superintendent John Sweet reading directly from it during his 40-minute "objective" presentation to the board. Bonnie Harrison, chairman of the "impartial" reconsideration committee, also read from the HBJ defense kit in her report.

Sweet admitted to a reporter that he quoted from HBJ's material. "If it is true, so what?" he said, declining to answer further questions.

Rehberg said the school gave a well-orchestrated three-and-a-half-hour production that included teachers reading lesson plans, but none that taught witchcraft. "Much of the evidence they presented was right out of the kit," he said. The board voted 4-1 to keep Impressions.

Spalding said she and C. Cary Lindsay, HBJ western regional manager, also attended and made presentations because they were invited.

"To be honest with you, I don't recall any conversation where we advised them on the presentation," Spalding said. "What they chose to do, who spoke, what they said was totally up to them."

Sheila Kistler, a parent, said she was sitting near Spalding at the meeting and watched for her reaction when Rehberg announced that he had a copy of HBJ's defense kit.

"She turned to the guy she was with and said, 'How did they get their hands on that?'" Kistler said.

When asked about the incident, Spalding said: "I was sitting next to a school official and Cary Lindsay, so if somebody heard it . . . I mean, I didn't say that . . . I was sitting next to two school officials as a matter of fact.

"I don't know how she could have heard my comment. First of all, I didn't make that comment, and second of all, I don't know how she could have heard it because . . . I don't even need to answer that."

Dr. Byron Tabbut, an ophthalmologist who is fighting to have Impressions removed from his children's suburban Chicago school, wrote a letter in mid-December to Wheaton/Warrenville school officials asking to see the HBJ kits. So far, his request has been denied.

In Alaska, Cheri Hensley, a parent, discovered the HBJ binder during a visit to Jan McNelly, director of curriculum at the Fairbanks District.

Hensley said she looked at the binder for a few minutes before McNelly saw her and ordered a secretary to take it. "They snatched it right out of my hands," Hinsley said. "Jan McNelly said, 'This is not for public viewing.' She said that came right from the publishers."

Hensley went back with an attorney and was able to view the book. She said some pages she saw the first time had been removed. Because Hensley involved the press and made a public issue that the binder is public record under Alaska's open records law, it is on display at the public library.

McNelly and School Superintendent Richard Cross declined to comment on the incident, referring all calls to the school district's attorney.

The kits do not have numbered pages, making it difficult to detect whether pages were removed. But Spalding said, "There was never any intent to have sections pulled before parents saw them."

Read the book

What does the HBJ defense kit say about the Impressions battle? It borrows heavily from review committee reports issued by different districts that fought to keep Impressions, and won.

One committee quoted in the binder, the Yucaipa (California) Joint Unified School District Textbook Review Committee, has been publicly criticized by one of its own members as being stacked with Impressions supporters who were hostile toward parents. In a story printed in the Sentry, a parent-produced newspaper, Pat Terrill writes that the first suggestion was to throw out complaints that didn't list page numbers. She writes:

"Whenever anyone addressed one of the parents' concerns, it was met with an outcry of protest from the opposition. Three of four committee members would verbally intimidate anyone with a comment that ran contrary to the party line. If they failed to silence the complaint . . . the 'impartial moderator' would take up the harangue personally. The atmosphere became so confrontational and the pressure to approve the series became so intense that questioning of any sort became very unpopular.

"During the course of the review, I ceased being a strong supporter of the administration. I saw many half-truths and misrepresentations passed off as fact . . . Censorship is alive and well in Yucaipa. I experienced it firsthand on the Textbook Review Committee."

The HBJ defense kit quotes the Yucaipa report as saying that 22 stories in student readers are about spirits, witches, ghosts and goblins. The binder lists that same committee as counting 21 references.

But the truth is, Impressions contains far greater references to witchcraft in the teacher resource manuals, teacher anthologies, other student books and teaching materials. Also, many stories in the series that are offensive do not mention witches or witchcraft. For example, a fourth-grade reader describes underwater pigs lurking within a putrid lake who "have acquired a taste for flesh. They are licking their lips. Listen. . ."

