

THE SEXUAL CLIMATE OF A SCHOOL: IMPACT SEXUAL HEALTH, SAFETY AND EDUCATION

Dr. Janet Rosenzweig
Author, *The Sex-Wise Parent*
National Consultant for Sexual Abuse
Prevention Programs, Prevent Child
Abuse America

A presentation for the topic track,
“The Framing and Climate of Sex Ed ”

NATIONAL SEX ED CONFERENCE

November 30, 2012

EXPERIENCE WORKING IN CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

- ◉ First Child Sexual Abuse Helpline in the US, 1978
 - *Was AASECT certified as a sex educator - NO experience at all in child welfare!*
- ◉ Directed 5 federally funded programs in East Tennessee
- ◉ State trainer for Texas Department of Human Resources
- ◉ Clinical sex-education for Texas DHR (1982-1984)
- ◉ National Consultant for Sexual Abuse Prevention Programs, Prevent Child Abuse America (current)

AUTHOR:

"Dr. Rosenzweig's work will reduce trauma, save lives, and help families."
—James Hmurovich, president and CEO, Prevent Child Abuse America

THE SEX-WISE PARENT

*The Parent's Guide to Protecting Your Child, Strengthening
Your Family, and Talking to Kids about
Sex, Abuse, and Bullying*



JANET ROSENZWEIG, MS, PHD, MPA

OBJECTIVES *

- Be able to define the concepts of sexual climate and sexual culture of a school
- Be able to discuss the positive and negative aspects of the sexual climate in their school
- Be able to identify options for intervention if the sexual climate is unhealthy

* *as specified for the CEU application*

RATIONALE

While policies and regulations may define the *culture* of an organization, the *climate* defines how it actually feels to be in the building. A healthy sexual climate promotes the physical and emotional safety of students and faculty and supports integration of sexual issues into curricula for art, history, science and related areas.

SEXUAL CLIMATE/SEXUAL CULTURE

- ◎ Terms borrowed from researchers/scholars in education

Extensive research on the impact of school climate on discipline, performance, achievement, staff turnover and other issues; see for example Tableman, Betty and Adrienne Herron. "School Climate and Learning." Best Practice Briefs, Number 31 University-Community Partnerships @Michigan State University: 2004

- ◎ “Culture” refers to the written rules, regulations and policies that specify how an organization operates
- ◎ “Climate” refers to how it actually feels to be in a building

SCHOOL CLIMATE CAN BE A DIFFICULT CONCEPT TO GRASP

- ⦿ Because most adults have spent time in very few schools!
- ⦿ Those of you who work in multiple schools can attest to the fact that 2 schools in the same district, with the same formal culture can ‘feel’ entirely different.
- ⦿ Climate is specific to an individual school - highly dependant on the PEOPLE

SEXUAL CLIMATE

- ⦿ Refers to how a group or organization actually deals with sexual issues
- ⦿ Language and terminology
- ⦿ Privacy
- ⦿ Respect
- ⦿ Dress Code
- ⦿ Graffiti
- ⦿ Others?

SEXUAL CLIMATE IN SCHOOLS

- ⦿ At least 5% of kids report sexual contact with a school employee sometime during their school years
- ⦿ With young kids, we're concerned with pedophiles.
- ⦿ By middle and high school we're concerned with adults who exploit their power and status to seduce kids.

THE SHAKESHAFT REPORT

- ◎ Shakeshaft, Carol. *Educator Sexual Misconduct: A Synthesis of Existing Literature*. Washington, D,C.: U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Undersecretary, 2004.
- ◎ Access [Educator Sexual Misconduct](#) here.
- ◎ Example -”Currently, the (PA) Department of Education, has 500 open cases (of educator misconduct) of which approximately 144 involve sexual misconduct or physical abuse.
- ◎ PA Task Force on Child Protection, report issued November 28, 2012, Page 281

EXAMPLE OF A SCHOOL CLIMATE

- [HBO special](#)
- (stop at 3:32)

THIS WAS NOT A SECRET!

- ⦿ People knew that this teacher routinely made sexual advances towards students.
- ⦿ In some schools, faculty or staff would be punished for no more than an off-color remark to a student; in other schools men like Andy Bleiler (who was barely 30 at the time!) operate in the open.

The DIFFERENCE IS THE SEXUAL CLIMATE!

SUPERINTENDENT REMOVES ENTIRE STAFF OF A SCHOOL AFTER INCIDENT REPORTED

- ◉ Deasy: “We intend to interview every adult, every adult who works at that school, whether they are a teacher or administrator, or whether they are an after-school playground worker or a custodian or a secretary. I mean every single solitary adult who works at Miramonte.”

This man understands the power of school climate!

