
September 25, 2019

Mr. Sam Grover
Associate Counsel
Freedom from Religion Foundation
PO Box 750
Madison, WI 53701

Re: Oak Grove R-VI School District

Dear Mr. Grover:

As counsel to the Oak Grove School District, I have been requested to respond to the allegations contained in your correspondence dated September 5, 2019. In your correspondence, you asserted multiple constitutional violations. This correspondence will address each of the allegations put at issue.

1. Prayers at Facility Meetings. In extremely limited situations, i.e., the Florida School Shooting, faculty meetings were begun with prayer. The practice in the District is that mandatory faculty meetings are not opened with prayer, nor is prayer to play any part of these meetings. Building administrators have been reminded of the District's practices and compliance will be monitored.
2. Religious Promotion by District Administrators. Based upon the District's investigation, it has been determined that on limited occasions, the High School Principal has used brief religious related comments in his communication. This conduct will end. With respect to Superintendent Thomsen's statements, he did not reference God. He did say, with respect to his recent employment, "we didn't get here by chance" and "we are thankful to be here." There is nothing inappropriate about these comments.
3. Religious Displays in Classrooms. A review of District classrooms does not reveal any presentation that is constitutionally impermissible. Building Principals have had religious symbols in their offices. These symbols will be removed.

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4. Baccalaureate. The annual baccalaureate, is voluntary, and is sponsored by the New Life and the Ministerial Alliance. The District plays no role in the event. Whether or not students or faculty attend, is a matter of individual choice.
5. Teaching of Creationism. Based upon the District's review, creationism is not taught either on its own or in conjunction with discussing evolution, nor is creationism a part of the District's curriculum.
6. Distribution of Religious Flyers. The District has had a practice of permitting all flyers to be sent home with students. This practice includes the flyers mentioned in your correspondence. However, this practice of allowing flyers of all kinds to be sent home with students is under review and will be satisfactorily resolved.

Sincerely,



Thomas A. Mickes

TAM/ndb

cc: Bryan Thomsen, Superintendent