From: Maggie Rich on behalf of Maggie Rich <maggie.r.rich@gmail.com>
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Subject: Cougar Valley Poster -- A 2007 CKHS Grad Note
Date: Thursday, September 23, 2021 12:32:11 PM

Superintendent Prince and CKSD Board Members,

My name is Maggie (M.) Rich, and I'm a 2007 graduate of Central Kitsap High School. My dad graduated from Central Kitsap High School--my family has a deep connection to the district and the lands it serves. I am also a board member of Q Youth Resources, an LGBTQ+ youth and family serving organization in Kitsap County. Today, I am writing to you as an individual.

I am deeply saddened to learn of the District's choice to instruct Cougar Valley's music teacher to remove the "Love Has No Gender" poster he had up in his classroom. I am even more saddened to learn that your primary concern is that the poster is "age inappropriate."

The poster in question? It has generic figures representing gay and straight relationships, and the words "homosexual, lesbian, bisexual, transgender --- we are all equal." What about this, specifically, is age inappropriate? **Being gay, being transgender, is not inherently sexual**. When you say that words describing identity, and gay relationships, are "age inappropriate," you are sending the message that you believe LGBTQ+ people and relationships are inherently sexualized, "adult," and inappropriate for children. This is an ideological belief most often based in specific religious practice, not a secular fact. Does this mean that you believe out gay teachers who have photographs of their spouses and partners are inappropriate for children? What about children who have parents who are gay? Lesbian? Transgender? Are they to learn *from their school* that their parent's identities are inappropriate for their age and only discussed when they are older? Being gay isn't inherently sexual just as being straight isn't inherently sexual -- they are identities. What of young LGBTQ+ teachers seeking jobs in your district? Are they to learn that your district finds any mention of their identities to be inappropriate for children? **Though likely not your intention, *your* decision sexualizes your LGBTQ+ students and staff of all ages.**

As a gay adult, I look back on my time at CKJH and CKHS with a mixture of fondness and also struggle. Though not too many years ago, school climates were strikingly different when I was in your schools. I was too afraid to be out, to be myself. There were no teachers like me, and there were no teachers with any visuals in support of LGBTQ+ people and families. Being gay was highly politicized, most often commented on from a place of secrecy or condemnation, or debated as an identity worthy of civil right. I grew up watching my identity, my future marriage, be sexualized, demonized. My rights to an equal society and protection under the law debated. "Gay" was a pejorative, and no teachers regularly intervened to interrupt bullying about perceived sexual orientation. The news was swirling with debate about my identity and my school was silent on simple matters of equality and inclusion. I didn't learn about LGBTQ+ people in school, I didn't learn about our fight for civil rights. The biggest touchstone for LGTBQ+ identity was briefly learning about the AIDS crisis, most often in the context of learning about STDs. I feel this decision is a time warp--reflecting the time I grew up in, in which I'd be unsurprised to find out a poster like that was removed from a 2005 classroom.

If I had seen a poster like that in a classroom as a student of any age, I'd have felt the profound relief I didn't find until I was much older. A teacher would have been recognizing the need for specifically making LGBTQ+ students and their families feel seen and understood as ***normal, okay, and not inappropriate***. Your decision reflects a very particular religious ideology. One that deems LGBTQ+ people as oppositional to family values and inappropriate and dangerous for children. I'm deeply saddened that this is also CKSD's official value and urge you to reconsider your harmful stance. I look forward to the time I get to enroll my future children in your school district, but this policy gives me profound pause about their future safety in your the school climate you are creating with this choice.

I'm hopeful you are *really listening* to the testimony you are receiving, and reflecting deeply on your own bias and assumption about LGBTQ+ people and their lives.

Please let me know if you'd like to talk more about my thoughts. I'm more than happy to connect.

All my best,
Maggie Rich