

November 19, 2024

Dear Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and Senate Education Committee Members,

Thank you for allowing me to testify. My name is Keith Comer. I am a resident of Ohio and a parent to children who attend public school. I have been outspoken concerning House Bill 445 and now Senate Bill 293. I have experienced threats of felony charges and lawsuits from Lifewise Academy<sup>1</sup>. I am grateful to have the chance to express my opposition to Senate Bill 293, which seeks to alter the system of Released Time Religious Instruction (released-time) by changing the permissive "may" to "shall" in Section [3313.6022](#) of the Ohio Revised Code. I believe this unnecessary bill threatens the autonomy of local school boards and undermines constitutional principles. I urge you to oppose this legislation for several key reasons:

Senate Bill 293 will remove the ability of local school boards to govern themselves and set policies for released-time. Released-time is not new; federal and state laws have been settled on this issue for decades. *Zorach vs Clauson* did not say released-time is a right; rather, it is legal when implemented properly. Matt Krause from First Liberty Institute, who represents Lifewise, stated, "It is not a constitutional right to have the program" when referring to released-time during his proponent testimony for the House version of this bill.

Ohio Attorney General Anthony Celebrezze, Jr., stated in opinion 88-001, "Whether a board of education should adopt a religious instruction released-time policy is a matter that must be resolved by the board itself, taking into account the particular circumstances of the school district in question and the need within the school district for such a policy." <sup>2</sup>

In 2014, Ohio passed its current released-time law. This was written and sponsored by Jeff McClain, the Ohio Representative in the 87th district and on the board of School Ministries Ohio, an organization that helps establish released-time programs. Ohio School Ministries has been in operation since 2007 and had pushed for the current released-time law. The word "may" was chosen purposefully to give local school boards the self-governance Ohio law requires.

School Ministries Ohio has been silent on the current Ohio House and Senate released-time bills. These bills do not reflect the needs of Ohio released-time programs. Students have been

dismissed for over 100 years in Ohio without an active school policy. Federal case law allows parents to sign their children out for released-time programs without being marked absent. The 1988 Attorney General opinion supports this. Parents can sign their children out and take them to a religious class during the school day without being marked absent.

Lifewise employees have stated that most Lifewise programs operate during the “specials” classes.<sup>3</sup> These classes include art, gym, library, music, STEM, and technology. Students miss a class, or the school creates a specific time slot in the schedule for Lifewise to operate. When a time slot is created, students who do not attend Lifewise do not receive new instruction. This impacts the students who do not attend Lifewise. 80% of Lifewise classes are kindergarten through fifth grade. Students in these grades do not have free study or unstructured learning times. Lifewise uses this to boost enrollment. Telling a young child to sit idle and work on something themselves feels like a punishment to that child. Given the option of a scheduled activity or idle time, children will want to attend the school-scheduled activity, Lifewise.

*McCullum vs Board of Education*, the first Supreme Court case to test released-time, stated this scenario was against the separation of church and state. “This was to be carried out on church premises under church authority. Those not desiring to attend church schools would continue their normal classes,” and “The religious teaching was held on church premises, and the public schools had no hand in the conduct of these church schools. They did not supervise the choice of instructors or the subject matter taught. Nor did they assume responsibility for the attendance, conduct or achievement of the child in a church school, and he received no credit for it. The period of attendance in the religious schools would otherwise have been a play period for the child, with the result that the arrangement did not cut into public school instruction or truly affect the activities or feelings of the children who did not attend the church schools.

*Zoarch vs Clauson* (1952) is the Supreme Court case that specifically defined guidelines for released-time programs. *Zorach* states, “School authorities are neutral in this regard, and do no more than release students whose parents so request. If [...] coercion were used [...] a wholly different case would be presented.” *Zorach* also states, “The following significant amplifications: no announcement of any kind will be made in the public schools relative to the program.”

