

Bibles Back in Schools? Not Yet, But It's a Start

There is a court ruling that not many teachers or school officials have even remotely heard of, and while it won't overturn the Supreme Court's ruling in 1962 that school-sponsored prayer in public schools violated the establishment clause of the First Amendment, it will give Christian parents and Christian students hope for the future.

It's called Released Time Religious Education, where the United States public school system is required to set aside, during school hours—typically an hour a day—for students to receive off-campus private education.

Some more good news was reported recently by . The state of Texas took a big step forward in promoting the values and beliefs of the Christian faith by advancing a bill that requires the display of the Ten Commandments in public school classrooms.

The bill, introduced by Texas State Representative Dan Flynn (R), has garnered support from many Christian leaders and educators who see the importance of instilling moral values and ethics in the next generation.

In 1952, a New York released time program was challenged in the United States Supreme Court with the case of *Zorach v. Clauson*. The Supreme Court upheld the school's cooperation with the program so long as the Released Time classes occurred off school grounds, with parental permission and without public funding.

The Court also held that the program did not violate the U.S. Constitution because it did not amount to an "establishment of religion."

The program is done with parent approval, and it recognizes and reinforces the constitutionally protected right of parents to direct the religious education of their children.

In 1914, Dr. William Wirt, an educator and superintendent in the Gary, Indiana school district, established the first "released time" program, in which 619 students participated in off-campus religious education. says that Dr. Wirt "believed that church, home, playground, library and school were all components in a child's education," and Released Time grew and flourished.

Joel Penton, an author and founder of LifeWise Academy in Ohio, recently wrote a book that took an in-depth look into both why religious education was removed from America's public schools and how he and his group would use Released Time to help further the preaching of the gospel for students.

In an interview with the Christian Post, Penton said: "I talk to people every single day that are in the know and never heard of this. That's how I was. The truth is, for most school officials, this is news for them as well, meaning they have never heard of Released Time."

In some states, the program has yielded tremendous benefits. In 2012, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit upheld a South Carolina law that allowed schools to award academic credit to high school students who participated in the Released Time programs. That same year, the Court of Appeals for the 4th Circuit affirmed the U.S. District Court's ruling in Moss vs. Spartanburg, upholding a school district's policy of award credit for the program to high school students.

Since the Moss decision, several other states have allowed academic credit for Released Time program participation, including Alabama, Tennessee, Utah and Ohio. estimates that there are ore than 500 Released Time programs in operation today involving hundreds of thousands of students from

elementary to high school.

Penton says this future-changing movement is growing faster than anyone could have imagined. You can learn exactly how your community can get started today at . {eo}

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