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# McKinney Counseling and Consulting

Pastoral Counseling for Individuals and Couples / Pastoral Consulting for Clergy and Churches

## Minister Makes The Case for Comprehensive Sexuality Education

Let me see if I am getting the gist of some recent news stories. The Catholic Church is facing a crisis because of a few priests who have sexually abused children and the solution that some are offering is to exclude gay men from the priesthood.

The Boy Scouts of America have excluded gay men from leadership positions because, apparently, there is some concern that pedophilia will become the norm if they do not.

Pedophilia, as some astute writers to the *News & Observer* have pointed out, is not synonymous with homosexuality. In fact, pedophiles are more likely to be heterosexual than homosexual.

And, back home in Wake County, we still do not have a comprehensive sexuality education curriculum in our school system. Could there be a connection linking all of these stories?

We live in perilous times when it comes to matters of sexuality. HIV infections are on the rise again as people mistakenly have come to believe that AIDS is just a chronic problem that can be easily managed. Other sexually transmitted diseases continue to be a major public health concern. African American, Native American and Latino communities are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS and other STDs. Gay men and lesbians are still subject to physical attacks and legalized discrimination.

In the midst of this dangerous and confusing milieu related to sexuality our children in Wake County are being told one thing: don't have sex until you get married. That is the basic message. And if that is what passes for education these days I can understand why people are mixed up about homosexuality and pedophilia.

The most trusted medical and scientific institutions in our nation recommend sexuality education that includes age-appropriate and medically accurate information about abstinence and contraception. But we don't have that in Wake County. We have a strict abstinence-based curriculum that is driven by conservative religious values, has no track record of success, and ignores the complicated and frightening realities in which our children live. As they try to navigate a tidal wave of difficult choices and confusing messages we are throwing our kids a surf board and telling them to ride it out until they get married.

Responsible sexuality education seeks to help young people acquire information and skills about taking care of their sexual health. This includes discussion of sexual development, abstinence, pregnancy prevention, disease prevention, sexual orientation, gender roles and identities, and body image. It also includes life skills such as decision making, assertiveness, critical thinking and relationship building. In other words, it is real public health education and not religious doctrine masquerading as such.

I am a parent of two children in Wake County public schools. I am also a minister. I care deeply about the moral development of my kids. Our schools have a role to play in encouraging that moral development, but it must not come at the expense of their education. The stakes are too high and the penalties too great for us to confine our message about sexual issues to “just say no.” The Wake County School Board owes our children a comprehensive sexuality education curriculum. Anything less indicates they are more concerned with political pressure than the well being of our kids.

Jack McKinney  
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PLANNED PARENTHOOD NEWSLETTER  
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NEWS & OBSERVER OP-ED: “NEGLECTING WAKE’S CHILDREN”  
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