

KEEPING THE FAITH IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS



ERIC BUEHRER



PUBLIC SCHOOL OFFICIALS WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN ABOUT THE BIBLE AND CHRISTIANITY.

School officials around the country recognize the importance of learning about the Bible and Christianity. For example, The California Department of Education's History-Social Science guidelines and standards state that:

"Students are expected to learn about the role of religion in the founding of this country because many of our political institutions have their antecedents in religious beliefs."

Colorado state school officials write in their standards:

"Because religion plays a significant role in history and society study about religion is essential to understanding both the nation and the world. Omission of facts about religion can give students the false impression that the religious life of humankind is insignificant or unimportant."

The goal of this booklet is to encourage public school parents, teachers, administrators, and school board members to foster an environment where students have the academic freedom to learn about Judeo-Christian history, thought, and values in a lawful and appropriate manner.

In order for students to learn these important cultural lessons, we encourage:

- Schools to include Judeo-Christian history, thought, and values in the curriculum,
- Teachers to acknowledge the religious aspects of Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter.
- Students to voluntarily attend Bible clubs at their schools.
- Educators to meet for encouragement and prayer.
- Parents to regularly pray for the schools and become a blessing to those within their spheres of activity.
- School boards and administrators to promote policies that honor religious expression.
- Churches to initiate simple acts of kindness toward their neighboring schools.

This booklet is meant to be a starting point in achieving these goals. Throughout the booklet you will find links to help you with more information. At Gateways to Better Education we serve the adults involved in public schools encouraging them to promote academic freedom, honor religious expression, and appropriately help students learn about the ways the Bible and Christianity have influenced the world.

That raises the question, "What is lawful and appropriate?" That is what this booklet helps clarify.



ACADEMICALLY EXPECTED

“I’d like to think that an educated person knows the Bible because I believe in the liberal arts. I believe an educated person should know something about Shakespeare, should know something about the Bible, too. This is the cultural heritage of the nation we live in. And also it is the heritage of the creation of literature in English.”*

*Professor Robert M. Polhemus
English Department Chair
Stanford University*

* See page seven.



The mother of a Tyler, Texas public school student recently wrote to me: “My son is a sixth-grader in middle school. When he stood up to give a book report on Psalms, his teacher stopped him from reading Psalm 23. She said he’s not allowed to read the Bible out loud in school.”

Reading the Psalm in this context is not only legal, it is academically legitimate. The Twenty-third Psalm is one of the most recognized passages of Scripture. Aside from its theological meaning, its poetic style makes it a thing of literary beauty. When doing a book report on the Psalms, it is certainly a legitimate academic exercise to actually read a psalm as an example. Unfortunately, many teachers’ view of neutrality leads them to censorship rather than education.

For such educators, it may be hard to believe that state school officials and various education leaders actually encourage teaching students about the Bible and Christianity. However, because the influence of the Bible and Christianity is important to understanding Western civilization and, specifically, American history and culture, school officials across the country recognize it is important to study about it. Consider these state’s academic standards:

ARIZONA

“Explain the philosophical foundations of the American political system in terms of the inalienable rights of man and the purpose of government, with emphasis on:...the fundamental principles in the Declaration of Independence; the moral and ethical ideals which have their antecedent in the Judeo-Christian tradition.” 2SS-P1.

CALIFORNIA

Grade Six: World History and Geography: Ancient Civilizations

[S]tudents should read and discuss Biblical literature that is part of the literary heritage and ethical teachings of Western civilization; for example, stories about the Creation, Noah, the Tower of Babel, Abraham, the Exodus, the Ten Commandments, Ruth and Naomi, David, and Daniel and the Lion’s Den; selections from the Psalms and Proverbs; and the Hebrew people’s concept of wisdom, righteousness, law, and justice.” Framework, p. 78

“Note the origins of Christianity in the Jewish Messianic prophecies, the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth as described in the New Testament, and the contribution of St. Paul the Apostle to the definition and spread of Christian beliefs (e.g., belief in the Trinity, resurrection, salvation).”

