

October 23, 2006

Dr. Weast and Members of the Board of Education

How would you feel if you were an 8th grader in a sex ed. class discussing sexual orientation and the teacher was explaining that to show “tolerance”¹ toward people who were different than you, it was necessary for you to **accept** the things that made these people seem different and perhaps they were better than the way you or thought you should be?

What if your religion and parents taught you some of these differences were wrong?
What if your doctor told you some were dangerous to your health?

If the 8th grader knew that the common English meaning for “accept” suggests “**to approve**”, would he agree with the teacher? Or feel threatened and coerced by the teacher to change his beliefs and morals?

How would a sexually abused child assimilate this information in his life? Or a child with strong religious convictions? or a child concerned about health risks?

Are 8th graders wise and mature enough to reject what the teacher says or should they accept whatever the teacher says and ignore their own beliefs so they can get the answer right? When schools start telling our children what they **must think** and how they **must feel** about others-indeed that they **must accept and approve** the feelings of others, aren't the schools getting out of education and into mind control?

Is MCPS compromising the child's own thoughts and feelings carefully nurtured by the child's parents and religion and protected by the US Constitution?

“Tolerance”, “empathy”² and “respect”³ are some of the incorrect words used in this 8th grade curriculum. The definition for “gender/sexual identity”⁴ doesn't even appear in the 8th grade frameworks or in the 8th grade approved resource material.

We believe the curriculum needs more work.

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¹ MCPS definition for “tolerance”: “*the ability to accept others' differences and to accept people for who they are*” (Holt)

² MCPS definition for “Empathy”: “*the ability to understand and show concern for another person's feelings.*”(Glencoe) This definition is not the common English usage- Webster's meaning implies “sharing of the feelings”

³ MCPS definition for “Respect”: “*when you show empathy and tolerance for people who are different from you.*”(Glencoe) Thus, the meaning of “respect” is incorrectly stated by defining it with other poorly defined terms.

⁴ The definition used for “gender/sexual identity” was lifted from the 10th grade Holt resource for “gender identity” and then MCPS inserted the word “sexual”. Sexual identity and gender identity do not have the same meaning!