



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on October 28, 2011

Christian Kids' Club Sues Okla. School District

An after-school Christian kids' club is suing the school district of Owassa, Oklahoma, a suburb of Tulsa, for preventing the club's organizers from promoting events at one of the district's schools. According to the Alliance Defense Fund (ADF), the conservative legal advocacy group that is representing the club, the district took away the Kids for Christ club's right to distribute fliers, make announcements, put up posters, and other activities at Northeast Elementary School, arguing that the club, which meets outside of class time, is religious.



Meanwhile, the district continues to allow such groups as the Boy Scouts and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), along with businesses such as a local burrito restaurant, to promote their activities.

"A Christian organization should not be targeted for discrimination when it is simply seeking to publicize its voluntary meetings just like other community groups do," said ADF attorney Matt Sharp. "The district would have people believe that the Constitution requires a religious organization to be singled out in this manner when, in reality, the Constitution strictly prohibits this type of discrimination. The courts have repeatedly upheld this."

The federal lawsuit is challenging the district's policy on approved campus communications, which states: "No literature will be distributed that contains primarily religious, objectionable, or political overtones which may be beneficial to any particular group or business at the expense of others."

The district appears to be involved in selective religious discrimination, the ADF pointed out, noting that it allows the YMCA to promote its activities on campus, although one of that group's stated missions, as promoted on a recent flier, is to "put Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind, and body for all." Curiously, the district approved that flier for distribution.

"Just as it rightly allowed the YMCA's flier, the district must allow the 'Kids for Christ' club's fliers and other activity announcements," Sharp said. "The district is very clearly wrong in its view of the First Amendment."

In addition to banning on-campus promotion of Kids for Christ activities, noted an ADF news release, the district's superintendent, Clark Ogilvie, "also discouraged the more-than-100-member club from publicizing its activities in the larger Owasso community through signs and banners and through local media and advertising outlets because he said he believed such publicity would 'stir up trouble.' "

A [statement released by the school district](#) claimed that the issue "has been misconstrued and taken out of context," on two counts. "First, the Owasso School District has never denied access to any religious



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groups in its schools,” explained the statement, attributed to Ogilvie. “Secondly, religious groups have met in the district’s facilities for years without discrimination but are asked to follow certain guidelines/school policies in their operation. The district’s policies in these matters are clear and available online at the school district’s website.”

An attorney for the school district sent a letter to the Kids for Christ organizers explaining that they could no longer use the school’s bulletin board, literature table, and PA system to promote club functions because allowing “such activities to impressionable elementary students during the regular school day and while school is in session would certainly raise the issue as to endorsement of religion. In fact, it is difficult to see how an elementary student could discern that [Kids for Christ] is not endorsed by the school district when such activities on behalf of [Kids for Christ] would be occurring by the school district to a captive elementary student audience.”

The ADF’s Sharp told the [Christian Post](#) that preventing “Kids for Christ” from promoting its activities as other clubs are allowed to do “is a pretty straightforward case of the school district impermissibly discriminating against a Christian community organization based on its religious message.” He added, “Our clients have a great message and a great program for kids ... and we really just want them to have the same access that all other community groups have so that they can get their positive message out to parents and students.”

Photo: A West Coast Kids for Christ group



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