

Pearl Stegner
Restore the Balance's School Board Candidate Survey

What motivates you to run for school board?

I am an involved parent in the district. I have four kids. I am a former teacher. I want to see public education thrive. I am concerned families and students and staff leave our district because they feel their worldview is not valued, or there is fear of retaliation in speaking up. When good teachers and staff leave, we must replace them. When students leave, we lose funding. We are accountable to the constituents, those paying taxes that support our schools. We are accountable to parents for providing an excellent education for their kids. Their voice is incredibly important, and I fear our district leadership is damaging faith in public education by serving special interest groups. If public school cannot be school for all, we are failing the mission.

What qualifications do you bring and how are you preparing to serve if elected?

I am a former teacher. I have lived and served in Durango, Bayfield, Denver (Jeffco Schools), and a rural district in Missouri. I have homeschooled for 3 years as my kids needed. I have a background in inclusive recreation for people with disabilities and elder care.

I understand diversity is not skin deep, but freedom to think, and that every person comes to the table with a unique worldview. I understand that equity does not mean entitlement, but that all our voices carry the same weight. Inclusion does not mean "me first" but takes on the posture of sitting down to listen and make room.

I am GOAL oriented, and love to analyze statistics and research to understand where we are and where we need to be.

Do you agree with the seven principles Restore the Balance feels should guide political conduct in Colorado? If you do not agree with one or more of these principles, please identify and explain why.

I cannot overemphasize how refreshing it was to find your email in my inbox! The heated environment of politics makes it very difficult for people to come together at a table and listen thoughtfully. Extremism and violence has no place in education, and I am concerned for the safety of our students and staff when all perspectives are not valued.

I have already been harassed in campaigning for this school board position. My perspective as a parent and former teacher and as a Christian has been publicly maligned by my opponent. But I believe public education is for everyone.

I have not accepted donations by political parties and am keen not to, even though I realize it might be my best avenue for support. I want to remain a voice that represents common virtue and ethics that are necessary for public school to thrive.

Durango School District and its board members have been the target of misinformation campaigns and legal threats. How should the school board address controversy, misinformation, and public criticism?

According to our district's model of coherent governance, "the Board consciously stays out of the district's day-to-day management decisions and adopts policies that give the superintendent the authority to select the resources, teachers, and educational programs that he or she believes best serve student-learning needs" and "the board's policies also require the superintendent to involve stakeholders in decisions that would result in significant change" (https://www.durangoschools.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=458611&type=d&pREC_ID=1000450).

I think a greater emphasis ought to be on transparency with stakeholders. Often I see the District's desire to correct misinformation, which feels disingenuous. Criticism is not always unwarranted. A posture of truly listening to our constituents is important to repair trust.

I would also like to see our school board inside the schools, observing and serving.

What does "common ground" mean to you in the context of board decision-making?

Common ground requires defining a level playing field, looking at the facts, goals, and expectations in our District, and swiftly moving to cooperative action in favor of our students.

If elected, how will you listen to and represent the concerns of constituents who don't agree with you?

One of the best things about public education is working with others who do not always agree with you. Quality education happens when we develop skills like those listed in Portrait of a Graduate. I welcome the opportunity to sit with other thinkers who are focused on excellence.

Cooperation must come from a willingness to listen, learn, and look for common ground. This is a quality found in servant leaders, and it goes along with having enough humility to admit when we've missed the mark.

We should not proceed with forming new policy unless it is supported by facts, and as you say, "objectively examined evidence."

What are the top two to three issues facing Colorado and briefly how do you plan to address these issues if elected?

I do think Colorado has a huge economy and ought to prioritize essential funding for SCHOOLS instead of leaning toward special grants, capital projects, and tax credits for select industries.

I am new to this, but I do think CASB advocacy is very important. I would like to see voters become more invested in school and therefore more invested in state legislation that affects education.

At the grassroots level, we need buy-in from our constituents, and we need to build trust within our community if we are going to see things change.

In addition to her shared response to the survey, Ms. Stegner was asked if she stood by writing she had posted online. She said she stood by those comments. Those comments were used to additionally inform Ms. Stegner's candidate ranking. They are included here (some graphics could not be copied):

Social Constructionism and Gender Dysphoria: "widely accepted" by few.

I am so thankful to everyone who has encouraged me over these past weeks as I continue to defend kids' rights to our local school board. I want to emphasize the absolute fact that I am totally dependent on Jesus to help me.

It has been *interesting* to say the least, especially with the things you are hearing in the news with regards to executive orders by our new president. I have not encountered a trickle-down effect where I am now, but that doesn't mean it isn't coming. I am not associated with various organizations like Parents Defending Education, but I totally agree with the sentiment of its founder, Nicki Neily, who said in a recent article,

DEI was never about 'equity'—it was about enforcing ideological conformity and institutionalizing discrimination. Shutting down these wasteful, divisive programs is a win for every student.”

My own school district board would beg to differ. I am still committed to the debate because I do think that intelligent unbelievers (I cannot assume they are Christians) also appreciate an opportunity to self-correct when they have misspoken.

