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EAD 505

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Religious Issues Assignment

Case Analysis

Mrs. Avery is the leader of an award-winning school. Under her leadership, the school has won many awards and set a tone for excellence in the district. Because Ms. Beckel and Ms. Kassidy are interested in expanding the school’s course offerings, they work with the school site committee to develop ideas between the teachers and the community. Together, they decide to create a course on Religious Studies because creating it will allow the expansion of the student’s minds. Along with the course outline, the team lists a selection of various textbooks, like the Bible and the Koran as supplemental texts.

The principal, Mrs. Avery, is all for the creation of the new course, as she is the spearhead and driving force behind the school’s curriculum design policy. Her school has been a leader in curriculum design throughout the district. She always encourages the teachers and other stakeholders to think outside the box regarding what they suggest for ways to keep the students engaged.

Once a problem arose, the relevant information needed to address the situation adequately includes what the relevant education law says about the inclusion of religious material as a reference and what the District Policy Documents say about religion and our school district.

Many people are involved in the decision-making process at this school. This school uses a site committee to make recommendations to the principal. Then, the principal and committee representatives make presentations to the superintendent of the district. However, this case is unique in that the principal, Mrs. Avery, the teacher Ms. Kassidy, the parent Ms. Beckel are prepared to make the presentation to the district, despite warnings from the neighbor Mrs. Wright that she will not stand for the comingling of church and state in the public school.

There are many possible solutions to the situation that arises in this scenario. They include canceling the presentation of the new course to the school board, postponing the presentation, engaging other community stakeholders in a town hall-like meeting, proceed with the presentation to the school board and answer any relevant questions the board may have regarding the addition of the course and the protests outside of the meeting.

Rationale

Based on the situation presented in the case, I would recommend that the presentation committee reschedule the district presentation. I think it is essential to be able to examine the situation at hand in a neutral setting thoroughly. This setting includes no cameras, no photo-opportunities, and the peace and calm required to make an informed decision and devise a solution that works for the school and the community.

Based on my understanding of the situation, the problem is not with adding a new course to the curriculum. That is something that this particular school does all the time, without incident. Since this school is a leader in course creation for the district, as the principal, I would be responsible for ensuring that virtually every decision made in the name of the school aligns with the schoolwide vision of “innovation.”

So, what is the problem? What about the new course is causing a backlash from community stakeholders at this stage of the process — the subject matter of the course. Many people associate the segregation of “church” and “state” with all religious discussion and not just with direct instruction. The steering committee proposed the course, not to explore the validity of the theorems in one particular religion, but rather to engage the students in productive dialog regarding religion in itself.

Engaging community stakeholders in a town hall-like meeting would allow me to thoroughly discuss every public aspect of the course with community members, not just a sound bite or two from a few people involved with the selection and creation of the course. It would also allow me to discuss the relevant laws regarding religious education in the public sector, which is something that everyone involved needs to know when trying to make an informed decision about education.

Reference:

Hanson, K. L. (2009). A casebook for school leaders: Linking the ISLLC standards to effective practice. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Merrill/Prentice Hall.