Here is a list of school districts with verified occurrences of coercion, schedule modification, and other violations to boost enrollment: Defiance, Hilliard, Columbus Grove, Ashland, Frederick,

Paulding, Cloverleaf, Central Local, Continental, Elmwood, Riverview, Greenville, Liberty Center, Wynford, Mechanicsburg, Southwest Licking, Franklin Monroe, Bellaire, Elida, Fairbanks, and Norwalk.<sup>4</sup>

The current law needs to meet the guidelines set by McCollum and Zorach. McCollum says no credit for released-time classes can be received, but Ohio law allows schools to assign credit for released-time classes. The ORC lacks full provisions for released-time, as set by McCollum and Zorach. These items are currently left to local school administrators, and many violations have been reported. Forcing all local school districts to adopt a local policy to allow released-time when the Ohio Revised Code does not even define the federal case law requirements correctly is not the proper step for Ohio.

Released-time programs operated in Ohio public schools for over 100 years with no policy requirements. What is the rush now to require a policy? With so many problems, please take the time to understand the current operating environment for released-time in Ohio. Do not allow Senate Bill 293 to make an already controversial process even worse.

Thank you,

Keith Comer

<sup>1</sup> Legal Threats From Lifewise Academy - <https://respectpublicschools.com/story.php>

<sup>2</sup> Opinion 88-001 -

<https://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov/getattachment/95a4717b-ba5c-4a32-904b-35a700f4697d/1988-001.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> Lifewise Academy Employees Discuss Schedules - <https://youtu.be/zQCJZSg5VjE>

<sup>4</sup> Documented Violations Ohio -

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GQpdPIRFxc8sHgk6YKIZ0yKi-9\\_2TPqcrNQ\\_FU7kRVk/e/dit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GQpdPIRFxc8sHgk6YKIZ0yKi-9_2TPqcrNQ_FU7kRVk/e/dit?usp=sharing)

## OPINION NO. 88-001

### Syllabus:

Pursuant to R.C. 3313.20 and R.C. 3313.47, a board of education may adopt a policy that permits high school students to be excused from attendance during regular school hours for the purpose of receiving religious instruction off school property. A religious instruction released-time policy adopted by a board of education pursuant to R.C. 3313.20 and R.C. 3313.47 must comport with the establishment clause of the first amendment to the United States Constitution and the religious freedom provisions of article I, §7 of the Ohio Constitution, as applied and interpreted by the United States Supreme Court and the courts of Ohio respectively.

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To: John J. Plough, Portage County Prosecuting Attorney, Ravenna, Ohio  
By: Anthony J. Celebrezze, Jr., Attorney General, January 25, 1988

You have requested my opinion regarding the authority of a board of education to adopt a religious instruction released-time policy for high school students. Specifically, you have asked that I address the following questions:

1. Does a board of education have legal authority to release students from school for religious training, and could the release time be lawfully counted as hours of instruction for purposes of computing the minimum hours of instruction required by the State Board of Education?
2. If such authority exists, should not a policy be adopted by the board of education to authorize the release of students for religious instruction?

You have indicated in your letter that the local parish priest has requested the school district to release Catholic students in grades nine through twelve on three afternoons each week for the purpose of receiving religious instruction at the Catholic church.

I shall consider first the question whether a board of education may, as a general matter, formulate and implement a policy that permits high school students to be excused from attendance during regular school hours for the purpose of receiving religious instruction off school property. Article VI, §3 of the Ohio Constitution states, in part, that, "[p]rovision shall be made by law for the organization, administration and control of the public school system of the state supported by public funds." Pursuant to this constitutional mandate, the General Assembly has enacted laws "establishing school districts and boards of education and granting such boards power to organize, administer control and conduct public schools." *Holroyd v. Eibling*, 116 Ohio App. 440, 445, 188 N.E.2d 797, 800 (Franklin County 1962). See, e.g., R.C. Chapters 3311 (school districts; county planning); 3313 (boards of education); 3315 (school funds); 3318 (school facilities); 3321 (school attendance). Thus, as a creature of statute, a board of education may exercise those powers expressly conferred upon it by statute, or that may be implied by those that have been expressly granted. *CADO Business Systems of Ohio, Inc. v. Board of Education*, 8 Ohio App. 3d 385, 457 N.E.2d 939 (Cuyahoga County 1983) (syllabus, paragraph one) ("Ohio boards of education are creations of statute and their authority is derived from and strictly limited to powers that are expressly granted by statute or clearly implied therefrom"); *Brownfield, Bowen, Bally & Sturtz v. Board of Education*, 56 Ohio App. 2d 10, 11, 381 N.E.2d 207, 208 (Jackson County 1977) (same).

