From:	Eli Oldfield on behalf of Eli Oldfield <eli@qyouthresources.org>
To:	MondayG@ckschools.org
Cc:	ErinP@ckschools.org; JENIZ@ckschools.org
Subject:	Regarding Cougar Valley Elementary Poster Decision
Date:	Wednesday, September 22, 2021 10:59:40 AM
Attachments:	Welcoming Schools -- Responding to Concerns .pdf Welcoming Schools -- Love Makes a Family.pdf GLSEN Elementary School LGBTQ+ Resources.pdf Welcoming Schools -- LGBTQ+ Material Across Curriculum .pdf GLSEN Climate Survey -- Exec Summary.pdf Ready, Set, Respect! .pdf GLSEN Playgrounds and Prejudice .pdf GLSEN Climate Survey -- Full Report .pdf Cougar Valley Letter -- QYR.pdf

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Dear Principal Galbreath,

This letter concerns your recent decision to instruct a Cougar Valley Elementary School teacher to remove a Kitsap Safe School's Network provided "Love Has No Gender" poster from his classroom. Our organization learned that CKSD found the poster to be age inappropriate and not connected to this teacher's curriculum following parent concerns of the poster's "political message." This decision, without foundation in policy nor an offering of alternatives, sends a clear message that any reference to LGBTQ+ people and families is unwelcome in your classrooms. **We are deeply disappointed by this decision to remove a poster promoting acceptance, and we are hopeful that CKSD administration will reverse this decision to ensure your district supports the inclusive and respectful school climate critical to the success of all students.**

We represent Q Youth Resources's Board of Directors. Q Youth Resources is a local LGBTQ+ youth serving organization -- currently, we provide scholarship funds to Kitsap and Mason County LGBTQ+ students seeking postsecondary education and training. We are proud to support local LGBTQ+ youth and their families, and believe this issue falls squarely within our mission.

An accepting and inclusive school climate is critical to the success and safety of LGBTQ+ students and students who have LGBTQ+ families and caregivers. Hostile and unwelcoming school climates have devastating impacts on LGBTQ+ student safety and success. The most recent GLSEN School Climate Survey reports that LGBTQ+ students who experienced victimization due to their gender identity and/or sexual orientation were three times more likely to miss school. They were also more than twice as likely to report that they did not plan to pursue any postsecondary education. The report also demonstrates how school-based supports positively impact LGBTQ+ youth's school experiences. According to the report, compared to LGBTQ+ students with no or few supportive staff, students who could identify many supportive school staff were less likely to feel unsafe because of their sexual orientation (44.8% vs. 74.2%) and less likely to feel unsafe because of their gender expression (33.6% vs. 51.3%). **The report specifically captures the utility of visuals, noting *"students who had seen a safe space sticker or poster were more likely to identify school staff who were supportive of LGBTQ students."*** GLSEN research has identified that inclusive anti-bullying policies are not enough on their own, and that one of the most important supports for students and their families are supportive educators.

While this research often focuses on secondary students, GLSEN and other organizations have also developed research-based best practices for elementary school teachers and administrators. Creating an elementary school climate that is welcoming of LGBTQ+ students and families is not only developmentally appropriate, it is crucial to developing empathy and respect for all kinds of people. **Developed in partnership with National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), *Ready, Set, Respect!* Is Common Core standardized curriculum that "focus on name-calling, bullying and bias, LGBT-inclusive family diversity and gender roles and diversity."** Similarly, The Human Rights Campaign's *Welcoming Schools* is a well-respected bullying prevention program providing LGBTQ+ and gender inclusive professional development resources including trainings and lesson plans

specifically for elementary school educators. These programs provide clear examples of elementary school-appropriate curricula that, like the “Love Has No Gender” poster, focus on LGBT-inclusive family diversity. Visuals like the poster that was removed are not only age-appropriate, but they are just one part of what should be a larger commitment to ensuring that LGBTQ+ elementary school students and families are specifically included in efforts to improve school climate for all.

Cougar Valley’s mission is *“To equip our students with the knowledge and skills to succeed and prosper in an ever-changing global society.”* Equipping your students to succeed in an ever-changing global society requires a commitment to acknowledging the growing body of evidence demonstrating the positive impact of acceptance and visibility for LGBTQ+ students and children of LGBTQ+ parents and caregivers.

We understand that these issues can feel complex and often appear to intersect with a wide range of social and political values held by parents and caregivers. **The benefits of school supports for LGBTQ+ students and families are numerous and urgent.** Like the NAESP developed *Ready, Set, Respect!* Curriculum demonstrates, resources specifically designed to address LGBTQ+ issues at the elementary school level include clear support for messages like “love has no gender.” We also understand that communicating with families about a district’s commitment to LGBTQ+ student safety requires clear rationale. **As an LGBTQ+ youth supporting organization, we are eager to support the school district in communicating the benefits of LGBTQ+ visibility and inclusion at the elementary school level.** While we can’t provide every resource ourselves, we are able to connect your district with statewide organizations and trainers who can support your administrators and teachers.

We urge Cougar Valley Elementary school to reverse the decision to remove the KSSN poster, and we are hopeful that we can continue this conversation in person or virtually so that we can be a resource to your district as you move forward.

Sincerely,

QYR Board of Directors
Eli Oldfield, President
Anna Cesa, Treasurer
Jill Davidson, Secretary
Tom Bowen
Kayla Potts
M. Rich

CC: Jeni Zapatka, CKSD Interim Director of Equity
Erin Prince, CKSD Superintendent

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