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TDSB clarifies book-ban "miscommunication"

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The Toronto District School Board has made amends with self-published author Ruowen Wang, who earlier this year accused the board of blanket-banning her series of 12 picture books on Chinese-Canadian culture.

The incident in question, which the TDSB is now calling a “miscommunication,” occurred after Wang sent unsolicited shipments of her books to more than 400 schools in the Greater Toronto Area – a move that angered the board, as it circumvented the approval process for books entering into school libraries. Despite Wang’s unorthodox approach, the TDSB did agree to review the titles for use in schools. As *Q&Q Omni* [reported in May](#), Wang was then notified that her books had not received approval due to “stereotypical imagery and text,” and that she should immediately retrieve the copies that had been delivered to schools.

Now, two months later, Wang has met with members of the TDSB to clarify the situation. “The books were never banned. I think there was some sort of miscommunication between herself and the individuals she was communicating with in the business development [department],” said Kurt McIntosh, the TDSB’s central supervising principal for equity.

McIntosh further explained that while all 12 of Wang’s books are approved for use in schools, the board did issue a warning to principals outlining specific concerns with two titles in the series. In *Little Wen*, one character is referred to as a “mommy’s boy,” a term the board’s equity department flagged as a negative gender stereotype. The other concern involved a stereotypical drawing of a woman of African descent in the book *Ajay*. Although McIntosh clarified that individual principals could still make use of those books without any changes, Wang has agreed to adhere to the board’s recommendations. “These concerns can be corrected when we reprint the books,” said Wang. “Even though I do not agree with them.”

Following the meeting between Wang and members of the TDSB, the board’s equity department has agreed to send an additional message to schools in the fall, correcting any misapprehensions about the eligibility of the titles for libraries. For her part, Wang has expressed satisfaction with the outcome and with the opportunity to continue to add to the multiculturalism of Canadian children’s literature.

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