Grade Seven – World History and Geography: Medieval and Early Modern Times

“Students should closely examine the Protestant Reformation and become familiar with the religious beliefs of Martin Luther and John Calvin as well as the history of the English Bible.” (Curriculum Framework, p. 91)

Grade Ten – World History, Culture, and Geography: The Modern World

“Students should review the moral and ethical principles of Judaism and Christianity that have profoundly influenced Western democratic thought, including belief in the dignity and equality of all; the search for social systems that ensure the freedom to

make individual moral choice; and the duty of each to work for morally just communities.” (p.125)”

COLORADO

“As students in grades 5-8 extend their knowledge, what they know and are able to do includes: giving examples of how religious and philosophical beliefs have defined standards of right and wrong, good and evil, and justice and injustice; and giving and describing examples of individuals who, throughout history, acted from their religious or philosophical beliefs.” Standard 6.2

FLORIDA

[High school students] should know the significant ideas and texts of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism...”

GEORGIA

Grade 9-12 - Course: American Government: “Standard: Traces the origin of individual rights in European history (Judeo-Christian traditions) and their transmission and application to U.S. history.”

MASSACHUSETTS

“Describe the monotheistic religion of the Israelites. A. the belief that there is one God; B. the Ten Commandments; C. the emphasis on individual worth and personal responsibility; D. the belief that all people must adhere to the same moral obligations, whether ruler or ruled; E. the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) as part of the history of early Israel.” Standard 7.21

“Describe the origins of Christianity and its central features. A. monotheism; B. the belief in Jesus as the Messiah and God’s son who redeemed humans from

sin; C. the concept of salvation; D. belief in the Old and New Testament; E. the lives and teachings of Jesus and Saint Paul.” Standard 7.41

PENNSYLVANIA

Sixth Grade World History - “A. Identify and explain how individuals and groups made significant political and cultural contributions to world history. Europe (e.g. Pope Leo X, John Calvin, John Wesley, Martin Luther, Ignatius of Loyola)”

“B. Identify and explain important documents, material artifacts and historic sites in world history. Europe (e.g. Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses, Wittenberg Castle Church)” Standard 8.4.6.

TEXAS

Sixth Grade: “The student [is to] explain the significance of religious holidays and observances such as Christmas and Easter, Ramadan, and Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah in selected contemporary societies.”

Because the Bible and Christianity have influenced so many subjects that are discussed in public schools, it is academically legitimate to teach about that influence.

YOUR STATE’S STANDARDS



To receive a summary of where the Bible as well as Judeo-Christian history, thought, and values are included in your state’s academic standards, visit www.gtbe.org. Enter your name and address, and a summary will be mailed to you.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BIBLE LITERACY

What do today's students need to know about the Bible to participate fully and equally in the courses taught in America's elite universities? The Bible Literacy Project surveyed thirty-nine English professors at thirty-four top universities to learn their assessment of how important Bible literacy is to college-level study of English and American literature.

"[I]t is disabling not to know the Bible in trying to come to terms with the discourse of the culture. The person who is educated is being educated to a purpose. The purpose is to allow them to be optimally free and enabled participants in cultural discussions. One cannot do that in the fullest sense, and even in a very full sense, without a knowledge of the Bible."

*English Professor Ralph Williams
University of Michigan*

"I think an educated person needs not only to know about the Bible but to know about the different ways the Bible has been read. It's difficult for me to think of an educated person who doesn't know it. I wouldn't think such a person is educated."

*Ina Lipkowitz, Lecturer in Literature
Massachusetts Institute of Technology*

What do incoming freshmen need to know? Almost without exception, the English professors saw knowledge of the Bible as a deeply important part of a good education. For example, all agreed with the statement "Regardless of a person's faith, an educated person needs to know about the Bible."

