

From: "Millstone, David J." <*****>
To: "Samuel Stickle" <*****>
Date: Sunday - September 13, 2009 11:02 PM
Subject: RE: Media inquiry - presentation of Religion In The PublicSchools

Slides 20 and 21 - there is no incongruity. Evolution is to be treated as scientific fact. There was an attempt in Georgia in 2002 by supporters of creationism to have the Cobb County Board of Education insert a disclaimer into middle and high school science texts stating "This textbook contains material on evolution. Evolution is a theory, not a fact, regarding the origin of living things. This material should be approached with an open mind, studied carefully and critically considered." The federal district court in Georgia ruled the disclaimer unconstitutional as it endorsed religion (in 2005). Thus, the statements in the two slides are consistent.

Slides 10 and 12 - The statements are both accurate. It says what was intended. In Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe, 530 U.S. 290 (2000), the U.S. Supreme Court held a school policy permitting student led, student initiated prayer before a football game is unconstitutional.

I trust that answers your questions.

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-----Original Message-----

From: Samuel Stickle [mailto:*****]

Sent: Friday, September 11, 2009 5:26 PM

To: Millstone, David J.

Subject: Media inquiry - presentation of Religion In The Public Schools

David Millstone,

I'm working on an article about the "Religion In The Public Schools" presentation that was given in the Mount Vernon City Schools District on August 18, 2009. Your name is listed on a copy of the slides used for that presentation. I had two questions, about the content of the slides, which I hope you will be able to answer.

A statement on slide #20 seems incongruent with a statement on slide #21:

Slide #20 states, "Evolution must only be taught as scientific fact."

Slide #21, however, states, "Disclaimers regarding the theory of evolution as the only explanation for the development of humankind have been found to be unconstitutional." Teaching something as fact strongly implies that there are no other explanations. How are the teachers supposed to state that evolution is "scientific fact" while avoiding the constitutional problem you point out of the students thinking the school is indorsing this one view of origins over all other views?

A statement on slide #10 seems incongruent with a statement on slide #12:

Slide #10 states, "May Students pray? --Voluntary, individual payer [sic] that is not coercive and does not substantially disrupt the school's education mission and activities. --Students may engage with other students in religious activities during non-curricular periods as long as the activities are not disruptive or coercive." Slide #12, however, states, "A policy permitting student-led, student-initiated prayer before football games is unconstitutional." Did you intend to state that prayer before football games is constitutional?

Sincerely,

Sam Stickle

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