

October 24, 2012

Before my daughter transferred to our regional high school, I proactively asked for the freshman health curriculum. I fully expected that some form of sex education would be included. I wanted to know how these matters would be presented within the context of a high school health class. In answer to my request, I received an incomplete physical education syllabus and I knew immediately that the sex ed part was missing. Since the health class was later in the year, I decided to wait to ask for the materials again.

A few months later, my daughter came home from school and asked me to opt her out of the second session of a presentation that would continue the next day. When I asked why and what it was, she informed me that she was bothered by a skit that she witnessed that day. (At the time, I knew nothing about HiTops, Inc. nor the TeenPep curriculum.) As she told me what the content was that bothered her, I became very angry at the administration for not being upfront in informing us, the parents, of these surreptitious monthly programs which were the norm at the school even though I had asked for the information.

What my daughter witnessed was awkward in understanding. She heard information presented in a way that went against what she knew and believed. The skit she viewed, "Later Baby", presented abortion as an equal and valid choice with keeping a baby or placing a baby for adoption. My 14 year old daughter expressed how these were not equal; that killing a pre-born baby was never equal to giving birth to a baby. She was bothered at how the attitude of the characters was portrayed. Each person seemed not completely happy with the choice that was made. And the female character that had the abortion dismissed having the procedure as no big deal. This is faulty and deceptive information. An honest survey would show that most who have abortions suffer in some way. My daughter knew this and that was what bothered her the most.

Needless to say, I was blind-sighted and angry. I immediately left a voice message on the Athletic Directors' voice mail and I emailed the phys ed teacher. By 8 am the next morning, I received a call from the assistant principal. I decided to bring this matter to him from the point of view that presenting these monthly skits without parental notification was an affront to parents like us who try hard to teach our children about these matters within the context of what we morally believe. In the next few days, I researched the Teen Pep program as well as HiTops and to this day believe both to be more harmful than helpful to the average teen.

I met with the administration and was told that an effort would be made to better inform parents. Unfortunately, at my daughter's high school, there is still no effort to inform parents of the monthly skits and topics. It is as if parents are seen as the enemy in enlightening teens of all things sexual, while health teachers, nurses, and high school seniors are seen as the proper authority. Apparently, parents may not understand the *need* for this particular program, so why give them an opportunity to reject it?

Since then, I have read the actual Teen Pep skits. They are written from a definite point of view that many parents would not share. In lesson after lesson, safe sex is touted while a captive audience of students are affronted with discussion of anal, oral and vaginal sex, with no reference to their personal value, their worth as human beings and their personal dignity.

After accosting our children with lessons void of any modesty or healthy direction, the additional insult to parents comes when they find out that the program is funded by the state under the NJ Department of Health in the AIDS/HIV Division. As a taxpayer, I am offended that I am contributing money to these programs. I suggest that politicians and taxpayers take the time to read the NJ Teen Pep skits and decide for themselves if these are appropriate and acceptable.

I hold that there is no reason why younger teens, 13 or 14 years old, need to be informed about sexual topics by 17 or 18 year olds. What parent would want an 18 year old boy to demonstrate to their daughter how to use a condom or inform her that she can go behind her parent's back in order to have an abortion or obtain any form of contraception? If more parents were honestly informed about what their children were being presented with, I believe more parents would voice their concerns. However, I am not foolish to believe that all parents would agree with me. Instead, I think that some have simply abdicated their role as parents and given that role to the society known as the public school.

In our case, my daughter was opted out of all sexual education classes and presentations in her freshman year. She completed an alternate assignment in which she discussed STI's, forms of contraception, and sexual behavior. Her "A" paper was written from her own moral understanding learned in the context of her family and her practice of her religion, NOT from the point of view of a school-run, government-funded, agenda-driven curriculum developed by HiTops in New Jersey, called *Teen Pep*.

Northern Burlington Regional High School (NJ) Parent