Judge Rules No Verbal Abuse by Teacher in HIV Class

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A federal judge ruled in favor of a Staten Island, New York, teacher who allowed her eighth grade students to use vulgar slang during a class about HIV/AIDS, *The New York Times* reports.

In teaching the state-mandated class in February 2008, Faith Kramer wrote down the polite words used to describe bodily fluids, genitalia and sexual acts. She then asked the students to list other terms they know for those words.

After at least one parent complained, the city investigated and ruled that Kramer violated a regulation against verbal abuse by using "language that tends to cause fear, physical or mental distress." She was placed in an administrative detention center, with pay, until she returned to the classroom September 2009.

According to the article, Kramer then sued the city for $1 million in damages for mental anguish, lawyer's fees and loss of extra work. The city had been trying to dismiss the case until the federal judge ruled in Kramer's favor.

The judge ruled that Kramer did not verbally abuse the students and that in fact she had been following the spirit of the state syllabus. The syllabus instructs teachers to help students make connections between clinical words and the words they are likely to come across.

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