



OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL

Richardson Independent School District

November 9, 2005

Via Facsimile

Derek L. Gaubatz, Esq.
Eric C. Rassbach, Esq.
The Beckett Fund
1350 Connecticut Avenue
Suite 605
Washington, D.C. 20036-1735

Re: L.V. Berkner High School

Gentlemen:

The Richardson Independent School District received your correspondence concerning alleged activities at L.V. Berkner High School. Kindly direct all further communications concerning this matter to the attention of the undersigned at the address or telephone number listed below.

RISD's community is richly diverse and its students represent a wide variety of cultures, ethnicities, religions, races, and viewpoints. The District is committed to accommodating the religious needs of students of all faiths and beliefs within the parameters of constitutional and state and federal law. Indeed, RISD is recognized as a progressive leader in this area. Staff at Berkner, and every other RISD campus, respect each student's right to pray at school and have a long history of working with individual students to accommodate their religious needs. They will continue to do so.

While I do not believe the facts you allege are correct, your letter reveals that some students may have perceived that they could not pray at school. Students were never prohibited from praying at school and the school is preparing a communication to students to reiterate that point. As I know you are aware, public schools must carefully balance religious accommodations to individual students with their duty to ensure the educational environment is not disrupted. Please be assured that the District is looking into the allegations you assert and we will work to clear up any misunderstandings that may have occurred. Direct communication from students and their parents is critical to assist the school in meeting each student's needs. I hope you will encourage your clients to speak with Ed Yartym, Berkner's interim principal, so he can address specific concerns.

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I have always found that collaborative solutions are most effective in addressing concerns. The school will work with students, their parents, and Muslim community leaders to appropriately address the concerns that have been raised. The District's Religious Practices Advisory Committee also will consider this issue and provide input as the District continues its efforts to address the religious needs of its students. Similarly, I would welcome the opportunity to speak with you further to explore creative solutions to the complex issues this matter raises.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mia M. Martin".

Mia M. Martin
General Counsel

c: Jim Nelson
Ed Yartym