

Abilene Independent School District

241 Pine Street • Abilene, Texas 79601 • (325) 677-1444

April 25, 2017

Dear Dr. Young,

The Abilene ISD School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) has met regularly during the 2016-2017 school year and reviewed a variety of programs and policies. Diane Russell has served as the SHAC Chair throughout the 2016-2017 school year and Linda Langston, RN-C, Director of Health Services, has continued to facilitate the SHAC this year.

Included in this letter is the written report of the programs SHAC has reviewed and resulting recommendations. Since the last SHAC update in 2016 to the AISD School Board, the SHAC has reviewed current implementation of the AISD health curriculum, discussed the presence of recess on each elementary campus, and reviewed current research on the impact of recess on academic performance.

The SHAC was pleased to find that the majority of elementary students have the opportunity to participate in recess. This is in direct alignment with current research on recess and its impact on learning. The SHAC recommends that all elementary students participate in recess daily.

Due to concerns raised regarding the implementation of health at middle school with particular concern regarding the need for sexuality education, a Sexuality Education Program Review Committee was formed to review sexuality education practices in AISD, determine needs, discuss/review possible solutions, and inform the SHAC of its findings and recommendations. The committee was composed of several SHAC members along with other interested parties including healthcare professionals, teachers (including former sexuality education, and current science and physical education teachers), administrators (campus and central office), community members, and parents. The SHAC reviewed the work of the Sexuality Education Program Review Committee and carefully considered each point to form a recommendation to the AISD School Board.

The SHAC Committee offers the following recommendations to Abilene ISD:

1. Health education (with emphasis on sexuality education) in AISD must be addressed and improved upon to ensure that all students receive instruction in health as specified in the 6th Grade Health Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) and 7-8th Grade Health TEKS.
2. In regard to sexuality education curriculum, an abstinence-“plus” emphasis would provide a more “real”, meaningful experience rather than sticking with only ideological beliefs. It is further recommended that the curriculum include current topics to ensure all AISD students are well prepared to make healthy decisions.
3. The sexuality education curriculum utilized to teach students needs to be flexible—one that may be personalized to the needs of AISD and the Abilene community through additions and adjustments. Flexibility and personalization would be preferable over a set, “canned” curriculum.

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4. The sexuality program must be delivered with consistency across each middle school campus with uniformity in how it is taught.
5. Health education teachers and any other teachers who teach sexuality education should receive proper professional learning to prepare them to appropriately teach the curriculum and have confidence in answering student's questions.

To summarize, the SHAC highly recommends that sexuality education in AISD be addressed in 6th grade and in either 7th grade or 8th grade and be implemented in a consistent manner across the district.

It is with high hopes that the information included will be useful to the AISD School Board. Members of the SHAC appreciate the opportunity to serve students and parents in this advisory role.

Sincerely,

Abigayle Barton, Ed.D.
Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction