From: Maggie Rich on behalf of Maggie Rich <maggie.r.rich@gmail.com>
To: Zapatka Jeni - TLC
Cc: ErinP@ckschools.org
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] Cougar Valley Poster -- A 2007 CKHS Grad Note
Date: Friday, October 1, 2021 11:16:12 AM

Jeni,

I forgot to include a critical question --

Will the District be communicating to all K-5 staff that any visual using any LGBTQ+ identity words ("lesbian," "bisexual," "transgender") must be removed from their classrooms?

Maggie

On Fri, Oct 1, 2021 at 11:06 AM Maggie Rich <maggie.r.rich@gmail.com> wrote:

> Hi Jeni,
>
> One major thing giving me pause in these communications is that the District seems uninterested in slowing down and listening to the LGBTQ+ leaders writing to you before assembling messaging in reply. There are folks in communication with you who are not only LGBTQ+ themselves, but also youth development and education professionals. I am not only an LGBTQ+ former student, I am also a former health educator and youth development professional. I helped develop federally funded health curriculum specifically for LGBTQ+ students and their medical providers.
>
> When I am writing to you I am not just acting on emotion without expertise nor context; I am offering expertise and knowledge of this subject area. Being told *"This does not mean that any and all materials on these topics should be posted in the district's classrooms"* unfortunately communicates to me that you, and the District, believe that the people writing to you who challenge the poster's removal must support any and all LGBTQ+ subject matter in elementary school classrooms. This is untrue, and tells me that the district believes that the LGBTQ+ experts writing to you don't truly understand what is appropriate for children. This, unfortunately, reinforces all kinds of homophonic and transphobic beliefs about LGBTQ+ adults. Consciously or not, the district is communicating that LGBTQ+ adults who disagree with your process just simply don't know what's safe and appropriate for children. It is deeply troubling to me that the district believes this. At no point have the experts writing to you indicated they believe any and all LGBTQ+ subject matter is appropriate for your youngest students.
>
> My question remains unanswered by the District -- **what process was used to evaluate the words found to be "age inappropriate"? Who was a part of those discussions? What, specifically, is the rationale for the statement that these words are age inappropriate?** Without this explanation, you leave an incredibly troubling amount of situations implicitly guided by this informal call. What about a young student who talks openly about their trans sibling? What about a k-5 student

who completes an "I Am From" project and talks about their lesbian moms using the word "lesbian" on a poster to be displayed? Will they be told they cannot post their project because the word "lesbian" is age inappropriate? Unfortunately, because the district opted for a policy call without clear process nor explanation, you leave LGBTQ+ staff, students, and families to assume the district finds their identities inappropriate for children.

What's incredibly frustrating is that the district is including all of these identity words into an "inappropriate" designation without honest conversation first. You've missed an opportunity to have a good discussion about the words and the bias/reaction they elicit from adults *before* making a call that appears to be treated as policy. For example, the word "homosexual," while not inherently age inappropriate, is culturally outdated and not really a relevant reference for students. Most use "gay" instead. But, because this conversation was skipped, and a decision was made on impulse, the district is instead choosing to call all words pertaining to LGBTQ+ identities ``inappropriate for k-5 classrooms." **LGBTQ+ identity words are not inherently sexual nor age inappropriate.**

I look forward to participating in this ongoing conversation.

Maggie Rich

On Thu, Sep 30, 2021 at 11:28 AM Zapatka Jeni - TLC <JENIZ@ckschools.org> wrote:

> Maggie,
>
> CKSD is committed to creating a safe and accepting environment for all staff, students, and their families including those who identify as LGBTQ. Our Equity and Gender-Inclusive Schools. Policies are committed to educating students on sexual orientation and gender identity in an age-appropriate manner over time. The district also acknowledges that sexual orientation is about far more than adult sexuality, including broader notions of self-identity, affection, and love.
>
> This does not mean that any and all materials on these topics should be posted in the district's classrooms. In selecting posters, the district must consider all available options and remain cognizant that such materials are accessible to all students within the school, especially rooms that are regularly accessed by students at all grade levels, and may serve as the basis for student inquiry and discussion. The district is also cognizant that these topics are complex, require delicacy in relation to student maturity, and are considered controversial by some parents. For these reasons, the district wants to be especially thoughtful, deliberate, and coordinated in how it addresses these issues with its students as they mature over time.
>
> Here, the poster was deemed age-inappropriate in the context of a K-5 music room specifically

because it included the terms “lesbian,” “homosexual,” “bisexual,” and “transgender.” The district does not consider the presentation of these terms to all its youngest students via a classroom poster an optimal way of educating them on sexual orientation and gender identity. The terms included, express reference to sexuality in particular, and could confuse our youngest students who have not yet been provided an initial foundation of understanding, especially when presented without context or guided discussion.

Throughout the years, our partnership with Kitsap Safe Schools has been positive and beneficial to our staff, students and families. We provide support for our elementary LGBTQ students on an individual basis when a student identifies a need. Our counselors, administrators and district-level admin are available to communicate to the classroom students and the families. Our secondary counselors have spent several years refining a communication plan for our transitioning students, so that everyone, the student wants to know, is informed about how to best support her/his/their decisions. Our participation in the Kitsap Human Rights Rally, the student Human Rights Rally, our secondary GSA clubs, and our district level policies all demonstrate that CKSD is more than one poster. Kitsap Safe Schools provides 35 posters, the majority of which are welcome in elementary classrooms. To provide support for staff and to avoid this frustration in the future, we are going to use our district Equity Lens tool to look at the 35 posters and provide recommendations as to which posters are age appropriate for which of our grade levels.

