

Following my receipt of the notification of this matter from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), I asked staff to schedule a time for me to visit the school to learn more about the concerns being raised. In visiting West Springfield High School (WSHS) this week and in inquiring about the student display, I learned that this particular assignment was thoughtfully developed as part of the National Endowment for the Humanities Institute for teaching women's history at the New York Historical program this past summer. I appreciate our teachers taking their time to attend professional opportunities to develop their craft and content for our students to experience, it matters.

In speaking with both the principal and the classroom teacher, I learned that this student project is part of an elective Women's History Class at WSHS, generally taken by students in their later years of high school. The assignment included prompts such as --

- . What is uplifting about being a young woman today?
- . What issue should you shine a light on?
- . What do you want the school to think about being a young woman here & now --in our school, community, state, country?
- . What are the basics that people should know?
- . Alphabet posters can be uplifting and positive and/or awareness promote students to respectfully share their honest, comprehensive historical perspective that is relevant to them as young adults and in keeping with the assignment guidance and expectations. This is critical thinking -- an integral part of our educational experience for our soon-to-be graduating high school students. Further, I am curiously reflective about the choices our students made in their student work letter and several introduction posters explaining the origin of the student work.

Often, women's history is excluded from traditional history texts and instruction. I respect their presentation and what their choices say about our national discourse on these topics, as each of the topics depicted continue to be debated in wide ranging mainstream media representing the various viewpoints in our society today.

Finally, let me be clear that our schools will remain focused on achieving a world class education for each and every student in a safe environment that values critical thinking, problem solving and creative thought provoking work. I see this student display as an example of student work that explores ideas and perspectives in a thoughtful manner and trust that this matter has been appropriately handled by school based staff - who have my full confidence.

Students chose a letter of the alphabet and selected words and images for a display that represented their perspective relative to the prompts presented. There were two posters for each letter of our

I invite you to connect with me directly if you have any further questions or concerns on this or any other topic. I welcome the opportunity to meet and have copied staff who can support this happening. Wishing you and yours an abundantly joyful spring season.

Take good care,

Michelle Reid, Ed.D.