R.C. Chapter 3313 sets forth the numerous powers, duties, and responsibilities conferred upon the boards of education of the various city, county,

local, and exempted village school districts established throughout the state. As pertains to your particular questions, I find that two provisions of R.C. Chapter 3313 are relevant, namely, R.C. 3313.20 and R.C. 3313.47. R.C. 3313.20 states, in part, as follows:

*The board of education shall make such rules as are necessary for its government and the government of its employees, pupils of its schools, and all other persons entering upon its school grounds or premises. Rules regarding entry of persons other than students, staff, and faculty upon school grounds or premises shall be posted conspicuously at or near the entrance to such grounds or premises, or near the perimeter of such grounds or premises if there are no formal entrances, and at the main entrance to each school building. (Emphasis added.)*

R.C. 3313.47, which addresses generally the management and control of the public schools, reads as follows:

*Each city, exempted village, or local board of education shall have the management and control of all of the public schools of whatever name or character in its respective district. If the board has adopted an annual appropriation resolution, it may, by general resolution, authorize the superintendent or other officer to appoint janitors, superintendents of buildings, and such other employees as are provided for in such annual appropriation resolution. (Emphasis added.)*

Thus, R.C. 3313.47 vests in each board of education responsibility for the management and control of all of the public schools within the board's district, see R.C. 3311.06 (territory of school districts), and R.C. 3313.20 bestows upon a board of education specific, express authority to promulgate whatever rules it deems necessary for the government of the pupils of its schools.

The foregoing provisions of R.C. 3313.20 and R.C. 3313.47 have been interpreted as conferring fairly broad authority upon a board of education with respect to the types of policies and rules the board may promulgate, and the actions it may pursue, for the government of its schools and the pupils attending therein. See, e.g., *Holroyd v. Eibling*, 116 Ohio App. at 445-6, 188 N.E.2d at 801 (under R.C. 3313.20 and R.C. 3313.47 and the general statutes concerning the powers of boards of education, "it has been held that the rule-making power of such boards for the proper conduct, control, regulation and supervision of its employees, pupils and the entire school system is unlimited except to the extent that it is curtailed by express law"); *State ex rel. Idle v. Chamberlain*, 39 Ohio Op. 2d 262, 263, 175 N.E.2d 539, 540 (C.P. Butler County 1961) ("[t]here is ample authority to the effect that in the exercise of the foregoing statutory powers [under R.C. 3313.20 and R.C. 3313.47], boards of education have been granted a wide area of discretion"); 1982 Op. Att'y Gen. No. 82-030 at 2-87 (citing *Holroyd v. Eibling*); 1982 Op. Att'y Gen. No. 82-029 at 2-85. Further, it has been stated that a board of education's exercise of its discretionary power under R.C. 3313.20 and R.C. 3313.47 will be upheld unless the exercise of such power is unreasonable, is done in bad faith, is fraudulent, or constitutes an abuse of discretion. *State ex rel. Ohio High School Athletic Association v. Judges*, 173 Ohio St. 239, 181 N.E.2d 261 (1962); *Greco v. Roper*, 145 Ohio St. 243, 61 N.E.2d 307 (1945); *Brannon v. Board of Education*, 99 Ohio St. 369, 124 N.E. 235 (1919); *Board of Education of Sycamore v. State ex rel. Wickham*, 80 Ohio St. 133, 88 N.E. 412 (1909); *State ex rel. Milhoof v. Board of Education*, 76 Ohio St. 297, 81 N.E. 568 (1907); *Youngstown Education Association v. Board of Education*, 36 Ohio App. 2d 35, 301 N.E.2d 891 (Mahoning County 1973); *Holroyd v. Eibling*; *State ex rel. Idle v. Chamberlain*. Thus, for example, it has been determined that a board of education, pursuant to R.C. 3313.20 and R.C. 3313.47, may enact policies pertaining to smoking by students on school property, 1974 Op. Att'y Gen. No. 74-095; participation of pregnant students in certain extracurricular activities, 1971 Op. Att'y Gen. No. 71-046; 1962 Op. Att'y Gen. No. 2998, p. 346; participation of students in extracurricular activities generally, 1963 Op. Att'y Gen. No. 120, p. 198; and students leaving school property at the lunchtime hour, 1962 Op. Att'y Gen. No. 3495, p. 1005.

