

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STAFF NOTE

Review Item:

704 KAR 3:306, Kentucky Academic Standards for Historical and Cultural Influences of the Bible Elective Social Studies Course (First Reading)

Rationale:

KRS 158.197 required the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) to develop course standards for an elective high school social studies course on the Hebrew Scriptures, Old Testament of the Bible, the New Testament, or a combination of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament of the Bible. The regulation will come forward for a second reading at the June Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) meeting.

Applicable Statute or Regulation:

KRS 156.070, 156.160, KRS 158.197

History/Background:

Existing Policy: In 2017, the Kentucky General Assembly passed House Bill 128, which amended KRS 158.197 to permit a School-Based Decision Making (SBDM) Council to offer an elective high school social studies course and required the KDE to develop course standards for an elective social studies course on the Hebrew Scriptures; Old Testament of the Bible; the New Testament; or a combination of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament of the Bible.

704 KAR 3:306 is a unique regulation for the KBE because it is an elective course. Prior to this regulation, the KBE had not approved standards for elective courses. The requirements related to standards review and development are contained in KRS 158.6453. This statute requires a multi-step process involving numerous shareholder groups to review and revise content standards in English/language arts, mathematics, science and social studies. As KRS 158.6453 did not mandate the process used to develop the Kentucky Academic Standards for Historical and Cultural Influences of the Bible, the cost to develop the standards and corresponding resources will be significantly less.

Summary: The purpose of these elective courses is to focus on the historical impact and literary style from texts of the Old Testament and/or New Testament eras, including the Hebrew Scriptures, to teach students knowledge of biblical content, characters, poetry and narratives that are prerequisites to understanding contemporary society and culture, including literature, art, music, mores, oratory and public policy.

An elective course offered under this section will be expected to follow applicable law and all federal and state guidelines in maintaining religious neutrality and accommodating the diverse religious views, traditions and perspectives of students in the school. Additionally, an elective course under this section shall not endorse, favor, promote, disfavor, or show hostility toward any particular religion or nonreligious faith or religious perspective. A SBDM under administrative regulations of the KBE may offer this elective course to students in grade nine or above.

Budget Impact:

State funds were used to develop these standards. The cost of development and focus groups was \$847.45 in addition to staff time. This cost is significantly less than other content areas because these standards only relate to an elective high school course and the multi-step process involving numerous shareholder groups required by KRS 158.6453 did not apply. Staff time will continue to be impacted after final approval as a result of the development of resources to support the implementation of these standards.

Groups Consulted and Brief Summary of Responses:

Higher Education Focus Groups
High School Social Studies Teacher Focus Groups
Council of State Social Studies Specialists (an associated group of the National Council of the Social Studies)
Kentucky Historical Society

The standards were informed by feedback from the public and social studies community. When these standards were open for public feedback, 3,987 individuals commented.

The Local Superintendents Advisory Council (LSAC) will review this regulation at its March 27, 2018 meeting.

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Commissioner of Education

Date:

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