HBJ's distortion is being cited as fact by school officials and People for the America Way alike. PAW is a liberal anti-censorship group that also is working behind the scenes with school administrators in support of Impressions. In a talk before a women's group in Los Angeles in December, Michael Hudson, vice president and counsel for PAW, said parents across the nation were complaining about 22 Impressions stories.

Hudson never mentioned any of the teacher books or other student books that are quite bold in instructing children in witchcraft.

Fred Eisenbraun, occult crime investigator for the Rapid City Police Department, said exercises from Impressions mirror those in books that teach beginning witchcraft, and he read several examples at a hearing on Impressions before the Douglas School Board in Box Elder, South Dakota, in December.

"We are beyond imagination here," he said. "These are real rituals that are detailed in these books and many more in my office."

Spalding said she did not have the expertise to comment on Eisenbraun's testimony, but she insisted that the series "does not promote Satanism or any other religion."

When asked how she could so firmly state that witchcraft wasn't taught if she was ignorant of its teachings, Spalding said:

"There was never any intent that this would have any satanic overtones, if that is what people are seeing in the program."

Child psychologists, counselors and other experts have testified in many districts that the violence and morbid stories in Impressions could cause children irreparable harm and set them up for a lifetime of fears.

In rebuttal, the HBJ binder named as a specialist, a child psychiatrist who never read the Impressions material, and used a letter he wrote to a school district without his knowledge or permission and in a way he feels is unfair.

In a September 16, 1987, letter to Dr. Rick Schulte of the Oak Harbor, Washington, School District, child psychiatrist Dr. Jack Raskin said after 25 years of practice, "In my opinion, there has never been a child whose emotional difficulties, character flaws, pathological thinking or amoral behavior was shown in any way to be attributable to reading materials provided for educational purposes."

But HBJ would be the first to admit that Impressions is breaking new ground. Educational material in the past 25 years did not include stories about witches who tell would-be apprentices to cut out the hearts of their mothers and sisters, as does a story in the Impressions third-grade teacher anthology. In an interview with *Citizen*, Raskin admitted that he did not read the Impressions material. He said his letter was in response to a request made by a school administrator who had read passages from the books to him over the telephone.

"I wrote this little letter, I guess three or four years ago, it began with a point of view that I had about censorship of any kind, as you can imagine, I am a very firm advocate that there be no censorship whatsoever for anything. Then I wrote it all off, but it seems that it's not a dead issue."

Raskin was disturbed to learn that HBJ was presenting his letter as proof that literature doesn't harm children.

"That's a little unfair," he said.

And, he was surprised to learn that his letter was being circulated by HBJ in their binder.

"I'm not so sure they have a right to do that without my permission. What can I do? I guess I could sue them, if I was litigious like everyone else. What I will do, and I have intended to do this, is read the whole thing, and I may change my mind. I've got an open mind."

Raskin said he believes it unlikely that children are frightened by books. They are more frightened by scary events that occur in relationships with people they trust, he said. But other professionals, including Dr. Mary Jo Schuett, child psychologist employed by the Rapid City Public Schools, say the debate is not whether children are harmed by frightening stories, but how much.

When it was pointed out to Raskin that he was speaking with conviction without reading the material, he said:

"Your point is well taken, and you are perfectly right. I should read the whole thing and it is very possible after I do, I will change my mind. I was asked a number of years ago whether children should have access to this book with very pornographic pictures. My first thought when I was asked over the phone was, gee, a book is a book, but after seeing the pictures, my thought was, no, it probably doesn't belong in a library that children have access to because it was really pornographic. It may well be that this literature falls into the same category."

What you can do

• If *Impressions* is used in your school district, ask the district to see Harcourt Brace Jovanovich's defense kit and binder. Bring a witness who can take complete notes.

(In most states, HBJ's materials qualify as public documents that cannot be withheld from you.)

• If your school district refuses to give you access to the HBJ materials, contact your state attorney general or local library. Request a copy of your state' s open-records law. Meet with the district superintendent and explain that the district's refusal to supply the HBJ documents may violate state law.

• In the presence of a witness, ask the district superintendent whether the district has consulted with HBJ, People for the American Way or other outside groups. Also, ask what other materials the district received.