I am not aware of any statutory provision that expressly prohibits a board of education from enacting a policy to permit high school students to be excused from attendance during regular school hours for the purpose of receiving religious instruction off school property. Further, from the information you have provided in your letter, it does not appear that the adoption of such a policy by the board would be characterized as unreasonable, in bad faith, or an abuse of discretion. Accordingly, I conclude that a board of education, pursuant to the authority conferred upon it by R.C. 3313.20 and R.C. 3313.47, may determine that a policy to permit high school students to be excused from attendance during regular school hours for the purpose of receiving religious instruction off school property is necessary for the government of the pupils of its schools. Having made such a determination, a board of education may properly adopt such a policy pursuant to the terms of R.C. 3313.20 and R.C. 3313.47.

A religious instruction released-time policy promulgated by a board of education under R.C. 3313.20 and R.C. 3313.47 is, however, subject to the strictures of the first amendment to the United States Constitution, which provides, in pertinent part, that, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."<sup>1</sup> The religious liberty guarantees expressed by the free exercise and establishment clauses have been held to be applicable to the individual states by virtue of the fourteenth amendment to the United States Constitution. *Cantwell v. Connecticut*, 310 U.S. 296, 303 (1940). Under currently prevailing decisions of the United States Supreme Court, a particular state law or governmental policy challenged as running afoul of the establishment clause will be upheld as constitutionally valid if it is demonstrated that the law or policy in question (1) has a secular purpose; (2) produces a principal or primary effect that neither advances nor inhibits religion; and, (3) does not result in an excessive entanglement of government with religion. See, e.g., *Lynch v. Donnelly*, 465 U.S. 668 (1984); *Mueller v. Allen*, 463 U.S. 388 (1983); *Wolman v. Walter*, 433 U.S. 229 (1977); *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, 403 U.S. 602 (1971).

Religious instruction released-time programs for public school students have been subject to close judicial scrutiny under the first amendment's establishment clause. A released-time program in which religious instruction is provided to students upon public school property will almost certainly be declared unconstitutional. *Illinois ex rel. McCollum v. Board of Education*, 333 U.S. 203 (1948) (declaring invalid a released-time arrangement whereby students were permitted to attend religious instruction classes conducted during regular school hours in the public school building by religious instructors of various faiths). On the other hand, a released-time program that permits public school students to be excused from attendance during regular school hours for the purpose of receiving religious instruction off school property does not, as a general matter, violate the proscriptions of the first amendment's religion clauses. *Zorach v. Clauson*, 343 U.S. 306 (1952) (upholding a released-time program that permitted a public school, upon written request of the parents of students, to release students during regular school hours for the purpose of attending religious instruction classes conducted off school premises by, and at the expense of, a duly constituted religious body). See also *Smith v. Smith*, 523 F.2d 121 (4th Cir. 1975) (syllabus paragraph), *cert. denied*, 423 U.S. 1073 (1976) (released-time program whereby public school students were released during school hours for religious instruction off school premises by a nonprofit organization supported by a council of churches had a secular purpose in accommodating the wishes of parents, did not excessively entangle the state with religion in that classrooms were not turned over to religious instruction, and, as its primary effect neither advanced nor inhibited religion, did not violate the establishment clause); *State ex rel. Holt v. Thompson*, 66 Wis. 2d 659, 225 N.W.2d 678 (1975) (released-time program did not violate establishment clause where the classes for religious instruction were conducted elsewhere than in public school buildings, students were released on written request or permission of their

