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CitizenLink

Parents beware

“Anti-bullying” initiatives are gay activists’ latest tools of choice for sneaking homosexuality lessons into classrooms.

by Candi Cushman

Illinois mom Tammy Schulz recently discovered that when her school district uses the words “safe” and “welcome,” she feels neither.

It all started in January when she received an invitation to a “Welcoming Schools” presentation at the local Beye elementary school. Billed as a way to address bullying, the program was introduced by the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance and its executive director, Shannon Sullivan.

“Safe schools” and “welcoming” sounded nice. But when Schulz did a little research on the Internet, she didn’t like what she saw. It turned out that the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance had strong ties to GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network) — a national homosexual-activist group dedicated to

promoting homosexuality to public school kids all the way down to the kindergarten level.

Not only had the national GLSEN office recently honored the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance as its “partner organization,” but a former GLSEN affiliate had helped start the alliance in the first place.

Targeting schools has always been a high priority of homosexual-activist groups. It’s not even something they’ve tried to hide — “we recognize that schools are ‘ground zero’ in our efforts,” proclaims the Web site for PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays).

From the beginning, GLSEN — the brainchild of President Obama’s controversial “Safe Schools czar” Kevin Jennings — has supported schools that take a “whole-school approach, incorporating gay issues into their curricula, their extracur-

ricular activities, their assemblies, their faculty and parent education programs, and other areas from kindergarten through twelfth grade.”

After all, gay activists realize that if they can capture the hearts and minds of the next generation, they will, for all practical purposes, have won the culture war. Problem is, they still find their agenda being blocked by a formidable force — parents and people of faith who don’t want their taxpayer-funded schools transformed into indoctrination centers.

So they have latched onto a more subtle tactic — infiltrating classrooms under the cover of “anti-bullying” or “safe schools” initiatives.

Resisting an agenda

Schulz has four very precious reasons for her concern: Through the foster care system, she and her husband have adopted four African-American children. Ranging in age from 3 to 10 years old, the children attend three public schools in Oak Park, Ill.

If the schools introduced mandatory homosexuality lessons, that would mean “having to discuss things with your child before they are developmentally ready,” Schulz said. “That was one of my main problems with this.”

At a neighborhood Bible study, she discovered that two other moms shared her concerns. One of them brought a *Citizen* magazine article to the study (“Under the Banner of Tolerance,” October 2009) featuring parents who’d successfully resisted homosexuality promotion in their schools. The article referred parents to a new Focus on the Family website, TrueTolerance.org, developed to equip parents facing this problem.

“That actually helped us to form what our responses would be,” Schulz said. “It gave us courage, too ... that this is something other communities don’t want and there is precedent to remove it.”

Red flags to watch for

- Videos in school libraries or teacher trainings, such as *That's a Family!*
- School partnerships with outside advocacy groups that have names like the "Safe Schools Alliance" or "Welcoming Schools."
- "Anti-bullying" policies that list special protections for "sexual orientation" or "gender identity."

How to respond

1. Be proactive. Don't wait until inappropriate material gets into classrooms, or your child's hands, to do something about it. Once bad policies and curricula get in, it's very hard to get them out. Educate school personnel and elected officials. Focus on the Family has created TrueTolerance.org to help you get the best information and data available on this issue to your school officials. In fact, you can e-mail information to them from the website's "Take Action" page.

2. Promote the right solution. Recognize that bullying and peer

abuse is wrong and should be stopped. But this can and should be done without politicizing classrooms and introducing controversial, sexual topics to children. Implement strong and objective policies that prohibit bullying for any reason against any child. Counteract bad policies by offering an effective and legally sound alternative like the model anti-bullying policy developed by the Alliance Defense Fund. Download it from TrueTolerance.org (look for the "new bullying resources" section at the top of the page).

3. Avoid creating special categories for protection. Policies that single out certain characteristics for special protections are counterproductive. They put the focus on the wrong place — on the characteristics of the victim, rather than on the actions of the bullies. Plus, listing certain categories creates a system ripe for

reverse discrimination.

4. Use statistics to make your case. Statistics clearly show that bullying is widespread among children for a wide variety of reasons. Thus, children are best served by a policy that gives equal protection to everyone and does not single out certain characteristics as being more worthy of protection than others. (Access up-to-date statistics and talking points in the "bullying resources" section of TrueTolerance.org.)

