

Talking Points on OCPS School Board Resolutions

What SHOULD the school board be focused on?

- Addressing the learning loss experienced by our students during COVID
- Taking steps to expand Career and Technical Education course offerings so students who are not college bound can be better prepared for financial independence upon graduation
- Filling the 79 job openings listed on the OCPS website
- Raising the college readiness score of our high school students, which is below that of students in nearby (and more rural) Greene and Madison counties

The first resolution requires that Critical Race Theory not be taught in Orange County public schools and that the EdEquity program not be part of teacher training and curriculum. Here are a few talking points:

- “Divisive content” is never defined, which would seem to be a rather critical missing component of this resolution. Even in the governor’s order (Executive Order #1) the definition of “inherently divisive content” is never defined in plain English. And what is provided clearly turns the Civil Rights Act of 1964 on its head. He says that any effort to acknowledge that there has been a history of racism in the education system and schools taking steps to improve outcomes for minority students are inherently discriminatory and will not be permitted.
- The meaning of “Critical Race Theory” has been skillfully distorted into a buzz phrase to trigger fury about students learning the complete American story. The goal is to whitewash history and stop efforts to incorporate diversity concepts and racial understanding into teacher training and student instruction.
- The EdEquity program has already been removed from the VA Department of Education website as a first step by the Youngkin administration to remove all resources to assist teachers in creating a climate of inclusion and appreciating diversity. (Yeah, that’s what they’re doing.)
- Consequently, this resolution is both ill-conceived and unnecessary.

The second resolution is the poorly crafted second cousin to the “Don’t Say Gay” bill in Florida, sneaking in under the ruse of protecting “parental rights.” Here are a few talking points:

- Family Life Education (aka Health and Sex Ed) has a long history in Virginia schools with a standard curriculum for all schools based on age-appropriate resources that have been well-reviewed by educators and parents. Parents can go to the DOE website and review the content and opt their children out of any content/discussion. So, we must assume that this is NOT the content being addressed in this resolution.

- The first Whereas clause states that content in classrooms across the county has embedded sexual materials into the curriculum without parental consent. No proof is offered. Is it happening here? Without proof or data this is pure conjecture.
- Senate Bill 656, which was signed by the governor, requires that the “sexually explicit content” (not just sexual content) be identified and made known to parents. FLE already offers parents every possible opportunity to review the content and opt their child out. By Virginia code, “sexually explicit content” is (i) any description of or (ii) any picture, photograph, drawing, motion picture film, digital image or similar visual representation depicting sexual bestiality, a lewd exhibition of nudity, as nudity is defined in § [18.2-390](#), sexual excitement, sexual conduct or sadomasochistic abuse, as also defined in § [18.2-390](#), coprophilia, urophilia, or fetishism. Is the school board suggesting that such content is currently included in our textbooks?
- The Therefore clause states the OCPs School Board declares that students “shall not be subjected to, but not limited to, curriculum, materials and discussions relating to sexual orientation, gender identity or any other sexually explicit subject without explicit parental consent.” Well, all of your teachers have a sexual orientation and may reference their spouse or children, kids talk about their mom just having a baby, boys refer to themselves as boys and girls as girls (that’s gender identity), and many of your textbooks refer to heterosexual couples (that’s sexual orientation). So, discussion and course content related to sexual orientation and gender identity comes up every day in a hundred different ways. Now, if you REALLY mean to say “Don’t Say Gay” then that’s a different resolution. And, what does the “but not limited to” mean? That is disturbingly open-ended.
- The Further clause is so poorly written it’s hard to determine what is intended. The school is required to provide health care information to parents? What kind of information? From what source? And the “but not limited to” phrase is again, disturbingly open-ended. This is a gross overreach, far beyond what Senate Bill 656 includes.
- Senate Bill 656 directs the VA Board of Education to prepare model policies for ensuring parental notification of any instructional materials that include sexually explicit content, and that those model policies be created no later than July 31 2022, and adopted by school boards by January 1, 2023. Why aren’t we waiting for that direction?

So, this resolution is premature at best, and, at worst, opens the door to allowing the School Board to set policies that endanger student privacy, stifle classroom discussion, undermine acceptance of non-traditional families and LGBTQ students, and may actually threaten, not protect, parental rights.