ANDY HAS A LOT OF COMPANY

- [Educator Sexual Misconduct: A Synthesis of Existing Literature](#)

READ THIS REPORT!

BEYOND PEDOPHILIA

- ◎ **Hebephile:** someone with a preference for children just entering puberty
- ◎ **Ephebophile:** someone with an attraction to older adolescents.
- ◎ **BOTH GENDERS**
 - Brittni Colleps, a Texas school teacher charged with having sex with four students at her home, 2012
 - Mary Kay Letourneau, the school teacher jailed for having sexual relations with her 13-year-old student, 1996

A MOMENTARY SIDE TRACK

... to how sex educators can help promoting sexual health and safety

- ⦿ As sex educators, we know that sexual arousal is an autonomic response that can be triggered by many things, often involuntarily.
- ⦿ Pedophiles count on a child not knowing that “Once he comes, he’s mine!”
- ⦿ Adolescents are subject to mistaking physical arousal for emotional attachment -people who prey on adolescents prey on that

My personal objective is to help every parent develop the comfort and knowledge to explain that to their kids!

SCHOOL CLIMATE

- ◉ [Great article about school climate here](#)
- ◉ There is a lot of research on the overall school climate and its impact on everything from student behavior to student achievement.
- ◉ These same concepts **MUST** be applied to issues around sexuality

APPLYING THE CONCEPT OF POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

- **Characteristics of the Policy**

- Is it clear and prescriptive in describing services and expected outcomes?
- Does it provide adequate resources - fiscal and technical - to the implementers?
- **Does it provide for sanctions for failing to comply?**
- Does it provide for rewards for successful implementation?

-

- **Characteristics of the Community**

- What are the demographics, e.g. age, ethnicity, language, values?
- What are the logistics, e.g. , where would service be delivered?
- Which political or social leaders support the policy?
- Has there been a recent high profile event?

-

- **Characteristics of the implementing Agencies**

- What is the professional training of the staff?
- How experienced is the staff?
- What is the ideology of the staff?
- How supportive is the administration?

-

- **Characteristics of the Clients**

- Are they voluntary participants or have they been coerced into receiving services?
- Can or will they pay for services?
- What is their level of knowledge before service begins?

- Based on Van Meter and Van Horn, Policy Implementation in the Federal System Aero Publishers Inc., U.S. (April 1980)

IMPORTANT DETAIL...

- ⦿ Does the policy provide for sanctions for failing to comply? Is anyone monitoring?
- ⦿ **The difference between culture and climate.... Just because there's a rule that something has to be done (culture) is no guarantee that it will be done the same way throughout!**

ASSESSING SEXUAL CLIMATE IN A SCHOOL

- ⦿ **Is the school's physical environment welcoming and conducive to learning?**
- ⦿ **What are the school's policies and track record around bullying and sexual harassment?**
 - Key conceptual link between bullying and sexual abuse: lack of regard for the impact the behavior has on the victim. Sadly, lack of empathy is developmentally normal during adolescence.

SEXUAL CLIMATE

- ⦿ **What is the school's policy and track record regarding teacher-student contact?**

Are student allowed to address faculty and staff by first names?

Are there clear rules for both actual and virtual out of school contact between student and faculty/staff? Are there meaningful consequences for breaking the rules? Are they enforced?

SEXUAL CLIMATE

- ⦿ **What is the policy on dress code and how is it enforced?**

Butt cleavage, breast cleavage, midriffs and suggestive slogans on clothing are not conducive to learning. It is perfectly natural for kids to push boundaries and show up to school wearing something that bends -- if not actually breaks -- the rules. School staff should react firmly and without embarrassing or humiliating the student.

SEX EDUCATORS CAN SET THE EXAMPLE

The 'climate' of an institution is set by the people who populate the institution.

Sex Educators can role model healthy attitudes, behaviors and boundaries

BOUNDARIES:

Can be.....

- ⦿ Physical (physical proximity, who can be alone with whom)
- ⦿ Emotional (e.g. certain feelings aren't shared)
- ⦿ Social (what we do together)
- ⦿ Virtual (on-line communication and relationships)

SPEAK UP!

- ◎ Sex educators **MUST** take an active role is ensuring that schools have healthy sexually climates!
 - The schools where we work
 - The schools in our community
 - The schools attended by the children and youth in our life.

IF WE DON'T SPEAK OUT, WHO WILL?

THANK YOU!

- ◎ STAY IN TOUCH!
- ◎ Jrosenzweig@preventchildabuse.org
- ◎ DrRosenzweig@SexWiseParent.com
- ◎ www.facebook.com/sexwiseparent
- ◎ @JanetRosenzweig (twitter)