We are proud to be living in a community where our LGBTQ students, staff and families have such powerful advocates. We do not believe we are silencing the recognition of LGBTQIA+ existence with removing this one particular poster. We appreciate you sharing your concerns and prior experiences as a CKSD student. The district will continue to strive toward a safe and inclusive environment for all students, so that no one feels afraid to be themselves at school.

With great respect,

Dr. Erin Prince, Superintendent Central Kitsap School District

Jeni Zapatka, Director of Equity Central Kitsap School District

From: Maggie Rich <maggie.r.rich@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, September 24, 2021 12:14 PM
To: Zapatka Jeni - TLC <JENIZ@ckschools.org>
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] Cougar Valley Poster -- A 2007 CKHS Grad Note

Hi Jeni,

My primary concern, as I shared in my email, is that your district leaders believe this poster to be unfit for a K-5 classroom. Are you willing to share with me why, specifically, this poster is deemed age inappropriate? Transparency and explanation is critical during this kind of decision making, and while you repeat that the decision is because it is not age appropriate I do not see an explanation for why district leaders, specifically, think the poster is age inappropriate. What metrics were used to evaluate this poster? What aspects of the poster, specifically, were found to be age inappropriate? What language on the poster is age inappropriate and why?

I am aware that KSSN communicated with CKSD about their poster -- as a board member of QYR, we connected with KSSN about this decision. KSSN is a loose network of advocates, and not all KSSN members share the same understanding of the posters and their age appropriateness. When communicating with QYR about this issue, **Arlis Stewart told QYR that "KSSN does not designate the age appropriateness of posters."** In your email to me it sounds like CKSD is treating KSSN's communication as policy designation. This surprises me.

I remain deeply disappointed by CKSD's choice to stand by a decision that very clearly sexualizes LGBTQ+ students and people, deeming reference to their relationships and to love of all kinds something that doesn't, as you said, *"belong"* in an elementary school classroom. This is an ideological belief, and the decision unfortunately communicates that CKSD shares that ideological belief. I am even more disappointed that CKSD hasn't shared why, specifically, this poster was evaluated to be age inappropriate, nor how that decision was reached.

I understand that you are likely replying to a large volume of communication and that I shouldn't expect a personalized reply. I do look forward to participating in conversations with CKSD as a board member of QYR in the coming weeks.

M. Rich

On Fri, Sep 24, 2021 at 11:13 AM Zapatka Jeni - TLC <JENIZ@ckschools.org> wrote:

> Ms Rich,
>
> Thank you for your email around the poster in an elementary classroom and your beliefs experiences as a former CK student. We also want children feeling accepted and aware that our families come in a variety of forms. This poster was not removed because it was deemed “political”, it was removed because the district leaders do not believe that, this particular poster belongs in a K-5 classroom. CKSD believes that all

students need to know that school is a safe place where they feel comfortable, valued and welcome. We believe that schools need to provide age appropriate materials related to the topic of sexual orientation and gender identity.

We have partnered with Kitsap Safe Schools Networks for many years with a common desire to support students who are part of the LGBTQ community. There are many Safe School posters which provide a staff, and students with a "we support you" message. District leaders believe the poster "Love Has No Gender" is not age appropriate for K-5 students. When the concern for this specific poster first came up, I reached out to Kitsap Safe Schools, the creators of the posters. The response was that when the poster was put into distribution it was intended for secondary students.

CKSD stands behind the decision to remove the "Love Has No Gender" poster. The District has underlying authority and wide discretion to control the décor in its classrooms. When considering whether to allow or remove a given poster, there could be any number of relevant and potentially interrelated factors to consider. These might include, for example, the educational value of the poster; its potential to contribute to positive relationships or morale; appropriateness for the setting and audience; the potential for disruption to the learning process; and whether superior alternatives are available. In this case, we believe Kitsap Safe Schools has provided a variety of alternative posters which are age appropriate. These alternatives will meet the above criteria for promoting an inclusive and safe environment for all of our students. The alternative posters from Kitsap Safe Schools will also comply with our district Equity policy to ensure a welcoming and safe environment.

If you would like to discuss this further, please give me a call.

Jeni Zapatka

Director of Equity 2021-2022

Central Kitsap School District

360-662-1712

jeniz@ckschools.org

From: Maggie Rich <maggie.r.rich@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 23, 2021 12:32 PM
To: Prince Erin - JW <ErinP@ckschools.org>
Cc: Zapatka Jeni - TLC <JENIZ@ckschools.org>; Galbreath Monday - CV <MondayG@ckschools.org>; Bruce Richards - Director 1 <Director1@ckschools.org>; Robert

MacDermid - Director 2 <Director2@ckschools.org>; Drayton Jackson - Director 3 <Director3@ckschools.org>; Jeanie Schulze - Director 4 <Director4@ckschools.org>; Eric Greene - Director 5 <Director5@ckschools.org>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Cougar Valley Poster -- A 2007 CKHS Grad Note

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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