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MICHIGAN'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS: A DEPARTURE FROM PARENTAL RIGHTS?

by Sylvia Leigh

On April 15, 2021, I attended the Hudsonville School Board meeting to support parents advocating for a politically neutral education for their children, and discovered numerous other parents had assembled to express their concerns over health mandates required for their child's school attendance. Parents concerned with these 2 issues were largely kept from the meeting due to Covid-19 measures, including enforced social distancing involving countless rolls of masking tape restricting most of the rows and individual seats in the auditorium, and the requirement to wear a mask. Many embracing left leaning indoctrination arrived early and appropriately donned, filling most of the allotted seats. However, an industrial hygienist in possession of a ADA medical exemption, one of the first to arrive, was denied entry. Inside the auditorium, school personnel actively monitored the audience for health measure compliance, including keeping parents' masks pulled up and prohibiting them from sitting next to a friend.

Approximately 50-100 parents were locked out of the meeting as it began, and security attempted to remove them from the building completely—a picture of what is happening to parents' voices in Michigan's education system on a larger scale. While some parents agree with schools and the state taking over the care and thinking of their children, the voices of a vast number of parents who disagree with such overreach are locked out of decision making, in direct contradiction to the Constitution and Michigan state law.

Michigan Revised School Code 380.10, Rights of parents and legal guardians; duties of public schools, states, "It is the natural, fundamental right of parents and legal guardians to determine and direct the care, teaching, and education of their children. The public schools of this state serve the needs of the pupils by cooperating with the pupil's parents and legal guardians to develop the pupil's intellectual capabilities and vocational skills in a safe and positive environment."

It is no surprise parents are beginning to show up to School Boards in large numbers. There is nothing more important to us than our children. Ottawa County parents are taking note of;

- Continued compliance of "leaders" to the unelected administrative branch of government

without visible and meaningful advocacy for the best interest of our children;

- Zero Covid-19 deaths ages 0-19 in Ottawa County;
- Increased mental health difficulties and suicidal ideation of our youth, with inadequate availability of mental health services;
- Lack of scientific evidence used by MDHHS to require mask mandates for our athletes and children, now required from the age of 2 years old—a socio-emotional development and attachment tragedy;
- Coerced mandated testing of student athletes and resulting contact tracing and quarantines, which then lead to loss of education and once-in-a-lifetime sports opportunities—all adding to student anxiety;
- Headaches, difficulty breathing, and other accumulating side effects of masks for children;
- Verbal blaming of our youth for a virus which vastly—apart from the health measures inflicted on them, does not affect their age group.

The loss of the Constitutional right, reaffirmed in Michigan law, to make these health decisions for our own children is enough to concern parents. But brewing underneath, teachers are also increasingly promoting personal ideologies—to the detriment of providing a politically neutral education and learning environment.

Perhaps this increase in ideological activism has been empowered by Michigan's State School Board guidance on LGBTQ issues and the new Social Studies Standards, as well as MDE and ISD input on controversial subjects like Critical Theory and sexuality/sex ed. Guidances by the State School Board are NOT LAW, and state such. As Michigan law provides for local district control, State School Board guidances regarding curriculum and policies do not need to be followed, especially when they go against the beliefs of a majority of parents in a socially Conservative district such as Hudsonville. Divisive issues such as Critical Race Theory should be left to parents to teach at home, rather than pitting children against each other.

America has an ideological divide more than a racial divide. Conservative minority thought leaders do not agree with the ideology being espoused by BLM, recognizing it as an effort to use Cultural Marxism to divide our nation. Disagreement with

BLM simply does not equal hate, and we ought not be teaching children that those who do not think or look like them automatically hate them. We believe in the value, agency, character, and best intent of parents and students, regardless of skin color or intersectionality labels. We agree with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream that people "should not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

Thankfully, some in leadership recognize divisive teaching is a problem for students and unhealthy for our nation. For example, in North Carolina's new F.A.C.T.S Task Force: Fairness and Accountability in the Classroom for Teachers and Students, "Lieutenant Governor Mark Robinson is seeking to provide support for parents, teachers, and most importantly, students who are willing to stand up for North Carolina's future by exposing indoctrination in the classroom and ensuring that our students are taught how to think – not what to think."

Citizens are asked to submit:

- Examples of discrimination or harassment related to a student's faith, ethnicity, worldview, or political beliefs;
- Examples of unequal, inconsistent, or disparate treatment of students in the enforcement of school rules and/or in disciplinary matters;
- Examples of students being subjected to indoctrination according to a political agenda or ideology, whether through assigned work, teacher comments, or a hostile classroom environment;
- Examples of students being required to disclose details regarding their individual race/ethnicity, sexual preference, religious ideology, or economic status;
- Examples of students being exposed to inappropriate content or subject matter in the classroom, including matters relating to substance abuse, profanity, or of a sexual nature.

"If I go into the classroom and I can't put my opinion aside long enough to go inside the classroom and give impressionable, young minds just the facts without my opinion, I have failed as an educator," Robinson said during a news conference."

Divisive indoctrination does not belong in our children's schools. Indeed, if this task force were centered in Michigan, Hudsonville parents would have reports to file. The demographics of most of the school districts outside of several urban areas in Michigan are comprised of a majority of citizens who do not subscribe to divisive progressive teaching (which is particularly true of Hudsonville), and we call school districts and teachers back to providing a politically neutral education and environment for the students and parents they serve.

Indoctrination of children in Critical Race Theory is not merely a concern of a few. It is widespread and part of the national conversation on education. In his response speech to the nation on April 28, 2021, Senator Tim Scott expressed, "100 years ago, kids in classrooms were taught the color of their skin was their most important characteristic—if they looked a certain way, they were inferior. Today, kids again are being taught the color of their skin defines them—and if they look a certain way, they're an oppressor." This is simply not acceptable.

We hope the School Boards of Ottawa County and Michigan will truly open their doors and ears again to parents, and cooperate "with the pupil's parents and legal guardians to develop the pupil's intellectual capabilities and vocational skills in a safe and positive environment." If schools do not begin to listen to parents on health and indoctrination matters, more large meetings and emptying classrooms are sure to ensue.

380.10 Rights Of Parents And Legal Guardians; Duties Of Public Schools. Michigan Revised School Code

from alliance114.com/michigan

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Sex Ed And Sexuality Content In Schools

"Natural" rights are those rights given to us by our Creator, rights that cannot be taken away by man, government or a school system. As parents, we should take our role in our children's education seriously, and reaffirm

public schools are not given a role above that of a child's parents. Children in Michigan may be exposed to sexualized content in school through books read to little ones, books in libraries and classrooms, anti-bullying campaigns, sexual behavior surveys and focus groups, and graphic Sex Ed curriculum and resource websites. State law does not require Sex Ed or sexualized content, and content children are exposed to varies by district. The 2019 Michigan Social Studies curriculum guidelines passed by the State School Board are not required by law, but may bring increased pressure on districts to include LGBTQ content. **As guidelines are not law**, individual school districts have the ability to make independent decisions on curriculum content. Michigan parents should be engaged with their individual School Districts to ascertain the curriculum and any sexualized content being used, and require transparency, as well as the ability to opt out of any sexualized content for children.



School Liaison Officer Dan Butler, Drake McWilliams, and Shettler Elementary Pricipal Janelle Duffey
Drake's grandma, Rose Dillon, wanted this picture with her grandson Drake in it in the paper.