



April 23, 2008

Chairman Don McLeroy
State Board of Education
9277 Brookwater Circle
College Station, TX 77845

Dear Chairman McLeroy,

We would like to express our support for the State Board of Education's decision taken at its March 27, 2008 meeting to approve the proposed rule related to the teaching of an elective course on academic study of the Bible.

It is particularly pleasing that the Board is supportive of allowing the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Special Topics in Social Studies and the TEKS for Independent Study in English to be used to teach elective courses on the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and the New Testament.

We believe that adopting this approach will allow Texas schools to begin offering courses on the Bible in the 2009-10 school year, as required by the legislation that established the Bible elective course (House Bill 1287, 80R).

Opponents of the proposed rule apparently believe that the guidance provided must be more specific. In his letter to the State Board of Education, Representative Scott Hochberg noted that "these proposed TEKS have such little specificity that ANY course content, no matter how trivial, could meet the requirements of the proposed rule."

However, the proposed rule clearly states the following:

- (b) The purpose of a course under this section is to:
 - (1) teach students knowledge of biblical content, characters, poetry, and narratives that are prerequisites to understanding contemporary society and culture, including literature, art, music, mores, oratory, and public policy; and
 - (2) familiarize students with, as applicable:
 - (A) the contents of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament;
 - (B) the history of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament;

- (C) the literary style and structure of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament; and
- (D) the influence of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament on law, history, government, literature, art, music, customs, morals, values, and culture.¹

This proposed rule, we believe, is specific to the teaching of the Bible and provides sufficient guidance for school districts and teachers on how the Bible elective should be administered. It is also clear that the proposed rule provides for neutral, balanced teaching of the Bible elective course:

(c) A course offered under this section shall follow applicable law and all federal and state guidelines in maintaining religious neutrality and accommodating the diverse religious views, traditions, and perspectives of students in their school district. A course under this section shall not endorse, favor, or promote, or disfavor or show hostility toward, any particular religion or nonreligious faith or religious perspective.²

Even the more generalized TEKS for Special Topics in Social Studies outlines the skills that students should attain that would apply to a Bible elective course:

§113.38 (c) (1) ...The student is expected to...(c) identify points of view from the historic context surrounding an event and the frame of reference that influenced the participants.³

It is clear that the proposed rule pertaining to teaching of the Bible elective course established by HB 1287 is appropriate and we therefore encourage the Board to adopt the rule as it is currently written.

Sincerely,



Rep. Wayne Christian
Center



Rep. Linda Harper-Brown
Irving

¹ Text of Proposed New 19 TAC, Chapter 74 Curriculum Requirements, Subchapter C: Other Provisions.
² Text of Proposed New 19 TAC, Chapter 74 Curriculum Requirements, Subchapter C: Other Provisions.
³ Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, Part II.



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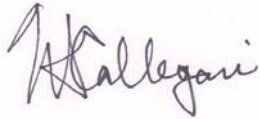
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