

By Senator Baxley

12-01026-20

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1                                   A bill to be entitled  
2       An act relating to the study of the Bible and  
3       religion; amending s. 1003.45, F.S.; requiring  
4       district school boards to install secular programs of  
5       education in public schools which include specified  
6       courses relating to religion, the Hebrew Scriptures,  
7       and the Bible; requiring the Department of Education  
8       to include such courses in the Course Code Directory;  
9       providing that such courses must be offered as  
10      elective courses to certain students; providing course  
11      requirements; providing an effective date.

12  
13 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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15       Section 1. Section 1003.45, Florida Statutes, is amended to  
16      read:

17       1003.45 ~~Permitting~~ Study of the Bible and religion;  
18      permitting brief meditation period.—

19       (1) (a) The district school board shall ~~may~~ install in the  
20      public schools in the district a secular program of education  
21      including, but not limited to:

- 22       1. An objective study of religion.  
23       2. An objective study of the Bible, including, but not  
24      limited to, a course on the Hebrew Scriptures and Old Testament  
25      of the Bible; a course on the New Testament of the Bible; and a  
26      course on the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament of the Bible,  
27      and the New Testament of the Bible. A student may not be  
28      required to use a specific translation of the Hebrew Scriptures  
29      or Bible as the sole text for the course.

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30       (b) The Department of Education must include the courses in  
31 the Course Code Directory.

32       (c) A course offered pursuant to this section must:

33       1. Be offered as an elective course for students in grades  
34 9 through 12.

35       2. Follow all state and federal laws and guidelines in  
36 maintaining religious neutrality and accommodating the diverse  
37 religious views, traditions, and perspectives of all students in  
38 the school. A course offered pursuant to this section may not  
39 endorse, favor, or promote or disfavor or show hostility toward  
40 a particular religion, religious perspective, or nonreligious  
41 faith, ~~an objective study of the Bible and of religion.~~

42       (2) The district school board may provide that a brief  
43 period, not to exceed 2 minutes, for the purpose of silent  
44 prayer or meditation be set aside at the start of each school  
45 day or each school week in the public schools in the district.

46       Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2020.