

Macon County Schools

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Superintendent's
Office

August 4, 2011



Rebecca S. Markert
Staff Attorney
Freedom From Religion Foundation
PO Box 750
Madison, WI 53701

Re: Your letter dated 6/29/11, Nantahala School

Dear Ms. Markert,

This letter comes in response to yours dated June 29, 2011 regarding the 2010-2011 Nantahala School graduation ceremony. First and foremost, let me assure you that Macon County Schools takes the protection of its students, parents, and employees very seriously. Without question, this protection extends to the legal rights of each of these vital parts of our school community.

On that basis, I do take some exception to the implication of the phrase "The school district cannot schedule prayer as part of its graduation ceremonies, and it may not invite Reverend Stewart...or any other minister, to deliver a sermon in an address to the graduates." Our district would never intentionally "schedule" such activities, nor "invite" anyone for those purposes.

That may seem to be a small distinction, but it is an important one in my opinion, because we do employ a process to look into the intended content of speakers. In some circumstances (including the Nantahala graduation ceremony), we allow students to select speakers. They are then to refer their choice to their principal; each principal is then to review that choice and determine whether it is appropriate. In this case, as you may be aware, tragic circumstances prevented a proper vetting through this process.

Again, Macon County Schools is committed to protecting the rights of its students, parents, and employees. We do employ a process to prevent the presentation of inappropriate materials to our students. We agree to and will ensure that future graduation speakers refrain from religious speech. I will take your other suggestions for further safeguards under advisement, and will discuss them with the Board of Education as necessary.

Sincerely,

Dr. Dan Brigman
Superintendent of Schools
Macon County