

1 AN ACT relating to Bible literacy courses in the public schools and declaring an
2 emergency.

3 ***Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky:***

4 ➔Section 1. KRS 158.197 is amended to read as follows:

- 5 (1) A school-based decision making council under administrative regulations of the
6 Kentucky Board of Education may offer students in grade seven (7)~~nine (9)~~ or
7 above:
- 8 (a) An elective social studies or language arts course on the Hebrew Scriptures,
9 Old Testament of the Bible;
- 10 (b) An elective social studies or language arts course on the New Testament of
11 the Bible; or
- 12 (c) An elective social studies or language arts course on the Hebrew Scriptures
13 and the New Testament of the Bible.
- 14 (2) The purpose of a course under this section is to:
- 15 (a) Teach students knowledge of biblical content, characters, poetry, and
16 narratives that are prerequisites to understanding contemporary society and
17 culture, including literature, art, music, mores, oratory, and public policy; and
- 18 (b) Familiarize students with, as applicable:
- 19 1. The contents of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament;
- 20 2. The history of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament;
- 21 3. The literary style and structure of the Hebrew Scriptures or New
22 Testament; and
- 23 4. The influence of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament on law,
24 history, government, literature, art, music, customs, morals, values, and
25 culture.
- 26 (3) A student shall not be required to use a specific translation as the sole text of the
27 Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament and may use as the basic textbook a different

1 translation of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament from that chosen by the
2 school council.

3 (4) A course offered under this section shall follow applicable law and all federal and
4 state guidelines in maintaining religious neutrality and accommodating the diverse
5 religious views, traditions, and perspectives of students in the school. A course
6 under this section shall not endorse, favor, or promote, or disfavor or show hostility
7 toward, any particular religion or nonreligious faith or religious perspective. A
8 school-based decision making council, in complying with this section, shall not
9 violate any provision of the United States Constitution or federal law, the Kentucky
10 Constitution or any state law, or any administrative regulations of the United States
11 Department of Education or the Kentucky Department of Education.

12 (5) Any school council organized pursuant to KRS 160.345 or, if none exists, the
13 principal, may authorize the display of historic artifacts, monuments, symbols, and
14 texts, including but not limited to religious materials, in conjunction with a course
15 of study that includes an elective course in history, civilization, ethics, comparative
16 religion, literature, or other subject area that uses such artifacts, monuments,
17 symbols, and texts as instructional material if the display is:

18 (a) Appropriate to the overall educational purpose of the course; and

19 (b) Consistent with the requirements of KRS 42.705.

20 ➔Section 2. KRS 156.162 is amended to read as follows:

21 (1) Pursuant to KRS 156.160, the Kentucky Board of Education shall promulgate
22 administrative regulations to establish the courses of study for the different grades.
23 The administrative regulation that sets forth the required and elective courses for
24 the schools shall include:

25 (a) An elective social studies or language arts course on the Hebrew Scriptures,
26 Old Testament of the Bible;

27 (b) An elective social studies or language arts course on the New Testament of

1 the Bible; or

2 (c) An elective social studies or language arts course on the Hebrew Scriptures
3 and the New Testament of the Bible.

4 (2) The purpose of a course under this section is to:

5 (a) Teach students knowledge of biblical content, characters, poetry, and
6 narratives that are prerequisites to understanding contemporary society and
7 culture, including literature, art, music, mores, oratory, and public policy; and

8 (b) Familiarize students with, as applicable:

9 1. The contents of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament;

10 2. The history of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament;

11 3. The literary style and structure of the Hebrew Scriptures or New
12 Testament; and

13 4. The influence of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament on law,
14 history, government, literature, art, music, customs, morals, values, and
15 culture.

16 (3) A student shall not be required to use a specific translation as the sole text of the
17 Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament and may use as the basic textbook a different
18 translation of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament from that chosen by the
19 school council.

20 (4) The Kentucky Department of Education shall include the course standards in the
21 program of studies for Kentucky schools, including the teacher qualifications and
22 required professional development.

23 (5) **By July 1, 2024, the Department of Education shall develop guidelines that**
24 **provide direction to local schools in developing and implementing the relevant**
25 **academic standards for instruction on the Hebrew Scriptures or the New**
26 **Testament of the Bible.**

27 (6) A course offered under this section shall follow applicable law and all federal and

1 state guidelines in maintaining religious neutrality and accommodating the diverse
2 religious views, traditions, and perspectives of students in the school. A course
3 under this section shall not endorse, favor, or promote, or disfavor or show hostility
4 toward, any particular religion or nonreligious faith or religious perspective. The
5 Kentucky Board of Education, in complying with this section, shall not violate any
6 provision of the United States Constitution or federal law, the Kentucky
7 Constitution or any state law, or any administrative regulations of the United States
8 Department of Education or the Kentucky Department of Education.

9 ➔Section 3. Whereas expanding opportunities in public education for students to
10 learn about important historical texts is of vital importance to the future of the
11 Commonwealth and its families, an emergency is declared to exist, and this Act takes
12 effect upon its passage and approval by the Governor or upon its otherwise becoming a
13 law.