

# Abstinence theme pervades new Michigan Model

BY TIM RICHARD  
STAFF WRITER

Despite a State Board of Education compromise, the Michigan Model seems destined to be a right-wing political issue in many school board elections next June. The state's revised model health curriculum will have "a

strong abstinence theme" in its human sexuality section. Seven of the eight board members last week approved the revised policy after a 10-month controversy. Only Gurneeville Salas, D-East Lansing, abstained — the equivalent of voting no. Salas disagreed with the emphasis

on abstinence.

Meanwhile, self-styled "concerned parents," echoing the line of the National Association on Christian Education, have called for sale of the curriculum, abolition of the State Board and elimination of the state's historic leadership of local public education.

Still dissatisfied was Bob Lemieux, president of DADS Foundation of Kalamazoo. He called for scrapping the Michigan Model.

State Sen. Gil DiNello, R-Macomb County, criticized the board for the same reason. DiNello chaired a special Senate panel whose reports echoed the "concerned parents' themes of scrapping the state's leadership of education.

Local districts and private schools may choose to adopt the Michigan Model curriculum, and 446 of the state's 524 school districts plus 129 private schools have done so. Other states have reportedly adopted the Michigan Model.

## State's role

"We are not redoing the curriculum," said board president Dorothy Beardmore, R-Rochester Hills.

"The Legislature says you must teach physical education and health. Your health education may include family planning. It must include communicable diseases, including sexually transmitted diseases. There is no (parental) opt out for AIDS. There is for birth con-

trol, reproductive health and family planning. We cannot teach about abortion as a means of birth control."

Beardmore, a former local and intermediate school board member, said the state's leadership role is necessary because local districts often avoid their jobs under pressure.

She said the comprehensive health curriculum is "the only state curriculum. The rest is outcomes and guidelines. It came out of the Legislature clear as a bell."

Last August Beardmore survived a stiff challenge from the religious right when she sought re-nomination for a second eight-year term at the Republican State Convention. On Nov. 3 she was the only Republican (among eight education board candidates) to win.

## Final wording

Here is the final wording of the long-debated statement on human sexuality:

"The cornerstone of instruction about human sexuality as it relates to sexual behavior norms for students is to have a strong abstinence theme."

"Delaying sexual intercourse until such time as individuals are capable of assuming responsibility for their actions, and as appropriate within a marital relationship, is to be emphasized as prevention for unintended pregnancy and/or a sexually transmitted disease infection."

It goes on:

"Under Public Act 226 of 1977, each local district should determine the extent to which risk reduction information is made available to students."

"If a district decides not to teach about methods for reducing risk of sexually transmitted diseases and/or pregnancy, the district should institute procedures for a referral process that would give students access to this information from family/community resources."

The disclaimer, Salas, said he had "grave reservations about a strong abstinence theme. It is not the role of this board to determine what human sexuality is."

"It is damaging to individual and civil rights. I've heard about getting government off our backs for 12 years now. Yet you give license to a government agency" to stress abstinence, Salas said.

# A Christmas memory: 1933

BY VALERIE OLANDER  
STAFF WRITER

Christmas is the time when families can get together and reminisce of days gone by. Remembering past Christmases can bring back sentimental memories to almost everyone.

When I was just a small child I remember my grandmother telling me stories of the "old days" and all the great times they had. I could sit and listen to her for hours, and I'd always ask her to repeat certain stories from time to time. I don't know if she ever got sick of repeating them for me, but she always did.

I still enjoy listening to her stories and yes, I still bring up ones that she had told me so she'll repeat them. One particular saying she always had is, "We were never rich but we always had fun."

There was one special Christmas story I remember her telling me and I think of it often. It was a time long before Super Nintendo and Cabbage Patch dolls. It was the Christmas of 1933. The country at that time was in recovery from the Great Depression, although my grandmother remembers it as the hardest year throughout all of her 86 years.

From what I understand Santa Claus wasn't able to visit everyone's house in those days. I suppose families still got together to celebrate the real meaning of Christmas, the birth of Christ.

In previous years good old St. Nick would stop by and leave small gifts for her children, mostly handmade necessities like dresses for the girls and warm shirts for the boys. Sometimes he

would even leave a book or small toy under the tree.

## 1933 is tough

However, 1933 was a tough year for my grandmother. She had told me she used to share a pair of shoes with her oldest daughter, who was about 10 years old at the time. My Aunt Lou would wear the shoes to school during the daytime while my grandmother tended to the house. Then when she'd get home my grandmother would slip them on to go to the market or to church. Neither of them could go out together because there was only the one pair of shoes.

My grandmother didn't even have enough money to buy thread for mending. She would take the strands of thread from the curtains that hung in the kitchen or living room and use them to mend socks or replace buttons on a shirt.

My grandfather worked very hard in those days to put food on the table for his five children; soon there would be five more mouths to feed. It was very hard to make ends meet.

During the holiday season of 1933 it didn't look as if Santa was going to visit the Larose family, my grandma said.

But on Christmas Eve a god-send happened. My grandmother received an unexpected \$10 bill from her mother in Ottawa, Ont. Being that the money was Canadian currency she needed to exchange it for American money and quick.

At that time my grandmother lived in an upper flat above a

small store in the heart of Detroit. She went to the landlord asking him to make the exchange. The landlord, I believe his name was Ebenezer Scrooge, agreed to exchange it but shorted her a few dollars for the difference. I'm sure she was as mad as an Irish woman can get, but what could she do as Christmas was the following day.

Besides, it was enough to buy food for the table, coal to heat the house and even enough left over to get small gifts for all her children. What else could she ask for? There was food to eat, the house would be warm and all her children would wake up to the joyous holiday with gifts from old St. Nick.

## Making a tree

Of course, there wasn't enough money to buy a Christmas tree; it would have been impractical in those days to buy a tree. But my grandfather very out and found a large branch which he nailed to a piece of wood to make one.

I can imagine the family sitting around decorating that Christmas tree. Christmas was complete. And what a Christmas to be thankful for.

Whenever the joyous holiday rolls around and the malls become annoyingly packed I think of the Christmas of 1933. Seeing that particular Christmas through someone else's eyes I become aware of the real meaning of the Christmas spirit.

Valerie Olander has filled in as a staff reporter for the Observer & Eccentric newspapers.

  
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