



CONGRESSIONAL  
PRAYER CAUCUS  
FOUNDATION

# The Bible's Place in Public Schools

## TOOLKIT



## It Really Is Up to You

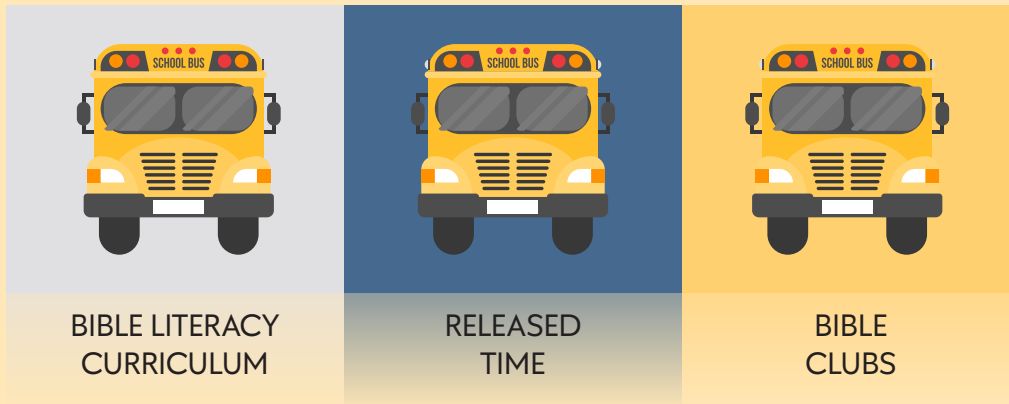
This toolkit is entitled, "The Bible's Place in Public Schools." This toolkit was not designed for editorial board writers, for television pundits, or for large boardrooms. It was designed for you.

Perhaps, it could have been entitled, "What is the Bible's Place in Public Schools?" Yet, no toolkit could answer that question. Only you can. The answer to this question will be determined for your school in large measure based on your commitment and perseverance.

This toolkit brings together the years of experience and expertise of many individuals and organizations who want to offer their talents to help you answer that question.

Maybe the real question is, "What are you willing to do to restore the Bible's place in public schools?" If you are willing to ask that question, let's now begin to find the answers.

# Three Vehicles



The book we call the Bible comes in a variety of shapes, sizes, colors, editions, and even translations. Which of these is best is certainly open to discussion and differences of opinion.

What is not open for debate is the fact that more copies of this book have been sold and more copies have been read than any other book on this planet.

What is not open for debate is the fact that the current government of the United States was shaped more by ideas and principles found in this book than any other book.

With statistics this overwhelming, how can anyone legitimately claim this book has no place in your public school? The reality is – they can not. This toolkit has been prepared to help you understand exactly what that place might be, and then assist you in navigating it back to its rightful place.

To begin this journey, it is perhaps best to picture three different and distinct vehicles that can take you where you want to go. Each of these vehicles have different laws, rules, and regulations that must be followed. While you can choose any of the three vehicles, real dangers can arise when you try to travel in two or more vehicles at the same time. Attempting to do this can not only injure your chances of getting the Bible to a proper place in your public school, but it can also negatively impact the attempts of others.

The good news is that there are many individuals and organizations with a great deal of expertise to assist you along the way. Many of them are listed in this toolkit and they stand ready, willing, and able to help you in your journey.



## Three Vehicles

To help you get in the right vehicle, it would be best to start with the following three questions:

### Question One:

Do you want the Bible to be studied for purely academic reasons, for school credit, with no faith component added? If so, you need to move now to **Vehicle One**.

### Question Two:

Do you want the Bible to be studied with a faith component, during school hours, but off school property – perhaps for school credit? If so, you need to move now to **Vehicle Two**.

### Question Three:

Do you want the Bible to be studied outside of normal school hours, but on school property, for no school credit, with a faith component? If so, you need to move now to **Vehicle Three**.





## VEHICLE ONE

# Bible Literacy Curriculum (No Faith Component)

# 1

These programs are part of a school's curriculum. They are taught on school property, during school hours, for school credit, just like any other academic course. However, they must be academic only! There can be no attempt to introduce a faith component, the existence or non-existence of a deity, the fact that the Bible was inspired by God, or any attempt to convert a student to any religion. The courts refer to these activities as proselytizing, and they are strictly prohibited. To do so—or even have the intent to do so—can jeopardize the entire program.

