**PRAYER AT SCHOOL – GUIDANCE FOR STAFF INTERVIEWS**

1. **INTRODUCTION**: Last year, the school system received a formal complaint from an attorney for an advocacy group about a prayer at a Moore County Schools athletic event. Dr. Grimesey asked the school system attorneys for legal guidance, and they provided a memorandum that was distributed to schools. Since that time, there have been ongoing reports of employees participating in prayers with students at athletic events and possibly other school events as well. I need to gather information about whether and when this is occurring to report back to Dr. Porter so that he, Dr. Grimesey, and the school system’s attorneys can ensure that the school system is not violating laws regarding the separation of church and state. It is important that I get accurate information so that the attorneys can give appropriate advice to Dr. Porter and Dr. Grimesey.
2. **PERSONS TO INTERVIEW**:
	1. Principals (interviewed by Dr. Porter)
	2. Assistant Principals (interviewed by principal)
	3. Athletic Director (interviewed by principal)
	4. All athletic coaches (interviewed by principal)
	5. All assistant athletic coaches (interviewed by principal)
3. **GENERAL INTERVIEW POINTERS**:
	1. Emphasize importance of accurate and honest information.
	2. Emphasize that the primary purpose of this review is to get accurate information to the superintendent and board attorney so that they can ensure that staff and the school system are not at legal risk, that the school system is complying with constitutional requirements and that individual employees and the district as a whole are not exposed to liability.
	3. Emphasize that leadership respects the rights of all employees to have and express their own religious beliefs when acting in a purely personal capacity – the legal limitations come into play only when staff are promoting or endorsing religion while interacting with students or otherwise acting in their capacity as school employees. Okay to reassure staff that school system attorneys have explained that schools are not entirely “religion free zones,” but there are legal limits that must be respected.
	4. It is fine to hand out a copy of Neal Ramee’s 3/25/15 memo to Dr. Grimesey to any person who expresses concerns or confusion about where to draw the legal lines.
	5. *Please get full, complete, and detailed answers to questions. It may be necessary to ask follow up questions. For example, if the question is “Describe the prayer,” an answer like “Just a regular prayer” is not helpful. It could be the person does not remember, but please follow up and get as much detail as possible. Similarly, if the question is “which students participated in the prayer,” an answer like “some of the football players” is not detailed or complete. Press for as much detail as possible.*
	6. *If multiple incidents or prayers are discussed, please get details about* *each one.*
4. **GENERAL QUESTIONS:**
	1. **Have you ever participated in or seen any prayers at any MCS athletic practices, games, or other events?**
		1. When did this occur? (Please be as specific as possible.)
		2. How many times did this occur?
		3. For how long did this occur (what time span)?
		4. Where did this occur? (Please be as specific as possible).
		5. Who was there? (Please be as specific as possible).
		6. Which students participated in the prayer? (Please be as specific as possible).
		7. Which employees participated in the prayer? (Please be as specific as possible).
		8. Who led the prayer?
		9. What was said before and after the prayer? (Please be as specific as possible).
		10. What was the content of the prayer – i.e., what exactly was said?
		11. Describe the prayer with as much detail as possible. (Was it a Christian prayer? Did people bow their heads or kneel? Did one person recite the prayer? Did students say “amen”? Etc.)
		12. Who decided what the content of the prayer would be?
		13. Who planned or organized the prayer?
		14. Who else was involved in planning or organizing the prayer?
		15. Were students required to participate?
		16. Did any students or parents express concerns or choose not to participate?
		17. Were there any oral communications with parents or students about the prayer? (Describe with as much detail as possible)
		18. Were there any written communications with parents or students about the prayer? (e.g., emails, flyers, notes sent home with students)? If so, please provide copies.
	2. **Have you ever participated in or seen a prayer at any MCS graduation or promotion ceremony?**
		1. When did this occur? (Please be as specific as possible.)
		2. How many times did this occur?
		3. For how long did this occur (what time span)?
		4. Where did this occur? (Please be as specific as possible).
		5. Who was there? (Please be as specific as possible).
		6. Which students participated in the prayer? (Please be as specific as possible).
		7. Which employees participated in the prayer? (Please be as specific as possible).
		8. Who led the prayer?
		9. What was said before and after the prayer? (Please be as specific as possible).
		10. What was the content of the prayer – i.e., what exactly was said?
		11. Describe the prayer with as much detail as possible. (Was it a Christian prayer? Did people bow their heads or kneel? Did one person recite the prayer? Did students say “amen”? Etc.)
		12. Who decided what the content of the prayer would be?
		13. Who planned or organized the prayer?
		14. Who else was involved in planning or organizing the prayer?
		15. Were students required to participate?
		16. Did any students or parents express concerns or choose not to participate?
		17. Were there any oral communications with parents or students about the prayer?
		18. Were there any written communications with parents or students about the prayer? (e.g., emails, flyers, notes sent home with students)? If so, please provide copies.
	3. **Are you aware of MCS employees praying with students in any other contexts during school hours or at any school-sponsored events?**
		1. When did this occur? (Please be as specific as possible.)
		2. How many times did this occur?
		3. For how long did this occur (time span)?
		4. Where did this occur? (Please be as specific as possible).
		5. Who was there? (Please be as specific as possible).
		6. Which students participated in the prayer? (Please be as specific as possible).
		7. Which employees participated in the prayer? (Please be as specific as possible).
		8. Who led the prayer?
		9. What was said before and after the prayer? (Please be as specific as possible).
		10. What was the content of the prayer – i.e., what exactly was said?
		11. Describe the prayer with as much detail as possible. (Was it a Christian prayer? Did people bow their heads or kneel? Did one person recite the prayer? Did students say “amen”? Etc.)
		12. Who decided what the content of the prayer would be?
		13. Who planned or organized the prayer?
		14. Who else was involved in planning or organizing the prayer?
		15. Were students required to participate?
		16. Did any students or parents express concerns or choose not to participate?
		17. Were there any oral communications with parents or students about the prayer?
		18. Were there any written communications with parents or students about the prayer? (e.g., emails, flyers, notes sent home with students)? If so, please provide copies.