

Appendix 22: Sample of a Buddhist Pedagogy Seminar Paper Information



Individual Proposal Participant Form for E-Mail Submissions

Copy all of the text in the box below and paste it into the body of an email. Fill in the the form as necessary within the email.

1. TITLE OF YOUR PROPOSAL (if presenting a paper): **Advocacy for Teaching Buddhist courses in Public Schools**

2. PROGRAM UNIT to which you are submitting this proposal: **Buddhist Pedagogy Seminar**
- 2b. OTHER PROGRAM UNIT to which you are submitting this proposal, if any
* Please indicate the order of preference, if any, to the program units.

- 2c. OTHER PROGRAM UNIT to which you are submitting another proposal, if any:
(Completed participant form(s) must accompany each submission.)

3. YOUR ROLE in this session (place an X next to your role):
Presiding (x)
Presenting (titled paper): **Advocacy for Teaching Buddhist courses in Public Schools**
Responding
Panelist (untitled presentation)
Presiding at a Business Meeting

- NOTE: No individual may participate in the program more than twice.

4. AUDIO-VISUAL REQUIREMENTS for the entire session (note number and type needed):
LCD Projector:
Sound:

Audio-Visual requests must be submitted at the time of your proposal. Late requests will not be accommodated. The Executive Office makes every attempt to honor the AV requests of our members. Unusual requests should be cleared, through the appropriate Program Unit Chair, with the Executive Office to confirm the availability of the equipment or setup of space.

5. SCHEDULING NEEDS due to religious observance, if any:

6. CONTACT INFORMATION (name, address, institution, phone, fax, etc.)

Advocacy for Teaching Buddhist courses in Public Schools

Abstract: Since some essential aspects of religions, such as ethics, can enhance children's morality and knowledge for their future upbringing, public schools have taken the lead to provide religious educations, especially the Bible courses in the past decades, for their students to have a complete education (Rogers, 35). Buddhists should follow the suit to advocate their religious right and liberty to offer Buddhist courses in public schools.

The Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) affirms extensive safeguards for people of every religion (Uddin). Thirty-five religious and civil liberties organizations advocated the students' religious rights in public school including: to pray; discuss their religious views; form religious clubs; access to school facilities under the Equal Access Act; distribute religious literature; and take religious courses ("The Bible and Public School").

Approximately, there were about 2.1 million Buddhists in the United States in 2004 and 500 million Buddhists in 2015 worldwide ("Religious affiliations in 2004" and "Christians are the largest religious group in 2015"). As the fourth largest religion in the world, Buddhism has great impacts on humanity for more than 2,500 years. One of the core Buddhist teachings is meditation, which theory and practice have brought tremendous benefits to people around the world. In recent years, Buddhist mindfulness practice has spread to every aspect of American life as part of the "mindfulness revolution." In fact, 18 million people in the United States practice meditation daily, and about 927,00 children used it in 2017 ((Santorelli and Brown) and ("Use of Complementary Health Approaches in the U.S")). The number of school children practicing meditation is growing rapidly through the Mind Up, Inner Explorer, Calm Classroom, Mindful Schools, and other programs (Southern). The mindfulness course brings tremendous benefits to educators as well ("Research on Mindfulness").

Disregard the meditative benefits for educators and students, some critiques allege it is an unconstitutional method to offer mindfulness course in public schools (Santorelli). Especially, the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) recently posted two articles to challenge the public schools that offer mindfulness practice (Southern). For example, the ACLJ argues that the Inner Explorer, a mindful program, has violated the laws because schools used public fund to instill Buddhist principles ((“About Us”) and (Southern)).

Contrarily, for many decades, Christians have been pushing successfully for teaching Bible courses in the public school. For instance, the president of the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools proudly boasts that 93% of school boards in 41 states with 3,274 high schools are offering Bible courses in various ways to more than 650,000 students (“Where this has been implemented”). Nonetheless, as up-to-date, the press releases mention only six states passing the laws to teach Bible in public school (“Bible classes in public schools?”). Specifically, Greg Abbott, an Attorney General of Texas, has given the school districts options to teach Bible courses (Abbott). Particularly, in Texas during the school year of 2011-12, 57 school districts and 3 charter schools have offered Bible courses or incorporated them into other subjects such as English, Social Studies, and general electives, which student enrollment ranged from 1 to 50 (Chancey, 14, 17).

Also, in 2017, Kentucky House Bill 128 passed a bill to teach Bible courses in Kentucky public schools (“KY HB128/2017/Regular Session”). Recently, the ACLU (The American Civil Liberties Union of Kentucky) has sent a complain regarding the ‘Bible Literacy’ courses offered in some of Kentucky’s Public Schools, which adapted lessons and exercises explicitly and directly from the online Sunday schools as well as requiring students to memorize the passages directly from the Bible (“AULC-KY Reviews ‘Bible Literacy’ courses in Kentucky Public Schools”).

By comparison of how the school districts in 6 states teaching Bible courses directly and explicitly to their respective students and the Mind Up, Inner Explorer, Calm Classroom, and Mindful Schools offering the mindfulness courses without claiming any Buddhist connection, there are some degrees of unfairness and discrepancy religiously. As a result, since several states have allowed teaching Bible courses as parts of religious education, Buddhists should utilize the First Amendment Right and Religious Freedom within those states to teach Buddhist courses, including its literature, history, arts, regulations, contemporary issues, and meditation as parts of religious education in public schools, legally and constitutionally.

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