NAR S2E4 Final Transcript

***Intro****: You're listening to “Drive with NAR” powered by REALTOR® Magazine. Listen in as real estate pros talk tools of the trade and share stories of inspiration. Get ready to step up your business. This episode is sponsored by the Center for REALTOR® Development.*

**Marki**: What's going on world I'm your girl Marki Lemons-Ryhal, the host of “Drive with NAR” and a REALTOR® member, and today's show is going to be quite interesting. A lot has been happening in America's schools lately. Battles over appropriateness of classroom curriculum and books and school libraries have captured the national conversation. This may lead to more questions from your client, about the suitability of local schools for their children. You must remember that it is a violation of fair housing laws to give customers your opinion about school quality and steer them toward or away from certain schools. But what can you discuss with your clients? And how can you add value to the conversation without crossing the line? I'm here to talk about that with two REALTORS® who are taking on this issue every day. Del Lile is an agent with Compass in Pasadena, California. And his local association is involved in a unique program to help REALTORS® become ambassadors of local schools.

**Del**: Thanks for having me.

**Marki**: And then Jamie Zapata is an agent with Coldwell Banker D'Ann Harper REALTORS® in San Antonio, Texas. Jamie is a transgender woman specializing in working with the LGBTQ+ client, many of whose families are affected by anti-LGBTQ policies in Texas schools.

**Jamie**: Thank you, Marki. It's great to be here.

**Marki**: I want to thank both of you for being here today. Let me start with my own story about growing up and attending Chicago public schools. The year was 1979, and Chicago Public Schools went on strike. My mother then decided to put me in a private school, Harvard St. George. And when I graduated from Harvard St. George, I instantly went to Luther High School South, it was not my high school of choice, but my mother wanted me to have small classrooms. Well, I had vowed that my children would never ever grace the front door of a Chicago Public School until I graduated from college and started working for Chicago Public Schools as a day-to-day sub. And then I received a promotion and became a full-time provisional sub of a second grade class. Instantly, I realized that Chicago public schools actually had certified and often better instructors, and they also had better resources. So instantly, I started thinking, what was the true difference between private and parochial schools and Chicago public schools, and I decided it was parents, it was the extracurricular activities and what they were doing with their children after-school and on the weekends. So I then decided that I would send my sons to Chicago Public Schools exclusively, but that I would select schools that had high parental involvement and engagement, because private schools, essentially, only had parents who were more involved because they were spending money. So one of the first questions a client may ask is whether a certain school is good or bad? That's a loaded question. Different factors like test scores may matter more or less to different people. Del and Jamie, what are the school issues your clients ask about most frequently? And what do you tell them when they ask whether a school is good or bad? Del, we'll start with you.

**Del**: Oh, thank you, Marki, and good morning, and thanks for hosting this important topic. I'm happy to be here. You know, Pasadena has a long history of parental involvement with schools and it also has kind of a long history of turmoil in the schools, let's call it that. Pasadena has been around since 1886. It started as kind of a vacation destination for wealthy families in the east and colder climates. And so we have a lot of big estates here, historical property and beautiful architecture. But then over the years there were other neighborhoods grew and the city grew as a whole and became very segregated in the early 1900s. And neighborhoods kind of separated themselves based on income levels. And that segregation expressed itself in the schools as well. So we had these segregated schools based on income level and some ethnicities. And in 1954, the Supreme Court tried to address segregated schools and they said that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. This led to Pasadena trying to come up with a solution and that solution was busing children to different schools around the city in order to diversify these schools. And that kind of scared some parents and led to what's called “white flight” in the area, parents didn't want to be told what to do, where their children had to be put in school, the kind of ignorance of that population led them to pull their kids out of public schools. A lot of funding for public schools comes from enrollment so these kids leaving the school district, school districts lost enrollment and lost funding. So therefore, quality of education declined because of that in the 70s. And ever since then, Pasadena has had a negative perception about their public schools. So typically, when a client comes to me asking about the schools, I realized that they already might have heard negative things about the schools, which is a perception that is no longer valid these days. The public schools in Pasadena are incredible. And there's so many opportunities there. So my main goal is to just let them know of their options, let them know that public school is an option. Of course, Pasadena has a large number of private schools, but the public schools are incredible these days. And I just tried to provide resources to my clients to investigate that for themselves. I tried to get them into the school to take a tour of the schools and see firsthand what the what kind of learning is going on in there. And if the school is a right fit for their child, so it's really providing them information to make informed decisions.

