

To summarize this case study, Ms. Avery, the principal of Laurel Palm Middle School, has formed a committee to help develop new and interesting curriculum programs for the school. One of the committee members, Ms. Beckel, suggested that the school add a religious studies course. Before it was formally presented to the site committee, Ms. Wright, an active volunteer at the school was made aware of the suggestion and expressed frustration and resentment towards the idea and made Ms. Beckel aware that she plans on stopping this. After Principal Avery and the committee heard the proposal of the religious studies course, the next step was to present it to the school board. Upon entering the school board meeting, Ms. Avery, Ms. Beckel, and Ms. Cassidy, a classroom teacher, were met with local media personnel and Ms. Wright protesting.

There needs to be communication that takes place to all stakeholders on what is actually taking place. Ms. Wright is upset because she believes the school is doing something unconstitutional when in reality, she needs to be educated on the matter. The school is not planning to indoctrinate students, they are planning to offer an elective course where students can become educated about religion. In the *Moss v. Spartanburg County School District No. 7* court case, the Supreme Court upheld the South Carolina legislation that was passed in 2006 stating that public school students could take outside religious classes and receive elective credits. Also, in the *Engel v. Vitale* (1962) and *Abington Township School District v Schempp* (1963) Supreme Court cases, the court ruled that public schools are allowed to teach about religion. With the knowledge of past court rulings, there clearly are options that could be explored and would be acceptable.

One solution would be to find a way to offer an elective course off campus or ITV class and accept it for credit. This would most likely involve partnering with a private school in town or a different school in the state that has educators that are already teaching religion classes. Another solution would be to educate all stakeholders involved and move forward with the presentation of an on-campus class that learns about religion. This class would not be trying to indoctrinate and persuade students to believe in a specific religion, this would be a class where students could become educated about a religion. The last option would be to move in a different direction and stay away from anything related to religion. This would most likely be the easiest solution and least controversial. However, that doesn't mean it is the right thing to do. Regardless of what solution is determined best, it needs to be clearly communicated to all stakeholders involved including; parents, students, school board members, staff, and community members.

I personally would try to move forward with some type of religious studies course that can be taken either online or over ITV. I understand that this may be controversial. However, I don't believe this is a good reason to not move forward with something. With that being said though, I would do extensive research and make sure that this religious studies course has the interest of the students and parents. If we go through all the work in making this happen, and then students don't want to take the course or parents don't allow their child to take the course, then there really was no point in creating the course. If I come to the conclusion that our students want this course, and we have support from parents, I would try to make it happen.

The reason I chose to offer the course online or over ITV is because I think it would be much easier and safer, being as this is something we are just starting and trying for the first time. I believe this option would be the most budget friendly option. By offering the course online or over ITV, we do not need to hire a teacher for this specific course. We also do not need to worry about paying for textbooks and other resources to get the class going. In the case study, it was stated that several other schools around the state offered courses similar to this. I would set up meetings with their administration and talk about how they got their courses up and running. I would also explore opportunities to partner with them. After the site committee and my administrative team come up with a clear direction, I would then communicate to all stakeholders exactly what we plan on offering and how we are going to implement this course.

I grew up and went to high school in Linton, North Dakota. Linton was a small school district that operated on a limited budget. They offered several interesting courses and engaged our student body without even having the teacher in the building. I took two years of Spanish in an ITV class and it was a great experience. I learned a lot and am very grateful to have learned the language as I have traveled to the Dominican Republic several times. Three years ago, I returned to Linton Public School as a teacher and was pleasantly surprised to see that they offered even more innovative courses. Linton now offers three different language courses over ITV as well as aviation and several college and dual credit online classes. I believe this is taking full advantage of the outstanding technology that we now have.

Overall, I do not believe this is something that can just be thrown together. I think there needs to be a lot of research done, productive planning meetings, and great

communication to all stakeholders. I do believe this is something that could be accomplished though.

References:

Vile, J. R. (n.d.). *Abington School District V. Schempp*. Abington School District v. Schempp. Retrieved January 10, 2023, from <https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/1/abington-school-district-v-schempp>

Jr., D. L. H. (n.d.). *Engel v. Vitale*. Retrieved January 10, 2023, from <https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/665/engel-v-vitale>

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