

STATE OF NEW YORK

6315

2019-2020 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

March 5, 2019

Introduced by M. of A. DiPIETRO -- read once and referred to the Committee on Education

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to Bible literacy courses in public schools

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. The education law is amended by adding a new section 817 to
2 read as follows:

3 § 817. Course of instruction on Bible literacy. 1. The commissioner
4 shall promulgate regulations to establish elective social studies courses
5 of study on the Hebrew Scriptures, Old Testament of the Bible, the
6 New Testament of the Bible or the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testa-
7 ment of the Bible.

8 2. The purpose of a course of study under this section is to:

9 (a) teach students knowledge of biblical content, characters, poetry,
10 and narratives that are prerequisites to understanding contemporary
11 society and culture, including literature, art, music, mores, oratory,
12 and public policy; and

13 (b) familiarize students with, as applicable:

14 (i) the contents of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament;

15 (ii) the history of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament;

16 (iii) the literary style and structure of the Hebrew Scriptures or New
17 Testament; and

18 (iv) the influence of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament on law,
19 history, government, literature, art, music, customs, morals, values,
20 and culture.

21 3. A student shall not be required to use a specific translation as
22 the sole text of the Hebrew Scriptures or New Testament and may use as
23 the basic textbook a different translation of the Hebrew Scriptures or
24 New Testament from that chosen by the school district.

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 4. The commissioner shall include the course standards in the program
2 of studies for public schools, including the teacher qualifications and
3 required professional development.

4 5. A course offered under this section shall follow applicable law and
5 all federal and state guidelines in maintaining religious neutrality and
6 accommodating the diverse religious views, traditions, and perspectives
7 of students in the school. A course under this section shall not
8 endorse, favor, or promote, or disfavor or show hostility toward, any
9 particular religion or nonreligious faith or religious perspective. The
10 commissioner, in complying with this section, shall not violate any
11 provision of the United States Constitution or federal law, the New York
12 Constitution or any state law, or any administrative regulations of the
13 United States Department of Education or the department.

14 6. Any school district may authorize the display of historic arti-
15 facts, monuments, symbols, and texts, including but not limited to reli-
16 gious materials, in conjunction with a course of study that includes an
17 elective course in history, civilization, ethics, comparative religion,
18 literature, or other subject area that uses such artifacts, monuments,
19 symbols, and texts as instructional material if the display is appropri-
20 ate to the overall educational purpose of the course.

21 § 2. This act shall take effect immediately.