

Religious Freedom Reigns in Texas School Flier Showdown

A Texas elementary school teacher was standing in the way of little children meeting Jesus. But a **religious freedom** lawsuit has caused the school to rethink its policy.

A teacher had denied a Hillcrest Elementary School third-grader permission to invite classmates to an AWANA ("Approved Workmen Are Not Ashamed") club meeting at a **local church** that would include games and hearing a Bible story. Other students were freely permitted to distribute invitations for events such as birthday parties.

The Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) stepped in with a lawsuit against the Nederland Independent School District in April. The result: The district changed its policy so that students are allowed to distribute private religious material on the same terms as non-religious material.

"Public schools should encourage, not shut down, the free exchange of ideas," said Matt Sharp, ADF litigation staff counsel. "We commend the school district's decision to respect this third-grader's constitutionally protected right to hand invitations to his fellow classmates during non-instructional time as other students have been allowed to do."

The ADF lawsuit prompted the school district to revise its policy on the distribution of materials so that it now states, "The district shall not discriminate based on the viewpoint, whether religious or non-religious, expressed in private, student-to-student, non-disruptive speech."