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<sup>1</sup> Article I, §7 of the Ohio Constitution also states, in part, that, "[n]o person shall be compelled to attend, erect, or support any place of worship, or maintain any form of worship, against his consent; and no preference shall be given, by law, to any religious society; nor shall any interference with the rights of conscience be permitted."

parents, the responsibility for ensuring attendance at the religious classes was solely that of the religious organizations involved, the time allotted for such classes was limited, and there was no expenditure of public funds other than for the minor expense of filing attendance reports); *Lewis v Spaulding*, 193 Misc. 66, 85 N.Y.S.2d 682 (Sup. Ct. 1948) (a released-time program that permitted the release of public school pupils from regular school attendance for one hour or less weekly, on their parents' request, to enable them to attend religious instruction classes, under auspices of churches of their choice, outside school buildings and grounds, not per se unconstitutional as violating guarantees of religious liberty and separation of church and state). See generally *Dilger v. School District 24* CJ, 222 Or. 108, 352 P.2d 564 (1960) (statute authorizing public school released-time for attendance at religious instruction not unconstitutional because it failed to designate official or board of school system to whom application for released-time is to be made).

In addition, however, certain individual aspects of such "off campus" released-time programs have, on occasion, been challenged successfully as violating the establishment clause. See, e.g., *Lanner v. Wimmer*, 662 F.2d 1349 (10th Cir. 1981) (finding that the first amendment was violated by public schools' assumption of burden of gathering seminary's attendance slips which had been prepared and provided by public schools in view of less entangling alternative of requiring released-time personnel to transmit attendance reports to the public school, and by the granting of state credit for religious classes in satisfaction of elective courses, insofar as the released-time program required public school officials to make a judgment whether the classes offered under the program were "mainly denominational" in content). Cf. *Perry v. School District No. 81*, 54 Wash. 2d 886, 344 P.2d 1036 (1959) (concluding that the distribution of cards in schools upon which parents of public school children could indicate their desire to have their children attend religious education classes off school property, and the making of announcements regarding such released-time programs in public school classrooms by representatives of religious groups or school instructors, violated specific religious freedom provisions of the Washington Constitution); *Fisher v. Clackamas County School District 12*, 13 Or. App. 56, 507 P.2d 839 (1973) (holding that a released-time program in which fifth and sixth grade parochial school students, as full-time students of purported public school maintained in parochial school building, received their instruction from public school teacher but were released for religious instruction in another room, violated provision of Oregon Constitution prohibiting the use of public money for the benefit of religious institutions). In the single reported Ohio decision on this subject, for example, a court of common pleas declared a school district's purportedly off campus released-time program unconstitutional under the first amendment's establishment clause because the school district in question had, according to the evidence presented, entered into such a close partnership with a local church in developing and implementing the released-time program as part of the students' public school regimen that any distinction between the students' secular education on the one hand, and their religious instruction on the other, had effectively been obliterated. *Moore v. Board of Education*, 4 Ohio Misc. 257, 212 N.E.2d 833 (C.P. Mercer County 1965). In this regard, the syllabus to the court's decision summarizes the salient characteristics of the challenged released-time program, and the court's holding with respect thereto, as follows:

Where a board of education of a local school district maintains four elementary schools, in three of which all pupils are Roman Catholic and in the other, most are non-Catholic; a released time religious instruction is conducted for one hour per day, five days per week in the three former schools only, under the following circumstances: (1) the religious instruction is conducted in the same buildings with, or ones nearby, the classrooms, (2) the same teachers (including members of religious orders) give both classroom and religious instruction, (3) teacher recruitment policies are designed to obtain only those able and willing to fulfill the dual role, (4) pupil attendance at the several schools is not determined by geographic considerations, and (5) some pupils from outside the district attend such schools, with tuition paid by their parish, there is such a commingling of religious with secular instruction and assistance to a religious sect that the plaintiff's rights

under the Establishment of Religion Clause of the First Amendment and of the Ohio Constitution have been violated and an injunction will be granted to prevent its continuance.

