



In 1993, a family with a third grader at Golden View Elementary in the San Ramon Valley Unified School District became alarmed when a 3rd grade son came home with the Golden View library book pictured at left, and said, "Mom, there's bad words in this book and I don't think I should be reading it."

The boy's mother commented, **"My third-grader knew within the first chapter that it wasn't appropriate."** The family attempted to get Golden View, the Superintendent (at the time, John Duncan), and then finally the School Board to remove the book from Golden View's **K - 6 library**. But a stacked "site council" -- and later the Superintendent and the School Board -- refused to remove the book, saying (for example, in the case of then School Board member Chris Kenber) that retention of the book, without even any restrictions on circulation, represented a "thoughtful, intelligent, rational, and totally defensible decision."

Today, the book remains available in at least three SRVUSD to kids who've just learned to read. Its use is one of many examples that reveal a school district at war philosophically with many of those who pay its bills.

SCHOOL TO PARENTS: IN YOUR FACE

SRVUSD Scandal, May 1993

Once upon a time, not so long ago, parents could depend on their local tax-supported schools to reinforce common family values. Today, parents are opposed by an array of implacable social revolutionaries in the schools -- individuals who seem determined to titillate and desensitize children with vulgarity, profanity, and inappropriate visual images as well.

Two Golden View Elementary parents have decided they'll just say "whoa." As recounted by the *SRV Times* (May 8), their *third-grade* son came home with a Golden View library book entitled *The Boy Who Lost His Face*. It's one of those thoroughly despicable little trash novels with all the juvenile soap-opera clichés — and worse.

The cover features a young schoolboy, his pants around his ankles, a shocked young female classmate looking on. "He has the cutest purple shorts," she says later. The text itself, as noted by the parents, is liberally spiced with words the *Times* could only print in truncated form (e.g., "dip___," "bull___," and "___hole"). The *Tri-Valley Herald*'s version of the story omitted the words altogether, then juxtaposed a second piece critical of *parental* "censorship."

The third grader's mom accurately points out that "other passages allude to child pornography, smoking marijuana, and problem-solving through violence" -- and that various characters regularly "flip off" each other.

As of May 14, the parents' attempt to remove the offensive book from the elementary library has been stonewalled by teachers, the school librarian, the principal, and the site council. The parents are considering their options and, depending upon circulation restrictions to be announced by the site council, they may appeal for common sense from the superintendent and or the school board of the San Ramon Valley Unified School District.

But common sense is woefully uncommon among the powerful political entities which control public schools these days. Among these...

1. **SRVEA, the local teacher union**, an affiliate of the malignant California Teachers Association — which defies parental authority and traditional values in its 1984 publication, *Guidelines for Academic Freedom in the Public Schools*: "Who dares take on religion, free enterprise, patriotism, enterprise, patriotism, and motherhood? We do, and we must!" (p 32).
2. **The irresponsible American Library Association**, which asserts that even the most explicit library materials should be available to all library patrons, regardless of age. ALA's "Freedom to Read Foundation" has received support from the Playboy Foundation, as a means of "embracing the ideals set forth in the Playboy Philosophy and often reaffirmed in *Playboy* magazine" (Playboy Foundation, Annual Reports).
3. **The compromised SRVUSD School Board itself**, a majority of which was seated through a CTA-award winning, orchestrated effort by SRVEA -- with at least one recent addition having routinely demonstrated philosophic solidarity with the union.

Stuart Goldware, current school board president, has already chanted the obligatory CTA and ALA mantra that "we need to trust our children and give our children credit for their ability to learn and understand right from wrong."

Goldware and his cohorts should read William Kilpatrick's *Why Johnny Can't Tell Right From Wrong: Moral Illiteracy and the Case for Character Education*.

As for complaints by Louis Sachar, the book's author, about the parents' attempt to remove the book (*Times*, May 9), who cares? Sachar is in the business of making money from his writing, whether or not it panders to baser instincts. Parents are in the business of raising children properly, whether or not that pleases "public servants" in the local public-school bureaucracy.

The board's own Policy 6916 requires that library materials demonstrate "educational suitability, good taste, relevance, appropriateness to age and grade level." One wonders how the board could *not* rule in favor of the parents.

But it's a reasonable policy in the hands of unreasonable people. The same board majority has okayed R-rated films in district classrooms (the "R" rating being assigned for violence, profanity, nudity, and sex). So the Board, metaphorically like the vulgar delinquents (and sappy father) in Sachar's story, will probably "flip off" the parents' legitimate complaint.

School Choice Vouchers, anyone?

Post Script: The School Board retained the book that year at Golden View. Today, at least three SRVUSD elementary schools have the book in their school libraries.