

# Neutral curriculum

Education



What is a neutral curriculum and can teachers truly leave their beliefs at the door of their classrooms upon entering? To tell the truth, this is a question I have pondered on myself for years. My answer to this question is and always has been, NO! A neutral curriculum, in my opinion, is one that lacks any thought on morals, character education, or a teacher's religious beliefs.

I have yet to meet a teacher who does not, on a daily basis, interject some kind of personal beliefs about classroom acceptable behavior and unacceptable behavior, taking responsibility for ones on actions, and being respectful to yourself, your classmates, and your teachers. Our personal beliefs may be different than our colleagues, but whatever influences our lives, truly comes out in how we conduct and manage our classrooms, if nothing else. I teach kindergarten.

I constantly teach children that sharing is the right thing to do, that stealing is wrong, and that treating your classmates with respect are the most important things to learn at this young age. I love the poem by Robert Fulghum, " All I Ever Need to Learn I Learned in Kindergarten. " This poem, written from a graduates point of view, explains that all of the things that make up good moral character are learned while in Kindergarten. Am I influenced by my Christian upbringing while choosing what values to instill in my students, absolutely.

I was raised that all people are equal in God's eyes regardless of race, gender, or nationality. Other religions do not teach this concept, in fact some do not believe in the One, True God at all. I give all of my students the same love and respect. My character shows through my interactions with them

everyday, and since my character is shaped by my belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, I can not imagine the possibility of a neutral curriculum. Being a public school teacher, it is harder to tow that fine line between what is legal and what is not.

I have been told by a fellow colleague, who moved to Georgia from a Northern state, that the things we are allowed to say and do here because we live in the " Bible Belt," would never be allowed up North. I do take advantage of living in the " Bible Belt," and I am proud of it. I try to expose my students to God and Christianity, as much as possible, by using the Georgia Performance Standards to my advantage. While teaching the letter of the week, if I can pull in a Christian based term or source, I do.

For example, when teaching the letter B, if I can get a student to say that the Bible begins with B, I will list it on my chart. I keep a copy of a Children's Bible in my classroom library, which is legal in the State of Georgia. While teaching calendar, on Monday mornings, I will review what happened yesterday, because this is one of our standards, and children will answer that they went to church. We have a standard that includes teaching different Christmas traditions around the world. I chose to cover Sweden extensively because the Swedish celebration focuses around the manger scene and Baby Jesus.

By using my own State's standards, I am able to share my morals and Christian beliefs while having the law of the State of Georgia on my side. In order to teach the traditions of Sweden so extensively, I also am required to cover other countries celebrations and religious activities. I do a small lesson

on Hanukkah, Kwanza, and cover other countries with Christian based celebrations. In a Christian school, I would think that a neutral curriculum would be nonexistent. The point of a Christian school is to indoctrinate the students with Christian beliefs.

Being a private school, a parent should be well aware of the beliefs of the founders before ever registering their child. Therefore, I do not feel that the legality side of this would ever be questioned. After saying all of this, my main concern from the moment I began to ponder this concept has been that while I am a Christian, not all teachers share my same beliefs. I am not all happy at the prospect of my child being taught ideals that do not agree with our Christian beliefs. I know this sounds like a double standard, and I would agree with you.

I feel very strongly that Jesus is real, that he died for my sins, and that he is the only way to Heaven. I can not miss an opportunity to share with my students, in a non threatening way, the love that he has given me. As a parent, I am not comfortable with a non believer pushing his beliefs on my children. It is a catch-22 situation. In closing, I do not believe that any curriculum can be neutral. One lives by certain standards, morals, and beliefs. No one can truly keep his feelings and beliefs separate from his teaching and classroom management.