



Mike Quarles <mdquarle@episd.org> Jul 5, 2022, 9:27 AM

to Diana, Joshua
Superintendent Sayavedra,

I cannot in good conscience work at a multicultural public school that promotes one religion, and I cannot work for a district that allows it. I am retiring from EPISD.

I am attaching the related grievance that I filed years ago and copying a board member who is familiar with this matter.

As evidenced again this school year, I was unable to effect change on this campus, perhaps the community can.

I believe public schools should be secular and inclusive. In my view, Hornedo administration's overt attempt at religious integralism or dominionism is public school poison.

You have a difficult job running this District and I appreciate what I've observed so far. I wish you the best.

Teaching has been the most mutually beneficial career I've had. I love teaching and I am proud of my service. Here are examples of student work from this school year <https://mdquarle.myportfolio.com/2021-2022-student-work>.

I was fortunate enough to travel students to compete for the first time in two years, a group made up of Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, and secular nerds. Following a difficult couple of pandemic years, this was a better year.

Disappointedly,

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The gist of the grievance I filed in 2020 follows

Two school years ago, Hornedo's Administration played religious Christian music with sung lyrics over the loudspeakers at our public-school campus. The only religion that was recognized in this way during the during that 2018-2019 school year was Christianity.

My concern is that playing music that features Christian themes, but no others could create an environment on the campus that encourages the expression of Christian beliefs to the exclusion of others.

To resolve this complaint/grievance at the lowest administrative level, I discussed my concerns with the campus Principal, a campus Counselor, and multiple members of CIT during that 2018-2019 school year. I supplied an Interfaith Calendar to assist the campus with inclusivity.

My efforts amounted to an agreement by campus Administration and our Campus Improvement Team, to be more inclusive in the following 2019-2020 school year. The determination was to not just play Christian religious music, but to include other religions that are representative of our multicultural student body.

When the 2019-2020 "Winter Celebrations" began, the only religious music that was being played, again, was Christian, and it continued for seven school days.

I wrote an email to Ms. Varela requesting a meeting ahead of the filing of a formal grievance in compliance with DHCB Local. Curiously, the day after my email, campus Administration played other religion's music, complying with what had been decided by CIT in the previous school year.

I am not assured, as demonstrated in the previous school year, that had I not sent the email on December 10, 2019, other religion's music would have been played before the winter break.

I am not opposed to the practice of broadcasting secular holiday music on a public-school campus, but I do not believe it is appropriate to broadcast only one religion's music and I am confident that Texas Education Code Sec. 29.920,"Winter Celebrations" states this.

I am requesting that the District be informed of the events pertaining to this grievance over the last two school years.

I am requesting the District's specific guidance for my campus Administration on the appropriate practice of on-campus religious celebrations.

I am also requesting assurance that the District's guidance will be followed on the campus that I teach, without requiring a yearly email from me to bring the campus into compliance.

This could come in the form of an equitable, predetermined, curated list of music that is approved by the District for yearly religious celebrations.