

Parents Presentation on End All Kinds of Bullying in Richmond Schools November 21, 2016 7:00 p.m.

Richmond Board of Education Board Meeting

Thank you Trustees, for giving us this opportunity to speak today. My name is Dong Pan. My name is Colleen Howu. Thank you for your commitment and hard work for our children in the City of Richmond. Your stellar performance is recognized well beyond the Richmond school district. We especially appreciate your understanding of parents' inalienable right and natural role in building success for their children's learning, which allows us to work in partnership with you to ensure a safe and inclusive learning environment for the students.

We are Parents Care, a civic group of 6,000 parents and citizens who are concerned about the request for a "discrete" policy, in effect a separate stand-alone policy, for the LGBTQ community proposed to the Richmond Board of Education on November 7, 2016.

We are here to petition the Richmond Board of Education to uphold and adhere to the principles of justice, fairness and equality for all in any and all policies that you may consider or adopt, which would affect all students throughout the school district of your jurisdiction.

We urge you to guard against the fallacy of any policy that is exclusive by nature, which would have the net effect of conferring more rights and/or privilege on some to the exclusion of all others. Any such policies are harmful to the students and to society as a whole, because such policies run directly opposite and are anathema to the values of diversity, pluralism and respect that Canadians embrace. Any policy that implies the notion of a special group, or gives subtle effect to the idea a distinct group or privileged class is exclusionary, no matter how incidental or unintended this effect might be.

An unwavering approach to making sure each and every student and all members of the school community are treated equally at all times is necessary.

It must be remembered that no selective ranking or prioritization of anyone's rights and freedoms is justifiable, whether under the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the BC School Acts, or the time-tested policies of the Richmond Board of Education to date.

A safe learning environment and the principles of justice, fairness and equality are not mutually exclusive. Entertaining a "discrete" policy may be politically expedient, but the very suggestion of such a policy itself is absolutely contrary to the very transparency and accountability that Richmond Board of Education has long been committed to, and which the public demands.

As parents **of diverse racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds**, we feel strongly that:

- Bullying must not be tolerated in any circumstances, whether directed against members of the LGBTQ community or any others.
- A discrete policy of this kind is a segregated policy by another name, which is polarizing and divisive, and will work against the inclusive society that Canada is trying hard to achieve and preserve. Such a policy will tend to stimulate a toxic and stressful school environment.

- Here is a very typical example. In a CBC report in 2016, a transsexual UBC student stated that the rising awareness about transgender people has made her life more difficult, something she finds “really emotional, really stressful to talk about”.
- The Richmond Board of Education should not adopt any policy of such an important nature in a piece-meal approach.
- A segregated policy by any name that protects one particular group to the exclusion of all others, such as members of the school community of a certain color, race, age, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, who are listed under Richmond Board of Education Policy 105, and who also are subject to discrimination, is patently unjust and unfair.
- For example, children who suffer from autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) are equally vulnerable, if not more so. In 2016, the Interactive autism network reported that “a total of 63% of 1,167 children with ASD, ages 6-15, had been bullied at some point in their lives.”
- Other studies found similar results.
- According to Statistics Canada, in 2014 the highest number of police-reported hate crime is motivated by race or ethnicity, which almost amount to 50%. And we all know about the shocking racist flyers delivered to the Richmond homes last week.
- What about the victims of cyberbullying that is becoming alarmingly prevalent and severe?
- According to an Ipsos Reid’s survey on 13-15 years old in 2013, over 70% reported having been bullied online.
- And StopABully School Reports from 2009-2013 show that cyberbully accounts for 30% of all forms of bullying compared to homophobic comments which account for 15% (Knowlton, 2009-2014).
- Remember Amanda Todd? Has the Richmond Board of Education forgotten about her and other young victims of cyberbullying like her? Amanda attempted two suicides and died the third time. Four years have gone by since. Has the Richmond Board of Education created a separate, discrete policy to address to the need of the many students that are subjected to cyberbullying? Are other vulnerable groups less significant and deserve less attention and less protection?
- Should other victims like Amanda Todd be excluded from your “discrete” policy? Should they be made to feel like second-class citizens in the schools?
- The safety and wellbeing of ALL students deserve equal attention and treatment by the Richmond Board of Education. All policies that you adopt ought to reflect and enshrine this imperative, and not favor one group over all others.
- At a Washington college, a transgender student who identified as a woman, used a female locker room but exposed the person’s male genitalia to other girls. It traumatized other female students but no relief or help was given to these other students.
- Another incident took place in Seattle February this year. A young man undressed twice in front of young girls in the women’s locker room and police were not called due to confusion over Washington State’s new Gender Identity regulations.
- These are just some examples proving how the hoped-for cure of a flawed and short-sighted policy is far more grievous and dangerous than the issue it seeks to address.
- Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. It would behoove the Richmond Board of Education to do everything within its power to prevent the tragic examples just cited from visiting upon the students of Richmond.

In addition, as parents of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, we remind you of your own Policy 102, which states, in part, that it “recognizes the different cultural, linguistic and ethnic nature of the Richmond community....” Accordingly, we expect the Richmond Board of Education, and all entities under your jurisdiction, to respect our diverse cultures and traditions, which we are proud to inculcate in and pass onto our own children.

It is our right as parents to be informed by you of all school activities, especially in relation to sex education, and gender identity or gender expression issues.

Whereas:

Richmond Board of Education Policy 100 states, “since schooling is but one aspect of a child’s education, it is essential for schools to work in close cooperation with the home and community....the home has prime responsibility for establishing a sound foundation of beliefs and behaviors for the student...”;

Richmond Board of Education Policy 102 states, “The Board is committed to working in partnership with parents...”;

Richmond Board of Education Policy 103 states, “Open respectful communication and collaborative decision making shall be encouraged...amongst trustees...parents and students”;

Therefore,

We, the undersigned, request the Richmond Board of Education:

To enshrine the safety principles for all students, including but not limited to the LGBTQ community;

To amend Policy 105 to also include protection for everyone against cyber bullying, and autistic members of the school community;

To respect parents’ role in their children’s education by informing and involving parents in thorough and extensive consultations before introducing any policy, guideline and/or practice changes which may be inconsistent in any way with the Article, Acts and Policy as mentioned in our petition;

To support the diverse cultural composition of the City of Richmond by consulting and seeking prior consent from parents for their children’s involvement in all sex and gender related activities;

To uphold the principles of equality and justice, to treat all members of the school community equally, to promote inclusion and harmony, and to provide and preserve a stress-free and non-toxic school environment for all members of the school community;

To not adopt any discrete policy for any single group, but ensure that all policies are inclusive that equally protect all the vulnerable groups listed in policy 105; and

To hold public hearings to consult meaningfully and hear from the parents, in the event that the Richmond Board of Education is studying separate discrete policies for each of the vulnerable groups including the LGBTQ community.

Conclusion

Every student is under the same umbrella and should be treated equally. We trust that you respect all students for their inherent worth as human beings regardless of their personal characteristics. Thank you once again for listening. We look forward to hearing from you as to how you will be addressing our concerns.

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