*Moore v. Board of Education* (syllabus, paragraph seven).

Accordingly, a board of education that proposes to adopt and implement a religious instruction released-time policy pursuant to R.C. 3313.20 and R.C. 3313.47 should ensure that the policy it formulates comports with the religious freedom guarantees set forth in the United States and Ohio Constitutions, as applied and interpreted by the United States Supreme Court and the courts of this state respectively. Thus, for example, the religious instruction permitted by such a policy should not take place on public school premises, or upon other property owned or leased by the school district; public school personnel should assume little or no responsibility for the actual, daily implementation of the individual aspects of the released-time program; public funds should not be expended in support of the released-time program; and the released-time policy formulated by the board of education should apply in a nondiscriminatory fashion to students of all religious faiths and persuasions. *Zorach v. Clauson*; *Lanner v. Wimmer*; *Moore v. Board of Education*.

You have also asked whether released-time religious instruction may be counted as hours of instruction for purposes of computing the minimum hours of instruction required by the State Board of Education. R.C. 3301.07 sets forth the powers, duties, and responsibilities conferred upon the State Board of Education. R.C. 3301.07(D) provides, in pertinent part, that the State Board of Education shall "[f]ormulate and prescribe minimum standards to be applied to all elementary and secondary schools in this state for the purpose of requiring a general education of high quality." Pursuant thereto the State Board of Education has promulgated comprehensive minimum educational standards for all elementary and secondary schools in Ohio. Those standards appear in 3 Ohio Admin. Code Chapter 3301-35. The minimum standards for secondary schools may be found in rule 3301-35-02(B)(13). Those standards describe the coursework subject areas, and the minimum credit units in such subject areas, that students in grades nine through twelve must satisfy in each academic year. See 3 Ohio Admin. Code 3301-35-02(B)(13)(b)(i)-(xiv).

Insofar as the General Assembly has expressly delegated to the State Board of Education the authority to prescribe minimum course and credit requirements for secondary school students, I conclude that your particular question concerns a matter that may be addressed more appropriately by the State Board of Education than by a formal opinion of the Attorney General. Thus, I must respectfully decline to render you an opinion with respect to this question.

Finally, you have asked whether a board of education should adopt a religious instruction released-time policy. As I have already noted, R.C. 3313.20 and R.C. 3313.47 confer authority upon a board of education, in the reasonable exercise of its discretion, to adopt whatever policies it deems necessary for the government of the pupils of its schools. Thus, whether a board of education should adopt a religious instruction released-time policy is a matter that must be resolved by the board itself, taking into account the particular circumstances of the school district in question and the need within the school district for such a policy.

