



Council For Lifelong Learning
Prayer in Schools

**Fact
Sheet**

September 2001

<p>1. Is prayer allowed by statute in Florida's public schools?</p>	<p>Florida statutes allow for a moment of silence. Section 233.062(2), F.S., states, "The school board may provide that a brief period, not to exceed 2 minutes, for the purpose of silent prayer or meditation be set aside at the start of each school day or each school week in the public schools in the district."</p>
<p>2. What is the recent history of prayer legislation in Florida?</p>	<p>In the 1996 Legislative Session, the graduation standards bill included a provision to allow voluntary student-led prayer at graduations, sports events, and other noncompulsory middle school and high school assemblies. Only nonsectarian, nonproselytizing prayer could occur. In addition, school officials would be prohibited from participating in or influencing student decisions on prayer. This bill was vetoed by the Governor. A similar bill was filed in the 2001 Legislative Session but died in the Senate.</p>
<p>3. What is the recent history of court decisions regarding school prayer?</p>	<p>In June, 2000, the U.S. Supreme Court decided the case of <u>Doe v. Santa Fe Independent School District</u> and held that student-led, student-initiated prayer at high school football games is unconstitutional. In May, 2001, the U.S. Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals held in <u>Adler v. Duval County School Board</u> that a school board policy allowing student-led, student-initiated messages, including prayers, at high school graduation ceremonies was constitutionally permissible. The U.S. Supreme Court will likely review the decision in <u>Adler</u>.</p>
<p>4. What are the applicable statutes and rules?</p>	<p>Section 233.062(2), F.S. -- Brief Meditation Period</p>
<p>5. Where can I get additional information?</p>	<p>Florida Department of Education Division of Public Schools (850) 488-2601 or SC 278-2601</p> <p>The Florida House of Representatives Council for Lifelong Learning (850) 414-6694</p>