



"Opt-In" Sex Education Policy

by Linda Holloway

The Kansas Board of Education is getting much attention as it deliberates over the science standards; however, another issue may cause consternation among the SEICUS-friendly sex education crowd.

John Bacon, vice-chair for the Board, plans to propose an opt-in policy for sex education, which would simply provide parents with information about what the school plans to teach. He envisions a list on which health educators would check-off what they plan to teach. He is interested in teachers reporting on three areas: the kinds of sex, for example: vaginal, anal, oral; kinds of partnering, for example: marriage, living together out of wedlock: heterosexual, homosexual, alternative; props to be used, for example – condoms, a bed.

Mr. Bacon believes that a straight-forward checklist would give all parents a clear idea of what is included in sex education at each grade level. Based on the proposed curriculum, parents could then decide whether or not to opt their children into the class.

Kansas media is currently focused on the evolution debate, but this opt-in proposal is sure to cause quite a stir. Opponents have already lined up at the Board's open forum to express horror that such a policy might become a reality. Two overstated complaints that surface frequently are that the kids who need this education the very most – victims of abuse – won't get the information they need, and that having an opt-in policy "puts teens at risk."

The last place children who have been sexually abused need to be is in the sex education classroom. Mr. Bacon's made the point that students who are victims of abuse have adults to go to besides a sex educator – nurse or counselor – that school is not the only place students can get help.

Mr. Bacon agrees that teens certainly are at risk and they need to be taught all the dangers. Sex outside of marriage presents an array of dangers, but parents have a right to know if their students are being taught protective "safe-sex" only, or if the curriculum will include abstinence education.

Mr. Bacon highlighted two concerns in the proposed health standards. One is that pregnancy is addressed as a health problem. The other one is found in the teacher examples for grades 5 - 8: students are to develop a

Power Point presentation showing how changes during puberty are affecting them. When Mr. Bacon asked if these presentations were to be made to same-gender groups, the speaker explained that the students would present to a mixed-gender group.

To insist that all students need sex education because some might not get the information at home is like saying some students may have diabetes so give them all insulin.

Yet, proponents trotted out this as the main reason to introduce sex education in public schools years ago. To be so adamantly against informing parents with this information is concerning, to say the least. What is really being said is not only does the school system think it knows what is best, but that parents should have no say in where, how, when or what their student are learning in the classroom.

The health standards will likely be discussed at the August meeting, and the vote may not take place until later in the fall.

Your voice needs to be heard.

Prayer:

- Pray for John Bacon and the other Board members as they discuss this issue.
- Pray for truth in the media.
- Pray for Christians to get this information and take action.

Action:

- Call your State Board member and express your view of an opt-in policy.
- Write a letter to the editor.
- Speak at the Board's open forum on August 9 at 10:30 a.m. Keep you comments to 2 minutes or less.

Encourage the Board members who are standing strong under withering criticism: Steve Abrams, John Bacon, Kathy Martin, Connie Morris, Iris Van Meter, and Ken Willard. Their contact information is at www.ksde.org under State Board.

Talking points:

- This is a common sense approach to sex education. It puts the decision where it belongs – with parents.
- Opt-out policies do not give parents information about what will be taught.
- Parents have a right to know exactly what sex educators will teach their children.