However, in their most recent response to my emails (which I will post at the bottom of this blogpost), they played the so-called “widely accepted” *social constructionist* card, which if you aren't familiar with it, I will distill it for you [per their cited source, the UMass gender studies department](#):

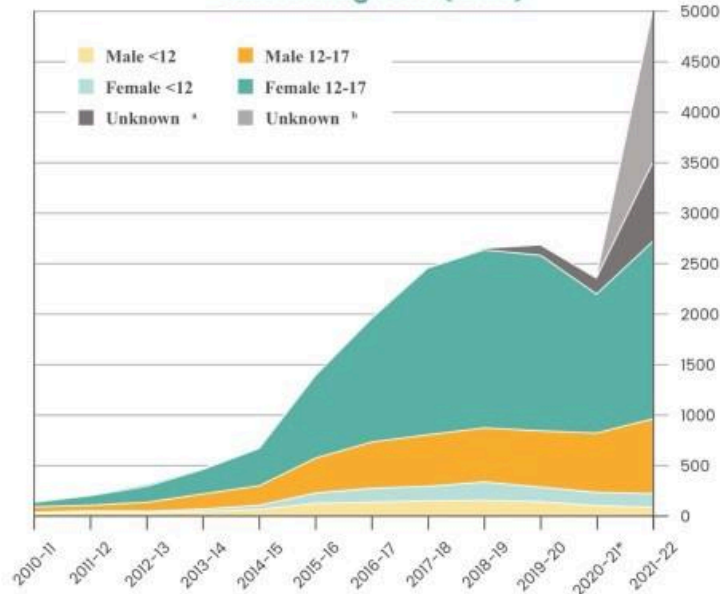
Social constructionism is a theory of knowledge that holds that characteristics typically thought to be immutable and solely biological—such as gender, race, class, ability, and sexuality—are products of human definition and interpretation shaped by cultural and historical contexts.

It is very hard to play by the rules when rules are open to interpretation. I am pretty sure 100 out of 100 board game makers and NFL referees and kindergarten teachers would agree: rules are a must for order.

But I am doing my research anyway, even if words like “peer-reviewed” and “scientific” are off-putting to the social constructionist crowd.

My best hope is that one of the board members' eyes will widen in interest when they see a chart like this one, where gender dysphoria referrals more than doubled from 2021 to 2022. Something is majorly wrong.

Child and Adolescent Referrals for Gender Dysphoria United Kingdom (GIDS)



*Referral activity to GIDS/Tavistock was sharply limited in 2020-2021 due to COVID-19.
 **Beginning in 2018-19, increasing numbers of referrals are not reported by sex.
 ***Beginning July 2021, referrals made directly to GIDS are reported separately from those handled by the Arden & GEM referral management service. The Tavistock reports that Arden & GEM handled over 1500 additional referrals in 2021-22 (age and sex not reported separately).

Graph from SEGM, Society for Evidence Based Gender Medicine, data collected from GIDS in the UK (which is now shut down “due to concerns concerns over the safety of its clinical approach based on the “gender-affirmative” model, as well as general operational failures.”)

Here is what I have learned: teenage girls are coming out in exponential numbers as gender dysphoric as social media replaces family connections and general body-mind-social issues are already at a head because of puberty. It's a phenomenon that especially goes hand in hand with kids who have preexisting mental issues, but is prevalent in girl friend groups that collectively decide to claim other “identities.” The beauty-at-any-cost, anorexic, bulimic, cutting, self-harm fad just took on another damaging flavor.

SEGM and L'Observatoire La Petite Sirène held a conference the summer of 2024 addressing things like the science of “trans” and reality of its social implications on kids and their future. Some researchers detailed the major resistance they faced when attempting to publish evidence-based articles. Those in opposition did not want to be seen as anti-LGBTQ—fuel for activists who take up transitioning as a “human rights” issue and press care providers to “affirm” them in their rights to mutilate a perfectly healthy body.

(This [eye-opening paper written on the conference](#) is incredible and should be read by anyone who cares about kids.)

To be honest, I never intended to dive this deep into the rates of gender dysphoria or among youth to prove my point that the school board ought to keep progressive ideology out of public schools.

But I am not unhappy it led to this, because *kids are drowning in this stuff and begging for help*. Any exposure or learning we can do around helping kids is valuable.

Did you know [the 9-8-8 suicide hotline goes straight to the LGBTQ-funded Trevor Project to the tune of tens of millions](#) of tax payer money? (Still waiting on Elon to dig up that story.)

Do you know you can't even find non-LGBTQ help for these youth on the Google because Google is also putting tons of money into Trevor Project's pockets?

Kids who desire human attention fall for the transgenderism lie with no hope of getting out apart from LGBTQ activists who tell them this is it, this is the plan for their life.

This, dear children, is *not* what life is about.

No life is so one-noted. No life is boiled down to sex, gender, and teenage emotions. No life requires a label, no life requires you to have it all figured out. You have every right to be a kid, think like a kid, act like a kid, love being a kid.

I am sorry there are grownups who are out there pushing such nonsense when you just want to be loved, protected, safe, known. Every advocacy group is a sorry excuse for Jesus. God did not make a mistake when He created you.

Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed.
Psalm 82:3

[The Myth of "Reliable Research" in Pediatric Gender Medicine](#) does a great job explaining how we went from zero to a hundred miles an hour offering gender "affirming" care with little to no evidence.

And here's recent communication with the School Board:

February 10 2025

Dear Pearl,

We have not found any evidence that the data from the Trevor Project is not reliable. They have received a 100% 4-star rating from Charity Navigator. Moreover, their numbers reflect what we see locally in our own data.

The concept of gender and sexuality being social constructs is a widely accepted. You can read more about it [here](#).

Sincerely,

Durango Board of Education

February 11 2025

School Board,

Thanks for your response.