**Marki**: Del, I love the idea of touring the school because I tell people if you know your children's friends, you know more about your children. Jamie, please talk about the safety issues your LGBTQ+ clients have raised?

**Jamie**: Well, that's a great question. So most of the clients that I work with our LGBTQ+ or I have been referred to by LGBTQ+ people. So I have a lot of clients that are relocating from out of state, we have a lot of people living here to San Antonio, Texas, from the West Coast. And oftentimes they want to know if their children will be safe in the schools, because there are a lot of policies that are trying to be enacted here in San Antonio, where people can be reported or parents can be reported for child abuse if they are providing transgender-affirming care for their children. And there's also you know, a lot of bullying that goes on. So I have a lot of clients who really want to know if their kids are going to be safe in school, which goes beyond just typical, are schools good. They want to know if their children are going to survive at school, which is a very difficult conversation to have. And, you know, so and it's a very valid issue here in Texas and in other places across the country, which is unfortunate. We do have people who are actually leaving San Antonio and moving out of Texas because of these policies. So it is sad, I do let them know, you know that my experience in school was not good. And but that's not everyone's experience. And it's not because it was a public school or private school, or whatever it was. It's really, like you said the school itself and the students and the parents. And there's a bigger picture behind that.

**Marki**: Obviously, there are some questions. This is real estate professionals we can't answer. Like, Jamie, you can't tell clients, whether their kids will be safe in school. So when you get a question you can't or don't know how to answer, how do you still show your value as a real estate agent? I know that I completed the Fair Housing challenge a few years ago, where we completed the at-home with diversity training, along with the Fairhaven training and the implicit bias training. And each of those classes I learned something new, something that I can improve upon, but basically how to become the source of the source. Del, what value are you adding as an agent?

**Del**: You know, just like when I show a client a home, I try to give them the pluses and minuses, things they might not be looking for. You know, it's a lot of times, parents these days are relying going on online school scores, and might rule out a school based on its score having no idea what that score reflects or what that score is measuring. And so just like a home, they wouldn't buy a home without seeing it or buy it based on an online estimate, you know, I tried to get them into the schools, like I mentioned, touring the schools, and seeing the classroom for themselves, perhaps talking to the teacher talking to the principal, speaking with other parents, who have children in the school is so important. If fair housing questions come up, I always try to go over forms with him, you know, and say, this is an issue that comes up might not be appropriate to talk about, or I can't take certain things into consideration. And these implicit biases kind of come out without people knowing it, you know, and I just tried to remind them that fair housing policies that are in place are very important. And I try to review those policies with them when necessary.

**Marki**: Jamie, can you talk about connecting your clients with local organizations that can help them?

**Jamie**: Yes, so I actually volunteer with the Pride Center of San Antonio, most big cities have an LGBTQ+ center. And that's a great resource. So I do point clients to our Pride Center here in San Antonio, for resources that can help them with specific LGBTQ+ questions as far as you know, areas that they might like, or they're, you know, information that they might need that I can't give them. And I you know, I often also get a lot of people that are relocating here that are very interested in one particular school district or one school in San Antonio, because it's the oldest and richest neighborhood in town, and you know, we can't all live there. So I let them know that we have plenty of great schools that luckily, in San Antonio, we don't have a bad reputation for our schools, but everybody just really wants this one district and I tell them, OK, well, I can afford to live there. If you can, great, then we can look in that area, but you know, you have to live in that area to go to that school district. So let's consider all your options. And you know, depends on this person, you know, what is your definition of a good school, and everybody's definition is going to be different. And just because one person has a great experience at a school doesn't mean that somebody else will. And just because I had a bad experience doesn't mean that somebody else is going to have one. And just like houses, everything is going to be based on the person's experience. And we have tons of great schools with tons of great programs available, and I let them know that they need to explore all of their options and not just be focused on one school that one person told them was the best, because that's an opinion.

