

A District Model Limiting Military Recruiter Access Whittier School District

A coalition of community members and parents met with the Whittier School District in the fall of 2004. As a result, the new District's policy was presented to the community at an open forum held at St. Mathias Church the following January.

Prior to that time, the District had no written policy regarding military recruitment. Recruiters were wandering campuses, speaking in classrooms, accessing student's personal information without proper consent, and displaying recruitment posters in the hallways, including five foot cardboard displays. Military humvees and helicopters even participated in annual Career Day presentations.

Orlando Terrazas, a parent of a Whittier High School student, and a member of the Whittier Peace and Justice Coalition, discovered a counter-recruitment brochure published by the American Friends and Service Committee (AFSC) entitled *Do You Know Enough to Enlist?* Mr. Terrazas decided to use the provided information to create his own poster, and then presented the brochure and the poster to the principal, Mr. Davies. He requested the posters be put up alongside the military posters, and for the brochures to be distributed to students.

Mr. Terrazas also confronted the Whittier District's Assistant Superintendent, Mr. Carruth, who explained in responses that the District would consider their options and get back to him. Mr. Terrazas contacted the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) for legal assistance. They then met with him and other community members to discuss various options, resulting in a letter being sent to the District, outlining his legal right to display the poster.

In March of 2005, the District denied the request to put up the poster, but did arrange for a meeting to take place May 23 between the community and the Board. As a result, the District now produces its own version of the brochure and keeps them in the counselors offices. When students request information about a military career, he or she is supposed to be given a brochure and staff are supposed to be trained on this new policy. Students are allowed to distribute the original *Do You Know Enough to Enlist* Brochure on campus. Parents or community members may distribute them off campus, such as on the sidewalk.

Even though ACLU believes he has a right to display the alternative poster, which has been denied. However, large military posters are being removed, unless a college recruiter poster of the same size is also being displayed.

In terms of opting out of recruiters accessing directory information, the Whittier District moved the Opt Out information section to the first page of disclosures being sent out to parents and teachers, which they conspicuously entitle "Military Recruiters." Opt Out forms will also be annually mailed out each July now (Spanish version coming soon) and will include an opt-out deadline. They will ensure compliance with the NCLB Act and Equal Access.

And finally, the District directed principals to not allow military vehicles to participate in Career Day presentations and assemblies.

Submitted by: Orlando Terrazas