

## Georgia Allows Bible in Schools

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Georgia's Board of Education adopted performance standards this month for the state's two new Bible courses, which public high schools will offer as early as the fall of this year.

In 2006, Georgia became the first state to pass a law funding a public school Bible course and calling for statewide standards for the course. Although it is estimated that 8% of public schools nationwide offer a course on the Bible, no other state has a law establishing guidelines and funds for such a course. Written by Senate Majority Leader Tommie Williams, the law passed with bipartisan support.

Supporters of the new courses pointed out that the Bible is the bestselling book of all time, and has hugely influenced world history. The Bible courses will also provide students with much-needed background for understanding more recent history and literature - from Shakespeare to the Pilgrims to the Bill of Rights.

The classes, "History and Literature of the Old Testament Era" and "History and Literature of the New Testament Era," will be offered as English department electives. Each school district will choose whether to offer them or not.

The legislation requires that the Bible curriculum "be taught in an objective and non-devotional manner with no attempt made to indoctrinate students as to either the truth or the falsity of the biblical materials." Teachers may not "disparage or encourage a commitment to a set of religious beliefs." Lawmakers also wanted to make sure that the courses would use the Bible itself as the textbook.

Sen. Williams wrote the bill with the hope that districts would choose the "Bible in History and Literature" curriculum, developed by the National Council On Bible Curriculum In Public Schools (NCBCPS). This curriculum uses only the Bible as the student textbook, and provides a 300-page Teacher's Guide. Students read through the entire Bible during the school year. It is already taught as an elective in 379 school districts in 37 states, and this course has never been legally challenged anywhere.

Georgia activist Kay Godwin is leading a grassroots effort to educate local school boards about "The Bible in History and Literature." So many districts have already expressed interest in offering the curriculum that she speculates half of Georgia high schools may implement it in the 2007-2008 school year.

To see the entire article in Education Reporter please go to: <http://www.eagleforum.org/educate/2007/jan07/bible.html>.