That the Trevor Project has a 100% 4-star rating from Charity Navigator does not indicate it is a reputable, unbiased research source. It merely points out they are responsible with their funding to their organization. Being fiscally responsible ensures they will get increased funding from donors that support their progressive, anti-parent, sex-based agenda.

Regarding the hyperlinked article you sent that explains the theory of social constructionism according to the liberal arts school UMass gender studies department, the author concludes, “this perspective is especially useful for the activist and emancipatory aims of feminist movements and theories.”

Social constructionism is an extremist belief that reality and knowledge are made-up. It challenges fact-based logic by arguing that undeniable facts are negotiable.

With this logic, I might very well ask “Why have a school board? Why care about children? Why send my kids to school? Why have expectations, standards, and testing in education? Why hire qualified staff?”

This is, at best, problematic for you.

It is easy to see how, through the lens of social constructionism, you might misunderstand gender dysphoria (and other psychopathology, and how it leads to hopelessness, depression, and suicide ideation). These kids need clinical help, not a pat on the back and three cheers for inclusion.

I am disturbed this is the angle you are playing in public education.

Families like mine should not have to endure your constructionist agenda when we are entitled to a free, fair, equal, unbiased, excellent education.

Families should not be forced to leave school for fear of indoctrination, compelled thought, modern psychology and transgender theory.

Please look at [this peer-reviewed study](#) that offers an explanation for the decline in mental health and parent-child relationships in youth with gender dysphoria:

“Parents reported subjective declines in their AYAs’ mental health (47.2%) and in parent-child relationships (57.3%) since the AYA “came out” and that AYAs expressed a range of behaviors that included: expressing distrust of non-transgender people (22.7%); stopping spending time with non-transgender friends (25.0%); trying to isolate themselves from their families (49.4%), and only trusting information about gender dysphoria from transgender sources (46.6%). Most (86.7%) of the parents reported that, along with the sudden or rapid onset of gender dysphoria, their child either had an increase in their social media/internet use, belonged to a friend group in which one or multiple friends became transgender-identified during a similar timeframe, or both.”

Also, check out [this study that details the bias in gender transition and reassignment studies](#):

“Another unique aspect of the gender medicine field is that a number of clinicians tasked with caring for gender-distressed have taken on the role of political campaigners—and in doing so, have traded wisdom and nuance for blunt activism (Kuper et al., [Citation2022](#); McNamara et al., [Citation2022](#)). Their insistence that today’s gender-dysphoric teens are tomorrow’s transgender adults, and that their future

happiness and mere survival hinges on early access to gender reassignment, is demonstrably false. While still reported as “rare” by the gender medicine establishment (Coleman et al., [Citation2022](#); McNamara et al., [Citation2022](#)), the rate of medical detransition is already 10%-30% just a few years following transition...

The scale of the potential harm can be fully appreciated if one considers that an astounding 1 in 10–20 middle school, high school, and college students in the West currently claim a transgender identity.”

Once again, I ask that you rescind this unconstitutional, agenda-driven policy in our schools.

Pearl

Find local and national news releases on the [school website](#). You can read my previous emails [here](#) and [here](#).

And [here](#) is where it all started...

Feb 12 2025

“Whereas we believe gender and sexuality are social constructs...”—and other words that don’t belong in public school policy.

Well, I have spent about as much time as I’d ever want to writing emails to our local school board.

I’m not the most efficient person when it comes to getting thoughts down on paper. I generally do research, looking for graphs and data and peer-reviewed studies, or I check out books by old philosophers and psychiatrists, sifting through tomes to back up my thinking with more sagacious thinking (and sometimes looking for inconsistencies). I’m just a mom, after all.

I’m not a Twitter/X person, I don’t like visibility, and posting on Facebook terrifies me (I sometimes do it and then go underground for weeks so I don’t have to face the

responses). (I'm trying to get better; I realize putting a face with words goes a long way in building trust.)

But I want to make this drama a little more public, only so that others know thinking has been done, letters have been written, efforts have been made. (Also, please feel free to borrow anything I've written if it is helpful in your own communications with school boards and such. Or if you are Jay or Jordan Sekulow and can bring some legal advice—give me a call, ha!)

It is so very easy to watch the news and *tsk, tsk* or mutter about the state of the world, then go on and ignore it. What speaks most loudly to me now is the *silence* of folks who say they are believers and yet whose faith does not compel them to do anything but watch Rome burn around them.

Christians: Y'all—we are *all* in Sodom and Gomorrah. All of us should be feeling uncomfortable here. Pray that God finds you faithful when He comes to visit.

Keep reminding your young people that God didn't make a mistake when He made them. God doesn't make mistakes.

Love your enemies genuinely—enough to tell them the truth. Evangelism is nothing magic, and it isn't a dirty word. It doesn't require a degree from seminary or a flashy personality (in fact, those things aren't usually helpful)—it's just telling the truth. More kids and parents need to know how much God loves them.

Thank God that He opens doors, and pray for my humility to walk through them in the footsteps of Christ. Pray we are salt and light and the aroma of life to folks who need Jesus.

February 5 2025

Hello School Board,

You are hearing from me again, a concerned parent. I have not heard any answers from you regarding questions I have posed.

How has your legal counsel changed so drastically from the October response of eliminating flags from school as an unnecessary distraction to your January unanimous approval of unconstitutional sectarian policy?