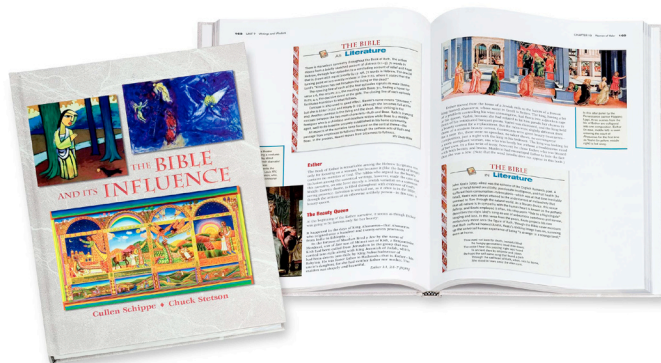
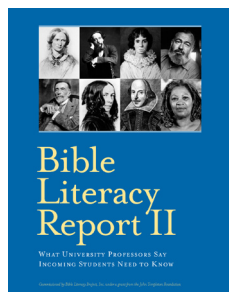
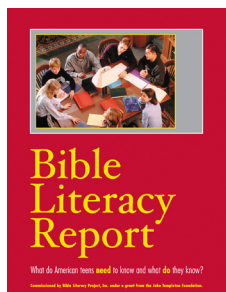
"The idea of Genesis to the New Jerusalem, these are really key ideas for how writers of my period think about history. So there's a lot that students benefit from if they have some access to this material coming into the class."

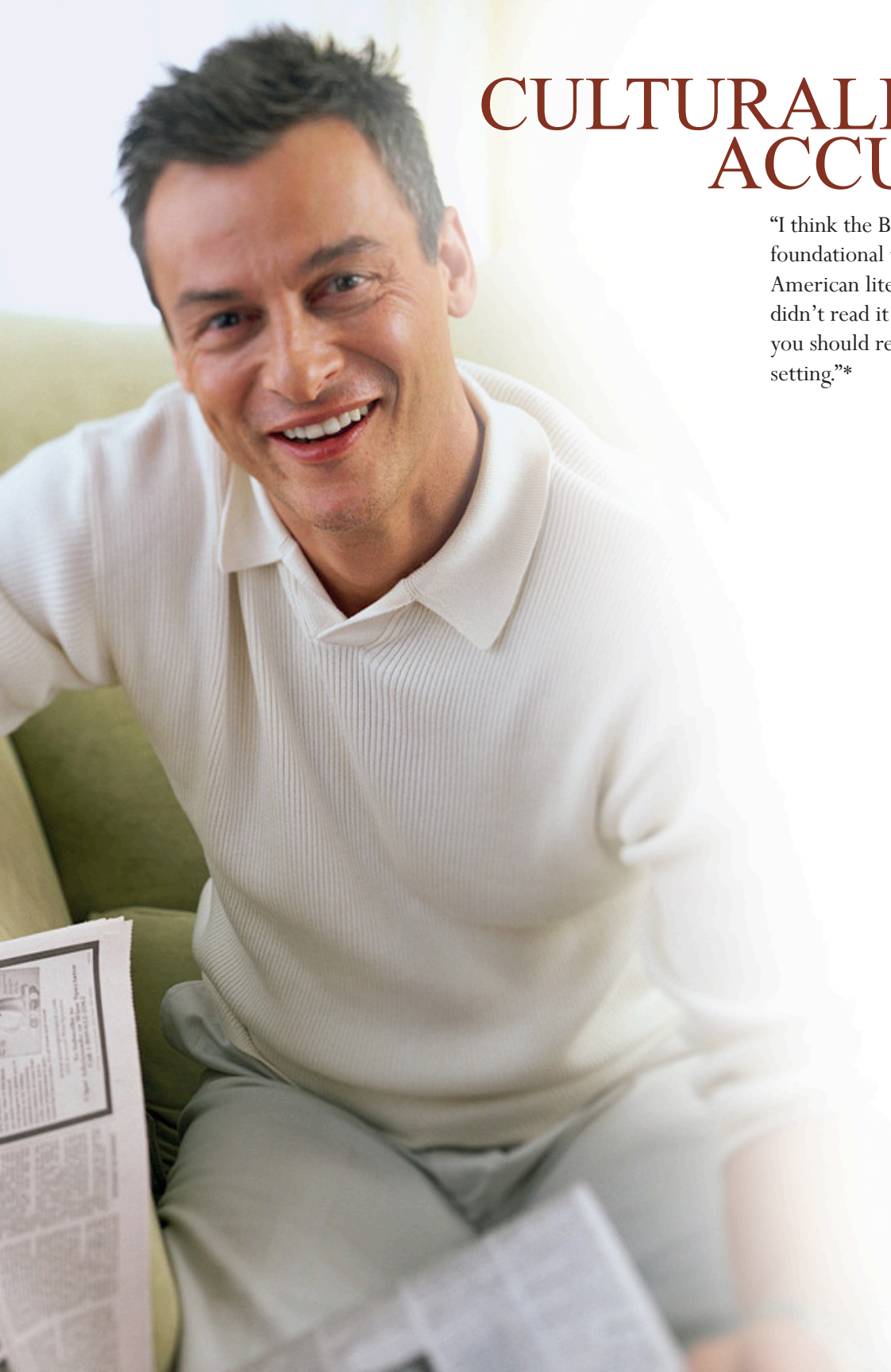
*Associate Professor of English
Steven Goldsmith
University of California at Berkeley*

