

CHAPTER 187

(HB 128)

AN ACT relating to Bible literacy courses in the public schools.

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

➔SECTION 1. A NEW SECTION OF KRS CHAPTER 156 IS CREATED TO READ AS FOLLOWS:

- (1) *Pursuant to KRS 156.160, the Kentucky Board of Education shall promulgate administrative regulations to establish the courses of study for the different grades. The administrative regulation that sets forth the required and elective courses for the schools shall include:*
 - (a) *An elective social studies course on the Hebrew Scriptures, Old Testament of the Bible;*
 - (b) *An elective social studies course on the New Testament of the Bible; or*
 - (c) *An elective social studies course on the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament of the Bible.*
- (2) *The purpose of a course under this section is to:*
 - (a) *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*
 - (b) *Familiarize students with, as applicable:*
 1. *The contents of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament;*
 2. *The history of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament;*
 3. *The literary style and structure of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament; and*
 4. *The influence of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament on law, history, government, literature, art, music, customs, morals, values, and culture.*
- (3) *A student shall not be required to use a specific translation as the sole text of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament and may use as the basic textbook a different translation of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament from that chosen by the school council.*
- (4) *The Kentucky Department of Education shall include the course standards in the program of studies for Kentucky schools, including the teacher qualifications and required professional development.*
- (5) *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 the school. 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. The Kentucky Board of Education, in complying with this section, shall not violate any provision of the United States Constitution or federal law, the Kentucky Constitution or any state law, or any administrative regulations of the United States Department of Education or the Kentucky Department of Education.*

➔Section 2. KRS 158.197 is amended to read as follows:

- (1) *A school-based decision making council under administrative regulations of the Kentucky Board of Education may offer students in grade nine (9) or above:*
 - (a) *An elective social studies course on the Hebrew Scriptures, Old Testament of the Bible;*
 - (b) *An elective social studies course on the New Testament of the Bible; or*
 - (c) *An elective social studies course on the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament of the Bible.*
- (2) *The purpose of a course under this section is to:*
 - (a) *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*

- (b) *Familiarize students with, as applicable:*
1. *The contents of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament;*
 2. *The history of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament;*
 3. *The literary style and structure of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament; and*
 4. *The influence of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament on law, history, government, literature, art, music, customs, morals, values, and culture.*
- (3) *A student shall not be required to use a specific translation as the sole text of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament and may use as the basic textbook a different translation of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament from that chosen by the school council.*
- (4) *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 the school. 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. A school-based decision making council, in complying with this section, shall not violate any provision of the United States Constitution or federal law, the Kentucky Constitution or any state law, or any administrative regulations of the United States Department of Education or the Kentucky Department of Education.*
- (5) Any school council organized pursuant to KRS 160.345 or, if none exists, the *principal*~~school's governing body~~, may authorize the display of historic artifacts, monuments, symbols, and texts, including but not limited to religious materials, in conjunction with a course of study that includes an elective course in history, civilization, ethics, comparative religion, literature, or other subject area that uses such artifacts, monuments, symbols, and texts as instructional material if the display is:
- (a)~~(1)~~ Appropriate to the overall educational purpose of the course; and
 - (b)~~(2)~~ Consistent with the requirements of KRS 42.705.

Signed by Governor April 11, 2017.