

Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to present law.
Act 1016 of the Regular Session

State of Arkansas
92nd General Assembly
Regular Session, 2019

As Engrossed: H3/18/19 S4/4/19
A Bill

HOUSE BILL 1626

By: Representatives Cloud, Dotson

By: Senator B. Ballinger

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT CONCERNING THE OFFERING OF AN ACADEMIC STUDY
OF THE BIBLE COURSE IF STUDENTS REQUEST THAT THE
COURSE BE OFFERED; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Subtitle

CONCERNING THE OFFERING OF AN ACADEMIC
STUDY OF THE BIBLE COURSE IF STUDENTS
REQUEST THAT THE COURSE BE OFFERED.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. Arkansas Code § 6-16-145 is amended to read as follows:
6-16-145. Academic study of the Bible course.

(a)(1) The State Board of Education shall allow for an elective academic study of the Bible course or courses that consist of a nonsectarian, nonreligious academic study of the Bible and its influence on literature, art, music, culture, and politics to be offered to students in public ~~school~~ schools or school districts if the academic study of the Bible course meets the standards listed in this section.

(2) The curriculum standards submitted by a public school or school district for approval of an academic study of the Bible course shall meet the:

(A) Academic rigor and curriculum standards of other elective courses approved by the state board; and

(B) Requirements of the Arkansas Constitution and the United States Constitution.



(b)(1) A public school or school district that elects to offer an academic study of the Bible course shall implement the course in accordance with the Arkansas Constitution and the United States Constitution, including the manner in which the course is taught in the classroom and the assignment of public school or school district personnel teaching the course.

(2) Personnel assigned to teach the course shall be licensed to teach in the State of Arkansas.

(3) Personnel shall not be assigned to teach the course based on any:

- (A) Religious test;
- (B) Profession of faith or lack of faith;
- (C) Prior or present religious affiliation or lack of affiliation; or
- (D) Criteria involving particular beliefs or lack of beliefs about the Bible.

(c) An academic study of the Bible course offered by a public school or school district shall:

(1) Be taught in an objective and nondevotional manner with no attempt made to indoctrinate students as to either the truth or falsity of the biblical materials or texts from other religious or cultural traditions;

(2) Not include teaching of religious doctrine or sectarian interpretation of the Bible or of texts from other religious or cultural traditions; and

(3) Not disparage or encourage a commitment to a set of religious beliefs.

(d) A public school or school district that elects to offer an academic study of the Bible course shall use only the standards in this section to:

(1) Evaluate textbooks for an academic study of the Bible course; and

(2) Teach an academic study of the Bible course.

(e) The Department of Education shall, by the 2019-2020 school year, identify, develop, and approve a Bible course for high school credit that meets the requirements in subsections (a), (b), and (c) of this section.

/s/Cloud

APPROVED: 4/15/19