* The quotations of university professors throughout this booklet are from research cited in *Bible Literacy Report II: What university professors say students need to know*, published by the Bible Literacy Project, June 2006.

THE BIBLE & ITS INFLUENCE

To download copies of these reports and information on *The Bible & Its Influence*, a textbook for an elective high school English course, visit www.BibleLiteracy.org.





CULTURALLY ACCURATE

"I think the Bible is one of the foundational texts of Western and American literature, and so I think if you didn't read it in some religious context, you should read it in some educational setting."*

*Professor Linda H. Peterson
Director of Graduate Studies
Yale University*

* See page seven.

Helping students understand the value and contribution that the Bible and Christianity has made to the world, to America, and to their lives is teaching accurately about the American culture. In discussing the importance of understanding the Bible, Professor Kevin Dunn, Dean of Academic Affairs for Arts and Sciences College at Tufts University states:

“If you are living here in this culture—no matter what culture you are from—you have a relationship to the book, whether you’ve read it or not, because it’s so central to a lot of our presuppositions. That literature aside, you know, it’s central, so just in terms of education, I don’t know if there’s any way around that. That’s part of a liberal education.”*

Precisely because of America’s ethnic and cultural diversity, it is more important than ever that students understand the influence of the Judeo-Christian tradition in America. “Because,” as California state school officials recognize, “many of our political institutions have their antecedents in religious beliefs.” For example, Thomas Jefferson wrote:

“And can the liberties of a nation be thought when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that they are of the gift of God?”

John Adams said:

“Our Constitution is made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”

They understood that our liberties come from God, and governments are established to secure—not grant—those freedoms. They stated this in our Declaration of Independence:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights. That among these rights are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; and that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men.”


Professor David Kastan, Chair of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University points out:

“Whatever one thinks, [the Bible] is arguably the foundational text, certainly of the West...We need to know more, and we need to know it better...this is something students really need to know just to do the work they want to do. It may not be a matter of faith for them, but simply an intellectual resource.”*

Today’s students are the beneficiaries of a long heritage of Christian influence. “Western Christianity,” writes Harvard professor Samuel Huntington, “is historically the single most important characteristic of Western civilization.” It has been the basis for, or has strongly influenced, such concepts as individualism, capitalism, the rule of law, constitutionalism, representative government, social pluralism, and equality before the law. Besides the historical influence on Western culture, Christianity continues to have a significant influence in American society. For example, eighty-five percent of Americans claim Christianity as their religious affiliation. During a typical week, 40-44 percent of Americans attend church. Biblical phrases permeate our language; the president takes his oath of office with his hand on a Bible; and our coins are inscribed with “In God We Trust.”

