

C'ville ponders revision to abstinence-based sex ed

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
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Clarenceville officials are considering a change in their high school sex education curriculum from "just say no" to more of a "what if" emphasis.

Before one letter of the policy gets revised, though, they are going to check with parents first. At a meeting 7 p.m. Monday, Clarenceville High parents will be able to voice their opinion.

The district's sex ed has been abstinence based.

Administrators would consider broadening that to possibly include talk about such things as over-the-counter birth control to prevent unwanted pregnancy or spread of sexually transmitted diseases.

In recent months, Novi's school board has been faced with angry parents over that district's teaching of sex ed, primarily because of the focus on contraception.

Some parents feel that teaching teens about birth control indirectly encourages them to have sex.

"We're doing this very carefully," said Barb Church, curriculum director. "We want to make sure we don't embroil ourselves in an unnecessary controversy."

Barb Church
—Curriculum director

Officials are counting on parental feedback at Monday's meeting.

Parent's views will be reported to an advisory committee, which is examining the district's health

and sex ed curriculum.

The committee includes principals, a clergy member, a trustee, three nurses and two high school students. Any changes would not take effect until the next school term.

The high school parents' group gathers monthly, but the topic of this meeting is likely to generate more of a turnout.

Parents have been notified through the school's newsletter. Principal David Simowski said, Clarenceville includes portions of Livonia, Redford and Farmington Hills.

"In a situation like this, you do tend to get the range of opinions," Simowski said. "We're hoping more than one side comes out because you tend to hear from the other side later."

Simowski and a school physical education teacher will supply parents with an outline of proposed changes. Sex ed is taught as part of physical education class.

The principal plans to share statistics with parents, including a 1999 state survey where 45 percent of high school students indicated they were sexually active.

In the same study, one-third of high school students said they have not talked about sex with their parents.

"That's pretty frightening," Simowski said.

In proposing changes, the district is not going to veer from its abstinence message, Simowski said.

Instead, administrators believe information on birth control is something that can be useful later on — not necessarily as students.

"We would like to give them information they will need as adults," Church said.

"There are some things we wouldn't touch with a 10-foot pole. One would be abortion or the abortion pill."

Parents have the option of

removing their child from a class when the topic is taught. The student is usually given another assignment.

Until now, advisory panel members have been getting informal feedback from parents about the proposed changes.

"People on the committee who have talked to parents have said they are surprised we didn't go beyond abstinence," Church said. "We haven't heard anything negative."

"I think people just want to know what we are doing."

Highmeadow plans reading month event

Highmeadow Common Campus' "Literature Extravaganza" to celebrate March is Reading Month will take place 6-to-8:30 p.m. Friday.

The festivities will include a Harry Potter room. Visitors also will have the chance to view a special painting by Highmeadow parent Pat Morel, who created her rendition of Monet's "Water Lilies" on a computer lab wall.

"This solved a problem," said school media specialist Sue Kalisky. "That's a handicapped ramp, which they can't use. Now, they can see it (Morel's portrait)" from a distance without attempting to step up on to the ramp.

ARMED SERVICES

Army Capt. Darcy L. Overbey has arrived for duty at Fort Benning, Columbus, Ga.

The captain is assigned to the 86th Military Police Criminal Investigation Division. She has served on active duty for more

than six years.

Overbey is the daughter of Debbie A. Pinal of Crosley Road, Redford, Mich. She is a 1989 graduate of Harrison High School, and a 1993 graduate of the University of Michigan.

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