5. Counteract deception with facts. Use facts to expose deceptive indoctrination. In the "What Parents Should Know" box, TrueTolerance.org provides concrete examples of so-called tolerance lessons that gay-advocacy groups use to brainwash young children. Use this information to provide documentation to your school officials and concerned citizens. ●

— Candi Cushman



The three moms joined forces to investigate. To their dismay, they found that a teacher training conducted by the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance had already taken place at their elementary school. So they filed under the Freedom of Infor-



Principal Jonathan Ellwanger and Shannon Sullivan talk about "welcoming" schools at Beye School in Oak Park, Ill.

mation Act to obtain documents from the training.

Besides the fact that the training centered entirely on homosexuality, one of the documents that disturbed them most was a list of "perceived obstacles," including "family values" and "faith systems."

Ironically, "to say that my faith and my traditional values are obstacles to learning makes me feel that my family and children are unwelcome and unsafe at school," Schulz pointed out. "It is interesting how, by highlighting one group, you end up discriminating against another."

Then, to top it all off, the moms learned that homosexual-themed videos were also being promoted to teachers. One of those, designed

for elementary-age kids, is called *That's a Family!* and depicts 9- and 10-year-olds lauding the benefits of living with two moms or two dads. The video has an accompanying teachers' handbook featuring a crossword puzzle for elementary kids using words such as "transgender."

"It's a political agenda being shoved into my school," Schulz said, "to normalize homosexuality."

School representatives claimed they had not officially adopted any curriculum; this was just a way to share resources with teachers. But Schulz and other parents saw it differently — as an underhanded attempt to get homosexuality lessons into classrooms without a formal

school board vote.

“I have the right to pass on my faith and my values to my children,” Schulz said. “It’s as if the school is trying to ‘correct’ a value that our family holds. What business is it of theirs to try and change my family values?”

The concerned parents have taken their case to the school board.

Special protections

The bias Schulz and other parents encountered is increasingly common as homosexual-themed “safe schools” initiatives are introduced in public schools across the country. And when gay activists run up against the “perceived obstacles” to that agenda, they are turning to state, and even federal, legislation to enforce their will.

Specifically, they lobby for so-called anti-bullying laws that mandate special protections in schools for homosexual-related categories. Most commonly, these categories are “sexual orientation,” “gender identity” and “gender expression,” which can include protection for things like cross-dressing or boys using girls’ bathrooms.

As she was encountering resistance at Beye elementary school, for instance, Shannon Sullivan and the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance were heavily involved in crafting state legislation that makes “sexual orientation” and “gender-related identity” protected categories in schools. In April, their efforts came to fruition: The Illinois Legislature passed a so-called anti-bullying bill that included the homosexual categories. The governor was expected to sign it.

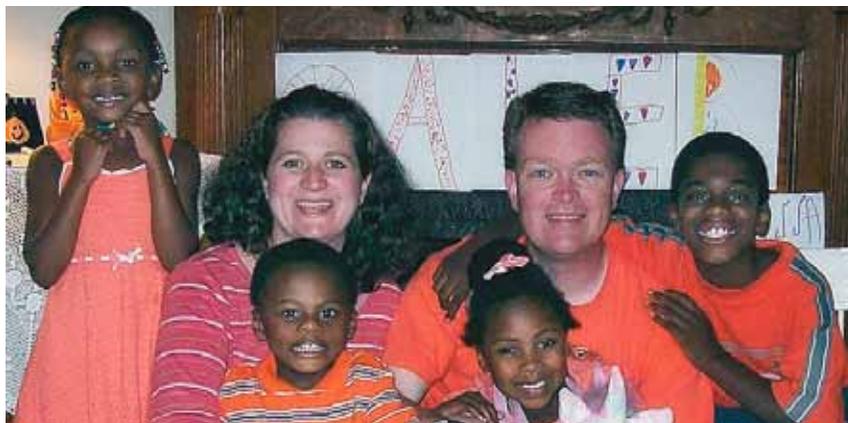
This strategy is also heavily pushed by the nation’s largest homosexual-advocacy groups, including PFLAG, GLSEN and the Human Rights Campaign. According to GLSEN, at least 16 states have “safe schools” laws that include special protections for “sexual orientation.”

Publicly, gay activists claim these

policies are about protecting kids. But behind the scenes, they use them as leverage to get what they want into schools: “diversity” trainings and homosexual-themed curricula.

The policies are also used to undermine parental rights and circumvent traditional marriage laws. These tactics have been documented across the country.