It is reasonable to assume that American schools should teach American students about American culture, and America’s culture is deeply rooted in the Bible and Christianity.

LEGALLY SUPPORTED

A portrait of Professor Robert Kiely, a man with short, dark, wavy hair, smiling and looking towards the camera. He is wearing a bright red button-down shirt. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

“The Bible has continued to be philosophically, ethically, religiously, politically influential in Western, Eastern, now African cultures, and so not to know it—whether one is a Jew or a Christian—seems to me not to understand world culture. It’s not just Western culture. And in terms of my own field, English and American literature is simply steeped in Biblical legends, morality, Biblical figures, Biblical metaphors, Biblical symbols, and so it would be like not learning a certain kind of grammar or vocabulary and trying to speak the language or read the language. Can’t do without it.”*

Professor Robert Kiely, Harvard University

* See page seven.

A mother from La Canada, California, wrote me: “My fourth-grader was told in art class (while designing art depicting the California history of the Spanish missions) that, ‘You may not draw a cross...because this is a public school and we are directed by our country’s separation-of-church-and-state policy.’”

Does such a policy exist? No. In fact, courts have stated just the opposite. In the Supreme Court case of *Abington School District v. Schempp*, Justice Clark, writing the majority opinion stated:

“...the state may not establish a ‘religion of secularism’ in the sense of affirmatively opposing or showing hostility to religion, thus ‘preferring those who believe in no religion over those who do believe.... it might well be said that one’s education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities.”

Also concurring with the majority opinion, Justice Goldberg wrote:

“...untutored devotion to the concept of neutrality can lead to the invocation or approval of results which partake not simply of that noninterference and noninvolvement with the religious which the Constitution commands, but of a brooding and pervasive devotion to the secular, and a passive or even active hostility to the religious. Such results are not only not compelled by the Constitution, but, it seems to me, are prohibited by it.”

It is common for public schools to forbid or discourage the singing of religious Christmas carols. However, in the Federal court case of *Florey v. Sioux Falls School District*, the court

upheld the district’s policy that stated:

“Music, art, literature and drama having religious themes or basis are permitted as part of the curriculum for school-sponsored activities and programs if presented in a prudent and objective manner and as a traditional part of the cultural and religious heritage of the particular holiday.”

The Court further agreed that it is permissible for teachers to use “religious symbols” such as a cross or nativity scene “as a teaching aid or resource provided such symbols are displayed as an example of the cultural and religious heritage of the holiday and are temporary in nature.”

While this may irritate some students or parents who think schools should be religion-free zones, the Court concluded:

“It would be literally impossible to develop a public school curriculum that did not in some way affect the religious or nonreligious sensibilities of some of the students or their parents.”

Students can learn all about the Bible’s impact on their lives; they can be taught that the Judeo-Christian tradition is a living and dynamic part of the American culture when it can be presented without an appeal for belief.

HOLIDAYS AT SCHOOL



To help your child’s teacher understand what the law allows in recognizing the religious aspects of Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter, order the series of Holiday Restoration booklets. www.gtbe.org/store



TEACHING ABOUT OR INSTRUCTION IN?

What is the distinction between teaching about religion and instruction in, or the teaching of, religion? The California Department of Education offers this distinction that is instructive for educators everywhere:

“To teach about religion is not to instruct in religion. Teaching about religion embraces the study of various religions; appreciation of the nature and variety of religious experience historically and currently; information on past and present sources, views, and behavior of religious persons or groups; and the influence of religion on cultures and civilizations. Instruction in religion, by contrast, is to seek acceptance of and commitment to a particular religion, including a non-religion, such as secularism.”

Teaching About Religion

Study of
Appreciation of
Information on
Influence of

Instruction In Religion

Seeking acceptance of
Seeking commitment to

Lest someone think that teaching about religion requires neutrality bordering on indifference, the state officials also write that to learn about religion is “to recognize the immense importance of religion to the American heritage.”

Lessons about Judeo-Christian history, thought, and values can—and should—be taught with as much enthusiasm as any other subject, but it is important for Christian public school educators to refrain from evangelizing in the classroom. Appeals for students to make faith commitments are not permitted.

