

West Bend High Schools Gay-Straight Alliance

November 25, 2014

Jason Levash, Chair
Human Growth and Development Advisory Committee
West Bend School District
West Bend, Wisconsin

Dear Chairman Levash:

Please distribute this letter to the members of the Human Growth and Development Committee and add it to the agenda for the Committee's December 3, 2014 meeting. We are requesting that the Committee vote to recommend the following to the West Bend School Board in its report.

We write to express our concerns regarding the current Review of Secondary Human Growth and Development (HGD) Curriculum by the newly appointed HGD Advisory Committee of the West Bend School Board (WBSB).

Because the District has illegally failed to include students in this process, we have scant information about whether the Committee plans to finally address the real world sexual issues faced by all students. The current HGD curriculum, by any measure, is woefully inadequate.

Prior to our discussion of these concerns, a brief review of the WBSB's past treatment of the LGBTQI student community is in order. The District's historically documented discrimination of our community is a symptom of a larger agenda by the WBSB to deliberately deprive students of science - based sexuality in the classroom.

For many years, the WBSB openly and intentionally discriminated against the LGBTQI students within the District. The Gay-Straight Alliance was historically denied their right to enjoy the same benefits as all other clubs at the West Bend High Schools. In 2010, our club

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retained counsel and formally notified the WBSB that such discrimination was unlawful. We asked that this discrimination cease. The WBSB refused. We then filed a Federal lawsuit against the West Bend School District in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Wisconsin. On July 29, 2011, U.S. District Court Judge Lynn Adelman signed a Consent Decree requiring that the District do that which we requested. The WBSB remains under the supervision of Judge Adelman until 2018.

The above contextual background offers insight as to why the GSA has concerns about any process to adopt curricula involving issues such as reproduction, sexual activity, parenting and marriage. We are not alone in this struggle. Students in other school districts are raising similar concerns.

(http://www.salon.com/2014/11/14/these_incredibly_smart_teens_are_protesting_to_get_comprehensive_sex_ed/)

Our first concern involves 2011 Wisconsin Act 216. The law recommends that the District present "*medically accurate information*" when teaching HGD. The above phrase is defined in Wis. Stats. Sec.118.019 (1m)(b), Wis. Stats., as "*Information that is scientifically – based and published, where appropriate, in peer-reviewed Journal and textbooks.*" That we at the GSA would advocate this approach should not come as a surprise. The history of the mistreatment of LGBTQI students by the WBSB is rooted in religious dogma, not peer-reviewed science.

Should the WBSB fail to follow the recommendation of the Legislature in this regard, we respectfully request a written explanation of the basis for such decision. We presume that we speak for much of the student body in this regard.

So, what does a scientifically based, published, and peer reviewed sexual curriculum look like? Fortunately, examples of such current educational models are commonplace. (<http://www.uua.org/re/owl/> and <http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/personal/famplan/educators/HighSchool.aspx>) They are typically based upon the

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Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education

(<http://www.siecus.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.viewPage&pageId=514&parentID=477>), authored by a task force of prominent HGD educators selected by the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States. (<http://www.siecus.org/index.cfm>)

What do these programs provide to students? They provide accurate, science based sexual and health information that allow students to make decisions and evaluate options. They discuss common sense topics such as all forms of contraception, the role of abstinence, date rape, adoption, abortion, STD's, LBGTQI sexuality, and much more. The West Bend Daily News recently reported that Chlamydia is Washington County's most reported disease. Whether lack of student information contributes to this crisis is unknown. What does seem reasonable is that more information to high school students about real world sexuality cannot hurt. A recent study on teen sexting is also instructive.

(<http://milwaukeejournal sentinel.wi.newsmemory.com/publink.php?shareid=0a44c163d>)

The second concern of the GSA involves whether the HGA Committee has considered the legislatively mandated purpose of HGD instruction. Wis. Stat. Sec.118.019 (1), Wis. Stats., states in part:

Purpose. The purpose of this section is to foster a partnership between parents of pupils attending schools in the school district and the schools in the school district to promote the optimal health and well being of the pupils.

Presumably, there are LBGTQI parents in the District whose children attend our schools. Gay marriage is now legal in the State of Wisconsin. The HGD curriculum does not speak to this issue when discussing marriage. The curriculum does not then represent a true partnership as between all parents to promote "*the optimal health and well-being of the pupils.*"

After a frank discussion, the members of the GSA request, at the very least, that the HGD curriculum include the following:

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- different types of sex: vaginal, anal, oral, masturbation.
- sex as a way to seek pleasure.
- better distinguishing between abstinence and forms of birth control.
- safe sex practices: dental dams, correct use of condoms, hormonal birth control, and lubrication.
- gay marriage is now legal, acknowledgment of sex within marriage needs to include this same sex practices.
- pregnancy resources such as adoption, abortion, what happens to the body during pregnancy, drop out rates of pregnant teens, poverty rate of pregnant teens.
- more clarification between AIDS and HPV.
- acknowledgement of frequency of sexting and the consequences, emotional dangers.
- STD photos and updated videos.
- date rape, under reporting of sexual assault, brainstorming as a teaching tool on how to get out of dangerous situations or situations when one has changed their mind.
- acknowledgment percentage of students reporting nationally they have sex.
- healthy relationships and conversations between partners.
- potential legal consequences for having sex or sexting.

Finally, the GSA notes that the WBSB is in violation of Wis. Stats. 118.091(5), Wis. Stats., by failing to include secondary students to the advisory Committee. The legislature clearly understood that input from the student body was both appropriate and necessary. Given the District's record of mistreatment of the GSA, we suggest that the WBSB consider appointment of a student member from the GSA to this Committee. In any event, we would assume that the Committee is statutorily unable to proceed unless and until this oversight is cured.

Ironically, the WBSB did choose to reject the Committee application of a current non-faculty advisor to the GSA, Shana Schloemer, MS. Ms. Schloemer is a clinical therapist at Northshore Clinics and Consultants, Inc. Among Shana's practice interests are LBGTQI, sex therapy, and parenting issues. The GSA was disappointed – but not surprised - by the WBSB's rejection of a community member whose professional interests and insights would have been invaluable to this particular committee.

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The GSA would prefer to believe this was an innocent oversight. Time will tell.

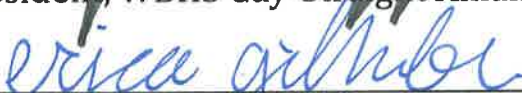
We look forward to hearing from the WBSB about the above concerns. A peer reviewed, scientifically – based HGD curriculum is what the Wisconsin Legislature wants. We at the GSA agree. The Legislature also proposes that HGD education be a true partnership as between the District and all parents. This is the very definition of inclusivity. The GSA, again, agrees.

Perhaps it is time for the WBSB to fully and finally distance itself from historical agendas that inhibit educational practices which value science and reason. Perhaps it is time that the WBSB commit to full compliance with the law. The GSA awaits your response.

Sincerely,




President, WBHS Gay-Straight Alliance



Vice President, WBHS Gay-Straight Alliance



Scott Lone, WBHS Faculty Advisor



Shana Schloemer, M.S., Volunteer Advisor