**Marki**: That is an opinion. Del, your local association has partnered with schools to help members communicate more effectively about the local education system with their clients. Can you talk a little bit about the program and what you learned from that program? A lot of people get hung up on nationalized test scores when deciding whether they want to live in a certain school district. But we know this information alone does not give us a full view of the schools. How do you get your clients to take a more holistic view of schools, Del?

**Del**: When my daughter was becoming school age, I relied on the online testing scores to determine where I would put her and, and I actually moved to a nearby city. I grew up in Pasadena and went through Pasadena schools. And I actually bought into the negative perception that was out there, looked at the online scores, and decided I would move to a nearby city with higher scores, without any kind of investigation into the schools at all. So about five or six years ago, a local nonprofit called Pasadena Educational Foundation started a program to reach out to REALTORS® to talk to them and educate them about the current state of public schools in Pasadena. So what they were doing was taking Realtors on tours of school. So I did I toured about six different schools and I thought, Wow, if I had to do all over, I would totally put my kid in the school because there was so much great learning going on. So many different programs are available, that aren't available in private schools. And the rich diversity in schools was something that was missing in the town that I've moved to in a school that I put my children in and having children grow up in that environment where they're learning with other kids who aren't like them, you know, working out problems and dealing with problems and coming up with solutions together is really something that is the basis for our democracy and a larger part of the education picture than I ever considered. Anyway, I became involved with the Pasadena Educational Foundation which raises about $15 million a year for local schools and puts on a bunch of programs, runs a summer school, just is this incredible organization that supports PUSD. And now I'm on the board of the nonprofit and vice president of community engagement. So all this led to an idea that we should have a course for REALTORS®, that educates them and certifies them in Pasadena public schools. And this really came out of a need to get rid of that negative perception because oftentimes, when parents come into a city, the first person they talk to is a REALTOR®. And what was happening is REALTORS® were saying, Oh, no, you can't put your kids in these public schools. And that was all based on negative incorrect information from the past. And so we created this REALTOR® certification course. And we've certified about 70 REALTORS® so far, and they come in. And we have a seminar and a course for them, which teaches them all about the programs that are going on in the schools. We have it on the school site, so they can see the great campuses. And then they get a tour from the principal of the schools. And they always come out, saying, Wow, that was unbelievable. I had no idea what was going on.

**Marki**: Jamie, how do you encourage clients to get involved with schools?

**Jamie**: Well, like Del said, I think it is really important to visit the schools and meet, you know, teachers and staff and really get to know the areas of town as well and not just focus on one area. And you know, I let them know that their kids are going to have a bright future. And it's really about the parenting and the children and they can do well anywhere, you know, where the city is not burning down, we have tons of options. And all of you know, I went to what could be considered a bad school, and I'm not, you know, I'm still here, I'm still standing and the city is doing well. Kids are thriving, adults are thriving, we're all doing fine. We've all gone to various schools and their kids are going to do well and succeed as well. And it's just their comfort level, they have to find out what works best for them. And really just not go on other people's opinions don't go based on that.