I once had a teacher tell me, “If I can’t tell my students that they need to make a decision for Christ, well, then I should get out of teaching and become a missionary.” He’s right. If he can’t stay within legal boundaries, he should leave the profession. However, I urged him to channel his enthusiasm into giving students an academic appreciation for the values and contributions of Christianity. To be fired for stepping over legal boundaries would not only mute his voice, it would be a poor example to the school administrators, and create a chilling effect academically for other teachers in his district.

We must have the integrity to honor the trust that parents give us when we teach their children. If Christian public school teachers try to use their classrooms for evangelistic opportunities, others may conclude that Christians, in general, cannot be trusted.

Here’s a rule of thumb: When there is an academic reason for teaching students about some aspect of Judeo-Christian history, thought, or values (and there are ample opportunities to do so), and it can be done without an admonition to devotion or acceptance, it is permissible.

SPECTRUM OF VIEWS

There are three ways that people can look at the issue of religion and public schools. They are reflected in the boxes below.

Evangelization

“My faith compels me to try to convince others to adopt my beliefs.”

In class it leads to...

Teachers violating the law

Is allowed...

In student free speech
In student homework
In after-school clubs
In conversations between willing adults

Integration

“An educated person needs to have an academic appreciation for Judeo-Christian history, thought, and values.”

In class it leads to...

Freedom of expression
Well-rounded education
Cultural preservation

Is allowed...

In the classroom
In music, art, and drama

Separation

“Separation of Church and state requires us to shield our schools from religion.”

In class it leads to...

Censorship
Civil liberties violations
Incomplete education

Is allowed...

In the privacy of one’s own home

STUDENTS' RELIGIOUS LIBERTIES



The freedom of speech can take different forms. It includes what students say to other people as well as their freedom to speak to God in prayer; it includes what they write in school assignments or the words they give to a friend either by speaking or in writing. The information

below comes from the U.S. Department of Education's document *Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools* (February 7, 2003).

1 Students can pray, read their Bible or other religious books, and talk about their faith at school during school hours.

Here's what the U.S. Department of Education (U.S.D.O.E.) says:

Students may pray when not engaged in school activities or instruction, subject to the same rules designed to prevent material disruption of the educational program that are applied to other privately initiated expressive activities. Among other things, students may read their Bibles or other scriptures, say grace before meals, and pray or study religious materials with fellow students during recess, the lunch hour, or other non-instructional time to the same extent that they may engage in nonreligious activities. While school authorities may impose rules of order and pedagogical restrictions on student activities, they may not discriminate against student prayer or religious speech in applying such rules and restrictions.

2 Students can express their faith in their class work and homework.

Here's what the U.S.D.O.E. says:

Students may express their beliefs about religion in homework, artwork, and other written and oral assignments free from discrimination based on the religious content of their submissions. Such home and classroom work should be judged by ordinary academic standards of substance and relevance and against other legitimate pedagogical concerns identified by the school. Thus, if a teacher's assignment involves writing a poem, the work of a student who submits a poem in the form of a prayer (for example, a psalm) should be judged on the basis of academic standards (such as literary quality) and neither penalized nor rewarded on account of its religious content.

3 Students may be able to go off campus to have a Bible study during school hours.

Here's what the U.S.D.O.E. says:

It has long been established that schools have the discretion to dismiss students to off-premises religious instruction, provided that schools do not encourage or discourage participation in such instruction or penalize students for attending or not attending. Similarly, schools may excuse students from class to remove a significant burden on their religious exercise, where doing so would not impose material burdens on other students. For example, it would be lawful for schools to excuse Muslim students briefly from class to enable them to fulfill their religious obligations to pray during Ramadan.

4 Students can express their faith at a school event.

Here's what the U.S.D.O.E. says:

Student speakers at student assemblies and extracurricular activities such as sporting events may not be selected on a basis that either favors or disfavors religious speech.