It seems obvious that you respond quickly and positively to protestors touting progressive ideology but not to responsible, caring parents who have walked the trenches of child rearing, pay taxes, support schools and teachers, and desire a fair, quality education.

I have read through your drafted policy and am deeply disturbed by the language presented.

“Whereas we believe gender and sexuality is a social construct”—in what world is gender and sexuality a social construct? How are babies made? Gender and sexuality are foundational to our existence—go ask your mom and dad. Our kids (who are kids, as we understand by the science of maturation and brain studies, not through “social constructs,” feelings, or other ambiguous factors) deserve a future where they can individually make decisions of their own about what they believe as they grow up.

Clearly there are two or more sides to every political and social argument, yet you claim your views are higher, better, safer, more important. The Trevor Project, a biased research source, was founded by LGBTQ activists. Their studies are made on confirmation bias that seeks to propagate more activists, not to solve teen suicide.

Trevor Project and therefore, you, willfully and purposefully engage in a grossly immoral narrative that pushes gender and sex ideology on kids. This inappropriate, hopeless agenda increases the chances of suicidal behavior among children—minors, who, under the constitution, deserve to have their rights protected. Their right to life, their right to safe, neutral learning spaces is paramount in a school setting, where parents trust they will not be propagandized or persuaded by a sectarian agenda.

Your proposed “safe spaces” where parents are not allowed speaks of your willingness to ignore our constitutional rights as parents. But perhaps constitutional rights fall under your understanding as a “social construct”.

Please do your research instead of spinning a narrative of inclusion that revolves around an agenda that hurts our kids.

We await your response.

Pearl

February 6 2025 (response by school board)

We understand and respect the fact that you disagree with our actions and would like to assure you that we have no agenda other than ensuring every student feels welcome in our schools. We take the mental health of all our students very seriously and are providing resources for all our students. If you have concerns about curriculum or your student's experience in school, please reach out to the principal.

As to your question regarding our legal counsel, the Board sought legal counsel after the district made the decision to remove flags, so we cannot speak to any differences. We can assure you that we take legal liability very seriously and followed legal guidance based on previous cases in Colorado.

Sincerely,

The Durango Board of Education

February 7 2025

School Board,

Thank you for your swift response, although you did not answer my questions about the wording in your drafted policy or the questionable Trevor Project sources you cited.

I have, as you mentioned, been in face-to-face meetings with school teachers and administration regarding curriculum and my students' experience in school, which is why I have began addressing you—I was encouraged by them to speak out on these matters. I will continue to be intentional about my involvement and accountability with the district.

We know in schools our goals must be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART), so I am wondering how you intend to measure inclusivity if sexuality and gender are just social constructs.

If your legal counsel is following the directive of schools such as Denver Public Schools, I would like to remind you the civil liberties battles they are embroiled in for the gender policies they have implemented, as [mentioned in the the recent Wall Street Journal article I have attached](#). One student succinctly commented, “They took a space away from me that I felt comfortable in. While they were trying to serve one community, they took it away from another.”

What I am hearing you say is *your* perception of mental health in schools is more important than *all* students’ rights to an unbiased education in a neutral school setting. You wrongly assume I do not care about children’s mental health. It is for this very reason a political agenda should not be in schools.

Do you understand ethics and the importance of structure and behavior in school classrooms?

Here is an example: two days ago my daughter’s third grade teacher sent out a message to all parents with a strong, clear message: “do not let your children bring gum to school. It is distracting and causes our classroom to become littered.”

This was simple—she rightly assumed parents were responsible for their kid’s behavior, she made a reasonable request, and she gave examples of how education is hindered when the rule isn’t followed.

If my response had been to take offense, or ignore the message and not talk to my kid about it, or to assume the teacher is stupid, or that gum isn’t distracting and my kid is an exception to following the rules, I would be wrong.

Schools must have unambiguous rules to maintain order, and simply because a parent or student doesn’t want to follow them does not mean they have the right to disrupt the learning process. No—if a student disrupts learning, there are consequences, because learning in school must continue.

Now the parent may throw a fit that their child got in trouble for bringing gum to school and losing recess because of it, but the school has ethically done nothing wrong—a great standard for tax-payer funded entities.

Furthering this analogy, what if a teacher or student is finding child-inappropriate sex/gender/political messaging a distraction in class to real, unbiased learning? Oughtn't the administrators tell kids/teachers to leave it at home? Oughtn't there be consequences for disrupting the learning environment? Oughtn't there be consequences for folks who continually promote activism which distracts from neutral learning?

This is what you are doing, school board.

While the schools themselves—administration, good teachers— are focused on becoming the number one school district in Colorado through portrait of a graduate values, focused academics, merit-based performance, consistent testing and measurable goals—you, School Board, are bringing in wads of gum to pass around. It is reasonable and responsible for parents to ask you to keep it out of school, yet you have insisted it is necessary for kids to feel safe. This is your idea of mental health—ignoring the SMART goals of public education to accommodate progressive ideology.

This is ethically irresponsible, no matter what political views you take. If mental wellbeing of students is your motto, please look into the mental illness factor of students that is leading to their self-destructive behavior. Identify and get these kids and parents the clinical help they need, do not slap labels on kids and call it “inclusion.”

Again, I appreciate your communication and await your response.

Thanks,

Pearl

You can read my previously sent emails [here](#).

Feb 07 2025

Under the flag of inclusivity.

If you are following my Durango school drama, welcome back! Ha. Do I have an update for you... Yes.

