

OCT 10 2023

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October 4, 2023

Ms. Samantha F. Lawrence
Anne Nicol Gaylor Legal Fellow
Freedom From Religion Foundation
P. O. Box 750
Madison, WI 53701

RE: Letter dated September 12, 2023; Unconstitutional proselytizing and promoting prayer by teachers

Dear Ms. Lawrence:

Please consider this as the Jackson County School District's formal response to your letter of September 12, 2023 alleging that a teacher used her position to proselytize and promote religion by placing cards with prayers written on them underneath her student's desks during the first week of the new school year. In support that the conduct alleged did in fact occur, your letter also included a screenshot of a Facebook post that documents the teacher's prayer card plan.

Upon receipt of your letter, Superintendent, David Baggett, immediately directed Assistant Superintendent, Monty Noblitt, to investigate the incident. The investigation determined that the conduct complained of did occur, although it occurred at East Central Middle School rather than East Central High School as alleged in your letter. Specifically, the investigation revealed that the teacher identified in your letter had indeed placed prayer cards under the desks of her students at the beginning of the school year after having earlier requested that prayer cards be sent to her for that purpose on Facebook.

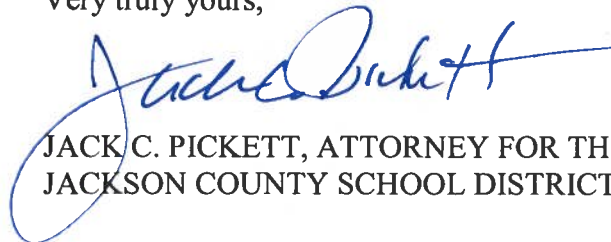
Upon confirmation that the conduct had occurred, the teacher in question was officially reprimanded on September 13, 2023 by the Principal of East Central Middle School. Among other things, the letter of reprimand stressed the seriousness of the teacher's misconduct and expressly stated that teachers are prohibited from using their positions to promote personal religious beliefs. The letter also stated any expressions of religious view points in the classroom and like settings is considered a constitutional violation and must cease immediately.

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Thereafter, in the District's continuing effort to prevent similar conduct from occurring in the future, a slide show entitled, "Religion in our Schools" was presented to all school principals in the District to be utilized by them in training all personnel. The slide show prepared by Assistant Superintendent, Monty Noblitt, who is also an attorney, sets out the legal framework regarding religion under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and has sections on the Establishment Clause, the Free Exercise Clause, Contemporary Issues and Religious Expression other than prayer. Hopefully, this training will prove effective in preventing future problems and it is the District's expectation that it will.

I trust this correspondence demonstrates the Jackson County School District's commitment to investigate all valid complaints brought to its attention swiftly and thoroughly and when warranted, to take appropriate corrective action so as to safeguard the constitutional rights of its students and faculty.

Very truly yours,



JACK C. PICKETT, ATTORNEY FOR THE
JACKSON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

JCP:dsv

Mr. David Baggett, Superintendent (via electronic mail)
Mr. J. Keith Lee, Board Chairman (via electronic mail)