Where student speakers are selected on the basis of genuinely neutral, evenhanded criteria and retain primary control over the content of their expression, that expression is not attributable to the school and therefore may not be restricted because of its religious (or anti-religious) content.

By contrast, where school officials determine or substantially control the content of what is expressed, such speech is attributable to the school and may not include prayer or other specifically religious (or anti-religious) content.

To avoid any mistaken perception that a school endorses student speech that is not in fact attributable to the school, school officials may make appropriate, neutral disclaimers to clarify that such speech (whether religious or non-religious) is the speaker's and not the school's.

5 Students can express their faith at their graduation ceremony.

Here's what the U.S.D.O.E. says:

School officials may not mandate or organize prayer at graduation or select speakers for such events in a manner that favors religious speech such as prayer.

Where students or other private graduation speakers are selected on the basis of genuinely neutral, evenhanded criteria and retain primary control over the content of their expression, however, that expression is not attributable to the school and therefore may not be restricted because of its religious (or anti-religious) content.

To avoid any mistaken perception that a school endorses student or other private speech that is not in fact attributable to the school, school officials may make appropriate, neutral disclaimers to clarify that such speech (whether religious or nonreligious) is the speaker's and not the school's.

6 Students can organize prayer groups and religious clubs and announce their meetings.

Here's what the U.S.D.O.E. says:

Students may organize prayer groups, religious clubs, and "see you at the pole" gatherings before school to the same extent that students are permitted to organize other non-curricular student activities groups. Such groups must be given the same access to school facilities for assembling as is given to other non-curricular groups, without discrimination because of the religious content of their expression. School authorities possess substantial discretion concerning whether to permit the use of school media for student advertising or announcements regarding non-curricular activities. However, where student groups that meet for nonreligious activities are permitted to advertise or announce their meetings—for example, by advertising in a student newspaper, making announcements on a student activities bulletin board or public address system, or handing out leaflets—school authorities may not discriminate against groups who meet to pray. School authorities may disclaim sponsorship of non-curricular groups and events, provided they administer such disclaimers in a manner that neither favors nor disfavors groups that meet to engage in prayer or religious speech.

CHARACTER EDUCATION & RELIGION

Inviting students to live by the moral dictates of their faith at school

A 2000 Gallup poll revealed that 48 percent of teens attend religious services weekly. Without endorsing or establishing religion, teachers can invite students to live out their faith while at school. Every teacher should convey to their students at the beginning of the school year that his or her classroom is a safe place for students to express their religious beliefs.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

IN THE CLASSROOM

CIVICS - Inform students of their freedom of religious expression at school; Discuss the meaning of each phrase of the Pledge of Allegiance; As a school, recognize Religious Freedom Day (January 16). For more information visit www.ReligiousFreedomDay.com.

CULTURE - Explain the religious aspects of Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter.

HISTORY - Read and discuss the Rev. Martin Luther Kings' "I have a Dream" speech as well as his "Letter from a Birmingham Jail;" Show a video about the life of Jesus; Review your state's academic standards regarding teaching about the Bible or Judeo-Christian history, thought, and values.

ENGLISH - Acquaint students with familiar phrases used today that originated from the Bible; Explain biblical allusions in various literary works read in class; Request that an elective course using the textbook *The Bible and Its Influence* be offered at your high school (see www.BibleLiteracy.org).

SCIENCE - Help students understand that science is a particular way of looking at the physical world and has definite limitations.

HEALTH - Acknowledge the religious values that many students' families have on dating, marriage, and family.

OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

CLUBS - Establish after-school clubs on campus for students such as Good News Clubs (www.cefonline.com).

Begin a student-led Bible club during the school day utilizing Equal Access laws.

PRAYER GROUPS - Start or join a Moms in Touch, International (MITI) prayer group. (www.momsintouch.org); Start or join a prayer group for teachers at your school. (www.prayingeducator.org.)

MENTOR PROGRAMS - Visit www.mentoryouth.com to learn how to become a mentor to teens, and visit www.KidsHope.org for mentoring children.

