



# CHARLESTON

CUSD NUMBER ONE

## Special Commentary on Public Act 102-0522

Recently, concerns have surfaced related to what public schools are teaching kids these days. Alarming, some reports indicate that families are withdrawing their children from public schools and enrolling them in private or parochial schools because public schools are teaching elementary children how to masturbate and have oral and anal sex, teaching young children that they can choose whether to be a boy or a girl, and teaching white children that they are inherently racist. **Simply put, no such teachings exist in any of our district's curriculum, and there are no plans to implement such teachings.** To be clear, district officials are confident that our school system offers a quality educational experience to prepare students for success in life, and we respect that a private or parochial education may be a better fit for some families. However, choosing an alternative to public education based upon misinformation is disheartening to public educators who work hard and care deeply for children and our citizenry. By way of example, let's take a look at how misinformation about the topic of sex education has raised alarms among some in our school community.

One local resident publicly reported in April of this year that "the National Sex Education Standards, adopted by Illinois, requires 6<sup>th</sup> graders to define the meaning of oral and anal sex and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders to explain masturbation." In reality, the Standards do not require that. The truth is, in accordance with Public Act 102-0522 (the Comprehensive Personal Health and Safety and Sexual Health Education Act) the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) adopted the National Sex Education Standards as the Illinois Learning Standards for sexual health education several days ago this June. However, there are several important points in the law that, absent careful reading, can lead people astray. First, the law states that the ISBE "shall develop and adopt rigorous learning standards in the area of comprehensive personal health and safety education for pupils in kindergarten through the 5th grade." Second, the law draws a distinction between "health and safety education" for K-5 students and 6-12 students by stating that the ISBE shall develop and adopt rigorous learning standards in the area of "comprehensive sexual health education for pupils in the 6th through 12th grades, including, but not limited to, all of the National Sex Education Standards." In other words, the law requires the ISBE to adopt the National Sex Education Standards for students in grades 6-12, not for students in grades K-5. In turn, **the ISBE adopted the National Sex Education Standards as the Illinois Learning Standards for sexual health education (grades 6-12), not for sexual health education for students in grades K-5.**

The law also states that "schools may choose and adapt the...sexual health education curriculum that meets the specific needs of their community." In other words, despite what some have claimed about what our schools currently are or will be required to teach, our district will undergo a similar process of curriculum development as with all other subject areas, which includes review and input among K-12 teaching staff, curriculum council recommendation, and, ultimately, Board approval – all of which will not begin until next school year at the earliest.

**As always, the district will continue to inform parents of their right to have their children refrain ("opt out") from such instruction without any disciplinary or academic penalty, and instructional materials will continue to be available for preview.**

In the meantime, as we navigate such issues in Charleston, district officials remain committed to supporting collaborative efforts among educators and parents to reach common ground on what's best, essential, and appropriate for kids. **We value community and parental partnerships, and we welcome questions to further clarify any of this information. We would prefer to take the time and answer questions about these and any other matters, rather than have misinformation about our schools circulate and lead to poorly-informed educational decisions.** Thank you, Charleston School Community!

In Educational Service,

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