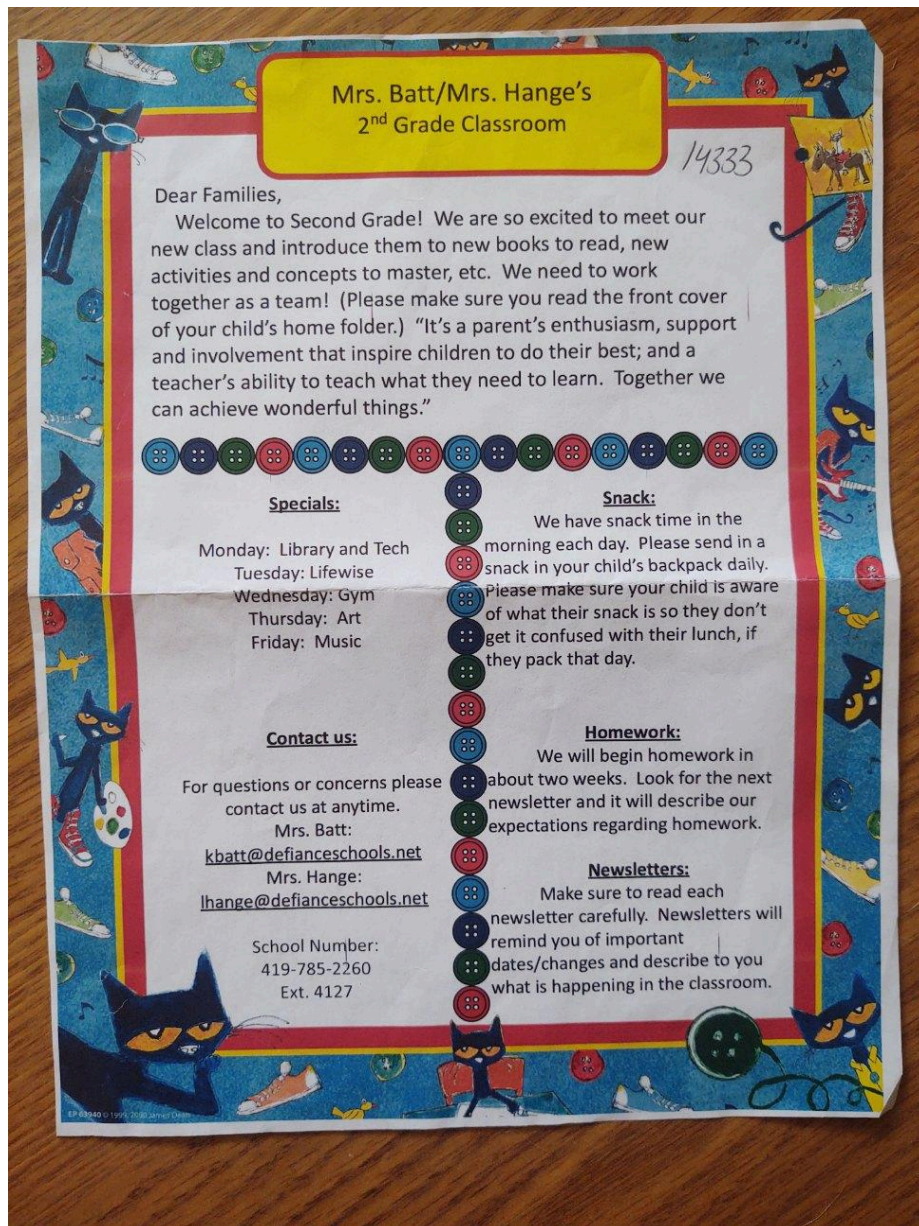
Based upon the foregoing it is my opinion, and you are advised that, pursuant to R.C. 3313.20 and R.C. 3313.47, a board of education may adopt a policy that permits high school students to be excused from attendance during regular school hours for the purpose of receiving religious instruction off school property. A religious instruction released-time policy adopted by a board of education pursuant to R.C. 3313.20 and R.C. 3313.47 must comport with the establishment clause of the first amendment to the United States Constitution and the religious freedom provisions of article I, §7 of the Ohio Constitution, as applied and interpreted by the United States Supreme Court and the courts of Ohio respectively.



# Documented Violations & Issues

## Defiance City Schools - Defiance, OH

School listed LifeWise as part of the weekly class [schedule](#), sent non attending 2nd graders to a [study hall](#), and [continued](#) to do so after being [warned](#) by FFRF. In addition; teachers have called kids that don't attend LifeWise "[leftovers](#)", shared private information & [punished](#) students for their behavior at LifeWise, and sent school [aides](#) to the program. LifeWise employees at this location have also left students [unsupervised](#) and even [restrained](#) them (likely without proper certification to do so).





On occasion, we will show a movie as a reward or special event. We typically show "G" rated movies, but on occasion may offer a school appropriate "PG" rated film. If you **DO NOT** want your child to watch "PG" films, please notify us in **writing**, otherwise permission is assumed.



# Documented Violations & Issues

## Special schedule

This year we will have 5 specials classes which means the specials will always happen on the same day of the week.

