




College Station Independent School District

Success....each life....each day....each hour

MEMORANDUM

To: Dr. Eddie Coulson, Superintendent

From: Greg McIntyre, Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction, and Personnel 

Date: August 16, 2007

Subject: Policy FNA (Local) Student Expression

Agenda Item: I-1

Board Priority/
District Goal: Priority A: Goal 4

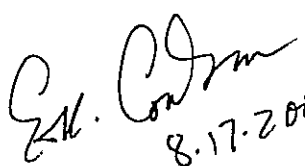
BACKGROUND

The 80th Texas Legislature recently passed House Bill 3678 which requires school districts to take immediate action to adopt local policy on student expression. HB 3678, also called the Religious Viewpoints Antidiscrimination Act (RVAA), addresses four general areas:

- (1) freedom of religious expression – the law requires districts to treat a student's voluntary expression of a religious viewpoint on an otherwise permissible subject in the same manner the district treats a student's voluntary expression of a secular viewpoint on the same topic,
- (2) student speakers – the law requires districts to adopt a policy that establishes a limited public forum for student speakers at all school events at which a student is to publicly speak, religious expression in class assignments, and freedom of association. The policy must:
 - require the district to provide the forum in a manner that does not discriminate based on religious viewpoints
 - provide a method, based on neutral criteria, for the selection of student speakers at school events and graduation
 - ensure that a student speaker does not engage in obscene, vulgar, offensively lewd, or indecent speech; and
 - state that the student's speech does not reflect the endorsement, sponsorship, position, or expression of the district. The disclaimer must be provided at all graduation ceremonies and at any other event in which a student speaks for as long as necessary to dispel confusion over the district's nonsponsorship of student speech.

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of Curriculum, Instruction
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EDDIE COULSON, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

(3) class assignments - the law states that students may express their beliefs about religion in homework, artwork, and other written and oral assignments. Homework must be judged by ordinary academic standards, and districts may not penalize or reward students based on the religious content of their work.

(4) freedom of association – the law states that students may organize prayer groups, religious clubs, ‘see you at the pole’ gatherings, and other religious gatherings before, during, and after school to the same extent that students are permitted to organize other noncurricular student activities and groups.

RVAA requires all districts to adopt and implement a local policy regarding a limited public forum and voluntary student expression of religious viewpoints. The law states that if a school district voluntarily adopts and follows the model policy, then the district is in compliance with the provisions covered by the model policy contained within the RVAA. The RVAA takes effect with the 2007-08 school year.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended the CSISD Board of Trustees approve the State model policy FNA (Local) as presented.