

## "Talking Dirty" in School: When You Can and When You Can't

*Write a book about sexuality—and you can say almost anything.*

By Warren Throckmorton, Ph.D.

**J**osé Minaya needs an agent. Labeled the "sex gabber" by the New York Post, Mr. Minaya was fired from his position as a middle school guidance counselor because he talked about sex to students.

According to a June 21st Post article, Mr. Minaya asked male and female middle school students if they had "hair down there" and told one of his male clients to use a condom if the boy was having sex.

Now I am not writing in defense of racy counseling sessions with middle school aged students—but this account made me wonder, why did Mr. Minaya get panned, when others talk about explicit sex to our school kids every day and are praised?

After a little research, I think I have it figured out.

### Use a Video

Maybe Mr. Minaya's mistake was that he didn't use a video demonstrating condom usage, rather than talking about it. Many schools around the country use the National Education Association film "Considering Your Options" or the video "Hope is Not a Method" that demonstrates various means of contraception, including how to apply condoms. "Hope is Not a Method" even describes the virtues of different-flavored condoms. This video may be being used in your school.

Perhaps his mistake was in not writing a *book* about sexuality. Then he could have recommended it to students without incident.

### Recommend it on a Website

When it comes to homosexuality, groups like the NEA recommend teachers and students consult the website of the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Educators Network (GLSEN) for materials. One of the many books recommended on the GLSEN website for youth in grades 7-12 is "Rainbow Boys" by guidance counselor Alex Sanchez. The book relates the fictional antics of three high school students portrayed as typical life for "gay kids."

Sexual behavior is described graphically, and one character has unprotected sex with an adult he contacted on the

Internet. There are other GLSEN-recommended books that make liberal use of profanity and explicit descriptions of sexual behavior.

Hence my recommendation that Mr. Minaya needs an agent. If you are going to talk dirty to kids, you must have the right vehicle.

Another avenue for Mr. Minaya to consider is hosting his own website. For instance, take the Planned Parenthood site, *Teenwire.com*. The writers on this site advocate explicit sex gabbing in ways that go way beyond Mr. Minaya's clumsy efforts. Teens are able to ask explicit questions about specific sexual problems they are having. The answers are equally explicit.

According to a study reported in the 2003 *American Journal of Health Education*, kids go to this site for information on the "how-to's" of sexual behavior much more than for information about how to protect against disease and pregnancy. Teens ask sexual questions on *Teenwire.com* that many adults would direct to a gynecologist or sex therapist. There is also a condom video for viewing. Since the guidance-counselor thing didn't work out for Mr. Minaya, maybe he could try a future in websites for teens.

Interesting to me is that Mr. Minaya's professional association, the NEA, offers GLSEN and the *Teenwire.com* site as resources for teachers and students. In the case of GLSEN, the NEA even provides some funding. Clearly, students going to these websites are going to read and see more sexually explicit material than the *Post* reported as coming from Mr. Minaya.

Why is this so? Why would the nation's largest education association promote organizations that assume teens will have sex, and indeed provide information that encourages sex? Remember, most teens are not going to these web sites to learn about "safe sex." They want to learn about sex, period.

### A Culture of Sexuality

Should the NEA be an accomplice in fostering a culture of sexuality in schools? Mr. Minaya lost his job over this type of behavior. Perhaps, the nation's parents should call in the NEA and other so-called "teen advocacy groups" for a parent-teacher conference. ■