### Bible Literacy Elective Classes

- A Bible elective class can be offered in the same manner that any other course is offered as part of the school's curriculum. This decision is made no different than any other elective course.
- There are currently eight states that **mandate** that Bible courses be available in public schools: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas.
- Additionally, three states have passed legislation to **encourage** Bible courses in public school: Missouri, South Carolina, and South Dakota.
- However, a Bible elective course can be offered in any school district **if adopted like any other elective course in the school's curriculum.**

#### States that MANDATE Bible elective courses

- Alabama
- Arizona
- Arkansas
- Georgia
- Kentucky
- Oklahoma
- Tennessee
- Texas

#### States that ENCOURAGE Bible elective courses

- Missouri
- South Carolina
- South Dakota

### Approaching a State Legislature

1. Contact a friendly member of the state legislature. Preferably one who represents your local school division.
2. Provide them with the model legislation and talking points for Bible Literacy courses.
3. Be prepared to help mobilize support for the legislator if they agree to introduce the bill.
4. If allowed, plan to have some people willing to speak in support of the bill. Be sure to check in advance for any applicable rules and deadlines that might apply to speaking at the meeting

such as signing up before the meeting begins.

5. Once the bill passes both chambers of the legislature and is signed by the governor it becomes law upon its effective date.
6. Once your law is passed, approach your local school division to ask that it be implemented, if not already.

### Approaching Local Schools

1. Once you have chosen a curriculum, present the curriculum to your local school board alongside your state law (if applicable) and ask them to adopt the curriculum into the school division.
2. If the school board opts to add the curriculum to the agenda for a vote, plan to attend the meeting where the vote will occur.
3. If allowed, plan to have some people willing to speak in support of the curriculum. Be sure to check in advance for any applicable rules and deadlines that might apply to speaking at the meeting such as signing up before the meeting begins.
4. Review the talking points supporting your chosen curriculum and share them with others who are speaking.
5. Encourage other supporters to attend as well even if they don't speak. The outward show of support will be noticed and considered.

### Bible Literacy Curriculums

Bible Literacy curriculum from either the Bible Literacy Project or the NCBCPS is offered in at least one school district in 44 states. There are various additional curriculums being used in individual states such as Hamilton County, Tennessee's curriculum funded by Bible in the Schools.

### National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools

The strengths of this curriculum, according to the founder, are that the Bible is the primary textbook and the multitude of endorsements.



### Bible In The Schools (Hamilton County, TN)

This is a five-year program of Bible literacy elective courses for middle and high school students, currently offered in 29 participating public and charter schools. In the 2020-2021 academic year, over 4,600 completed a course, with the pre- and post-test assessments reflecting a countywide average increase in student's Bible content knowledge of 96%.

### Bible Literacy Pathways

STATE	LOCAL	
FRIENDLY	FRIENDLY	Begin by approaching your local school division and get a program established there. Then, if you'd like, you can take it to the state legislature to encourage other local school divisions across your state to also establish a program.
FRIENDLY	HOSTILE	Begin by approaching the state legislature to get a Bible Literacy Courses Bill passed there. Then, you can approach your local school division with the new law on your side.
HOSTILE	FRIENDLY	Approach your local school division to ask for the Bible Literacy courses to be implemented there.
HOSTILE	HOSTILE	Try to get the local school division to adopt a program first. However, if the school division refuses, the state legislature is the next step to assist with adopting a program.



### Bible Literacy Project

According to the founder, "This is the only First-Amendment-safe textbook that supports academic study of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation."



