



August 7, 2026

VIA Regular Mail & Email (*beverly.felton@littleaxeeps.org*)

Beverly Felton, President

Board of Education

Little Axe Public Schools

2000 168th Ave NE

Norman, OK 73026

VIA Email (*trey.kirkpatrick@littleaxeeps.org*)

Trey Kirkpatrick

Little Axe High School

2000 168th Ave NE

Norman, OK 73026

**Re: Religious materials in Dr. James Taylor's classroom;
Request for lesson plans under Policy EHBDBA and *Mahmoud v. Taylor***

President Felton and Principal Kirkpatrick:

A parent with a child in Dr. James Taylor's U.S. Government course contacted the American Atheists Legal & Policy Center about concerns raised by Dr. Taylor's classroom. According to the parent,¹ Dr. Taylor keeps one of his books, *It's Biblical, Not Political: How to Line Candidates Up Biblically*, as well as a DVD he produced, *Critical Race Theory vs. The Bible*, prominently displayed in his classroom. Given the expressly sectarian nature of these materials, the parent is deeply concerned that Dr. Taylor will incorporate them or other religious materials into his lesson plans.² American Atheists shares her concerns. Therefore, **pursuant to Board Policy EHBDBA and the U.S. Supreme Court's recent decision in *Mahmoud v. Taylor*,³ the parent requests copies of Dr. Taylor's lesson plans and course materials that include religion** in order to determine whether any such lessons are likely to conflict with the family's nonreligious beliefs and should seek to withdraw her child from any individual lessons taught by Dr. Taylor.

The AALC is part of American Atheists, Inc., a national nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the separation of religion and government and eliminating the stigma and

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- 1 The parent has asked to be kept anonymous due to concerns about harassment after an incident last year in which a student was harassed and the family was subsequently derided by school staff. <https://www.news9.com/story/67a2bb0c7cab91a09302511/racist-slur-filled-video-inside-little-axe-high-school-classroom-sparks-calls-for-accountability>
 - 2 The parent's concerns are heightened by Dr. Taylor's decision to include a reference to the Beatitudes in an handout accompanying the courts syllabus on the first day of class.
 - 3 606 U.S. 522 (2025).

discrimination atheists face in our nation's public and political discourse. American Atheists is based in Cranford, New Jersey, and has more than 350,000 members and supporters across the country, including in Norman, Oklahoma.

The Supreme Court recently clarified the scope of a parent's right to guide the upbringing of their children.⁴ Parents must be afforded a meaningful opportunity to opt their children out of instruction that interferes with the right to guide the sincerely held beliefs of their child.⁵ In order for such an opportunity to be meaningful, parents must be afforded advance notice that a lesson will incorporate the conflicting material.⁶

Moreover, the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution demands that government remain neutral between different religious sects and between religion and nonreligion,⁷ a requirement that extends to state governments via the Fourteenth Amendment.⁸ When it comes to the education of our children, the government should be "particularly vigilant" in ensuring schools do not promote religious views that may conflict with the religious beliefs of students and their families.⁹ "Families entrust public schools with the education of their children, but condition their trust on the understanding that the classroom will not purposely be used to advance religious views that may conflict with the private beliefs of the student and his or her family."¹⁰

Finally, the Free Exercise Clause imposes an additional barrier against religious instruction in public schools by prohibiting the government from taking an action that discriminates along religious lines or otherwise regulates or prohibits religious conduct.¹¹ Although neutral and generally applicable government acts that only incidentally infringe religious exercise do not violate the Free Exercise Clause, government acts that are not neutral must be narrowly tailored to achieve a compelling governmental interest.¹² Moreover, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act¹³ prohibits the government from compelling an act inconsistent with a person's observance or practice of their beliefs.

An educator who uses their position of authority in the classroom to evangelize their religious beliefs to their student abuses the authority that their community has entrusted to them. If Dr. Taylor intends to discuss religion in any of his lessons this school year, this parent and their child have the right know and the right to an accommodation. Pursuant to Board Policy EHBDBA, on or before August 17, 2026 (ten days from your receipt of this letter) please provide my office with copies of all of Dr. Taylor's lesson plans and course materials that include religion.

4 *Mahmoud*, 606 U.S. 522 (2025).

5 *Id.* at 550.

6 *Id.* at 529-30.

7 *Epperson v. Arkansas*, 393 U.S. 97, 104 (1968).

8 *School District of Abington Twp. v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203, 205 (1963).

9 *Edwards v. Aguillard*, 482 U.S. 578, 583 (1987); *see also* *Widmar v. Vincent*, 454 U.S. 263, 274, n.14 (1981).

10 *Edwards*, 482 U.S. at 584.

11 *Church of Lukumi Babalu Aye v. City of Hialeah*, 508 U.S. 520, 532 (1993); *see also* *Employment Div. v. Smith*, 494 U.S. 872, 876-77 (1990).

12 *Employment Div. v. Smith*, 494 U.S. 872, 879 (1990); *Sherbert v. Verner*, 374 U.S. 398, 403 (1963).

13 42 U.S.C. 2000bb.

Regardless of the availability of an accommodation, any instance of Dr. Taylor promoting his religious views in the classroom violates the Establishment Clause and Free Exercise Clause rights of his students. If Dr. Taylor or Little Axe Public Schools violate that right, or if the parent is denied the opportunity to review Dr. Taylor's course materials pursuant to Policy EHBDBA, American Atheists is prepared to defend the family's constitutional rights in court.

I hope that we can work together constructively to preserve the rights of all students entrusted to the care of Little Axe Public Schools. Thank you for your time and assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Blackwell', written over the printed name.

Geoffrey T. Blackwell
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