

October 3, 2014

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To Our Parents and Community,

The mission of the Clark County School District is all about what is best for kids. I am listening to you, our parents, our employees, and our community. I like nothing better than to celebrate the successes of our school district with all of you and I want to be honest when I feel we have fallen short of our goals.

After listening to members of our community over the past few weeks, I believe that our school district has inadvertently broken trust with many of our families and with some members of our Board of Trustees. This happened when we set up a series of invitation-only community forums to start a conversation about what changes – if any – we should make to our sex education curriculum.

This topic first came up because the Legislature considered a bill in 2013 that would have required a “comprehensive” sex education curriculum. The bill did not pass, but we know the subject will surface again in the 2015 legislative session, and we wanted to respond to gaps in our curriculum at a local level rather than have them mandated by the state.

We made a misjudgment when we put out a document in these community forums from the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States, also known as SIECUS. Our staff chose the SIECUS document because it is one of the few nationally recognized “comprehensive” sex education documents. We also asked a SIECUS-affiliated moderator to run these forums for the same reason.

This document, along with a survey passed out to the participants, was meant as a starting point for our conversation. However, the SIECUS document includes topics that many members of our community found to be sexually explicit and age inappropriate. Our sex education curriculum is currently taught in Grades 5, 8, and high school.

In hindsight, I regret that we made these decisions, and that we did not open these initial input sessions to the general public. We also should have notified the Board of School Trustees as a whole about the documents that were passed out at the forums. I am sorry that the Trustees have taken criticism over this situation because they did not approve this process as a group, and some of them, including Board President Erin Cranor, did express objections to the methodology of the meetings.

I am asking our community to forgive how we handled this situation. I hope we can pause and reset this conversation, and move forward as a community to work on a sex education curriculum that best serves our students.

I have instructed my staff to move forward with this discussion in a way that is respectful, open, and collaborative.

I also have directed my staff to stop using the SIECUS document as we move forward. Again, our intent was never to adopt SIECUS. The document as a whole does not align with the values of many members of our community, and so we will not use it in the future.

We are posting a Web site this week on ccsd.net under “Parents” and “Students” that gives all the information you may want to read on this issue, including:

- Our current sex education curriculum and the curriculum of other states and school districts for purposes of comparison.
- A copy of AB230 (second reprint) from the 2013 session – the bill that was under consideration by the Legislature that generated this discussion.
- A “crosswalk” looking at what was proposed in AB230 versus what we currently use in Clark County’s sex education curriculum.
- Any other documents we are using as a resource as part of this conversation.

We will give our Trustees and our community an update on our next steps and a timeline at our Board meeting on October 9, 2014. However, here is a preview:

- We will create a survey to ask parents their opinions on sex education curriculum. We anticipate the survey will be out by late October 2014. All parents will get a notification through Infinite Campus.
- We will set up a series of public meetings to gather input throughout November 2014.
- We will use the input we have received from the public so far, plus ideas expressed in the last legislative session. We will suggest changes to our current sex education curriculum that we believe will serve our students and align with the values in our community.
- We will inform the public about these suggested changes through every communication avenue we have available: Trustee newsletters to the community, our school district’s social media, ccsd.net, news releases to the media, Infinite Campus, and more.
- The Sex Education Advisory Committee will be briefed on the information gathered and the proposed changes, and will discuss them in a public meeting where they invite public comment.
- Our goal is to gather all of the input from the community and present it to Trustees at the December 11, 2014, Board meeting. Trustees will also listen to public comment at that meeting.
- After Trustees give their input, we will present them with suggested changes once again in January 2015, with the goal of having final recommendations to the Legislature when they convene on February 2, 2015.

Sex education is an intensely personal and emotional topic for students and families. We appreciate all of the thoughtful comments we received in recent Board meetings from parents and students.

The good news is that we heard some common themes from our community, even from people who ostensibly disagreed with each other on this issue.

With the support of the community, I believe we can restore trust and move forward on this issue in the spirit of a common goal: to ensure that all students can learn in a safe and respectful environment and parents can be assured that their values are respected.

Sincerely,



Pat Skorkowsky
Superintendent of Schools

“Every student in every classroom, without exceptions, without excuses”