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Radical Sex Education-Is Your School Next?

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Last week, parents presented the school board with 3,500 signatures opposing the sex-education curriculum. Michelle Turner, President of Citizens for a Responsible Curriculum, told The Washington Times that the message to the school board is simple: the petition represents “a growing concern over your recent decisions to introduce materials and topics to our schoolchildren that many families find objectionable, with no reasonable or acceptable alternative.”

Sex education in the public schools is a topic of continual controversy. The reason for this is straightforward. There is simply no way that materials related to a subject as sensitive as sexuality can be presented in a value-neutral context. After all, the real issue here is not biology and reproduction—it’s whether teenagers will be encouraged to have sex or will be challenged to practice sexual abstinence until marriage.

In the background to all this lies the undeniable fact that the sex education curricula commonly found in America’s public schools are overwhelmingly influenced by the radical left. Progressivist educators and parents share the common knowledge that children—even teenagers—really are listening when adults talk about sex. When those adults convey the message that they expect adolescents to engage in sexual behavior, they will. When sex education is reduced to the myth of “safe sex,” the idea of sexual abstinence goes right out the classroom window.

The Montgomery County curriculum is particularly odious. As a matter of fact, press reports do not do the curriculum justice. It is one of the most radical manifestations of the sexual revolution ever targeted at teenagers, who, in this Maryland county, will be as young as eighth-graders.

The worldview behind the Montgomery County curriculum is clear. Teachers are to present various sexual lifestyles as equally valid and acceptable. Students are to be confronted with a one-week instructional segment on sexual identity that will cover homosexuality and bisexuality and will encourage teens to explore their own sexual identity. The students are to be told that sexual exploration is normal, including same-sex experimentation. Eighth-graders are to learn that homosexual couples represent the newest form of the American family, while tenth-graders will be shown how to put condoms on cucumbers.

It’s the now-infamous “cucumber film” that has attracted the most attention and controversy. The film, known as “Protect Yourself,” features a very young woman demonstrating how to put a condom on a cucumber. According to the website of Citizens for a Responsible Curriculum, the video was produced and paid for by the Montgomery County Public School System. Let me be clear. There is no way this film can be described as anything other than pornography disguised as health education. This very young woman instructs tenth-graders—largely fifteen-year-olds—about how to use a condom in the act of sex, and uses a cucumber as the prop for her “lesson.” The woman tells the teens, “Buying condoms isn’t as scary as you might think.” She goes on to explain just how a condom is to be used. What follows is vegetable porn that is absolutely certain to have the undiluted interest of every teenage boy in the classroom.

Professors Warren Throckmorton and David Blakeslee of Grove City College, both experts in adolescent sexuality and sexual orientation, critiqued the Montgomery County curriculum in a masterful 36-page analysis. Throckmorton and Blakeslee found that the curriculum “unnecessarily presents some material that may serve to promote sexual activity.” Furthermore, “The curriculum on same gender attraction is based on a theoretical orientation, called essentialism, which does not represent a singular consensus of opinion in the social sciences and research community concerning sexual orientation.”

In their devastating analysis, Throckmorton and Blakeslee accuse the school board of adopting a curriculum in which controversial issues and matters of debate are presented “as settled facts.” The curriculum also “appears to view with suspicion and/or neglect the role of religious beliefs in assisting some adolescents to make healthy decisions.”

The sections on sexual orientation and homosexuality came in for intense criticism. Throckmorton and Blakeslee correctly identified the “essentialist assumptions” embedded within the curriculum. These assumptions suggest that sexual orientation is something fixed, whether by genetic predisposition or other factors. This construct allows those pushing this curriculum to argue that sexual orientation should be seen as just the way people “are,” and thus beyond moral scrutiny. Beyond this, “The curriculum wrongly assumes that harassment of gays and lesbians will be ameliorated through this educational process. Although a worthy and necessary objective, to date there are no data to support such an assertion. On the contrary, there is evidence to suggest that the distress of gay and lesbian identified students may continue despite such efforts.”