Alameda, Calif.: Mikel Del Rosario, a former youth pastor and the father of a 6-year-old boy, got a firsthand look at how “safe schools” policies are used to intimidate parents.



John and Tammy Schulz of Oak Park, Ill., have adopted four children through the foster care system. Tammy quickly discovered she wasn’t the only parent concerned about “safe-schools” initiatives.

On the same day in May 2009 that California’s highest court upheld Proposition 8 — defining marriage as only between a man and a woman — the Alameda school board pushed through an “anti-bullying” curriculum that promotes homosexuality and gay marriage to elementary kids.

That’s a Family! was to be shown to third-graders. First-graders would be introduced to a storybook called *Who’s in a Family?* featuring images of same-sex couples interspersed with pictures of animals, including an all-male elephant herd. In the second grade, kids would listen to *And Tango Makes Three*, a story about two male penguins who supposedly fall in love and hatch a chick.

So how did the school board

justify promotion of same-sex marriage to 6-, 7- and 8-year-olds even as the state’s highest court upheld the definition of traditional marriage? Alameda education officials cited “student safety” policies that specified protection for “sexual orientation.”

Del Rosario decided to voice his objections. “My son was entering kindergarten, so I felt like I had a responsibility and a duty to stand for truth and righteousness,” he told *Citizen*.

“There is a huge difference between teaching tolerance, which is by definition being respectful of other people with whom you dis-

agree,” he said, “and saying [the homosexual] lifestyle is to be affirmed and morally praiseworthy.”

But when he asked to opt his child out of the lessons, he was denied, as were many other parents. They filed a lawsuit against the school district. But in December 2009, Judge Frank Roesch of the Superior Court of California in Alameda County determined that any “opt-out right” is “outweighed by the policies against discrimination and harassment of students from LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender] families.”

Translation: State laws and school provisions citing special protections for homosexual characteristics trump parental rights and religious freedoms.

This spring, the Alameda school

board tried to appease outraged parents by adopting a series of books on other topics, such as race and disability. However, homosexual-themed books like *And Tango Makes Three* and *Heather Has Two Mommies* remain on the list for every elementary grade — with no opt-outs allowed.

Del Rosario has moved to another school district. His advice for parents: “Don’t wait until it shows up on your kid’s desk or in homework. Be involved in your school. Know not only what your kid is being taught, but what they are proposing.”

Iowa: Iowa passed a homosexual-themed “anti-bullying” law in 2007. As a result, local government education agencies now have training courses for teachers with titles like “How to Make My Classroom Safe for LGBT Students.” They feature the movie *Brokeback Mountain*, as well as training on how to use books like *And Tango Makes Three*.

Minnesota: Katherine Kersten, an opinion columnist for Minnesota’s *Star Tribune*, has tracked similar trends in her state. “One of

coming Schools” curriculum (not the same as the Illinois program) piloted in Minnesota public elementary schools by the nation’s largest homosexual-advocacy group, the Human Rights Campaign. The advocacy group promotes its curriculum as a way to “maintain a safe school environment.” Minneapolis Superintendent Bill Green praised it as “a tool to combat bullying.”

But when Kersten investigated deeper, she discovered “Welcoming Schools” lessons like the “Family Diversity Photo Puzzle” for kids in the first through third grades. In that exercise, “the teacher instructs students to arrange photos of adults and children to create seven families,” wrote Kersten in one of her columns. “But the exercise is rigged.”

Children find themselves forced to “create some families with adults of the same gender” and to “make decisions about whether to label the adults as two mothers,” explains the lesson-plan guide.

Concerned Minnesota parents succeeded in getting controversial elements like the photo diversity exercise removed from at least one school district. So gay activists



Margaret Brown, a Beye School parent, speaks out against the proposed curriculum change.

vocacy,” explained Kersten. “If they can say they now have the law on their side, it becomes that much more difficult to resist.”

The proposed Minnesota measure got all the way to Gov. Tim Pawlenty’s desk, but was defeated at the 11th hour after parents and pro-family groups swung into action. They exposed the true agenda by citing the “Welcoming Schools” curriculum, and pointing out that the state already had a good anti-bullying law that just needed to be enforced. After the Minnesota Family Policy Council patched through thousands of phone calls to the governor’s office, he vetoed it.

New Hampshire: Parents shouldn’t underestimate their power to stop bad legislation, especially when they rally together through grassroots networks, according to Kevin Smith, executive director of Cornerstone Action in New Hampshire.

He speaks from experience.

