

Ms. Nancy Garrett
Chairman
Williamson County Board of Education
1320 West Main St
Franklin TN 37064

7/29/2021

By email to nancy.garrett@wcs.edu
By hand: via Williamson County BoE

Dear Ms. Garrett,

I write to deliver notice to you of violations of multiple Board policies, including ethics policies, with respect to conduct on social media of Board member Eric Welch. The relevant policies are:

1.2021 Code of Ethics for School Board Members, Article II, Section 5

Section 5. I will refer to other board members, staff, students, and the public with respect including when using social media.

1.2021 Code of Ethics for School Board Members, Article VI, Sections I and 4

Section 1. I will inform myself about my duties and responsibilities and current educational issues by individual study and through participation in programs providing needed information.

“Section 4. I will take no action that will compromise the Board, the District or administration.”¹

1.202 Duties of Board Members, #7

7. To represent the Board and the school system to the public in such a way as to promote both interest and support;

¹ 1.2021 Code of Ethics for School Board Members, Article 6, Sect 4

In addition to these policies Mr. Welch as a board member has a implied duty as a Board Member when speaking publicly on school matters to be informed, accurate, and not to omit material information, the omission of which would make any such statement false or misleading.

As you know pursuant to Williamson County Board of Education (“WCBOE”) policy 4.403 multiple Complainants have filed requests for Reconsideration of Instructional Materials and Textbooks, and a formal review is underway. Among the items under review by the 4.403 Committee and named by various Complainants alike is *Ruby Bridges Goes to School, My True Story*, ISN 9780545108553.

As you also may know the discussion has, unfortunately become contentious on social media, and consequently the need for accuracy and professionalism in public communication by board members is heightened. Please be aware of the following issues with Mr. Welch.

I. Public dissemination of misleading and untrue information

First, with respect to public dissemination of misleading & untrue information, **Mr. Welch identifies himself and his status on Twitter with the WCBOE** in his profile as you may see below (copied 7/25//2021).



Source: <https://twitter.com/EricWelchWCS>

On **July 8, 2021**, Mr. Welch, while identifying himself as a member of Williamson County Schools, posted on Twitter the following comment during the pendency & ongoing work of the 4.403 Review Committee.

 **Eric Welch** @EricWelchWCS

Replying to @EricWelchWCS

Here's the book "Ruby Bridges Goes to School" for anyone wanting to makeup their own mind.



Ruby Bridges read along with Miss Erica!!
Hi you guys! I hope that you have enjoyed today's video!
Please be sure to check out the book below on Amazon and ...
youtube.com

11:37 AM · Jul 8, 2021 from Virginia, USA · Twitter for iPhone

1 Retweet 9 Likes

 **Kerri Dunaway** @kerridunaway · Jul 8

Replying to @EricWelchWCS

Thanks for posting this video. Guarantee no one complaining about this curriculum has actually looked at any of these materials.

Source: <https://twitter.com/EricWelchWCS/status/1413175538026487808>

Link to video in Tweet: <https://youtu.be/OPFUCJiF4cA>

And again on July 14th with reference to the review of the curriculum:



So what's the problem? His posting is false. The Board and the Ethics Committee should be aware that **the book presented by Mr. Welch is neither the book used by WCS curriculum nor the book cited by the various and several Complainants.** Also, note the implicit allegation by reference to Nathan Bedford Forrest, that the critics of the content are racist.

How does one know Mr. Welch cited the wrong book? The snip immediately below was not Tweeted by Mr. Welch, but provided so you may see clearly the ISBN identifying number of that book (highlighted in yellow below) he cited repeatedly and falsely.



Let's Read About-- Ruby Bridges
by **Grace Maccarone** and **Ruby Bridges**

☆☆☆☆☆ No Customer Reviews

Select Format

Paperback
\$3.59 - \$4.79

Select Condition ?

Like New \$4.79	Very Good \$4.69 <small>DEAL</small>	Good \$4.19 <small>DEAL</small>
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ISBN: **0439513626**
ISBN13: **9780439513623**

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Is this book cited by Mr. Welch even in the Wit & Wisdom curriculum? No. Wit & Wisdom publishes its Core Text Library, the cover page of which of is presented below to identify the primary source document and facilitate your verification of the information below.

