

Citizens Advisory Committee on Family Life and Human Development
MONTGOMERY COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
Rockville, Maryland

November 22, 2006

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MEMORANDUM

To: Dr. Jerry D. Weast, Superintendent of Schools
From: Carol Plotsky, M.D., Chair
Subject: Recommendations on Revised Lessons on "Respect for Differences in Human Sexuality" in Grade 8 and Grade 10 Health Education Curriculum

OFFICE OF THE
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

The Citizens Advisory Committee on Family Life and Human Development has completed its review of the revised lessons in health education being prepared for students of the Montgomery County Public Schools. In October, the committee provided you with its report in support of the revised condom use demonstration lesson and video for Grade 10, with changes as identified by the committee. Earlier this month, the committee completed its review of the revised lessons on "Respect for Differences in Human Sexuality" for Grade 8. Last week, the committee finished its work on the revised lesson for Grade 10 on "Respect for Differences in Human Sexuality." In each instance, the committee carefully examined the lessons and devoted significant time in public meetings to discussion about their content and purpose. As with the earlier work on the condom use demonstration lesson, the committee supported the revised lessons on "Respect for Differences in Human Sexuality" for both Grade 8 and Grade 10, with changes as identified by the committee (Attachments A and B). Our proposed changes are offered as further improvements to the work prepared by staff for recommendation to the Board of Education.

The committee also reaffirmed its recommendations regarding these lessons in response to your request to review public comments made to the Board of Education on November 14, 2006. The committee reviewed and discussed the comments, including a petition, in light of the positions already taken by the committee, and approved a motion stating: "The committee has completed its deliberations and made its recommendations, and we reaffirm our recommendations after reviewing the information provided." The committee also approved a motion in response to the actions of two committee members who were among those who made the comments to the Board: "We express surprise and disappointment that committee members, without showing the courtesy of notifying the chair or other committee members, went outside the process and violated the spirit that committee members worked hard to develop."

I want to add a personal note of appreciation, as well, for myself and on behalf of the committee for the excellent staffing afforded to our efforts. Your decision to provide the time and expertise of your chief of staff, Mr. Brian J. Porter, as well as the excellent contributions of Ms. Betsy Brown, Ms. Lori-Christina Webb, and Ms. Sally Thomas, allowed us to complete our work in a timely and responsive manner. We are extremely grateful for all their help.

I am available to address any questions or concerns.

CP/

Attachments

Copy to:
Members of the Citizens Advisory Committee on
Family Life and Human Development
Mr. B. Porter
Ms. Brown
Ms. Webb
Ms. Thomas

Citizens Advisory Committee on Family Life and Human Development

**Proposed Changes for the Staff Recommended
Grade 8 Lessons, “Respect for Differences in Human Sexuality”¹**

Revised Grade 8 Lesson 1

- On Page 2, under Vocabulary, separate “sexual identity” and “gender identity” and define each. (Passed) Y-9, N-0, A-3
- On Page 2, under Vocabulary, use the definition of “sexual identity” from the Glencoe resource (Chapter 1, “Sexuality and You,” page 4) distributed by Mr. Peter Sprigg. (Passed) Y-10, N-0, A-2
- On Page 2, under Vocabulary, include the definition of “gender identity” from Holt: “A person determines his or her gender identity based on the gender he or she feels to be inside.” (Passed) Y-10, N-0, A-2
- The committee voted on whether to consider the acceptance of the current definition of “tolerance.” (Passed) Y-9, N-3, A-0
- On Page 2, under Vocabulary, keep the definition of “tolerance” as “the ability to accept other’s differences and to accept people for who they are.” (Passed) Y-9, N-3, A-0
- On Page 2, under Mastery Objectives, Enduring Understandings, or other appropriate placement, add new text: “Students will understand that bullying and harassment are not acceptable behaviors.” (Passed) Y-11, N-0, A-1
- Throughout the documents, substitute “behavior” for traits. (Passed) Y-11, N-0, A-1
- On Page 7, Vocabulary Word Tree, change the examples to reflect the subject matter of the lesson. (Passed) Y-10, N-0, A-3
- On Page 9, Bullets, add a 4th bullet, “People sometimes stereotype others based on their beliefs. Sexuality is an emotionally charged issue in our society. Just as we wouldn’t stereotype anyone on the basis of their sexual orientation, individuals should not be stereotyped with regard to personal beliefs. (Passed) Y-11, N-0, A-2
- On Page 2, Vocabulary, MCPS should change the definition of “sexual orientation” to the same one used in the Grade 10 curriculum. (Passed) Y-10, N-1, A-2

¹ Proposed changes include those that were approved by the committee in public sessions, beginning October 25, through November 1, 2006. The proposed changes are presented here, with committee votes, as subsequently described in action minutes and approved by the committee. The committee endorsed the lessons, with these proposed changes, for recommendation to the Board of Education.

- On Page 2, Vocabulary, change the definition of “sexual orientation” from Glencoe to the Holt definition in order to be consistent. (Passed) Y-10, N-1, A-2
- On Page 8, Think Questions, add a 4th question, “How do you report bullying?” (Passed) Y-13, N-0, A-0

Revised Grade 8 Lesson 2

- On Page 2 and 8, Vocabulary, add the term “straight” in the definition for heterosexual; add the term “gay or lesbian” in the definition for homosexual; add “straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual” in the definition of sexual orientation. (Passed) Y-11, N-1, A-1
- On Page 5, Instructional Delivery, MCPS staff should provide more follow up on the Glencoe excerpt (pages 5-6). (Passed) Y-9, N-0, A-4
- After Page 6, teachers should be provided with a Teacher Resource information sheet containing the following information, which should be then presented to students:

“Other things to know:

- “Children who have fleeting same-sex attractions may assume incorrectly that they are gay or lesbian. Mere fleeting attraction does not prove sexual orientation.
- “All mainstream medical and mental health professionals have concluded that homosexuality is not a disease or a mental illness. [referenced at Compendium pp. 3, 27-28]²
- “The American Academy of Pediatrics says that most experts have concluded that ‘one’s sexual orientation is not a choice; that is, individuals do not choose to be homosexual or heterosexual.’ Moreover, according to the American Psychological Association, sexual orientation is not a ‘conscious choice that can voluntarily be changed.’ Similarly, the American Medical Association opposes ‘therapies’ that seek to change sexual orientation that are premised on the assumption that homosexuality is an illness and that people should change. [referenced at Compendium pp. 3, 27, 1]
- “Homosexuals can live happy, successful lives; they ‘can be successful parents.’ [referenced at Compendium pp. 6, 27-28]

[Continued next page]

² Statements in brackets refer to materials included in “Summary of Committee Member Proposals on Revised Grade 8 Lesson ‘Respect for Differences in Human Sexuality,’” dated October 23, 2006, as considered by the committee.

- “Children raised by same-sex couples do just as well as those raised by heterosexuals, and are no more likely to be homosexual. [referenced at Compendium 28]

(Passed) Y-10, N-3, A-0

- On Page 7, Think Questions, add a new question, “Why is it important to be kind to others even when you don’t agree?” (Passed) Y-10, N-0, A-3
- On Pages 7 and 12, Think Questions, replace question 3 with “How can harassing, bullying, or stereotyping hurt the individual targeted and the school environment?” (Passed) Y-9, N-0, A-3
- In both Sessions 1 and 2, MCPS should find a method for including instruction and discussion of inappropriate terminology related to sexual orientation. (Passed) Y-8, N-1, A-3