***Mid-Reel Ad Spot***

*Marki: One thing that can make the compensation conversation with clients easier and more transparent is having a blueprint for how to approach the subject, which you can get with the Accredited Buyer’s Representative designation course. Here to tell us more is Jen Rzeszewski, executive director of the Center for REALTOR® Development, NAR’s home for exceptional education.*

***Jen:*** *Thank you. It’s great to be here with you today.*

***Marki:*** *So, how can the ABR designation help agents with talking about compensation with their buyer clients?*

***Jen:*** *One of the first topics we cover on Day 1 of the ABR course is the buyer consultation—how to prepare, what the outcomes should be, and how to use the consultation as an opportunity to build trust between the agent and client. Of course, a big part of that is how to have that conversation about compensation. The course equips agents with a blueprint to guide them step-by-step through the process.*

***Marki****: The housing market is ever evolving. How do you make sure the course stays up to date with industry changes?*

***Jen:*** *We are diligent in updating the course to reflect the realities of the current industry changes. We want to be sure that the information we are providing is accurate and relevant. When developing content we work closely with Subject Matter Experts, members, who are in the field and close to the industry issues. Also, ABR instructors are some of the most well-informed experts in real estate. They really have their finger on the pulse of the industry, and they bring that up-to-date knowledge into the classroom.**When a member earns the Accredited Buyer’s Representative designation they receive exclusive resources, toolkits, and content that will enhance their business when working with buyer clients.*

***Marki:*** *That’s great, thank you so much, Jen.*

***Jen:*** *Thank you.*

***Marki****: And if you want to find out more about the ABR course and designation, you can visit* [*abr.realtor*](https://abr.realtor/)*. That’s* [*abr.realtor*](https://abr.realtor/)*.*

**Marki**: We're observing Fair Housing Month right now. So let's take a little bit of a broader view. Jamie and Del, where do you think we are as a nation on our journey to realize housing equality? When a client expresses something that could run afoul of fair housing? Is it your responsibility as an agent to call them out? Jamie, are we calling people out? Or how are we handling them?

**Jamie**: Well, I've been so fortunate that I've never had an experience like that. But I would say that if I did, I would tell them that that's first of all not right. And it's against fair housing, but I would just let them know, you know, we don't, you cannot judge, you know, you should have an open mind on all things. You can't be judging people, you can't be making discriminatory comments, you can't. It's basically, you know, as REALTORS®, we do have to follow a code of ethics. But I like to go above and beyond that, and just make sure that everybody is treated equally.

**Del**: Yeah, I agree with Jamie, you know, it doesn't come up often, I found comes up more with leases, than anything else. You know, I think it is important. I think it's our duty that to keep our clients out of trouble. In all contract negotiations in every part of the contract, you know, we're the expert, we have to make sure that we advise a client that things they do could lead to certain consequences. And I think it's important to call it out. Because, you know, many people don't realize that they have this implicit bias. And sometimes, you know, when it's pointed out, they say, oh, you know, I didn't even think about that, and they're happy to know it. They just didn't realize it. So it's my duty as a realtor to keep my client out of trouble, whether that be in a transaction when they're when their deposit might be at risk, or certain aspects of the home that need to be pointed out. And in fair housing, it's all considerations that the client really relies on us to keep them informed of.

**Marki**: Yes, they do. When I'm meeting with the client, I often will state if they go off track is the fact that we have to adhere to license law and the REALTOR® code of ethics and all of our transaction. So I will quote rules and regulations for them because I want them to know that we have to be the source of the source, that these aren't my rules. And when it comes to education, working with buyers and sellers, we want to be the source of the source providing accurate information, ensuring that we aren't scaring anyone and realizing that all schools are not created equal. We need to implement what Jamie and Del have implemented in regards to providing information and value to the real estate transaction. Thanks for being here.

**Jamie**: Thank you.

**Del**: Thank you.

**Marki**: That's a wrap!

***Outro****: Thanks for joining us on this episode of “Drive With NAR.” Tune in every month on* [*Magazine.realtor/drive*](https://magazine.realtor/drive) *or subscribe wherever you get your podcasts. Find more tips to boost your business at* [*Magazine.Realtor*](https://magazine.realtor/)*.*