

Evans Middle School



A TEA RECOGNIZED SCHOOL

August 27, 2010

Re: HB 3678 – Religious Viewpoint Antidiscrimination Act

Dear Parents and Students:

During the 80th Legislative session, HB 3678, also called the Religious Viewpoint Antidiscrimination Act (“Act”) was passed by the Legislature. The Act is effective beginning with the 2009-2010 school year. The Act addresses four general areas: freedom of religious expression, student speakers, religious expression in class assignments, and freedom to organize religious groups and activities. As required by the Act, the District treats a student’s voluntary expression of a religious viewpoint in the same manner it treats a student’s voluntary expression of any other viewpoint

In compliance with the Act, the District Board of Trustees approved a policy that establishes a “limited public forum” for student speakers at all school events at which a student is to publicly speak. The Act requires that the policy: 1) provide the forum in a manner that does not discriminate against a student’s voluntary expression of a religious viewpoint, if any, on an otherwise permissible subject; 2) provide a method, based on neutral criteria, for the selection of student speakers at school events and graduation ceremonies; 3) ensure that a student speaker does not engage in obscene, vulgar, offensively lewd, or indecent speech; and 4) state, in writing, orally, or both, that the student’s speech does not reflect the endorsement, sponsorship, position, or expression of the district. You may obtain a copy of the policy on the District website, www.mckinneyisd.net.

In accordance with the policy, student speakers will be given a limited public forum to introduce daily announcements at campuses where there is a public address system. Students are eligible to participate as introductory speakers if they are: 1) in the highest two grade levels of the school; 2) volunteer; 3) are not in a disciplinary placement (ISS, OSS, DAEP, or JJAEP) at the time of the speaking event. If your child meets these neutral criteria, he/she must submit his/her name to the campus administrator no later than the end of the school day on Friday, September 3, 2010. Sign-up forms are located in the front office on each campus. You will be notified if your child is selected to speak and the dates/events for which he/she will be speaking. If there are no student volunteers, the campus will seek volunteers again at the beginning of next semester. If no students volunteer or if the selected speaker declines or becomes ineligible, no student introduction will be made at the event.

The names of the students who volunteer to speak will be randomly drawn until all names have been selected. The students, in the order drawn, will be matched chronologically to the single event for which the student shall give the introduction. The assignment process will be repeated as needed until

a student speaker is assigned for all of the events identified above. The campus will repeat the selection and assignment process at the beginning of each semester.

Students who have attained special positions of honor in the school and those who have traditionally addressed school audiences as an ordinary component of their achieved positions will continue their duties in this regard. The District will treat their voluntary expression of a religious viewpoint, if any, on an otherwise permissible subject in the same manner the District treats a student's voluntary expression of a secular or other viewpoint on an otherwise permissible subject.

The subject of the student introductions must relate to the purpose of introducing the designated event. The selected student must stay on the subject. The selected student may not engage in speech that:

- Is obscene, vulgar, offensively lewd, or indecent;
- Creates reasonable cause to believe that the speech would result in material and substantial interference with school activities or the rights of others;
- Promotes illegal drug use;
- Violates the intellectual property rights, privacy rights, or other rights of another person;
- Contains defamatory statements about public figures or others; or
- Advocates imminent lawless action and is likely to incite or produce such action.

Students violating these restrictions will be prohibited from eligibility to speak under the policy for a defined period. As part of the speaking events, the District will provide a disclaimer in written or oral form that states the student volunteered to speak, was selected to speak based on neutral criteria, and that the student's speech does not reflect the endorsement, sponsorship, position, or expression of the District.

Questions regarding this policy may be directed to Todd Young, Principal of Evans Middle School.

Sincerely,

Todd Young, Principal
Evans Middle School
469-742-7100