This spring, his group raised the alarm about “The Pupil Safety and Violence Prevention Act,” which was moving through the state Legislature. As originally written, the measure would have required every school district in the state to insert protections for homosexual categories into their anti-bullying policies. Not only that, but it also included language requiring schools to integrate that



Parents and teachers watch a film about tolerance at the “safe-schools” presentation in Oak Park, Ill.

the things that truly shocked me,” she told *Citizen*, “are these manipulative education techniques. ... This was very clearly indoctrination of young children who were simply too inexperienced to be able to counter the kind of propaganda that was being pushed on them.”

She was referring to the “Wel-

began pressuring state lawmakers to pass the Safe Schools for All Act, to require schools to create anti-bullying policies with special protections for “sexual orientation” and “gender identity.”

“The advocacy groups who are pushing this are highly organized. ... They are relentless in their ad-

The 'Safe Schools' czar

Using “safe schools” as a code phrase for promoting homosexuality to kids is no fly-by-night maneuver. It’s a well-planned strategy crafted in large part by “Safe Schools” czar Kevin Jennings, the founder of GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network).

In GLSEN’s early years, Jennings explained his plan: “We immediately seized upon the opponents’ calling card — safety — and turned it to our favor by illustrating how homophobia is a threat to students’ safety ... After all, who can be against ‘valuing and respecting’ everyone? ... Who can oppose



Kevin Jennings has a 17-year track record of using the word “safety” to push homosexual activism in schools.

‘healthy school climates?’ In fact, Jennings has a 17-year track record of using the word “safety” to push homosexual activism in schools. What’s scary about this is that the Obama administration has not only made Jennings a powerful “Safe Schools czar,” but it has also allocated some \$410 million for programs overseen by Jennings in its proposed 2011 budget. Jennings has already stated that he wants to use some \$70 million for “school climate projects.”

To learn more about Jennings and his controversial policies, visit CitizenLink.org/Jennings. ●

policy into curriculum.

“Anti-bullying policies in and of themselves are not bad things,” Smith said, “but parents have to be aware they are being co-opted by these political activists who are using it as a vehicle to infuse their own agenda into the public school curriculum.”

Smith provided testimony, giving legislators concrete examples of how the measure could be used to undermine parental rights based on what’s already happened in Alameda, Iowa and Minnesota. It’s important “to come armed with the facts,” he said. “At one point, we were being called to account, as if we were making this stuff up. Once we presented the evidence, it became clear that it’s indisputable.”

The truth is, “no one is saying that kids who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender shouldn’t be protected. They need to be protected just as every other student is protected,” he said. “But

we have to be sure that those anti-bullying measures don’t translate into discussions of homosexual issues in the classroom.”

So Smith presented the legislators with alternative language that provided equal protection against bullying for all students. “You don’t want to just go in there and say, ‘Don’t do this.’ ... You’ve got to give them something to work with,” he said.

One resource he offered them was a model anti-bullying policy developed by the Alliance Defense Fund (ADF). “Without advancing any sexual or other agendas, this policy successfully prohibits all forms of bullying, for any reason, and cannot be argued to exclude any particular child,” explains ADF.

Cornerstone Action also sent an e-mail alert to constituents. Citing the hundreds of e-mails they received, House subcommittee members unexpectedly changed course, voting instead for more neutral

language and removing the mandate that would have forced every school to include homosexual categories.

“It wouldn’t have gotten changed if there wasn’t an outcry from so many people,” Smith said.

U.S. Congress: Facing this kind of strong resistance at the local level, gay activists are now hoping to score a victory at the federal level that would take the power completely out of the hands of parents and elected state officials.

There are two bills currently pending in the U.S. House that would accomplish this: The Student Nondiscrimination Act, proposed by openly gay Congressman Jared Polis (D-Colorado), would require every public school in the nation to enforce special protections for “sexual orientation” and “gender identity.”

Also pending in the House is the Safe Schools Improvement Act (from Linda Sanchez, D-Calif). It likewise would have a sweeping impact, requiring all K-12 public schools receiving federal funding under “safe and drug-free” programs to add homosexual categories into their anti-bullying policies.

Adding fuel to the fire is the fact that “Safe Schools” czar Kevin Jennings, founder of GLSEN, would likely implement this measure (see sidebar).

“The wake-up call is that we need to be more involved,” said Illinois mom Tammy Schulz. “We need to be serving in our schools on our committees and find people who are like-minded to serve on our school boards.” ●

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit TrueTolerance.org.

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