• If the district has received counsel from HBJ, PAW or other sources, ask to see all correspondence, and notes on any meetings or phone calls. If the district has received other materials, ask to see them. Open records laws apply in both cases.

• If your local school district has received outside documents and counsel, present evidence of this to other concerned parents and school board members. Point out the misrepresentations of *Impressions* and parental concerns in the HBJ defense kit and binder.

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Making a federal case about two books

By James J. Kilpatrick
Universal Press Syndicate

A visiting mama saw the two books and had a hissy. The school principal went into conniptions. The district school board fled to the mountains. Then the American Civil Liberties Union and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith got into the act. The Concerned Women for America leaped to the defense of an overwhelmed teacher. After a while everyone wound up in federal court, and the story is worth your attention.

It began at Berkeley Gardens Elementary School in Denver on a parents' night in September 1987. By ill luck, a parent wandered into the classroom of fifth-grade teacher Kenneth Roberts. There her eye fell upon a small bookcase containing 239 books. Most of the books were at the level of "The Care and Feeding of Gerbils," but aha!

What did her inquisitive eye behold but *The Bible in Pictures* and *The Life of Jesus*. The visitor was aghast. She ran to the office of Principal Kathleen Madigan to report the horrid sight. Ms. Madigan at once "entered Mr. Roberts' classroom, perused the two books, and directed Mr. Roberts to remove them from the classroom library."

While she was there, Ms. Madigan noticed a Bible that Roberts kept on his desk. The dreadful sight quite unnerved her. She ordered him to keep this suspicious object out of sight during school hours. She also discovered that from time to time, during silent reading periods, Roberts had been reading to himself from the Bible. This had to stop forthwith!

Not content, Ms. Madigan visited the school library "and removed a Bible from the library shelves." Having thus wiped out the last hint, trace or vestige of potential Christian influence from the school, Ms. Madigan threatened Roberts with disciplinary action for insubordination if he got out of line again.

Naturally, everyone wound up in U.S. District Court. There was some confusion. Suit against Ms. Madigan and the school district had been filed in the name of three youngsters—Kelly White, Kelly Nelson and Amy Nelson. On examination, it transpired that Kelly, Kelly and Amy never had been students of Kenneth Roberts. They had no access to the forbidden books. Their little psyches had suffered no demonstrable damage whatever. Judge Sherman G. Finesilver threw them out of court for want of standing.

That left Roberts' own suit against the school officials. He pleaded that his First Amendment right to the free exercise of religion had been violated. He also claimed violation of his right of free speech. The defendants countered by arguing that Roberts' actions, taken all in all, amounted to conduct respecting an "establishment of religion" in violation of the Constitution.

The trial judge also threw Roberts out of court, or mostly out of court. In January of 1990 Judge Finesilver summarily ordered the Bible restored to the school library, but otherwise the defendants prevailed. The case went up to the 10th Circuit. On December 17, the appellate court voted 2-1 to affirm. Judge Monroe G. McKay, writing for the majority, took 28 pages to conclude that the school officials had acted properly "for the valid purpose of preventing Roberts from promoting Christianity in a public school."

Promoting? There was not one word of evidence that Roberts ever had opened his mouth about the Christian religion. He had never proselytized anyone. So far as the record discloses, no child ever even looked at the potentially dangerous books. The books just sat there on the shelf on the outside possibility that someday some 11-year-old might want to learn a little bit about one of the great towering figures in world history and one of the greatest works of literature ever put to press.

The majority's decision was preposterous. Senior Circuit Judge James E. Barrett vigorously dissented. He denounced Madigan's insistence "on the obliteration of all Christian books from the school premises." Her extreme stance amounted to disparagement and hostility toward the Christian religion. Nothing in First Amendment jurisprudence supports her "unwarranted" actions. Roberts' conduct was passive. The activities were *"de minimis."*

Well, I hope the Concerned Women for America will finance Roberts' appeal to the Supreme Court, and I hope further that the high court agrees to hear the case. If the facts in this trivial case support an "establishment of religion," words have lost their meaning. But, then, what else is new?