

12 THINGS SCHOOL BOARDS AND ADMINISTRATORS HOPE YOU'LL KEEP IN MIND WHEN ADVOCATING FOR HEALTH PROGRAMS

Jacquelyn G. Sowers, M.Ed.

- 1. School boards and administrators are currently under enormous pressure to raise academic standards and student performance. Test results are carrying far more weight than most leaders think they should, yet they still believe they must show progress, or else.**

[How can you respond to the current climate, using the existing pressure to support your call for comprehensive, coordinated health and physical education programs?]
- 2. School policy makers are responsible for a wide range of planning, personnel, budget, curricular, and other administrative issues. The salience of health and physical education programming is probably low. It is just one of many issues competing for agenda space, time, and energy in a finite system.**

[How will you acknowledge this, yet stress importance of health?]
- 3. Boards and administrators require data upon which to base decisions. But, they do not have time to read all the studies, evaluation reports, epidemiological analyses, curriculum guides, etc. as they (and you) might like.**

[What data will you provide? How will you summarize compelling statistics, program overviews, and sample policies into succinct information sheets?]
- 4. The curriculum is very full. Many administrators feel schools are already asked to do too much and that they cannot possibly fulfill all the expectations.**

[How will you help them place the health and physical education program in larger context and link it with existing instructional frameworks? How can you make the case that health is not "just one more thing" but is instrumental to student success?]
- 5. There is wide variation in physical, cognitive, psychosocial, emotional, and moral development among students at a given age or grade level.**

[How will you speak to the developmental appropriateness of health education, physical education, and services at the various levels?]

- 6. There are some curricula out there that are stronger and sounder than others. Some are biased, insensitive, or factually incorrect. Some were designed for particular audiences but are being marketed to all. Some have evaluation data that is many years old. Some of the most promising curricula have not been evaluated. How should we choose? It's often difficult to see strengths and weaknesses on cursory reading.**

[Can you offer criteria for selection of health education and physical education materials? Do you have annotated bibliographies or reviews? Will you recommend certain ones?]
- 7. There will always be a range of parent and community reactions to health and physical education programs from highly supportive to apathetic to highly critical.**

[How can you help them mobilize the supporters and the silent majority and gain the confidence of the critics? What will you propose to increase parent and community involvement?]
- 8. Policy makers and administrators don't like to be blind-sided. They prefer "no surprises."**

[How will you apprise them and forthrightly address existing and potential "sticky wickets"?)]
- 9. School boards and administrators dread having to deal with crisis situations like a terrorist attack, pandemic flu, a bomb threat, a school shooting, a case of sexual harassment, a suicide, or even an outbreak of head lice or food borne illness.**

[Specifically, what support will you and your program offer in case of crisis? How will you make the case for prevention as well as crisis intervention and postvention?]
- 10. There are cultural, political, and religious differences in beliefs about pregnancy prevention, substance use, AIDS-related issues, nutrition, and physical activity to name a few. Administrators know these health topics can be minefields and may just as soon omit them from the school program.**

[How will you acknowledge the diversity and values issues? How will you address them in a more (or less) homogeneous school district? How can you appeal to the administrator's responsibility and courage to address controversial issues?]

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- 11. It is absolutely critical for school boards and administrators to maintain parent and community confidence in the schools and in their administrative judgment.**

[How can you show you understand the political importance of this fact and still urge action?]

- 12. School leaders always like positive publicity for their district.**

[What is something that could be featured in the press or other venues right now that would enhance the reputation of the district as a place that actively supports both the health and learning of students?]

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