

Williamson County Religious Liberty & Protection Resolution

WHEREAS, Tennessee students must acquire essential knowledge in history and social sciences, as well as develop critical thinking to study the past and its relationship to the present;

WHEREAS, Tennessee Commissioner of Education Candice McQueen acknowledges that the State has delegated all textbooks and supplemental materials used to teach standards to Tennessee children are determined at the local level;

WHEREAS, Williamson County parents and taxpayers have expressed concerns that some social studies textbooks and supplemental materials in use in Tennessee Classrooms contain a pro-Islamic/anti-Judeo-Christian bias.

WHEREAS, statewide assessments are not reviewable by teachers, parents and taxpayers, or school boards to confirm that no religion is being favored over another.

Therefore, we the Williamson County School Board encourage the state to develop social studies standards that reflect Tennessee's commitment to public education. We know that standards serve as the basis for *statewide assessments, curriculum frameworks, and instructional materials*, but methods of instructional delivery must remain the responsibility of local educators.

- ***The State should Revise & Clarify Our Social Studies Standards.*** We believe these standards should emphasize the historical narrative, highlight the roles of significant individuals throughout history, and convey the rights and obligations of citizenship, as required by T.C.A Section 49-6-1208. In that spirit the standards should proceed chronologically and call attention to the story of America as a noble experiment in a constitutional republic. Standards should recognize that America's ongoing struggle to realize the ideals of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution is the struggle to maintain our beautifully complex national heritage of *e pluribus unum*. Our standards should emphasize Western civilizations as the source of American and Tennessee political institutions, laws, and ideology. We understand and expect students to analyze the changing political relationships within, and among, other countries and regions of the world, both throughout history and within the context of contemporary global interdependence. Therefore, we encourage the state to revise and clarify our social studies curriculum standards to be more aligned with Tennessee values. In regards to treatment of the world's major religions this must be done with respect, without inequalities of coverage of one religion over others, except to the extent necessary to accurately reflect the Judeo-Christian heritage expressed by our Founding Fathers. We encourage the state to utilize Tennessee classroom educators to assist in developing standards. We encourage districts to remain in control of curriculum decisions. Districts know their students and community best, curriculum and instruction are local decisions best made by the district, schools, and teachers with input from parents.
- ***Textbooks or Supplementary Instructional Materials in use in Tennessee Classrooms should be balanced and equitable.*** Districts should reject the selection and purchase of any social studies textbook that inhibits “the basic democratic values of our state and national heritage” or that do not accurately portray the history of world religions.

- **Supplemental Instructional Material should also be unbiased.** We encourage the use of biographies, original documents, diaries, letters, legends, speeches, and other narrative artifacts from our past to encourage and foster students' understanding of historical events by revealing the ideas, values, fears, and dreams of the people associated with them. We urge the State to reinforce the notion that methods of instructional delivery remain the responsibility of local educators. We support the use of material found in archives, museums, historical sites, and libraries across Tennessee. Original materials are indispensable resources. We hope the curriculum standards/frameworks will encourage students to take advantage of these repositories and encourage our students' direct contact with history. No material should be used by our district if it is provided by a terrorist organization, or individuals, groups or countries that support terrorism. No material should be used if its authors, contributors, or publishers have proven links to terrorists or terrorist organizations. No material should be used if it actively supports terrorists or groups and nations that support, foster, aid, or encourage terrorism. Furthermore, parents are entitled to review supplementary instructional materials, prior to use for instructional purposes, particularly those of religious and sensitive nature to verify the theological truthfulness of any religion not being favored over another.
- **Parental Accountability & Input.** Williamson County Schools rely on public funding and are accountable to the public for how they spend taxpayer funds. Because our schools belong to the community and because the students are the primary concern, textbooks and instructional material should be made available to parents and taxpayers. Religious instruction is the primary responsibility of parents.
- **Statewide Assessment.** No student shall ever be required as a qualification for graduation or statewide assessment to be tested on their knowledge of any religion. Students should not be required to adhere to or accept any religion or belief to attend any public school, nor should they be tested by end of course exam or statewide assessment on religion for any mandatory social studies course or in order to graduate.

RESOLVED, that the Williamson County School Board will select textbooks that promote the basic democratic values of our state and national heritage, our republican form of government, and the principles of federalism. We will oppose the selection of textbooks that contain historical inaccuracies or omissions of world religions which could lead to religious bias.

RESOLVED, Williamson County Schools will not discipline or discourage Teachers, Principals and School Personnel “for reporting inaccuracies or errors or potentially inflammatory material in textbooks or other educational materials to supervisors, elected officials, or parents or guardians; prohibits requiring a teacher or other educator to agree not to report inaccuracies or errors or potentially inflammatory material in textbooks or other educational materials, as a condition of employment” as in accordance with Tennessee Law, Public Chapter 165 enacted on July 1, 2015.

RESOLVED, Williamson County Schools will include on their website; a copy of social studies state standards, a summary of the basic content of the instruction, a statement of a parent's right to review the materials, and information describing a parent's opportunity to participate in the review of social studies textbooks and supplemental materials. Parents may also request to remove their child from the instruction without

retribution or penalty and the process for doing so will also be found on the Williamson County Schools website and/or made available upon parental request.

RESOLVED, Statewide Assessments, or end of course exams, often drive curriculum decisions. Therefore, Statewide Assessment and end of the course exams should be reviewed by teachers, parents and taxpayers, or school boards prior to administration of exam to confirm students are not being tested on their knowledge of any religion.

WITNESS our signatures this 26th day of October, two thousand fifteen, in Franklin, Williamson County, Tennessee.

Signature
Chairman Gary Anderson

Signature
Mr Kenneth Peterson

Signature
Mr Dan Cash

Signature
Mr PJ Mezera

Signature
Mrs Anne McGraw

Signature
Mr Jay Galbreath

Signature
Mr Robert Hullett

Signature
Mrs Candy Emerson

Signature
Mr Rick Wimberly

Signature
Dr Beth Burgos

Signature
Mr Mark Gregory

Signature
Mrs Susan Curlee