WIT & WISDOM™

More Meaningful English

From Great Minds, the nonprofit that created *Eureka Math*, comes a new, text-based curriculum that brings coherent, knowledge-rich ELA content back into the classroom. *Wit & Wisdom* helps you meet the expectations of the standards while celebrating the world of knowledge with your students. See the frequently asked questions below to learn more about our *Wit & Wisdom* libraries.

How are texts selected?

We take great care in selecting texts for inclusion in our *Wit & Wisdom* curriculum by considering content, craft, and complexity in our text selection. Our curated libraries include content-rich texts that enable students to learn about the world by reading complex and rigorous literary and informative works.

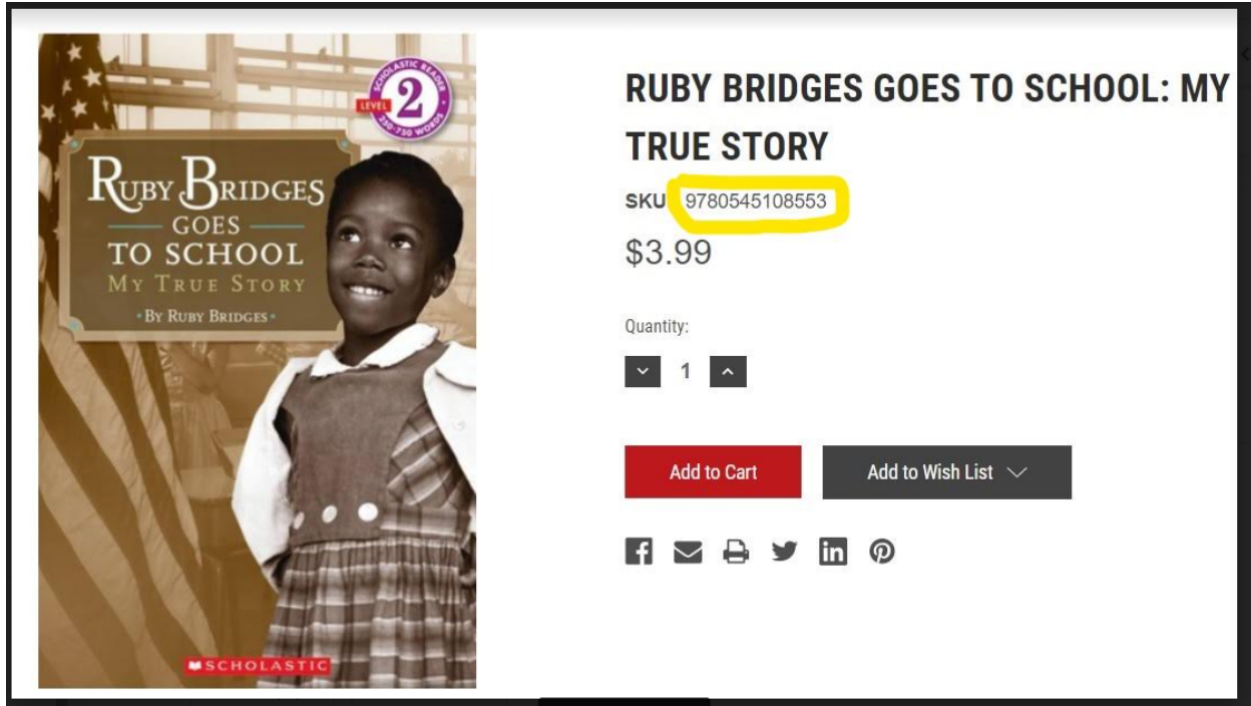
What does a *Wit & Wisdom* Library include?

Each grade level library contains the complete listing of Core Texts for each module, including print and digital formats. Select the library type and the number of texts that best reflect your classroom needs.

The relevant excerpt from the Core Text Library appears below. Note the the title of the actual textbook and the ISBN number highlighted in yellow cited by various complainants. **The book Mr. Welch cites is not found in the Wit & Wisdom Core Text Library.**

2	3	Civil Rights Heroes	Separate Is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez and Her Family's Fight for Desegregation	Duncan Tonatiuh	Library/Reinforced	9781419710544	1	
					EBOOK, Single User	9781613126332		
			Martin Luther King, Jr. and the March on Washington	Frances E. Ruffin	Paperback	9780448424217	30	
			Ruby Bridges Goes to School: My True Story	Ruby Bridges	Paperback	9780545108553	30	
			The Story of Ruby Bridges	Robert Coles	Paperback	9780439472265	15	
			I Have a Dream	Martin Luther King Jr. and Kadir Nelson	Hardcover	9780375858871	1	
					EBOOK, Single User	9780375987724		

Below is the book listed in the Core Text Library, highlighted in yellow above, and referenced in the many complaints.



