

**Subject:** Health and Wellness requirement

**Date:** Friday, March 10, 2017 at 4:43:58 PM Mountain Standard Time

**From:** TCA William Jennings

**To:** TCA Tom LaValley, TCA Russ Sojourner, Matt Dubois, TCA Chris Carter, TCA Robert Moulton, TCA Jeffrey Rudder, TCA Becky VanVleet

**CC:** William Jennings

I will listen with an open mind on Monday, but I anticipate voting against adding a health and wellness graduation requirement and want to preview why. Some might see this as operational, but I see curriculum as elemental to the school and curriculum oversight as a proper governance function. I am not planning on pounding on the table in the meeting to advocate my view and try to persuade you. (Making these points would take half the total discussion time allotted.) But I do want to share my thinking:

- The requirement is seemingly laudable, but...
- I am skeptical that a course designed *before* the recent tragedies is the correct and appropriate response.
- I am skeptical that adding a requirement with such immediacy will reflect our clearheaded long-term best thinking.
- “Doing something” is a Big Government / Big Education response that I don’t endorse.
- “More” is always better—*more* math or *more* science, for example, would unambiguously enhance knowledge—but *more* requirements necessarily displace another course, or another choice.
- TCA is predicated on educational choice, and this is anti-choice. (Further, aligning with D20, as good as it is, is not persuasive to me.)
- I prefer letting parents decide with their children if the class is right for them.
- TCA has seemed anti-Health-Course, and I have even heard it expressed that way. The prospective requirement adds the full CDE public-school health curriculum, save the Sex-Ed that our Core Values explicitly prohibit.
- We already have *six-year access* to secondary students via Flex and Titan Teams—programs designed to assure community, connection, and no invisible kids—and those seem wiser places to have this sort of life-skills curriculum. One takeaway from the Poland material is that communities are key. Flex and Titan Teams: Starting earlier than high school...six years, not six months.
- Our Core Values specify 18 Commitment bullets about curriculum, including “College Prep high school graduation requirements.” Requiring a life-skills course is inconsistent with that Core Value Commitment and much of the curricular material in the Core Values. We don’t require a life-skills personal finance course (nor should we).
- Given my family’s experience of TCA’s sympathy-empathy-gratitude post-trauma discussions so far, I am unpersuaded *requiring* this course is wise or going to be helpful. I believe they intrude somewhat on parental prerogatives. And, while leading classroom discussions about suicide is indubitably tough, I would want further assurance that we have the appropriate staff before requiring such a course.
- We don’t plant trees. We don’t have memorial benches. We don’t have teams wear black armbands. Memorializing these tragedies permanently with what will undoubtedly be labeled the “suicide course” is inconsistent and inappropriate.

We are all heart-broken for the families involved, but requiring this course is not the best response for that sentiment.

The requirement will not affect my children.

Please don’t Reply-All.

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