Please help share and expose what is going on in our district—it is both unconstitutional and unabashed thought reform.

Our most [recent district school board meeting](#) ended with the board voting unanimously to advance a [new flag policy](#), one that takes advantage of responsible, tax-paying constituents to codify their culture of *inclusivity*.

The meeting was attended by the rainbow-carrying, mask-wearing crowd, and the only ten community members that spoke in the open forum were advocates of the new policies.

Let me stop here and explain why it was only supporters who spoke: *most of us wouldn't be caught dead in a crowd of people who are so hateful.*

We have kids to cart around to various extracurriculars and kids to come home to—kids we wouldn't dare bring to a school meeting where the vitriol is high and the discussion is sexual. We are busy keeping kids off screens and TikTok, busy cooking supper and washing clothes and filling our lives with good, grounding, family, *kid* things. We are parents who think these current school board discussions are R-rated, inappropriate, disgusting. We are trying to protect our kids, and they shouldn't be a part of a school board meeting that wants to write up anti-child policies.

We aren't ignoring the issue; we are living quiet, wholesome lives, and I don't need anyone to follow me to my car in the parking lot, hurling insults. (But they're very kind and inclusive, they say.)

The school board praised the speakers for their “bravery”—people who, I think, have so abandoned their kids to cellphones, addictions, and the lies of culture (and blamed their children's suicide attempts on the school) that they ought to be in jail.

You know what I think is brave? Not giving in to getting your kid a smartphone when they're thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen...

Not heading to the pot shop for your weekend pick-me-up, even though smoking pot is legal. *Brave* is trying to make it to every single one of your kids' basketball games even though you work till five, gas is expensive, and you would rather be home on the couch.

Yet this is the culture, this is who has the microphone, and the school board will get lots

of hugs and affirmation from these folks after they approve the new policies...well, at least until they come up with a new identity that isn't yet represented by the LGBTQIA2S+ alphabet-calculator salad (which used to be simply represented by an American flag, and covered the rest of us too).

I have been writing thoughtful emails for some time to these board members—but I do not think I've been strong enough. I refuse to drag my own children into the arena to display them like some scarred warrior—even if that is what they are—because that is the game the other side is playing.

My kids are getting hurt because of this, and you don't care.

See, we have the same argument, but I am trying to point out, with reason, that the other side is heavily influenced by a selfish, nasty agenda that destroys kids, and I am just a mom who wants kids to have an excellent, non-agenda-aligned education.

What I'd like the board to hear and understand is this:

You say in your inclusion policy that “gender and sexuality are social constructs”—well, prove it.

At what point is a child capable of even believing a boy is not a boy and a girl is not a girl unless it is modeled to them or they have been conditioned to think it?

Science says female and male are distinct and separate, and nature tells us life and procreation cannot happen outside of these rules. Gender and sexuality are two of the most unmovable, inflexible facts of life—just ask any three year old.

“Gender and sexuality as a social construct” is *ideology*, and that, rooted in nihilism—a sectarian belief (which are unconstitutional in schools) that meaning and moral principles be abandoned. To clarify, nihilism *is* a value system in contrast to morality, and gender and sex are therefore nebulous and “made-up.”

If there is anything more worthless and dangerous to project upon our kids and in our community, it is this destructive agenda that parades as “inclusive.”

Want to see teen suicide go up?

Teach them that truth is ambiguous, that no one truly understands them, and that they are oppressed by their assigned gender. Train them to offer compelled answers instead

of thinking critically, to *blame and expose those who disagree with them* as racist, transphobic, hateful. Offer “safe spaces” where their parents are not trusted or welcome. Fly flags that ostracize the rest of the community that holds traditional family values. (It’s all very Mao Zedong, but what does history know? We can revise it!)

Oh, right. It’s already happening.

The reason teen suicide is going up is because of this phony agenda to be inclusive.

Recently my little girl with potty issues had a bathroom accident because a man walked into the womens’ restroom at the airport and I refused to send her in after him. Did he identify as a female? Do I care? Shouldn’t a little girl be able to use a womens’ restroom before a man? There was no line to the mens’ room! I hope he felt “safe” and “accommodated” as my child suffered wet pants the rest of our journey.

This is how backwards it is getting: kids’ basic rights—to be a kid! To innocently use the potty! To go to school and call a boy a boy and a girl a girl! To think without input from the thought police! To grow up at a pace allowing them to clearly understand the world!—are getting trampled.

Kids are not small adults. They cannot and do not reason as grownups. They cannot synthesize information without scaffolding. Their brains are not fully developed. They are vulnerable *because they are kids*. We have to protect them.

The truth is this: kids want to be in a safe, loving family. The school community is no substitute, even though I rely heavily on wonderful teachers and administrators to teach my kids. Kids want to feel safe, with boundaries that create scaffolding for understanding the world as they grow up—and this *only* comes from a moral-based, child-valued, family-centric foundation.

The folks that you, the school board, called “brave”? They had already failed at their job of protecting kids; they only wanted someone to push the blame on. You took the bait under the façade of “inclusivity.” It makes you look good now, gives you the pat on the back you want.

The “trans” message that is so strong and appealing to young teenagers who seek attention—is devastating.

How will these future adults feel in a few years or decades when they realize everything they ever knew and believed was a lie?

How will they ever live a satisfying life where gender and sexual confusion doesn’t tint

every decision they make?

