

Students still allowed to talk about religion

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At a previous board meeting, several angry parents charged religious groups such as Campus Life have no right in or around the public schools. The presence of such groups, they asserted, violate the U.S. Constitution, which provides for separation of church and state.

The parents accused North Farmington principal Clayton Graham and other North teachers of supporting Campus Life by allowing its posters to be placed on bulletin boards and by wearing lapel buttons advertising its functions.

One of the new procedures reads, "Posters, literature, advertising in school publications and notices which espouse, promote or advertise religious beliefs or activities are not to be permitted."

The board listened to statements and answered questions on the Campus Life controversy for about two hours Tuesday.

Kerrie Pridemore, a Campus Life supporter, said that the board "was promoting one religion — secular humanism — over another by eliminating freedom of choice."

Neither was the new policy pleasing to Roy Larson, who said, "If this doesn't sound like Soviet Russia, I don't know what does." Later, Larson added, "We're in a learning atmosphere, and we have some pretty sharp young people. Let's give them the chance."

THE CAMPUS LIFE controversy has affected the music program of North Farmington, according to two members of the school's choir.

Senior Heather MacKenzie told the board that a recent directive allowed only 30 percent of the music to be "seasonal" in the recent holiday performance.

"I feel we're being reprimanded for what's been going on in the Campus Life situation," MacKenzie said.

Another choir member, senior Greg Tellner, confirmed the 30 percent sea-

sonal music quota and added, "The music they want to cut out is very educational."

"I'd like to say that when most of this is over, those who will suffer are not the board or the older generation, but the students," Tellner said.

Farmington superintendent of school Lewis Schulman answered MacKenzie by saying, "There's no such policy." After Tellner's statement, Schulman said, "The intent is not to set up a quota system. The intent is to arrive at a balanced program and to observe the festive nature of the holiday."

Suzanne Miller, a 1983 graduate of North Farmington and a strong supporter of Campus Life, asked the board if the new policy would prohibit students from wearing religious symbols like crosses and Stars of David.

Told that it would, Miller asked if the students would be permitted to wear T-shirts with Campus Life slogans or emblems on them.

Answered trustee Susan Rennels, who chaired a committee which studied the issue and drafted the policy, "I think we've made it pretty clear that the students have the right to express themselves."

THE POLICY, which received its "first reading" at the meeting last Tuesday, will be studied further before it is adopted, Rennels said.

"We do not adopt a policy on the same night it is initially considered," she said. "Final adoption will not be considered until we have a special meeting of the board. We'll publicize it as well as we've publicized this one."

Asked about the meeting to summarize the district's position on the Campus Life issue and the new policy, Schulman said, "We have an outstanding school here and we hate to have a divisive issue. I'm sure the kids will respond to clear direction and expectations."

"It's a reasonable policy. I hope this issue has been forever resolved."

Standing at the back of the auditorium, a teacher, who did not wish to be

identified, said, "They always land on their feet, don't they."

He continued, "I went to Duncle's concert the other night. It was bland. It's gotten to the point that we're all so sensitive that we're looking for offense when none is there."

Religious policy

Following is the policy introduced at this week's Farmington School Board meeting relating to religious participation in the schools.

The Farmington Public School District recognizes that freedom of religion is a fundamental right deeply rooted in the American Constitutional system. While this right is firmly engrained among our Constitutional

freedoms, it is not without limitation. One such limitation is the concept of the separation between church and state.

This principle indicates that school districts must be wholly neutral in dealing with religious beliefs. Therefore, while schools may teach about religion, schools must not support or introduce those procedures that either enhance, promote or inhibit re-

ligion.

It is implicit in the character of American public education that the training of our young people be conducted in an atmosphere in which young people may assimilate a heritage which is neither theistic or atheistic but, simply, civic and patriotic. Administration is hereby directed to develop appropriate procedures to implement this policy.

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