



# HCCS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Special Meeting – Wednesday, April 26 – 5:30 PM – Cafeteria

Public Zoom Link: <https://zoom.us/j/91820682227>

- I. **Call to Order & Roll Call - 5:31PM called to order**
  - a. **In attendance:** Sherry, Bridgette, Dillon, Laura, Matt Admin: Kevin. Liaison: Mary Bassett
  - b. **Absent:** Mary, Craig, Woodrow, Mouna
- II. **Changes or Additions to the Agenda**
  - a. **No approval of meeting minutes at this session**
- III. **Public Comment**
  - a. **Sammit Sabharwal:** Parent of 2 Honey Creek kids. Appreciates the work that went into the curriculum. When he went to medical school it blew a lot of doctors' budding minds to learn what we're aiming to teach our students here. The sex ed he had was about the mechanics of getting pregnant, contraceptive failure, disease. Many folks in medical school didn't understand how much of a spectrum phenotypical development and the spectrum of gender identity. The fact that our kids will be learning at this age is great.
  - b. **Jamie Griffith:** Daughter here who graduated and son who is in middle school right now. Fully in support of the curriculum. If we didn't provide this for them we would be failing students and families. This group has come through adolescence during covid - they haven't had the tools - and to send them to HS with this would be failing them.
  - c. **Matthias Kirch:** Parent at HC for the last 10 years and former board member and president. Thank you for all the hard work - the amount of detail that has gone into this is really important - the inclusive language - talking about body parts rather than sex assigned at birth - doesn't know why it would be objectionable to call a person a person.
  - d. **Will Muerer:** 8th grader as well as other kids. Unique honor of being embedded with the 8th grade class during camp. They are such a bright diverse group of kids. Really proud that we as a community can offer them this additional opportunity of education with aspects of their health and well being. Thank you to the board, community and SEAB for their consideration, time, and thoughtfulness.
  - e. **Aaron Towne:** Read and then emailed, available as an addendum:
  - f. Statement from **Emme Hakala**, grade 6 (in email): "I think that it is very important that inclusive language is used in school and for all people. People who are trans or nonbinary might already be going through a tough time transitioning. Not acknowledging their pronouns or body type is extremely disrespectful and might make them feel unrepresented and insignificant. I don't think that this should be even up for debate and especially in a school built around being inclusive."
  - g. **Abby Adams:** Parent of Bea Adams, student representative. Long time parent speaking on behalf of the PTO executive committee. Last week pledged financial support to the 8th grade curriculum in the sum of \$500 this year. They will inform the incoming executive committee of the ongoing support.
  - h. **Melissa Duhaime:** Parent of 3 Honey Creek kids. Recognizing the distinction between values and value statements and the identities of the students. We come to HC as individuals embodying many different value systems - come to understand that it is possible to disentangle value systems from the identities of our children.
  - i. **Leigh Ann Phillips-Knope:** Honey Creek parents of a ½ student. Attended both public hearings - so super proud of this and thank the board again. We are beyond fortunate for your work as professionals and content creators. You put so many hours and heart and soul into this. We as human beings have a need for felt belonging. LGBTQ+ Adults and youth are under attack across the

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country and we can be proud. It was harmful to hear a leader on the board repeatedly question the language of the curriculum. She disagrees with the curriculum excluding world views. Thank you to the board for representing our school's policies. We are not about rejecting kids at our school.

- j. **Katie Wimsatt:** At HC for 11 years - part of what attracted them was their inclusivity and open-mindedness - it's sense of inclusion and fairness for everyone. Oldest child is very heteronormative and cisgender - younger kid is less clear - want to make sure that every child that goes through HC feels seen and heard and loved for who they are. The attacks on trans and nb kids across the country - wants us to be the opposite of that - to be a refuge for those kids. The inclusive language is not harmful for cisgender kids, more harm will come to kids who are struggling with their identity by being excluded than the perceived harm to cisgender kids who will learn about other people's experiences. This is important for their interaction with their families, their teachers, their communities and their world. Please stick with the language that the SEAB came up with.
- k. **Equity Committee** Statement to the Board of Directors - available as an addendum
- l. **Rev. Dr. Deborah Dean-Ware** - Clergy Representative for the SEAB: Thrilled to get to know the community. Pastor of an LGBTQIA affirming church that is multi-racial. She sees the adult damage and trauma from children who are raised in environments that are not affirming or supportive. Her dissertation shows that cisgender heteronormative children benefit from learning about the diversity of God's creation. It makes us all more rich, full, and productive citizens.
- m. **Willa Theil**, grade 6, student, read by Jamie: "Dear Honey Creek Board: The students at HOney Creek know that it isn't right to exclude people. What kind of school would we be if we only teach some kids about who they are? You may be fearful of change, but it would be unacceptable to let that exclude people from learning. I hope that the school will use gender inclusive language and always respect Honey Creek students and the whole community. Willa Theil, grade 6"
- n. **Kim Phillips-Knope:** Speaking as a parent and a well credentialed professional working with the state of Michigan on LGBT+ issues - asks that we understand the broader issue. This isn't an abstract issue - this is happening in our own backyard. I want to be really clear that anti-lgbt rederic is not neutral - it causes harm even if it isn't meant that way - background: well well established fact that students have a sense of their gender identity between 2-4 - these kids know who they are and the curriculum is not changing that. 1 in 7 Michigan residents identify as LGBT+. When students were polled about these discussions - 90% of youth in Michigan reported that as a direct result of these debates on LGBT+ issues nearly half have been cyber bullied (+ additional negative outcomes). One of the most inclusive things we can do is create safe space. The place that had the greatest impact was school - decrease in suicide attempts. We can have really good intentions and still do a tremendous amount of harm. These discussions are not neutral. Honey Creek has made a point to issue a Social Justice Statement - we are not going to be a space where those conversations are going to cause harm. I expect that the board will uphold those values and policies.

