

Proposed bill to put restrictions on books

By Ryan Brown

A bill initially proposed by Governor Kim Reynolds would establish a list of books that have been removed from school districts across the state of Iowa for obscene or sexually explicit material.

If this bill were to be passed, school districts where a book has been removed would be required to notify the Iowa Department of Education.

That department would then put any book that is banned onto a state removal list, which is available to schools across Iowa.

For any book on that list, districts would be required to get parental consent to teach or distribute the book.

If these conditions are not met by a district, it would get a warning. If it happened again, staff members and the superintendent could be subject to a disciplinary hearing if the law was knowingly violated.

Durant superintendent Joe Burnett is not sold on the state removal list.

“My opinion is that I do believe in local control, and if there’s a district in western Iowa that wants something banned, I think that should be their prerogatives in the district,” Mr. Burnett stated.

He stated that he believes that if a ban were to happen in Sioux City, for example, every other district in the state shouldn’t have to necessarily adhere to that ban.

Mr. Burnett says if parents have a concern about a book that is being taught in the Durant district, they have every right to bring that up to the district.

“We have a board policy for all instructional materials, and if it’s questioned by a parent, it goes through a reconsideration committee, and that committee makes a recommendation to the school board,” he said.

Mr. Burnett said the school board would then vote on the committee’s findings,

whether that be banned or not banned.

Mr. Burnett stated that if parents have a concern about something that is being taught by a teacher, they should feel free to inquire about it.

Ms. Jennifer Turner, the Polk County chapter chair for the group Moms for Liberty, feels that the state removal list would not infringe on local control “because it’s giving a parent notification that this book contains content that some may deem as ‘objectionable’ and for the parent to review.”

She said the state removal list is no different than the rating system used for movies today.

Moms for Liberty has developed its own list of books that are currently being offered or taught in school districts in Iowa. The books are rated on a scale of 1 to 5 depending on how sexually graphic or controversial they are.

“We created a book to bring aware-

ness to provide examples of the content we were talking about – sexually explicit content,” she said.

“It is a resource for anyone to use. This list isn’t all-inclusive. We would like clear objective standards established on what is acceptable content to be available. Today that doesn’t exist.”

Ms. Turner said Moms for Liberty used an already established rating system with clear objective standards and definitions for its list.

“We looked up the books that had the highest ratings to see if they were in our public school libraries in Iowa,” she said. “The book provided an easy and concise way to highlight the content and get people to actually look at the content in an effort to raise awareness.”

Ms. Turner said her organization “would like to see the same protections that **See LEGISLATION, page 2**

Students do their part, but bond falls just short

By Grace Paustian

Although the bond referendum fell painfully short of passing, some Durant high school seniors and recent graduates did their part to vote yes on election day or by absentee ballots.

Out of 1,046 people who voted for the bond on March 7, only 30 more yes votes were needed for the bond to pass with 60 percent.

Superintendent Joe Burnett is disappointed by the outcome of the bond but explains how he is proud of the efforts put in by the group of people who raised awareness about the importance of the bond.

Mr. Burnett is pleased with the rise in percentage of yes votes from the previous bond five years ago.

“Five years ago, we had 38 percent yes, and this time we had almost 59 percent yes, and this is a major improvement,” said Mr. Burnett.

Mrs. Jenny Paper, who is the mother of Durant graduate Brendan Paper, now a college student at the University of Iowa,

sent out absentee ballot request forms to her son and other college students as well as other community members.

She even passed some out at basketball games to parents with college-aged children.

She also had multiple flyers posted on the door of Paper’s Lumber and Supply, the local business she owns with her husband Gary.

Mrs. Paper said she went through this effort to get out the vote because of the importance of the bond.

“The school is the backbone of our community and we need to take care of it,” Mrs. Paper said. “An upkeep school will attract new families to our community and help keep our small town thriving.”

She said many areas of the school are exactly the same as when she was in school and are in desperate need of repair.

When customers would ask about the bond, she would share her feelings on how important voting yes for the bond was.

See BOND, page 3



Photo by Kylie Meyermann

Durant quarterback Charles Huesmann drops back against Sigourney-Keota in the season opener last August. The Wildcats may drop from Class 1A to Class A next season based on the outcome of a new formula for determining a school’s class size.

New formula affects football classes

By Lauren Callison

A new statewide classification system could drop Durant football to Class A next season.

Assistant Director Jared Chizek of the Iowa High School Athletic Association (IHSAA) doesn’t know for sure where Du- **See FORMULA, page 4**

State survey examines local school environment

By Garrett Pearlman

With ISASP testing right around the corner from April 10-14, Durant students will also take the annual Conditions of Learning survey.

In the student survey given last spring, it revealed that Durant’s grades 7-12 exceeded the state average when it comes to students feeling physically safe at school.

The Conditions of Learning survey contains five sections. In addition to physical safety, students are asked questions dealing with their emotional safety, how they feel about adult-to-student relationships in school, how they feel about student-to-student relationships in school, and how they feel about the boundaries and expectations set by the high school staff.

Based on the survey, Durant’s grades 7-12 improved in most categories from the previous year’s survey but fell just below the state average for every category

except physical safety. Although there is no sure way to tell if someone lied on the survey or not, the school is still graded for it.

One of the more surprising results came from a question asking if students believe that their peers treat adults working at Durant’s middle and high schools with respect. More than half, 58 percent, disagreed.

A soon-retiring teacher who saw many waves of students in her educational career, Mrs. Mary Feuerbach, believes the results might actually be skewed, though.

“I just think more often than not it’s a certain group of students that are being disrespectful, and other students in the class are seeing that,” Mrs. Feuerbach said.

She even believes that the actual percentage of those disrespectful students would only be five percent.

“I think in general most students respect their teachers,” said Mrs. Feuerbach. “I think that statistic revolves around the fact

of those students seeing other students that don’t respect their teachers, and I don’t think it’s every teacher, and it’s not every student. I think they are looking at particular students that are not being respectful, and that’s where they are basing their answer.”

Although every survey question in the category of physical safety seemed to have high markings, two results seemed out of place.

Five percent of students answered that they had gotten their things, such as books, clothing, or bikes, damaged on purpose or even stolen three or more times. Almost a fourth of the students said it had at least happened once.

On another topic of safety, 76 percent of students reported that they haven’t been hit, kicked, or pushed around by their fellow peers, but 11 percent of students reported that they had been a victim at least three times.

In the category of emotional safety, 25 percent of students reported that they received hurtful or even scary messages electronically at least three times in the last year.

Sophomore Mariah Alpen, who took the survey as a freshman, said she doesn’t see it happen to other students that often.

“I do believe it’s true, but it’s never actually happened to me,” she said.

In one question which asked whether students felt included by their peers, 47 percent of students report that they’ve felt included six times or more.

Freshman Paige Happ questions if that statistic is really true.

“I always felt like I was included because I’m friends with people in the grade above me, so it wasn’t really a problem with me, but I see people get left out a lot,” said Happ.

See SURVEY, page 2