



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on October 13, 2010

Sex "Ed" Still Hot Topic in Helena

By a 6-3 vote the School Board of Trustees in Helena Montana Tuesday night approved a modified version of a sex education plan that caused an uproar among parents and others who believed it was too graphic and exposed children in the lower grades an to more information than they need at an early age.

The revised plan, the Associated Press reported, "removes such proposals as teaching children in the first grade that people of the same gender can love each other." Under the new version, students are to learn, starting in the fifth grade that abstinence from sex is a "healthy choice" and "the only 100 percent effective way" to avoid pregnancy and sexually-transmitted diseases.



The original plan, presented in July as part of 62-page "Health and Nutrition" program, created a local controversy that soon got national attention. According to the AP report of July 14, the plan would teach fifth-graders that sexual intercourse includes "vaginal, oral and or anal penetration," and kindergartners would learn anatomical terms like penis, breast nipples, testicles, scrotum and uterus. Lessons on erotic art would be taught to high school students.

"They made this more controversial by adding in all this stuff like same-gender relationships to small children, teaching body parts to kindergartners, and teaching erotic art to ninth- through 12th-graders," said Mikal Wilkerson, who has five children in the school system. Wilkerson, whose husband is a member of the school board, said: "They even teach about anxiety about sexual performance in high school."

Some parents said the revised policy still brings too much explicitly sexual content into the school curriculum and argued that sex education should be done under the purview of parents at home. Others argued that children of all ages need to be educated on such subjects so they will be able to protect themselves from sexual abuse and disease and from unwanted pregnancy.

Superintendent of Schools Bruce Messinger told district trustees the changed plan "reflects the values and expectations of the Helena community and will provide quality, comprehensive health education for all students."

Meanwhile, a candidate for the state House of Representatives has announced she has dropped her lawsuit against the school district and the state Office of Public Instruction over the sex education plan. Kristi Allen-Gailushaus sought an injunction in August to prevent implementation of the program, claiming it would do "irreparable harm" to her children. She also charged the plan was developed in private in violation of the Montana Constitution. A press release issued Monday said Allen-Gailushaus could not find an attorney in Helena to take the case and the effort to find an out-of-town lawyer, along



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with the "meticulous demands of the judicial process" proved too much of a financial burden.

Allen-Gailushaus received only limited financial support from a handful of Helena residents and found "the halls of justice were empty when it came to actual help or support against the legal monster" she challenged, the press release said. "I will pull two of my daughters out of the public school system if the curriculum passes," she wrote.

The suit has already become an issue state Democrats hope will be effective against Allen-Gailushaus, a Republican, in the campaign for representative in Montana's House District 82. "Her actions represent the erratic behavior coming from the Republican ticket this year," said Martin Kidston, spokesperson for the Montana Democratic Party. "She realized she was in the minority. Most people are willing to let the school board do what it was elected to do, and let the process play out as it was intended to. The people of Helena are smart and level-headed, and they didn't buy into her fear tactics and lies."

Photo: The Montana state capitol building in Helena



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