

Letter: School DEI Surveys



To the Editor:

On Tuesday May 25th the Easton, Redding, and the Joel Barlow Boards of Education (BOE) will gather. Among other things, they will discuss and vote on collecting additional Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) information on students from 6th to 12th grades via a 26-page survey. Parents and School Staff will be questioned as well. The new survey is in addition to the annual State mandated Bullying/Climate Survey the schools do each year which also asks fairness and inclusion questions.

The proposed survey questions primarily came from the Gay-Lesbian-Straight Education Network (GLSEN "<https://www.glsen.org>), although other surveys were reviewed, and the DEI group selected the questions. The survey's purposes are to drive "real change", to make our schools more inclusive and fairer, and to look for the "systematic bias". Questions will be asked on sexuality, gender, adherence to the doctrine of systematic racism and other sensitive topics. We also sent the letter to Redding because the issue effects both towns.

The Gender question on the new Middle School survey offers students this menu of choices: Male/Female/Nonbinary/Cis/Trans/Genderqueer/Not sure/Questioning/Prefer not to answer/not familiar. Another question asks kids if there are opportunities to talk

about sexual orientation and gender in class and when they it is talked about whether it is done in a way that makes them feel comfortable.

Question #35 on the Middle School Survey asks if children are able to use school computers to find books or resources in the school to learn about LGBTQ+ history and events, another wonders if “those who I can turn to for help” share a common Race/Gender/Gender Identity/Sexual orientation/Religion/. The Teacher survey asks the Teachers to identify their sexual orientation, giving them a choice Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Pansexual/Straight/Heterosexual/Questioning/Not sure/Queer/Asexual, etc.

As concerned citizens of Easton and Redding we ask:

Would you answer personal questions like these about your sexual orientation or gender preferences if asked by your employer?

Are these questions “age appropriate”?

What does sexual orientation have to do with being a good teacher or with learning reading, writing and mathematics?

Is the purpose of sexual orientation information on the teachers to set “sexual orientation diversity” hiring quotas?

Do we want teachers to feel pressured to talk about student sexuality and gender in the classroom?

Save Our Towns/Save Our Schools LLC

As concerned citizens of Easton and Redding we ask you not to proceed with this intrusive, unneeded and ideologically biased survey. If you proceed, we suggest questions 7, 25, 26, 27, 29, 34, 35 on the School Surveys reworked or eliminated. We suggest the Staff survey questions 5 and 7 be eliminated.

We ask you not to adopt the Inclusion Statement. Existing policies address these concerns. If you proceed with the Inclusion Statement we suggest it be stripped of

excess jargon and revised to something like this: “The Easton, Redding, and Region 9 School Districts acknowledge the uniqueness and varied experiences of all students, staff, families, and community members. We are committed to ensuring that all students get a great education in our schools”

The Equity section of the preface or glossary of terms needs to be reworked (p.1, paragraphs 5 and 6) It says “Equity ensures that individuals are provided the resources they need to have access to the same opportunities as the general population. While equity represents impartiality, i.e. the distribution is made in such a way to even opportunities for all the people, conversely equality indicates uniformity, where everything is evenly distributed among people. The idea that people who belong to historically oppressed groups should get preferential treatment in the present “impartially” to redress past wrongs is a political idea that does not belong in a school survey.

At a recent Easton BOE meeting a Board Member said the new survey should be amended or postponed because it was divisive. Two other Easton BOE members expressed similar concerns.

As Board Members overseeing the administration of our schools do you agree with the Critical Race theorists that our schools are “socially unjust” institutions plagued with “racist and heterosexist hegemonies” that need to be reformed?

That is not the reality we see. We see an attempt to import theoretical ideas that might have a basis in other parts of the country into our community.

We urge you to vote against this unnecessary survey.

See Signatories below as of 5/18/2021

Signed,

Dana Benson (Easton)
Maureen E. Hanley (Easton)
Anne Manusky (Easton)
Lew Andrews (Redding)
Ralph Kuhn (Easton)
Kathy Kuhn (Easton)
Steve Landa (Easton)
David Bohn (Redding)
Kevin Oliver (Easton)
Beverlee Dacey (Easton)
June Logie (Easton)
Shari Williams (Easton)
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Dan Lent (Easton)
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