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**OSDE Instructional Support Guidelines for Teachers**

**Introduction**

The Standards Guidelines for the upcoming 2024-2025 school year are provided below. Immediate and complete implementation of these guidelines for the 2024-2025 school year is required.

This memorandum and the included standards must be provided to every teacher as well as providing a physical copy of the Bible, the United States Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and the Ten Commandments as resources in every classroom in the school district. These documents are mandatory for the holistic education of students in Oklahoma.

In conjunction with the State Superintendent's directive regarding incorporating the Bible as an instructional support in recognition of the existing Oklahoma Social Studies Standards, the Oklahoma State Department of Education has crafted these guidelines to aid teachers incorporating the Bible as an instructional support. The Bible has played a significant role in the development of Western civilization and American history (Kling, David W. *The Bible in History: How the Texts have Shaped the Times*, Oxford University Press, 2006). This document provides guidelines for teachers on how to approach incorporation in a manner that emphasizes only its historical, literary and secular benefits, ensuring compliance with legal standards and precedents. Citation to standards is for example of sample authority.

**Historical Context**

- **Influence on Western Civilization:** The Bible has been a key cornerstone in the development of Western thought, influencing legal systems, ethical frameworks, and cultural norms. Teachers must focus on how biblical principles have shaped the foundational aspects of Western societies, such as the concepts of justice, human rights, and the rule of law (See e.g., including but not limited to Oklahoma Social Studies Standards 5.2.4; 6.3.2; 7.3.3; OK1.4; WG3.1; and WG3.5.)
- **Impact on American History:** From the early European settlers to the founding fathers, biblical references have been prevalent in American historical documents and speeches. Teachers must highlight key historical moments where the Bible played a role, such as the Mayflower Compact, the Declaration of Independence, and the speeches of leaders like Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King, Jr. (See e.g., including but not limited to Oklahoma Social Studies Standards 5.2.4; 6.3.2; 7.3.3; OK1.4; WG3.1; WG3.5; and WH1.2.)

## Literary Significance

- **Canonical Literature:** The Bible is a primary source of allusions, themes, and archetypes in Western literature. Teachers must explore its influence on classic and contemporary works, helping students understand references and themes in literature, poetry, and even modern media. (See e.g., including but not limited to Oklahoma Social Studies Standards 6.3.2; 7.3.3; and WH1.2.)
- **Literary Techniques:** The Bible uses numerous and various literary techniques, including allegory, metaphor, and parable. Teachers can use biblical texts to illustrate these techniques, enhancing students' literary analysis skills. This approach allows students to appreciate the Bible's literary craftsmanship without delving into religious doctrine. (See e.g., including but not limited to Oklahoma Social Studies Standards 6.3.2; 7.3.3; and WH1.2.)

## Artistic and Musical Influence

- **Art History:** The Bible has inspired numerous works of art throughout history (See e.g., Davies, Penelope J.W., et al. *Janson's History of Art: The Western Tradition*, 8<sup>th</sup> ed., Pearson, 2011., page 273 et al.). Teachers must introduce students to famous artworks that depict biblical scenes or themes, discussing the historical and cultural context of these while remaining mindful of all rules for grade level and age level appropriate material. (See e.g., including but not limited to Oklahoma Social Studies Standards 6.3.2; 7.3.3; and WH1.2.)
- **Music:** Biblical texts and stories have influenced many musical compositions (See e.g., Grout, Donald J., and Palisca, Claude V. *A History of Western Music*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., W.W. Norton & Company, 1988). Teachers can explore how composers and musicians have interpreted and expressed biblical themes through music, focusing on the cultural and historical significance rather than the religious content. (See e.g., including but not limited to Oklahoma Social Studies Standards 6.3.2; 7.3.3; and WH1.2.)

## Implementation Strategies

**Textual Analysis:** Students may be encouraged to analyze biblical texts as they would any other historical or literary document. Focus on the structure, language, and rhetorical strategies used in biblical narratives, poetry, and epistles. (See e.g., including but not limited to Oklahoma Social Studies Standards 6.3.2; 7.3.3; and WH1.2.)

**Comparative Studies:** Conduct comparative studies between biblical texts and other historical or literary works. This can include examining parallels between biblical stories and Greek mythology or comparing the ethical teachings of the Bible with those of other philosophical traditions. (See e.g., including but not limited to Oklahoma Social Studies Standards 6.3.2; 7.3.3; and WH1.2.)

