



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on January 2, 2018

Exclusive: Teacher Fired for Showing Pornographic Art; Media Tell Only Half the Story

A Utah art teacher was recently fired for showing children art postcards that included nude images. Now some parents are up in arms and the school is accused of Puritanism and, contradictively, political correctness. But there's more to the story than the media have told.



The issue began December 4 when Mateo Rueda, then a teacher at Lincoln Elementary School in Hyrum, instructed his sixth-grade charges to “look through some art postcards in the classroom library for examples of color usage in notable paintings,” as the *Herald Journal* [tells the story](#).

The paper continues, Rueda knew the postcards “portrayed a wide variety of classic artworks, but he has since said he was not aware that three or four of the 100 pieces featured in the box showed nudity.” “Asked if he thought the nudes were appropriate for the sixth-graders in his class,” wrote the *Journal*, “Rueda said he did not. ‘This is not material at all that I would use. I had no idea,’ he said.”

But Rueda apparently thought the nudes were appropriate for fifth-graders — because that's exactly who he showed them to *after the sixth-grade class in question*, according to Lincoln parents I interviewed. This was not revealed in the *Journal's* story, which led readers to believe only one class had seen the nudes.

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One of the parents I spoke to is Benji Christensen, whose 10-year-old daughter was in the fifth-grade class. He told me he became aware of the incident December 4 when his girl came home crying and upset, feeling she'd done something wrong by viewing the images. Here is his post on the subject — which contains the majority of what he related to me — from under the *Journal* piece:

There are a number of facts about this incident which are being left out.

I have been reluctant to comment because of the backlash that most people receive for speaking up in favor of the actions taken.

I for one am a parent of one of the children that was in this classroom. First, an important fact to not overlook, is after the nude art was discovered, not all of which has been disclosed by the way, there were more full nude paintings, the teacher did not in fact remove it from the classroom. He then showed it to the next class which was a fifth grade class. My daughter is a part of this class. They were told before they viewed the pictures that there were paintings that they may find inappropriate, but that they were works of art and they were not offensive to him (Mr. Mateo). *He then stated that he did not care if they told on him.* The students were NOT told to bring the art forward as stated. Instead as children brought [inappropriate] images forward, they were sent



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away. My daughter came home from school devastated. Just a short time earlier in school, these same children had been taught that certain parts of the body were not to be viewed, and if they were ever put into an uncomfortable situation, they should tell a trusted adult.

I, as a parent, would have a totally different view of this if it had been a clear mistake followed by immediate removal of the images, *but this was not the case*. It was shown to multiple classes, not just one, and was presented in a way to make the kids feel as if they should understand it.

Is it really appropriate to ask a 10 year old to distinguish between pornography and art? Is that a process that should take place in the classroom or the home? [Emphasis added.]

Christensen also told me that while he trusts his daughter, he contacted other parents whose children were in Rueda's class to corroborate her story. Their accounts were identical to hers. He then went to the school the next day, December 5, before classes commenced to speak to the principal, Jeni Buist. Christensen said that before he could even lodge his complaint, Buist "recited" his daughter's story to him, pretty much word for word, which means that other parents had already complained and related the same events.

Moreover, while the *Journal* mentioned two nude artwork cards shown to the children and three or four ultimately destroyed, Christensen emphasizes that there actually were more. He says this included one showing naked women lying on top of one another, in addition to one mentioned in the story, "[Iris Tree](#)," which showed full frontal nudity.

Christensen's account was backed up by another parent I interviewed, who wishes to remain anonymous because of the aforementioned "backlash" coming from Rueda's supporters. She had a child in Rueda's sixth-grade class and confirms that the lewd art was shown to another class afterwards, saying that "the principal announced over the intercom an apology to both the 5th and 6th graders involved."

This parent also says there were more nude images involved than the *Journal* let on. She added to the story as well, saying that what most bothered her was "that after there was expressed discomfort by several students, the teacher 'frustratedly' made the kids keep looking through them [the images]."

This aligns with what the *Journal* cited one of Rueda's students as reporting. Dismissing the children's concerns, he allegedly said, "There's nothing wrong with female nipples. You guys need to grow up and be mature about this." In other words, the teacher was interested in more than illustrating "color usage."

And what of Rueda's claims that he "had no idea" about the nudes and that they were not material he "would use"? Christensen put it bluntly, stating that the "teacher is most definitely lying."

Rueda did not respond to requests for comment by the time of this piece's publication.

As for the school's alleged "Puritanism," note that the aforementioned "Iris Tree" is an early 20th-century work by Italian Amedeo Modigliani, a [violent, drug-addicted, alcoholic, womanizing accused rapist](#) who could be viewed as a pornographer of his day. Unlike with Michelangelo and the [Sistine Chapel](#), his goal wasn't to teach but titillate.

Unfortunately, many Lincoln Elementary parents may suspect the same of Mateo Rueda.

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