### Museum of the Bible

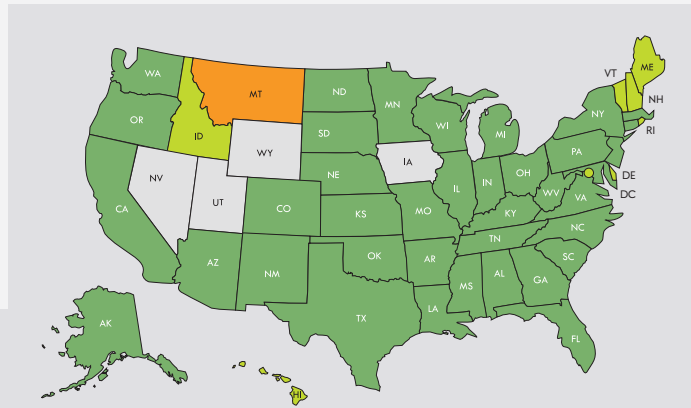
#### Museum of the Bible

The Museum of the Bible has two distinct resources, one designed for U.S. public schools, and one for other

audiences. The public school version is "The Bible's Impact on Western Society," 37 chapters, and a parallel volume teacher's guide, 37 chapters (available in 2022). This is full of augmented reality learning exercises and additional resources. Each chapter focuses on a key biblical story and how it manifests itself in cultural indicators like music, film, literature, painting, and sculpture. The private and personal use version has 4 volumes and 4 teacher's guides, 108 chapters, and focuses on the Bible's history, story, and impact. It's available now in English, Russian, Spanish, Hebrew (2 volumes), Arabic (2 volumes, 2 in process), and other languages are forthcoming.

### Bible Literature Online

Bible Literature Online aims to develop and distribute Bible Literature course content to be offered as online, elective, for-credit courses to high schools. Currently there are limited choices for Bible literature in public schools that is written from a non-devotional and viewpoint-neutral perspective. The purpose of these courses is to enable students to acquire an understanding and appreciation of the Bible's major ideas, historical/geographical contexts, literary forms, and its impact on later cultures, societies, and religions.



■ Both ■ Bible Literacy Project Only ■ NCBCPS Only



**Bible Literacy curriculum from either the Bible Literacy Project or the NCBCPS is offered in at least one school district in 44 states.**



### VEHICLE TWO

## Released Time (takes place during school hours but off school property)

# 2

### What is Released Time?

Public school students (K-12) are given time during the school day to leave the school campus in order to study the Bible, both academically and devotionally, including classes for high school credit.

Ruled Constitutional in *Zorach v. Clauson* (1952)

#### REQUIREMENTS:

- Schools remain neutral – but may cooperate with community to offer Released Time classes
- Classes are held offsite
- Funded privately – without expenditure of taxpayer dollars
- Voluntary in nature (students attend only with written parental permission)
- Schools have the discretion to dismiss students to off-premises religious instruction, provided that schools do not encourage or discourage participation in such instruction or penalize students for attending or not attending.
- School Ministries is the largest Released Time organization in the country.

Released Time is required by state law, if requested by the community, in 8 states: Florida, Hawaii, Kentucky, New York, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Wisconsin.

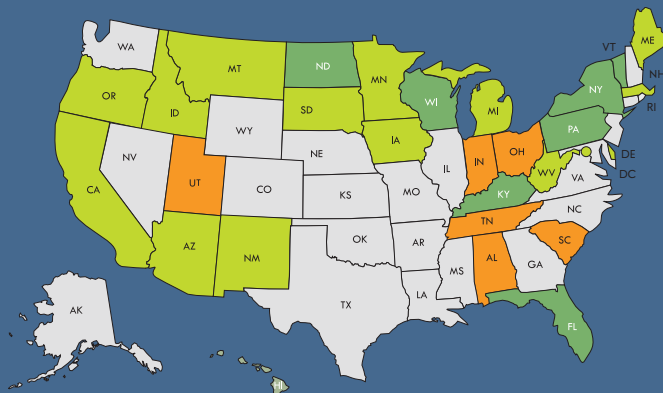
In the other 42 states, Released Time can be granted by the local school board or designated authority, whether there is a state law expressly permitting it or not.

Check the full state law and guidelines in your state.

### How To Get Released Time

1. Investigate whether your community already offers a Released Time program.
2. Discover your state's law to see if Released Time is already mandatory (if requested by the community), allowable (under certain conditions) or constitutionally permissible but not the subject of a state statute.
3. Research your school district's policy on Released Time: Is there one in place already?
4. If no policy exists, craft a proposal for Released Time in your school district. Contact School Ministries for resources, strategy, and support.
5. Present your proposal to your local school board and ask them to adopt a policy for the district.
6. If the school board opts to add the proposal to the agenda for a vote, plan to attend the meeting where the vote will occur.
7. If allowed, plan to have some people willing to speak in support of the proposal. Be sure to check in advance for any applicable rules and deadlines that might apply to speaking at the meeting such as signing up before the meeting begins.
8. Review the talking points and messaging supporting Released Time and share them with others who are speaking.
9. Encourage other supporters to attend as well even if they don't speak – the outward show of support will be noticed and considered.