**Historical Documents and Speeches:** Integrate excerpts from historical documents and speeches that reference the Bible. Discuss the context and significance of these references, helping students understand the Bible’s role in shaping political and social thought. (See e.g., including but not limited to Oklahoma Social Studies Standards 6.3.2; 7.3.3; and WH1.2.)

**Critical Thinking and Discussion:** Foster an environment where students can engage in critical thinking and discussion about the historical and literary aspects of the Bible. Encourage respectful dialogue and diverse perspectives, ensuring that discussions remain academic rather than doctrinal. (See e.g., including but not limited to Oklahoma Social Studies Standards 6.3.2; 7.3.3; and WH1.2.)

## Grade-Level Specific Guidelines

### Upper Elementary (5)

- **Narrative Elements:** Discuss the elements of a story, such as plot, characters, and setting, using biblical stories as examples.
- **Historical Context:** Begin introducing the historical context in which these stories were written and their impact on Western culture.
- **Literary Devices:** Identify and discuss simple literary devices such as similes, metaphors, and personification within biblical texts.
- **Music Appreciation:** Introduce students to classical music pieces inspired by biblical themes, discussing the historical context and significance without focusing on religious content.

### Middle School (6-8)

- **Textual Analysis:** Engage students in more detailed analysis of biblical texts, focusing on language, structure, and themes.
- **Comparative Literature:** Compare biblical stories with myths and legends from other cultures, examining similarities and differences.
- **Historical Impact:** Discuss the influence of the Bible on historical events and figures.
- **Art and Music Exploration:** Study famous artworks and musical compositions inspired by biblical themes, discussing their impact on culture and society while remaining mindful of all rules for grade level and age level appropriate material.

## High School (9-12)

- **Advanced Literary Analysis:** Conduct in-depth analysis of complex biblical texts, examining themes, motifs, and literary techniques.
- **Historical Documents:** Study primary historical documents and speeches that reference the Bible, exploring their significance and context.
- **Ethical and Philosophical Discussions:** Facilitate discussions on the ethical and philosophical ideas presented in the Bible and their influence on Western thought.
- **Critical Essays:** Assign essays that require critical thinking and analysis of the Bible's role in literature, history, and culture.
- **Art and Music Appreciation:** Analyze and interpret significant artworks and musical pieces inspired by the Bible, understanding their historical and cultural relevance while remaining mindful of all rules for grade level and age level appropriate material.

## Legal Considerations

1. **Neutrality and Objectivity:** Ensure that all instruction is conducted in a neutral and objective manner. Teachers must **not promote or favor** any religious beliefs, focusing solely on the historical and literary aspects of the Bible.
2. **Diverse Perspectives:** Acknowledge the Bible's influence while recognizing and respecting the diversity of religious beliefs among students. Incorporate perspectives from other religious and secular traditions to provide a balanced view while remaining mindful of all rules for grade level and age level appropriate material.
3. **Parental Communication:** Maintain open communication with parents about the purpose and content of incorporating the Bible as an instructional support into the curriculum. Provide information on how the curriculum addresses historical and literary aspects, emphasizing that it is not an endorsement of any religious belief.
4. **Primary Purpose of Usage:** The Bible must be used in student instruction for its historical, literary and secular value and is not to be used for religious purposes such as preaching, proselytizing or indoctrination.

## **Conclusion**

The inclusion of the Bible as an instructional support in the curriculum offers students a deeper understanding of the historical and literary foundations of Western civilization and American history. By focusing on these aspects, teachers can enrich students' education while adhering to legal guidelines. These guidelines aim to provide a balanced, objective approach that respects diverse beliefs and fosters critical thinking. A holistic approach ensures that students do not merely see the Bible as a religious text but as a significant historical and cultural artifact that has influenced a wide array of human endeavors.

Moreover, maintaining neutrality and objectivity is crucial. By not promoting any religious beliefs, these guidelines ensure that the curriculum remains inclusive and respectful of all backgrounds and beliefs. The focus remains firmly on the educational and secular benefits of literacy and background knowledge rather than religious indoctrination.

In conclusion, incorporating the Bible as an instructional support into the curriculum provides an invaluable opportunity to deepen students' understanding of historical and cultural developments. These guidelines offer guidance for educators to approach this subject matter thoughtfully and inclusively, fostering an educational environment that is both informative and respectful.