

The Origin Story of Policy 321

The majority of our school board has voted against the rainbow flag's display in our schools. Their reasoning, repeated oft, indicated that teachers who did *not* display the rainbow flag were asked by students why it was absent. This, the board concluded, was bullying of our teachers.

(Note: rarely has the board had much sympathy for bullying of teachers. When some groups of parents accused all teachers of sexual predation, the board was silent.)

This reason made no sense. It banned the pretext for “bullying”, if indeed bullying there was, rather than the bullying itself. If students were bullied for wearing chartreuse, would you ban the color—or the bullying behavior?

Shortly after this controversy, up came policy 321 in its original form. It stated:

“The board recognizes stickers, signs, flags, and other decor can communicate multiple and sometimes conflicting messages. A sticker, sign, or flag hung by a teacher may be intended to show support for inclusion of particular students. But it can simultaneously communicate that other teachers who do not affix such symbols in their classroom do not support inclusion for all their students. All teachers are expected to demonstrate love, compassion, and support for all of their students, and they should not be questioned or criticized for the decision to fly or not to fly various flags, or otherwise include other décor in the classroom. It may communicate that students who do not agree with certain positions are unwelcome.

Because such decisions have led to contention and misunderstanding—and out of respect for the entire, diverse school community—decor related to political, sociopolitical, sexual orientation, gender identity, or religious beliefs in the classroom other than as described below, is prohibited.”

The new draft of policy 321 has eliminated all language about sexual orientation or identity, but it appears that this is the true concern of the board members who have proposed it.

We cannot understand why some feel that showing support for a historically persecuted minority somehow imperils or wounds those who have never encountered such abuse.