



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on November 20, 2013

Teacher Says He Faces Termination for Opposing Planned Parenthood

An Oregon teacher is fighting for his job and teaching license after he was placed on administrative leave earlier this year. Bill Diss, a computer science and math teacher who has taught in the Portland, Oregon, school system for 11 years, insists he was removed from the classroom because of his opposition to Planned Parenthood. Officials at Portland's Benson High School, however, argue that he is being fired for insubordination and unprofessional behavior toward students and fellow educators.



On March 19 Diss, who is a Catholic as well as a recognized local pro-life activist and advocate for teen abstinence, was notified that he was being placed on administrative leave “pending a recommendation to the superintendent that you be dismissed from your employment with Portland public schools for reasons that have been discussed with you.”

As reported in April by [The New American](#), Diss' relationship with the school soured in 2012 after a local Planned Parenthood chapter was invited into Benson High School to speak to students about pregnancy prevention through its Teen Outreach Program (TOP). Planned Parenthood representatives came to Diss' classroom to make a presentation to Diss' students. When Diss discovered that the representatives were from the abortion provider he asked them to leave the room, which they did. But a few minutes later the principal and vice principal came and removed Diss from the classroom and allowed the Planned Parenthood representatives to continue their presentation.

“The following day, Diss said, he was compelled to sit through a Planned Parenthood presentation during which the representatives pressured students to join the program,” reported *The New American*. “‘They were extremely aggressive in obtaining the children’s signatures by promising them all sorts of gifts and cash,’ Diss recalled. Planned Parenthood officials subsequently filed a formal complaint against Diss for his intrusion into their efforts.”

While school officials insist that their efforts to dismiss Diss and even have his teaching license revoked are tied to unprofessional behavior, it is difficult to ignore a marked change in the district's attitude toward Diss relative to his conflict with Planned Parenthood. Through 2007 Diss' teaching evaluations indicated that he was a competent teacher with skills that were steadily improving. “It was only in 2008, after he began speaking publicly about Planned Parenthood, that the official assessments turned negative,” recalled the *Catholic Sentinel*.

The most critical evaluations began in 2012, “with claims that Diss lacks knowledge about the age group he is teaching and about issues of race and culture,” reported *The New American*. “Benson High School is in a largely black and Hispanic neighborhood of Portland. Diss, however, pointed out that the top two students in one of his most challenging computer classes ... have been Hispanic and Black females.”



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According to *World Net Daily*, “officials claimed the teacher’s religious beliefs caused him to try to stop students from attending the pregnancy program” sponsored by Planned Parenthood. One of the letters also cited “unprofessional, intimidating and/or harassing behavior” on the part of Diss. Continued *World Net Daily*: “A letter from Principal Carol Campbell and human resources regional director Frank Scotto told Diss it was inappropriate to discuss chastity, purity, premarital sex, abortion, and religion in his math, computer science, and study hall classes, even though it was apparently appropriate to have a Planned Parenthood presentation on teenage sex and pregnancy in the same classroom.”

Among the charges against Diss were accusations by students that he had ordered them to “shut their mouths,” noted one school letter, and that he had warned them they would end up on “82nd Avenue,” a reference to an area of Portland with a reputation for prostitution. While Diss acknowledged that he had discussed Planned Parenthood and religious beliefs in class, he insisted his actions were appropriate because he had also allowed students to express their views.

The New American reported that although “some students have targeted Diss for criticism, dozens of other past and present students and parents have stepped forward to support the teacher, many of them focusing on his faith and moral convictions, which they see as at the root of the school’s actions. ‘I know that many of your staff disagree with Mr. Diss on his religious views,’ wrote Matthew Wade, a parent of two students at Benson, ‘but I think that is a very poor reason to persecute someone who has done as much good as he has for the children of Portland and for the students at Benson Tech.’”

The [Oregonian](#) newspaper reported that at a November 14 hearing for Diss’ dismissal, school officials and Diss both pressed their cases. “Elizabeth McKanna, the attorney who represented Diss, said she believes he was unfairly targeted for his beliefs,” reported the Portland paper. “In addition, Diss says he should have been placed on a ‘plan of assistance,’ which districts develop for low-performing or struggling teachers, rather than dismissed.”

McKanna said she believes that “the district is trying to end [Diss’] employment because he has been active in the political community and religious community on certain issues, and sometimes he has challenged the district.”

While the *Oregonian* appeared to tilt its coverage to make Diss appear to be a less-than-admirable teacher, [Washington Times](#) columnist Paul Rondeau wrote that “Diss is the only teacher in Oregon to earn the distinction of being credentialed to teach computer science for college credit at the high school level.” Rondeau argued that “Diss is a highly qualified high school educator who has been teaching for more than a decade at a desperate public school that almost closed in 2010 — a school that serves a population which is 75 percent minority.”

Among those who have defended Diss is a parent (who holds a M.Ed.) of a student at Benson High School, who wrote that her daughter found in Diss “a teacher that achieved tremendous balance between high expectations and accommodating individual needs.”

Another mother wrote that the highlight of her son’s school day was “his math class with Mr. Diss.... It seems he goes to great lengths to make himself available for any student who needs additional help.... Mr. Diss cares enough about his students to have firm boundaries and tell them the truth, even when it hurts.”

The *Oregonian* noted that the November 14 hearing was held before Sascha Perrins, a regional administrator working under Portland school superintendent Carole Smith, who earlier recommended dismissing Diss. There was no indication when Perrins would render his verdict on Diss’ future.



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