

Several Schools Quit Yoga for Students After Pastors Raise Concerns

Many believe public schools stretching classes into yoga seminars is out of place. It is no surprise that some parents are doing cartwheels in reaction to a swift change of heart by school officials.

After northwest Ohio clergy sent a letter to school districts about their objection to the indoctrination of yoga on students, several area schools have now agreed to focus on education during class rather than Eastern religion.

Over 100 clergymen chimed in by sending a corporate correspondence to 39 school districts across the region, including the State Board of Education. According to the clergymen, yoga is not merely an external physical practice with a physiological effect, but rather an internal spiritual practice advertised as being spiritually transformative.

Their letter has resonated with school superintendents.

Lucas Superintendent Bradley Herman acknowledged to Reverend El Akuchie, one of the clergy letter's co-signers "As a public school district, we are mindful of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment and the prohibition of religious instruction. To that end, we must ensure that we are not doing anything that runs afoul of our obligations and appreciate your concerns."

The Lucas superintendent went on to say, "Please further know that there is no official yoga class or yoga instruction at Lucas High School and no intent to change that."

Lexington Superintendent Mike Ziegelhofer also responded to

the clergy correspondence and a family's objection by saying "Effective immediately, upon our return to school, all employees of the Lexington Local School District will be notified in writing via email that the use or endorsement of and/or any inference of the use or endorsement of yoga, any forms of transcendental meditation and the promotion, endorsement or practice of any religious beliefs is not permitted within the Lexington Local School District during school hours."

A family whose children were subject to the Eastern religion instruction addressed the Lexington School Board and had Rabbi William Hallbrook of Sar Shalom Center respond to the latest developments.

"On behalf of the family, we are thankful for Superintendent Ziegelhofer's answer to our concerns. There is no room for the promotion of Eastern religion in our public school classrooms. We appreciate that Mr. Ziegelhofer recognizes the sensitivity of this issue and look forward to the continuation of this new policy under the administration of his successor Mr. Jeremy Secrist."

Superintendents from Mansfield Senior, Shelby, Galion and Clear Fork schools who were sent the letter dated March 11, 2020, and asked to reply have declined to respond to the area clergy's concerns.

Faith leaders maintain that courts recognize yoga as a practice of Eastern religion and that there are other less controversial methods to improve student focus and fitness such as exercise, naps and healthy foods.

According to the clergy letter, the American Center for Law & Justice (ACLJ) was notified about the local incidents of yoga in classroom settings. The ACLJ has launched a national petition and initiated forthcoming litigation regarding the promotion of Buddhism.

View the video in this article of a Frontlines Ohio exclusive interview with local clergy.

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