

Dear school board candidates and whoever wants to listen,

I am emailing you because of the training that all teachers are forced to go through this year. FOUR trainings, all four hours each. I walk out of these “trainings” more ashamed to be a teacher than I ever have been in my many years in the profession. In the not too distant past, being a teacher used to be one of the most respected jobs for someone to have. For many reasons, that is simply not the case anymore. One of the biggest reasons that have caused that shift is the fact that teachers cannot be trusted anymore.

My breaking point this year was when I had a female student tell a guidance counselor that she now wanted to go by a boy’s name. There were THIRTY other staff members that were included on that email, and we were told to not tell the parents. Act like nothing happened if we needed to contact home. Could you imagine being a parent and finding out that thirty teachers are calling your girl a boy’s name and you knew nothing about it? I would be beside myself. That is a major life decision for a 14 year old to make! For the parents to not be a part of it is mindblowing. For teachers and the people running the “training” to use a blanket statement like “the child will not be safe when the parents find out” is not good enough! Parents need to be involved. WHY is the child feeling this way? Is there something else going on that is causing this thought process to occur? There can be deep, meaningful discussion about this topic! Do parents know that at North High School there is a “Gender Sexuality Alliance” that students go to once a week that parents do not know about? You won’t find it in the yearbook, you won’t see it on Facebook, you won’t see pictures of the gatherings. Why? Because they are keeping it a secret. That is not right.

Do parents know that the teachers had to take a “white privilege test” during our first training? Do parents know that teachers had to take a “heterosexual privilege test” during training? Do parents know that they told us we need to “be an advocate, not just an ally” and that we need to be “willing to go to jail with them” if we agree with their cause? Parents would be **stunned** to know what they were telling us at those trainings!

During the training, they said over and over and over again “this is a safe space. Anyone can speak up! Feel free to open up! No judgment!”. On the first day I questioned one thing and was QUICKLY shut down. At that point I realized that it was not a “judgment free zone”. This was a “You accept what we are teaching and keep your mouth shut” zone. They are treating everything in the “training” as fact. Something that CANNOT be questioned and SHAME on anyone who disagrees! So many teachers say they are inclusive of everyone and say the right things. Last year I was talking with a colleague about a student that was added to one of my classes at semester break, and this colleague’s response was, “Ugh. I hate teaching that kid. He wears a trump mask and trump hoodie every day. I can’t stand him”. I was shocked. I loved the kid. A smart, respectful, hardworking young man. To despise a student because of their personal beliefs...seriously! I would be lying if that was the first time I had heard comments like that. It happens way more than you would think.

I have loved my time at Eau Claire, and I NEVER thought I would ever consider leaving. I love the kids and they are what have kept me going. The “extra” stuff is what has caused me to question what I want to do and has finally gotten to me. It has crushed me. I have had many discussions with my spouse about leaving teaching or getting a new job...but one thing is for sure is that I will not be returning to the district. An out of touch school board has crushed my passion for teaching in Eau Claire.

Sincerely,

- A NEW Former Eau Claire Area School District Educator