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School Board tables decision on creation of transgender policy

By Camalot Todd

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The Clark County School Board on Monday hosted a three-hour meeting that could have led to the drafting of a policy aimed to protect transgender students.

But the meeting in a crowded theater at Valley High School ended without a decision when Trustee Carolyn Edwards, who proposed the policy last year, postponed the topic for when all her fellow School Board members could be present. Trustee Linda Cavazos was absent, meaning the vote could have ended in a tie.

“I’m encouraged by Carolyn Edwards’ leadership in this matter. I fully expect that when they bring this matter up again, even though it’s probably going to take a long time, that the majority of the board will be in favor of these things,” said Jane Heenan, the executive director of Gender Justice Nevada.

The Gender Diverse Working Group, a coalition of parents, CCSD staff and community members, crafted a survey and collected public comments from past meetings on the issue. On Monday, they revealed their survey of 2,070 responses, in which 58 percent said the district should develop policies protecting gender-diverse youth.

Those who support the policy emphasized that some youth who identify as transgender feel underprotected and face high incidence of discrimination, suicide and homelessness. Edwards said that the current bullying policy is inadequate and that CCSD needs a uniform policy to help school leaders address this in a consistent manner.

Stephanie Menard, the mother of a transgender daughter, was in the front row of Monday’s meeting. She winced at comments from parents against the measure.

“We have so many breakthroughs after the meetings where we’ll sit in the car and talk about what was discussed and what I learned, not necessarily as her mom, but as her friend and I have a relationship with her that I never thought I’d have,” Menard said. “I look up to her as a brave soul.”

Those who opposed creating a transgender policy stated several reasons, including religion, safety concerns, and the anti-bullying policy already in place to protect transgender youth. In the last legislative session, the state passed [Senate Bill 225](#), an anti-bullying law that would require policy and training by school personnel to educate them on gender diverse students.

The next meeting is planned for February at the discretion of School Board members.

“I know this, dialogue heals divisions,” Heenan said.

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