Finally, the professors found that the curriculum “uses as sources documents provided by advocacy organizations.” As they made clear, these organizations “have a political agenda which undermines the educator’s ability to present sound information to their students.”

In a separate report, David Blakeslee took these arguments a step further, offering five specific criticisms of the curriculum.

These criticisms, addressed to the specific sex-education program in Montgomery County, Maryland, form a helpful framework for parents seeking to understand and evaluate what is being taught in their own schools.

First, Blakeslee suggests that “the curriculum may present too much too soon.” Blakeslee and Throckmorton cited research provided by Durex, a condom manufacturer, which conducted a world-wide survey on sexuality and sex education. “In analyzing their data, we came to a startling conclusion: there is a statistically significant linear relationship between onset of sex education and onset of sexual behavior. Simply stated, the earlier an adolescent is educated about sex, the earlier he is likely to engage in sex. This observation is so remarkable because it remains true across a worldwide tapestry of cultures which have different political systems, ethnic makeup and religious systems. This disturbing finding raises the provocative question: Are there unintentional negative consequences from merely the presentation of sexual education programs?”

Most parents would respond with a quick yes. Who can honestly doubt that among the “unintentional negative consequences” of teaching such material would be behavior that would follow the instructions presented in the classroom?

Secondly, Blakeslee notes simply that “adolescents are not adults.” That brilliant observation seems to be missing among those leading the Montgomery County schools. Blakeslee and Throckmorton remind these educators that the adolescent mind “is undergoing a huge renovation.” In shifting from concrete thinking to more abstract forms of thought, “adolescents process their decision making in a highly emotional and impulsive manner.” The material in this curriculum—including the presentation of flavored condoms—will lead to high-risk sexual behavior. “While this is not news to anyone who has one or was one, adolescents are predisposed to think and act impulsively when contemplating sexual behavior because that emotionally-driven behavior easily overwhelms their compromised decision-making ability.”

Third, Blakeslee insists that “biology is not destiny.” As he explains, the Montgomery County curriculum “is permeated by a worldview which sees same sex attraction as determined by one’s biology.” As he knows, the “born-that-way” argument is employed by homosexual advocacy groups in order to present their arguments and shape public opinion. Nevertheless, “It is not a position supported by research into same sex attraction.”

Fourth, Blakeslee asserts what most parents would see as plain common sense—"health education is not an appropriate venue for social advocacy." Blakeslee assails the curriculum for citing source materials taken directly from advocacy groups and overlooking "peer review scientific studies which present more educationally sound material." Blakeslee and Throckmorton argue that the curriculum's dependence on material from advocacy groups and neglect of the actual scientific data undermines the very credibility that establishes public trust in a school board.

Fifth, Blakeslee insists that "tolerance is not required distortion of facts." Here, he gets to the heart of the issue. "The curriculum, in an effort to teach tolerance, completely obscures the overwhelming benefit of the two-parent family. It defines family in a nearly meaningless fashion: 'two or more people who are joined together by emotional feelings or who are related to one another.' It implies that those who have significant concerns about the destruction of the family over the last 40 years are 'intolerant.' The curriculum states: 'American families are becoming more complex and the greater variety of households encourages open mindedness in society.'" As Blakeslee concludes, "This is education, in service of tolerance, becoming a vacuous exercise in social persuasion."

The soap opera over sex education in Montgomery County, Maryland includes other dimensions that defy adequate explanation. The school district committee charged with the responsibility of considering the sex-education curriculum includes an eleven-year-old girl, drawn from one of the district's middle schools. Steve Fisher, a spokesman for Citizens for a Responsible Curriculum asks the pertinent question: "Is it really appropriate for someone this young to be sitting on a committee advising on some very adult themes and topics and issues?"

The real question parents in Montgomery County should be asking is why they would allow their children to be indoctrinated by moral revolutionaries? Furthermore, why would taxpayers in Montgomery County put up with this kind of radicalism from the school board?

Montgomery County, Maryland may be located in one of the nation's more liberal regions—an area that went overwhelmingly for John Kerry in the 2004 election. Nevertheless, my guess is that parents even there aren't ready for this. Are you?

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