

Bixby Public School Response to OSDE Instructional Support Guidelines for Teachers

This Wednesday, Oklahoma schools received long-awaited guidance from the State Department of Education (OSDE) regarding Superintendent Ryan Walters's so-called "Bible mandate" in schools. While the district appreciates the additional context and detail, today's guidance does not change the district's position as outlined in last week's [community update](#).

Unfortunately, in some crucial ways, the [new guidance](#) poses more questions than it answers. First, it directs districts to place a physical copy of the Bible in every classroom yet provides no clarity on which version of the Bible school districts must use or how to pay for them. There are also legitimate [constitutional issues](#) associated with public schools purchasing religious materials with taxpayer dollars.

Superintendent Walters's request that schools incorporate elements of the Bible into the framework of selected courses as an instructional resource warrants some consideration and review. However, [state law](#) is also clear that the selection and purchase of curriculum and instructional materials used to teach subject matter standards is a matter of local control.

- *"School districts shall exclusively determine the instruction, curriculum, reading lists and instructional materials and textbooks, subject to any applicable provisions or requirements as set forth in law, to be used in meeting the subject matter standards."* [70 O.S. § 11-103.6a](#)
- Oklahoma Attorney General Gentner Drummond has publicly affirmed a school district's exclusive authority related to curriculum and instructional materials.
- The Oklahoma Supreme Court also recently confirmed this authority in a [unanimous June 2024 decision](#) involving Edmond Public Schools.

In conclusion, the district will continue to teach the legislatively approved Oklahoma Academic Standards in BPS classrooms during the upcoming school year using curricular resources vetted and formally approved by the Bixby Board of Education.