

SYNOPSIS
URBANA SCHOOL DISTRICT 116
BOARD OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL WORK SESSION
FEBRUARY 15, 2006

Three years of writing the proposed physical development and health curriculum became the focus of the community at a special work session of the Urbana School Board of Education yesterday. A group of teachers have been working voluntarily on the curriculum guide, which was presented to the BOE in January.

Despite the fact that the curriculum includes the recommendation to hire certified P.E. instructors at the elementary buildings, as well as expanding our facilities to accommodate P.E. classes – recommendations that could conceivably cost thousands of dollars – the community focus was on the sex ed curriculum.

For some who spoke to the board, the issue was a lack of resources provided to the teachers in the curriculum guide. The Champaign-Urbana Public Health District provides paper and online resources, as well as speakers for classrooms. Planned Parenthood is another resource. Speakers commented that our teen pregnancy rate is very high, although there was no definition of “high”, nor were there any per capita statistics provided about the pregnancy rate overall.

Members of a local grassroots organization, the Campaign for Comprehensive Sex Ed, took the matter of resources even further and presented a list of proposed changes to the curriculum.

A theme that was commented upon a number of times was the erroneous belief that we teach abstinence *only* and we don't attempt any sex education at all. Still others were critical of the fact that we have shaved minutes off our school day and we don't devote enough time to sex ed. It was noted that many educators who deal with the demands of *No Child Left Behind* carry with them the prevailing belief that "what gets measured gets treasured," and that has a major impact on how the teaching day is spent

Dr. Kim Glow, director of our school-based health center at Urbana High School, said she has read the curriculum and she finds it to be very thorough. She also said that she has talked with students in our classrooms, has observed what is being taught and she is impressed with the content and the presentation. She also mentioned that throughout the discussion, no one had mentioned the role of parents in this issue and she wouldn't leave such an important topic up to the schools alone when it comes to teaching her own children.

One parent told the board, “The school system is the default provider of essential human services.” And he admonished the board that it's not going to get any better for schools.

The curriculum committee, which was charged with writing a curriculum that incorporates the Illinois State School Code and the Illinois State Learning Standards, will now go back to work. Changes/additions to the curriculum will be proposed when the committee has finished its work, and then it is up to the Board of Education to either accept or reject the administrative recommendation on the curriculum guide. There is no proposed timeframe for doing so.