What difference does it make? A big difference. The book cited by Mr. Welch omits various of the offensive issues which exist in the in the actual curriculum and were the objects of complaints. It is clear that Mr. Welch **knew or should have known and likely knows today that his various public pronouncements on Twitter were and remain untrue and misleading.** It is difficult to see how the Board can responsibly suffer such behavior to exist.

Further, should the determination of the Review Committee be appealed, the issue **may be subject to a hearing of appeal to the WCBOE itself, which begs the issue of Mr. Welch's actions regarding prejudicial conduct, conflict and compromise.**

His advertized standing with the WCBOE is misleading in that he presumably does not speak in this context for the Board, yet it serves by design to influence the public. **In no way can this conduct be seen as representing the Board and school system as to promote interest and support** as is his duty (cf 1.2021 Code of Ethics for School Board Members, Article VI, Sections I and 4; and 1.202 Duties of Board Members, #7). Accordingly, at a minimum Mr. Welch should recuse himself or be caused to recuse

himself from any vote on the matter. The Board would be well advised to consider public censure to maintain its credibility and that of its responsible members.

II Conduct violating Article 2, Section 5 of the Code of Ethics for School Board Members: lack of respect, social media conduct, and public misrepresentation

Section 5. I will refer to other board members, staff, students, and the public with respect including when using social media².

Please review these materials with specific regard to the standard of respect and acceptable conduct. Mr. Welch on social media serially misrepresents the referent of a Tweet by Mrs. Robin Steenman and repeatedly targets her personally and misrepresents the context in which her statement was made. This requires impartial examination for compliance with the standard as defined and expected by the public.

On July 12th:



What's the problem here? Mr. Welch's Tweet of July 12 is untrue. Mr. Welch misrepresents the referent in Mrs. Steenman's statement. At no time did Mrs. Steenman refer to the William County Schools or its employees.

² 1.2021 Code of Ethics for School Board Members, Article 2, Sect 5

And again on July 14th.



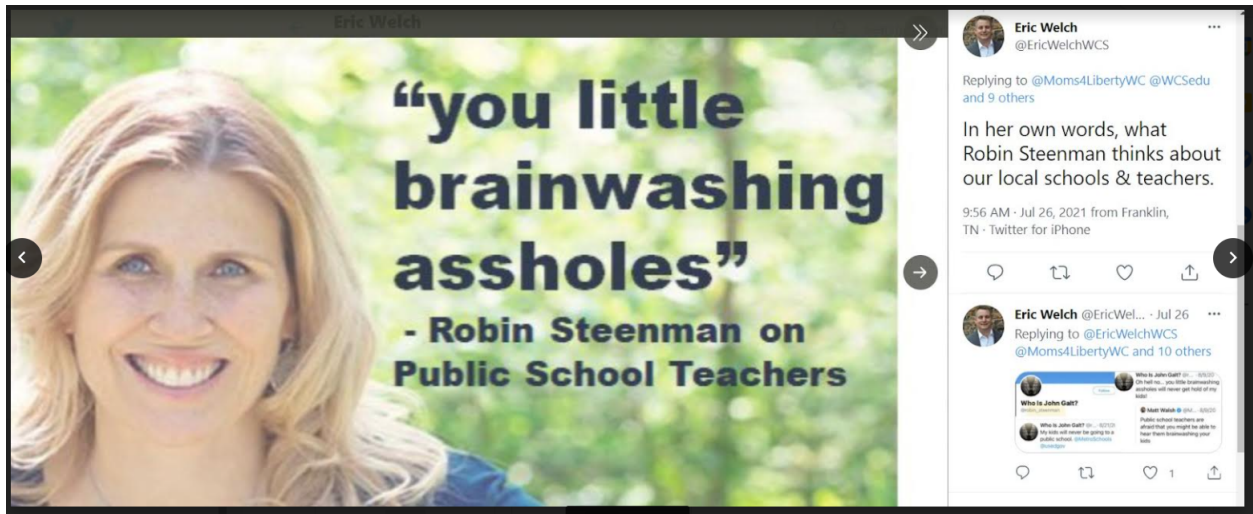
What's the problem here? Mr. Welch's Tweet of July 14th is untrue. Mr. Welch misrepresents the referent. At no time did Mrs. Steenman refer to the Williamson County Schools or its employees.

