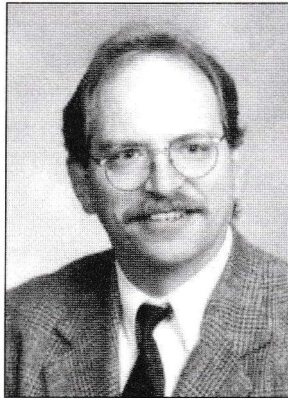

Psychologists Analyze Pro-Gay Curriculum Considered In Montgomery County, Maryland

Dr. Warren Throckmorton and clinical psychologist David Blakeslee have just published a critique of a health education curriculum that was adopted by the Montgomery County school district in Maryland this year.

The study, "Health Education as Social Advocacy: An Evaluation of the Proposed Montgomery County Public Schools Health Education Curriculum," outlines numerous flaws and unsupported assumptions about homosexuality and sexual orientation in the materials, which are part of the curriculum.

In late November, the school board voted 6-0 to adopt the recommendations of a Citizens' Advisory Committee on Family Life & Human Development. The 29-member committee made final a decision on the recommendations this year.

Throckmorton and Blakeslee point out a variety of problems with the curriculum as currently written. In their Executive Summary, they observe that the section on contraception unnecessarily presents some material that may serve to promote sexual activity. The sections on same gender attraction "is based on a theoretical orientation, called essentialism, which does not represent a singular consensus of opinion in the social sciences and research community concerning sexual orientation."



Warren Throckmorton, Ph.D.

In addition, the authors observe that the health materials do not adequately prepare students "for the additional risks they may encounter: higher levels of mental illnesses and substance abuse, higher levels of STD's." The curriculum also wrongly assumes that the harassment of gays will be ameliorated through this educational process.

"We do wonder why the risk factors attendant to a gay identity were not more obvious in the health education curriculum. This omission seems particularly troubling since the curriculum is supposed to be designed to help protect children during a vulnerable time. For example,

recent research suggests that those at highest risk for HIV infection, young men with many sex partners, appear to be the least likely to have changed their sexual behaviors since the onset of the AIDS epidemic. Despite being just 2-3% of the population, gay and bisexual men accounted for 44% of new HIV cases reported between 2000-2003."

The curriculum is also faulted for using source documents on homosexuality provided by gay advocacy organizations that have a political agenda. "Furthermore, curriculum resources completely omit scientific information, published in peer reviewed journals, which differ from the positions of these political advocacy organizations," say Throckmorton and Blakeslee.