doubt about where we stand on the issue of racism and the ways we are using our platform to make much-needed change. That's why today we posted our commitment. **Black Lives Matter.**

We believe Black Lives Matter. We believe in social justice. We believe learning is a fundamental right. We believe the education system needs to change, and we will continue to use our platform to make that change.

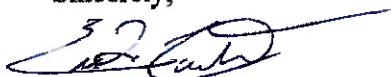
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While the Board is mindful that the article was written in the aftermath of the death of George Floyd, it also is concerned that the maintenance of the posting of the article for over a year unnecessarily politicizes matters for a company whose focus should be political neutrality in the area of instructional materials adoption and purchase. The Board insists, in the interest of fostering such neutrality, HMH remove or revise the title and the content of its June 11, 2020, blog post in order for the Board to be able to proceed forward with the adoption. While we appreciate the K-5 ELA text materials, the intensive vetting done by the District's recommending committee of 21 members, and follow up by District staff, we also take seriously the claims by the objectors and the community members who have supported them.

We look forward to promptly hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Erick Carter", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mr. Erick Carter
School Board Chair