Discover your state's law to see if Released Time is already mandatory (if requested by the community), allowable (under certain conditions) or constitutionally permissible but not the subject of a state statute.



- State Law – Schools SHALL Allow Released Time
- State Law – Schools MAY Allow Released Time
- State Law – Schools MAY Allow and Offer Academic Credit
- NO State Law – Local Option

## school MINISTRIES®

The purpose of School Ministries is to partner with communities across America bringing hope and purpose in the lives of public school students and their families through Christian Released Time Bible Education ("RTBE"). The mission of School Ministries is to assist local communities in the creation, support, and growth of RTBE programs. Additionally, the organization promotes Released Time research and national visibility while creating materials and training for local programs.

[schoolministries.org](http://schoolministries.org)



### VEHICLE THREE

## Bible Clubs (can take place on school property)

# 3

If a school or school division allows any student-led clubs that do not pertain to school curriculum, then they must allow all student-led clubs – including a Bible club.

Bible clubs can meet before, after, or during school, depending on when the other clubs are allowed to meet.

#### Equal Access Act of 1984

- Allows equal access to student-led, non-curriculum based clubs and organizations in public secondary schools.
- Ruled Constitutional in *Westside Community Schools v. Mergens* (1990)
- Equal Access Principles were further strengthened and defined in the new 2020 U.S. Department of Education Guidelines.

#### HOW TO GET STUDENT-INITIATED BIBLE CLUBS

1. Discover if your school or school district allows any student-led, non-curriculum clubs (i.e., coloring club, glee club, board game club, etc.).
2. Determine which rules exist regarding these clubs. Begin by asking the school principal. For example, one rule may require you to have a faculty sponsor. Talking Points available [HERE](#).
3. Create a plan to start and develop a Bible club.
4. Once you have identified students who are interested in leading the club and you have found a faculty member who is willing to help organize it, if necessary, identify a time and location in the school for the club to meet (i.e., Wednesdays before school in the cafeteria).
5. Begin promoting the club to the rest of the school's student population and steadily grow the club's attendance.

#### COMMUNITY-BASED BIBLE PROGRAMS

There are hundreds of outside community groups which promote Bible clubs in the public schools before or after school hours.

Most are small, regional groups led by local pastors or community leaders.

Community-based Bible programs are only required to be allowed if other community groups are also allowed to orchestrate programs at the school (i.e., YMCA programs).

The largest organization promoting community-based Bible programs is Child Evangelism Fellowship with their Good News Clubs.

#### *Good News Club v. Milford Central School (2001)*

Expands the Equal Access Principle to clubs orchestrated by outside organizations and clubs held in elementary schools under the Free Exercise Clause.

#### HOW TO GET COMMUNITY-BASED BIBLE PROGRAMS

1. Discover if your school or school district allows any other outside community-based clubs/programs to operate in the schools.
2. If yes, create a plan and meet with the school principal to begin setting up the details of your program such as where and when you would be able to meet (i.e., Wednesdays before school in the cafeteria).
3. If no, craft a proposal and meet with the school principal to inquire about starting your program. Since no other outside clubs exist, you could be denied.
4. Begin promoting the club to the rest of the school student population to grow the club's attendance.



## Addendum

Even if your school has a Bible curriculum, Released Time classes, or numerous Bible clubs and programs, the Bible's role in your school may be unsettled if:

- Students have no desire to read or study the Bible.
- Students, teachers, or other employees are prohibited or unsure if they can bring their Bible to school.

To assist in these areas, you can take advantage of the following:

**1. Request the "Student Religious Expression Strategic Action Toolkit"**

This Toolkit outlines in detail the rights of students to express their faith in public schools.

**2. Christian Educators Association International**

This resource center is stocked with information detailing the legal use of the Bible; including, connecting teachers with a Christian attorney who can answer any question about the use of the Bible and religious freedoms in the public schools.



## Connect With Us!

For more information:

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[cpcfoundation.com](http://cpcfoundation.com)



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