**IV. Board Correspondence - integrated into public comment portion**

V. **Presentations:** None

**VI. Reports - omitted for tonight's session**

- a. Director's Report
- b. President's Report
- c. Teacher's Report
- d. Parent-Teacher Organization Report
- e. Committee Reports as Applicable
  - i. Finance
  - ii. Governance
  - iii. Advancement
- f. Equity Report - see statement in addendum

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## VII. Discussion Items

- a. None

## VIII. Action Items

- a. Sex Ed Advisory Board 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Curriculum - Sherry: Received from the assigned SEAB - has been reviewed and majority approved by the governance committee of the board of directors. There has been a note as a reminder of consideration of the Honey Creek belief statement and statement of social justice. Open up for discussion with discussion focus on anything that will lead to a motion for action not as an open discussion.
  - i. Bridgette moves to accept the curriculum as presented. Done in recognition of the emailed amendment. This is not a position where we don't know how people feel. The community overwhelmingly and enthusiastically supports this and even if she didn't personally agree it would be important to enact the curriculum based on the response from the community. Seconded by Laura.
  - ii. Open for Discussion:
    1. Matt: Vote no on the current language as discussed in the committee and in board correspondence. Issue with the body-first language. It reduced the clarity of the subject that we're discussing. It's an assertion of a political and ideological viewpoint. Brought up by public comment - the idea that we owe gender minority students our hearts and minds is not -
    2. Interrupted by Dillon: stopping you because you refuse to acknowledge that mountain of evidence in front of you -
    3. Interrupted by Bridgette "Calling the Question" - vote to end discussion and move to a vote immediately. Dillon seconded. In favor: Laura, Bridgette, Dillon, Sherry. Matt opposed.
  - iii. Motion to vote on the SEAB 8th Grade Curriculum: In favor: Laura, Bridgette, Dillon, Sherry. Opposed: Matt. SEAB curriculum has been approved by the board.
- b. My Future Fund:
  - i. Using American recovery act dollars, washtenaw county fund, city of ann arbor. Students will receive \$25 initial seed money (\$475 added for low income). Funding in perpetuity. Comes with research on the benefits. Costs the school and families nothing.
    1. Motioned by Bridgette - seconded by Laura. Discussion: Costs us nothing. Parent opt-in program. Creating an account would trigger the money to be deposited into the account. Families with lower incomes would be triggered by dataset for lunch program. Staff input would be for communication to the community. Would be managed by the MESP education funds.
    2. All present in favor - motion carries.

## IX. Acknowledgements & Thank You's

- a. Sherry: Thank you everyone for participating over the last few months. We appreciate public participation. We can do a better job as trustees by having feedback from the community.

## X. Public Comment

- a. **Aaron Towne:** Narrow view of DEI that he hopes will be expanded on in the future.
- b. **Sarah Hakala:** Thank you to the board and the SEAB for all the hard work to get this ready for our kids. Thank you for standing by the social justice initiatives of our school and what we stand for as a community.
- c. **Will Muerer:** I asked my 8th grader what he was hoping for about sex education and he said "I don't care" because he's an 8th grader. I think he does care and it's really good that we have this in the coming weeks.

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- d. **Jamie Krake:** Thank you to the SEAB and the board - and for the wide variety of viewpoints - the 8th graders are going to have something before they go to HS. We're going to have more discussions and this will grow and expand to include everyone in the school in every possible way.