And again on July 21.



What's the problem here? Mr. Welch's Tweet of July 21th is untrue. Mr. Welch misrepresents the referent. At no time did Mrs. Steenman refer to the William County Schools or its employees.

And again:



What’s the problem here? Mr. Welch’s Tweet is untrue. Mr. Welch misrepresents the referent. At no time did Mrs. Steenman refer to the William County Schools or its employees nor did it refer to all public school teachers.

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So what was the proper referent? Below, the initial post highlighted by Matt Walsh which highlights Mr. Kay comments. Mr. Kay's comments are expanded in detail on the following page and were the object of Mrs. Steenman's comment.



(this space intentionally blank)

Expanded to include Mr. Kay's comments to which Mrs. Steenman referred:



The image shows a screenshot of a Twitter thread on a dark background. It features four tweets from Matthew R. Kay (@MattRKay), each with a circular profile picture of a man with a beard and glasses. The tweets are connected by a vertical line. The first tweet is a thread starter with 1,413 replies, 1,666 retweets, and 2,107 likes. The second tweet has 140 replies, 171 retweets, and 546 likes. The third tweet has 157 replies, 144 retweets, and 506 likes. The fourth tweet is partially cut off at the bottom of the screenshot.

Matthew R. Kay @MattRKay · 23h
So, this fall, virtual class discussions will have many potential spectators - parents, siblings, etc. - in the same room. We'll never be quite sure who is overhearing the discourse. What does this do for our equity/inclusion work? (Thread)
1,413 1,666 2,107

Matthew R. Kay @MattRKay · 23h
How much have students depended on the (somewhat) secure barriers of our physical classrooms to encourage vulnerability? How many of us have installed some version of "what happens here stays here" to help this?
140 171 546

Matthew R. Kay @MattRKay · 23h
While conversations about race are in my wheelhouse, and remain a concern in this no-walls environment - I am most intrigued by the damage that "helicopter/snowplow" parents can do in honest conversations about gender/sexuality...
157 144 506

Matthew R. Kay
@MattRKay

[Matt Walsh on Twitter: "Public school teachers are afraid that you might be able to hear them brainwashing your kids..."](#)

And while "conservative" parents are my chief concern - I know that the damage can come from the left too. If we are engaged in the messy work of destabilizing a kids racism or homophobia or

The referent of “you” in the Tweets by Mr Welch was not “our local schools and teachers” or all “public school teachers” as Mr. Welch so disingenuously and serially presents. The rough comment from Mrs. Steenman was in response to a specific postings by a teacher, Matthew R. Kay of Philadelphia (see <https://www.stenhouse.com/authors/matthew-r-kay>) and with specific respect to a teacher suggesting an agenda **whereby parental oversight of classroom discussion is vitiating**, removed by instilling an informal policy of “what happens here stays here” (i.e. discussions in the classroom are not to be discussed outside the classroom with parents or others). This, he muses, this would solve what he considers to be a problem: “We’re never be quite sure who is overhearing the discourse.” It is clear Mrs. Steenman’s comment was not directed at or in response to anything having to do with WCS teachers or all public school teachers. She will provide a sworn affidavit to the Board or an appropriate subordinate committee upon request.

Mr. Welch is simply and serially misrepresenting the actual context and the referent to disingenuously mislead the public and attack a citizen and parent.

Again, Mr. Welch’s Twitter profile highlights his association with Williamson County Schools in in twitter address (“WCS”) and his role as member of the Board of Education (profile copied 7/25//2021).



Source: <https://twitter.com/EricWelchWCS>

One is left to conclude that he treats neither Mrs. Steenman, the public, parents, the Williamson County Schools nor the Board of Education nor it’s policies with respect.

He violates his implicit obligations as a Board member to speak truthfully and violates his explicit obligation to treat members of the public with respect.

This letter constitutes notice to you in your capacity as Chairperson of the Board of Education and delivered with the expectation of appropriate evaluation, remedy, and cure. I request that you kindly confirm good receipt of this email to include a response outlining the steps the board will take and the timeline in which its action will fall.

Sincerely,

J. Hunter Brown

 Franklin, TN 37064