RELEASED-TIME PROGRAMS - Most states allow public schools the option to release students during school hours for religious education without being counted absent. For the laws in your state, visit www.schoolministries.org.



BLESSING SCHOOLS IN WORD & DEED

Imagine the positive impact that can happen if you and your friends at church reach out to a nearby school. Occasional simple acts of kindness can be a great blessing to people. For example, the men's ministry at your church could approach a school principal about helping with a Saturday clean-up project; or the women's ministry could simply bake cookies to place in the teachers' lounge. Does your church have a parking lot that the school next door could use during the school's open house? What if you offered to supply childcare? Get creative. Keep it simple, and watch what can happen as you express God's love to others.

BECOMING A CAMPUS PARTNER

For many years, our public schools have been seen as battlefields. However, nothing much grows on a battlefield. Instead, we can look at our schools as gardens to cultivate. Schools are enriched when Christians appropriately express their faith in word and deed. As a Christian in a public school, you are not alone! The majority of Christians with school-aged children send them to public schools. I believe there is a Christian presence in every classroom in America. *That includes your school!*

There are also many teachers, parents, school officials, and students who—though they may not attend church regularly—would support religious freedom on campus and lessons on the ways the Bible and Christianity have contributed to the world. For example, a Gallup poll found in 2001 that 62 percent of Americans think religion has “too little of a presence in public schools,” and nearly half (47%) of those who describe themselves as “liberal” agree with that view.

THE FIVE STEPS OF F.A.I.T.H.

Allow Gateways to partner with you in helping others at your school have the confidence to teach students about Judeo-Christian history and values. Gateways Campus Partners use five steps to bring a positive influence to their schools. I call them the five steps of F.A.I.T.H.



F – FOCUS ON THOSE AROUND YOU.

As the Good Samaritan attended to the man in his path, so you should focus on those God has put in your path at school this year. Begin to see the people in your path as divinely appointed opportunities. Create a list of teachers, parents, administrators, and school staff that you have contact with regularly. Put the list in a place where you will see it often, such as on your refrigerator, in your Bible, or in your daily planner.

A – ASK GOD TO OPEN DOORS.

In the book of Acts, God used the Apostles to influence 3,000 people in one day! In Acts 1:14 we find that the Apostles were people of prayer. Campus Partners pray regularly for the people God has placed in their paths. Ask the Lord for opportunities to cultivate relationships and plant seeds of love and truth.

Opportunities can be as simple as sending a “get well” card to the principal who is sick, or passing along information on religious liberty at school, or encouraging a teacher to teach about the birth of Jesus.

I – INVEST IN PREPARATION.

Peter’s sermon in Acts 2 reveals that he was prepared. He quotes heavily from the Old Testament. He had done his homework! To be an effective Christian influence you must be prepared with answers. Visit the website of Gateways to Better Education at www.gtbe.org. We have an ever-expanding list of helpful articles. At the website, you can also sign up to receive an e-mail update featuring ideas you can use at school.

T – TAKE A STEP OF FAITH WITH GOD.

You’ve been praying for those on your list, you’ve been preparing, as God opens a door, take a step of faith with Him. God is at work in your school. In fact, He placed you right where you are for a reason! Are you watching for opportunities? In all likelihood, there is at least one Christian involved in every classroom in your school (the teacher or a parent). Imagine the positive impact of dozens of Christians on your campus participating in God’s activity!

H – HELP SOMEONE MOVE FROM FEAR TO FREEDOM.

The biggest challenge we face is misinformation and fear. You can help others gain the confidence they need to include teaching about the influence of the Bible and Christianity in their classroom. You could be God’s instrument to restore Christmas to the school. You could be the person God is wanting to use to protect and promote religious freedom for all the students at the school.

Each year God brings another Christian family into the life of your child’s teacher. As you and your child enter a new school year, you are filling the vacancy left by another Christian parent. Who knows how God used parents before you? Don’t miss out on how God wants to use you this year.

Our special thanks to:



www.gtbe.org (800) 929-1163