**XI. Adjournment** - 6:24pm meeting adjourned

## Statement from Aaron Towne:

My name is Aaron Towne; I am a Honey Creek parent and a member of the Sex Ed Advisory Board (SEAB). Despite sitting on the SEAB, I am speaking in opposition to approving the proposed curriculum at this time. Before explaining my concerns, I want to acknowledge the hard work of others on the board in putting this curriculum together incredibly quickly. I do not intend anything I say as a criticism of any of you or the effort you've dedicated to this project.

While much has been said in praise of the proposed curriculum's inclusiveness, my concern is that it is only inclusive in specific ways and toward certain segments of our Honey Creek community while excluding other perspectives. Specifically, all aspects of the curriculum, and indeed all of the discussions about the curriculum, assume a particular progressive worldview. This worldview is dominant among Honey Creek families, but it is certainly not the only one.

This concern was not taken seriously during SEAB meetings; among other critical remarks, I was told that the proposed curriculum is entirely grounded in science and medicine and that any different perspective is, therefore, invalid (if not worse). Certainly, I agree that many aspects of the curriculum are matters of scientific or medical fact, for example, that birth control strategy X is Y% effective given certain conditions. But many other statements throughout the curriculum are value statements, for example, that X and Y (but no mention of Z) determine whether a sexual relationship is positive. This is inherently a statement of values, and our community contains families with many different viewpoints on this and many other issues within the realm of sexuality and gender. The curriculum contains many such value statements, and these values always align with one particular worldview to the exclusion of all others.

To be more concrete, let me delve deeper into the example I just used. I find it astounding that among a list of 10 characteristics of a positive sexual relationship given in lesson 3, consistency with one's moral convictions is not included. To be clear, I am not saying that any particular moral system should be promoted, but not even acknowledging that this is a significant consideration for many students and families is a distinctly biased point of view and, incidentally, does promote a particular conception of morality by exclusion. The "Tea Consent" video that was brought up as a point of concern last week goes even further: it presents a cavalier and transactional view of sex (both consensual and regarding assault) and proclaims that "consent is everything" (not that it is a necessary condition, but everything). This is a favorite slogan of those holding a certain worldview but is deeply inconsistent with most others.

My concern is that consistently pushing one particular value system, to the exclusion and frequent contradiction of other value systems, is antithetical to our goal of promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. It does not promote diversity to give only one perspective on complex topics. It is not equitable to privilege one perspective over all others. It is not inclusive to constantly tell a student who holds other values that they are wrong (either explicitly or implicitly). All of these things are also inconsistent with many of the themes from the parent survey (fact/science based, apolitical, non-moralistic / non-religious, inclusive).

I do not think pressing forward with this single-perspective approach and arguing that families with different values can opt-out is a good solution. This argument could be used to exclude any minority group and is, by definition, uninclusive. Instead, I believe that this viewpoint bias should be corrected before the curriculum is approved and taught to our students. Much of the curriculum is excellent, but this concern needs to be taken seriously before I can support moving forward.

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**Equity Team Statement:**

To the Board of Directors,

Thank you for all of your efforts on behalf of our school this year. Thank you especially for considering the critical issue of inclusive sexuality education for our middle school students.

Comprehensive and inclusive sex ed is a fundamental human issue that must be treated with care. Students of all gender identities and sexual orientations must be represented in and respected by the curriculum. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not political agendas. They are not perspectives that can be “disagreed” with. They are the basic biopsychosocial makeup of diverse human beings.

Every one of us has a gender identity and sexual orientation. Historically and traditionally in US society, cisgender and heterosexual people have been “normalized” by dominant culture. As such, they experience privilege, power, and greater access to resources. Those who identify as transgender, non-binary, gender neutral, agender, queer, gay, bisexual, homosexual, etc. experience marginalization, reduced power and access to resources, discrimination, microaggressions, and other harms of systemic oppression.

Our mission as a school includes “developing the whole child” in a “supportive” environment, and our belief statements highlight the right of every child to a “respectful environment that is both physically and emotionally safe in which he/she/they can develop to their full potential.” We are a school community that intentionally values every student in their wholeness which includes their gender identities and sexual orientations. While students with dominant identities in these categories experience the privilege of emotional safety in a traditional sex ed curriculum, those with marginalized identities do not. It is for their benefit, and the benefit of all toward a supportive community, that we are in favor of an *inclusive* sex ed curriculum that honors every one of our students, regardless of identity.

The Honey Creek Equity Team exists to help center equity in everything we do as a school. Working toward equity requires us to act with the well-being of *every* child in our community in mind. We encourage the board and all members of our community to step out of our comfort zones when necessary to foster a real sense of safety and belonging for all of our students.

The Equity Team strongly supports the Sexual Education Advisory Board’s efforts toward an *inclusive* and *equitable* sex ed curriculum at Honey Creek.

Respectfully,

The Honey Creek Equity Team