



SOMERSET ACADEMY

OF LAS VEGAS

1378 Paseo Verde Parkway, Suite 200
Henderson, NV 89012

May 22, 2015

Via Email and Certified Mail

Jeremy Dys
c/o JoElia Harty – jharty@libertyinstitute.org
Liberty Institute

Liberty Institute
2001 West Plano Parkway, Suite 1600
Plano, Texas 75075

RE: Your letter dated May 20, 2015/Mackenzie Fraiser

Dear Mr. Dys:

Thank you for bringing this important issue to our attention. Somerset Academy of Las Vegas is dedicated to providing an equitable, high-quality education for all its students.

We respect the civil liberties of our students and their parents. As such, we strive to comply with the directives set forth by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE), including those dealing with religious expression in public schools. We endeavor to strike the correct balance between two basic and equally important obligations imposed on public school officials by the First Amendment: honoring the students' right to express their personal religious views, while not endorsing any particular religious activity or doctrine. Balancing these interests is not an easy task, and "will depend on specific factual contexts and will require careful consideration in particular cases." (DOE, *Religious Expression in Public Schools: A Statement of Principles*, 1998).

The teacher and assistant principal in this matter acted in good faith at all times and intended to follow DOE's guidelines. After reviewing the facts of this particular situation, Somerset Academy recognizes that the teacher and assistant principal incorrectly implemented those guidelines. Expression of a student's religious beliefs in the form of homework, artwork,

and other written or oral assignments is protected speech and should have been allowed in this instance.

Somerset Academy of Las Vegas and its Administrators apologize for this inadvertent error. The student will be allowed to re-submit her original presentation, inclusive of her religious beliefs. Additionally, we are taking active steps to make sure that the DOE guidelines are properly implemented by Somerset's administration and teachers.

If you have any remaining questions or concerns, please contact Somerset Academy's attorney, Jeff Blanck, who can be reached at 775-324-6640. We trust that this matter is now resolved and look forward to serving this student and her family for years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cody Noble', written in a cursive style.

Cody Noble, Board Chair
Somerset Academy of Las Vegas

Enclosure.

CC: U.S. Department of Education,
Office of Civil Rights
Seattle Office
915 Second Avenue, Room 3310
Seattle, WA 98174-1099

The Hon. Adam Paul Laxalt
Office of the Attorney General
100 North Carson Street
Carson City, NV 89701