This new “freedom” or “right” to be whatever they want to be is awfully constraining.

And you could’ve let them just be kids.

The underlying, unsaid malevolence in your policy is that you are using children to promote a lifestyle that is, at best, hopeless.

Your reasoning behind these policies are predicated by political and ideological bias, not constitutional rights, which is your MO as a school board.

You could’ve let them just be kids.

Jan 31 2025

Brave: Conversations in public school.

I had a short conversation with a friend following [my last post](#)—one where she said, quite honestly, that she had no idea the battles we were facing in the public school setting. She was genuinely appalled at the situation and promised to pray for those of us on the “front lines.”

I appreciate feedback! It totally gets lonely when you are trying to speak truth into a corrupt culture. It’s easier to look away and pretend it doesn’t affect us.

But it does. Think of the children in your own life, their future spouses and their children yet to be born. It’s a pretty good chance that the public school kids of today—even if you don’t have skin in the game now—will be in their world tomorrow as partners, parents, friends, co-workers, leaders. Let’s give them every advantage while we can, protecting them from evil times and allowing them to grow up without unnecessary harm.

“Snatching them from the fire”—I always think of this beautiful phrase in Jude—it isn’t metaphorical. We’ve been commissioned to go into the fire (Mark 16:15).

In the meanwhile, over the semester we were dealing with our teenager’s experience in modern day health class, pushing back on things like the hyper-focus on depression

and suicidal behavior, advocacy for people with extreme mental illness, recognizing and correcting transgender bias. I guess I was just innocently hoping they'd cover the basics for early drivers—work on that 30-hour safety skills unit that ends with a permit. Nope.

Several emails translated to an in-person meeting. We prayed for about a week and then calmly and gratefully took the opportunity to explain our concerns, along with a quick lesson on [opposing thought reform](#) (now that would finally be a worthy professional development course!).

The health teacher, kind as can be, was stunned, I think. We did not come with a stick to beat her over the head. We came with prayers that she would listen and be curious. We prayed that we would be salty in a way that made her thirst to know Jesus. I talked about the spiritual side of mental illness. We talked about what real advocacy looks like. Joe spoke of our belief in God-assigned gender, and pointed out the interesting fact that kids who want to be fluid are more likely to deal with suicide ideation. *Isn't that awful? We love kids; we don't want this anywhere near our kids.* I told her that because of some biased teaching and curriculum, some of our friends refused to put their kids in the public school system.

Isn't that sad? I said. *Christians like us don't feel like schools are neutral, but agenda-driven. Good people who support teachers are leaving. Our kids are coming home saying "I wish we could just learn something instead of being asked how we feel all the time!"*

She was wide-eyed—and still, kind. I wonder if she'd expected us to hate her. We didn't. In fact, I was struck by what a warm, wonderful person she was. I would've loved to talk to her more.

The administrator encouraged us to speak up at the board meetings—"There's plenty of people on the other side, but folks like you, we need you to speak up too."

I told him if the other side wasn't so intimidating with their masks and signage, if I could feel safe walking back to my car in the parking lot at night, if I wasn't home feeding and putting kids to bed, if my husband didn't travel for work—I might.

We all got up from the table and shook hands.

It was a wonderful conversation—maybe because educators love kids, just like us, and see the freedom in letting kids remain kids. Maybe it was wonderful because we had a desire to truly listen, and they did, too.

It made me feel brave, because for once I spoke aloud the words of reason, and reason was heard.

So, what about you? Is there something you need to say—is there a place you need to go and tell the truth? Let me encourage you: be brave.

The following are three emails I have sent to our district's school board. Please read and take what you need to form your own emails. Speak up. Encourage right thinking and right action. Your kids and mine—they matter.

January 2025

Hello Board,

I just wanted to send another little note before your meeting tonight. I have sent emails in the past asking you to please kindly reconsider and desist writing new policy that is, in fact, contrary to the Colorado State constitution's direction to remain free of sectarian tenants and doctrines (Article 9, Section 2).

I do not write on behalf of the Colorado Republicans, nor do I wish to be associated with them or any political leaning. I am frustrated that our concerns are not being heard or validly addressed—only a weak, understated argument that this potential policy would mollify LGBTQ activists.

I write to remind you Karen Cheser (superintendent) addressed this in an email this fall, saying:

“Our goal is to maintain a neutral environment in our schools that is inclusive for all students and families. To ensure neutrality, we are removing these two symbols from employee workspaces and classrooms.”

Obviously this is not about flags; flags were just a foot in the door, a strawman argument for one side to demand unnecessary and salacious attention—which you readily give.

This side lays claim to “existential” rights that stretch beyond leveling the playing field—they are the things that aren’t even listed on Maslow’s pyramid—entitlement that has the audacity to suggest *you are limiting my happiness by erecting safe boundaries and maintaining neutral learning spaces for all children.*

What is worse, you say what is inappropriate and grossly sexual is *good* for *all* children, and that it *creates* safe spaces.

I was especially glad I was not able to be at the meeting with my young children when a creepy “polyamorous”-identifying individual discussed his own needs and safety concerns.

At the time when I am training my own children to use discernment and good judgment to make wise choices, I know my efforts to raise excellent kids will be thwarted by a school culture that demands a spotlight on sexual and gender-bending ideology.

Parents with the precious task of raising kids should not have to be in a position of fighting the school board to keep our schools child-safe, child-appropriate, child-based, and academically excellent.

Pearl

December 2024

Dear Board:

I regret not being able to attend Tuesday meetings as my husband is frequently out of town for work and I have four children to look after.

I have been—after personal meetings with school employees and even admin—encouraged by them to speak up, as it seems that a certain ideological platform threatens to drown out many parents and voices of reason—people that pay taxes and are intensely interested in public education as academic institutions.

Perhaps employees aren't speaking up against your proposed policy for fear of potential discrimination leading to job termination?

I have been following closely the news and push for DEI policy to prevail. I want to remind you, as a constituent, that your responsibility is to “establish and maintain a system of education in the district, as prescribed by the constitution and laws of the state.”

The Colorado state constitution states that “no sectarian tenants or doctrines shall be taught in the public school” (CO const. Article 9 Section 2).

Sectarianism is represented in narrow mindedness and the unwillingness to consider other points of view.

This is the very foundation of discrimination, and as it has no place in schools, there is no room for it in the policy.

In the Supreme Court case *Engle v. Vitale* (1962) it was determined that school-sponsored prayer was unconstitutional as it violated the First Amendment's Establishment Clause. As the school has not been established for religious or ideological pursuit, its buildings and classrooms and teachers ought not display these unavoidable ideological flags.

There is already propaganda pressuring students to align themselves with a gendered ideology, as seen in the classroom at the beginning of the year when teachers ask students to express their “preferred” pronouns. This is not terminology; it is ideology. Yet there is no opting out of this exercise, and students risk discrimination and social ostracization if they do not comply.

Please consider these things as you move forward with your plan to draft new policy.

Thank you,

Pearl

November 2024

Dear School Board,

I understand your board is under pressure to respond to a group of people who want to erect flags within the school district, because it represents an ideology to which they align.

Under the 9-R DEIB policy, Durango schools prioritize inclusivity for all students. This inclusivity refers to the equity in access to a standards-based education and activities. Your equity resolution says that 9-R “strives to be an equitable, inclusive educational system and community—a place where all students, staff, and family members feel valued, safe, and welcome...”

Inclusion refers to minorities and the disadvantaged as it pertains to their basic rights, and removing barriers that prevent them from learning.

Freedom from that which is unvalued, unsafe, unwelcome—this is what your goal is when you make decisions as a school board looking at inclusion.

Inclusivity, then, does not refer to one’s specific ideology or expression to be made inherent in our district as a backdrop for learning! In fact, it is the opposite of “inclusion” to erect flags that only represent the values of a certain population.

As constituents who pay taxes and parents and students finding community in our school, we want to have safe, secure, and peaceful schools. Your duty is to ensure school is a neutral, safe ground where all may enter and all may learn, even students whose values are not aligned with flag-represented agendas.

DHS clubs and extracurricular activities of all kinds occur during lunch hour or before/after school, where they do not interrupt or interfere with standard learning hours. I suggest this is where and when flags and meetings ought to be displayed and held.

We want our kids to be safe in school. We want them to learn and be successful. Let’s

not get distracted.

Pearl

Jan 28 2025

In Love and Rage: the rottenness of current culture

I am sorry I didn't write more in 2024, but of course this is the lesson you learn when your kids get bigger... Things do not get easier, they just get more complicated. The tired feeling you have after a day of feeding/cleaning/chasing/persuading/coddling/disciplining/teaching little kids morphs into an equally tired feeling of raising bigger kids in a bigger world with bigger problems.

If we ran into trouble (hunger, belligerence, nap-related or stranger danger) at the park or library or store, we could just leave, one screaming baby or toddler tucked under an arm and the rest of the solemn gaggle hustled along holding hands. But now—and with the maturity of our kids—most of the problems are outside our control, yet affecting us such that we can't just walk away. They are growing, and as good growing goes, the kids have to observe that when there is an issue, we stand our ground and handle it.

And so most of my writing has been emails and such, sometimes directed toward a school board that values policy over people, yet doesn't see it that way. Instead of looking at the root, where concern lies, they look at the fruit and think if we just champion the rotting apples, the tree will get better.

I've drafted letters that, I hope, are simple and understandable and not too me-and-my-kids-centric, letters that raise questions—the type of questions that, if one is being honest, open up a new way of thinking. The way that folks will be persuaded by “science” and that which is logical: this is how am attempting to appeal to the situation. And this gets tricky when you're limited to one page, or in school board meetings, three minutes.

Honestly, I hate politics. I hate watching the recent confirmation hearing clips of Trump's cabinet. I hate the vitriol, the intense, palpable defiance of both sides and their unwillingness to drop their pride and egos. Both have erred; neither is sorry. There will be no peaceable transition, just a sticking out of the tongue and nanny nanny boo boo,

“sucks to be you, losers,” smirks plastered on their faces, just like the people of four years ago, and the people four years before that.

In my own small community, I want to be a bridge—those were the exact words I used in a meeting with school officials. If science and open-mindedness are so valued, then let’s look at numbers!

And shouldn’t school be the place where academics are valued?
And isn’t school the safe, instituted, big government-funded place to hash it out?
And doesn’t our school district strive to “[be the best public school in Colorado](#)”?

But the school board just wants to let the shiny, rotten apples hang on the tree, for freedom’s sake, they say. First amendment rights, they say. Now the rights of *some people* are more important than others—this is their silent consensus, in an ironic, Orwellian twist, but they don’t see it this way. They honestly think the rotten apples are beautiful and marginalized—they don’t *know* how rotten they are.

And this is the problem with school boards and politicians with sacred cows that cannot be touched. They peer down into the tiny voices of reason, the three minute public comment spiel or one-page email, and they promptly (and especially) ignore any alarms that the tree is dying, or that the shiny fruit is full of worms.

It doesn’t matter if wisdom is found in quiet learned voices, older generations, or those well-studied, qualified, stable, wholesome community members. History is no longer our teacher. Those in charge in our culture win and succeed by plowing ahead and damning all fences. Fences that, as Chesterton said,

The more modern type of reformer goes gaily up to it and says, “I don’t see the use of this; let us clear it away.” To which the more intelligent type of reformer will do well to answer: “If you don’t see the use of it, I certainly won’t let you clear it away. Go away and think. Then, when you can come back and tell me that you do see the use of it, I may allow you to destroy it.

A modern leader’s sacred cow is *destroying fences* in favor of laying new highways. Our local school district is following in the footsteps of Denver Public Schools, which has a [LGBTQ agenda and a team that sends out emails signed, in love and rage](#)—four words that, put together, seem strikingly out of place coming from an academic

institution.

After receiving an email from a concerned parent (not me) at the beginning of the year regarding various flags posted around the high school as propaganda, our smart superintendent issued a lengthy email that vowed to remove the problem flags:

We are addressing a formal complaint from a school parent about two specific political symbols displayed by staff: Black Lives Matter posters and Pride Progress flags. (These were determined to be political expressions by our legal counsel based on a set of factors such as case law, the original intent of the symbols, and their primary use.)

Our goal is to maintain a neutral environment in our schools that is inclusive for all students and families. To ensure neutrality, we are removing these two symbols from employee workspaces and classrooms.

I was new to the high school at the time—so I sent a quick thank you to the board and superintendent for nipping this in the bud. Back to academics, thank you very much!

But a can of worms was opened; the same worms from those shiny apples came wriggling out into the sun.

A student walk-out was staged. A handful of teachers claimed that, by removing flags, they removed a safe space for troubled kids. Board meetings were had; public comment was accepted.

A large turnout with many flags and weirdos persuaded the board to believe the community majority wanted flags left in schools.

One commenter, a young fellow, announced he was “polyamorous” and that he really needed places to be himself. He assured the board with a sly smile that “polyamorous” didn’t mean he wanted to necessarily have sex with *everyone*.

I couldn’t believe my ears, couldn’t believe this trash was even being allowed in a public session, let alone in a facility *built for the purpose of safely educating children*. Rotten apples!

Another public commenter, voice shaking with anger, compared this prescient, historic decision of allowing flags in schools to Ruby Bridges and racial desegregation. “Don’t be on the wrong side of history,” she coolly warned from behind her mask. (There’s nothing like amplifying your own hurt by associating it with the hurt of something totally unrelated. For what it is worth, our district is less than 1% Black—a far more representative flag than BLM would be something Native American or Hispanic, as these populations make up a quarter of our students. Haven’t we determined by now that BLM and PP flags are ideological in nature, just as much as the AWANA flag we raise on Wednesday nights at our local Baptist church?)

“Destroy these fences!” they screamed.

The board got right to it.

They decided to draft up a policy that, as I said, is based on an established Denver Public Schools policy, and wholeheartedly supported (obviously) by groups such as the high school equity team and gay-straight alliance.

Pushing back was the loud (and admittedly egregious) Colorado Republican Party, threatening to sue the school district for violating the 14th Amendment Equal Protection Clause.

This week, public servant and vice president of the board shot back,

we’re choosing this based on our values, on our policies, on our programming...so if the public doesn’t like it, they can vote us out of office.

So much for neutrality...so much for safety and fences and reasoning and legal council.

So much for education, maybe.

And so much for being the best public school in Colorado.

In love and rage. The way schools ought to be run. Keep polishing those rotten apples.

The Drift from Domesticity, The Thing. Chesterton, GK. 1929

Superintendent message regarding legal decision, Cheser, Karen. Email. 10/14/24.

Colorado GOP Threatens to Sue Durango School District over pride flag resolution.
Colorado Times Recorder, 1/10/25

Vote Us Out of Office,' Says Board Member To People Who Don't Support LGBTQ and BLM Flags in Durango Schools. Colorado Times Recorder, 1/15/25

Jan 17 2025

TAP+B Pod: Ep.9, Resisting Thought Reform in Public Schools

Episode 9

Resisting Thought Reform in Public Schools

Are you in too-deep waters at the local public school (I am!)? Should Christians even *be* in public schools? How does a Jesus-follower swim upstream from culture?

What is free speech? Where does one begin engaging respectfully and thoughtfully when it comes to social/emotional/gender activism in schools?

Greg Lukianoff might have some answers...

[*Article: The Empowering of the American Mind: 10 Principles for Opposing Thought Reform in K-12, Greg Lukianoff \(4/27/21\)*](#)

We hope this is a huge encouragement to those of you committed to daily picking up your cross and following Jesus. Pray for us as we pray for you!

The Average Pearl + Beth Podcast is made up of two sisters (one a thinker, one a dreamer) who like to church conventional culture noodles up against the refrigerator of unconventional Bible wisdom. What will stick?

Not your water colored, hand lettered, instagram pith (though Beth loves a good candle) (and Pearl loves pith). We are deep diggers, here to excavate the Word and expose it to

the next generation, with a side of momming fun. Join us?
Hosts: Pearl, Beth

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