Monday- Physical Education

Tuesday- Art

Wednesday- Music


Thursday- Library/Computer

Friday- Lifewise

## Important dates

Sept. 5	NO SCHOOL-Labor Day
Oct. 13-14	Parent-Teacher Conferences
Oct. 14-17	NO SCHOOL-Teacher days
Oct. 21	End of 9 weeks
Nov. 23-25	NO SCHOOL-Thanksgiving
Dec. 22	Early dismissal 2:45
Dec. 22-Jan. 2	NO SCHOOL-Winter Break
Jan. 13	End of 9 weeks
Jan. 16	NO SCHOOL-MLK day
Feb. 17-20	NO SCHOOL-Teacher day/Presidents Day
Mar. 17	End of 9 weeks
Mar. 20-24	NO SCHOOL-Spring Break
APRIL IS TESTING MONTH	
*Avoid vacations and morning appointments	
Apr. 7	NO SCHOOL-Good Friday
May 29	NO SCHOOL-Memorial Day
May 31	Last day/2:45 dismissal

## Welcome to THIRD Grade



**MRS. ROBARGE**  
**2022-2023**  
**DES**  
**ROOM 312**

## Contact Info

**Mrs. Robarge**

Email  
[erobarge@defianceschools.net](mailto:erobarge@defianceschools.net)

School phone  
(419) 785-2260 x4146

**Mrs. Ashbaugh (ELA)**

Email  
[kashbaugh@defianceschools.net](mailto:kashbaugh@defianceschools.net)

School phone  
(419) 785-2260 x4147

# Documented Violations & Issues

## FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

P.O. BOX 750 • MADISON, WI 53701 • (608) 256-8900 • WWW.FFRF.ORG

August 24, 2021

**SENT VIA EMAIL & U.S. MAIL: [rmorton@defianceschools.net](mailto:rmorton@defianceschools.net)**

Robert Morton  
Superintendent  
Defiance City Schools  
801 S. Clinton Street  
Defiance, OH 43512

Re: Unconstitutional Endorsement of Released Time Religious Program

Dear Superintendent Morton:

I am writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) regarding a constitutional violation occurring in Defiance City Schools. FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with more than 35,000 members across the country, including more than 900 members and a local chapter in Ohio. Our purposes are to protect the constitutional principle of separation between state and church, and to educate the public on matters relating to nontheism.

A concerned Defiance City Schools parent has raised concerns with the District's endorsement and advancement of a religious released time program run by Lifewise Academy. Our complainant reports that time for the religious program is built into the students' schedules and students who choose not to attend the program are not given alternative instruction. We understand that students are given the choice between a limited version of "study hall," or attending this religious program. We also understand schools list Lifewise as a class in the same way they do gym or music class. Please see the enclosed photo.

We write to ensure Defiance City Schools is not endorsing religious released time classes, promoting the classes, or enticing students to attend by listing it as part of the school's curriculum.

Encouraging students to participate in a religious class violates the Constitution. *See, e.g., Doe v. Porter*, 370 F.3d 558 (6th Cir. 2004) (striking down school's allowance of private group to provide bible instruction in case brought by FFRF); *HS v. Huntington County Community School Corp.*, 616 F.Supp.2d 863 (N.D. Ind. 2009) (issuing preliminary injunction against school that allowed trailers on school property for religious instruction because to do so conveyed a message of support and endorsement of religion); *Doe by Doe v. Shenandoah County School Bd.*, 737 F. Supp. 913 (W.D. Va. 1990) (issuing temporary restraining order against school finding that buses used for religious instruction parked in front of the school gave the appearance of school involvement and that school employees took part in recruitment efforts).

# Documented Violations & Issues

While the Supreme Court has upheld the constitutionality of released time classes, this doesn't permit schools to foster or encourage participation in these programs by making them an official part of the school curriculum or by punishing students who do not attend the program by not offering them alternative instruction. See *Zorach v. Clauson*, 343 U.S. 306, 312 (1952). Schools also may not endorse these programs. In *Zorach*, the Supreme Court held that released time is acceptable if school authorities "do no more than release students whose parents so request." *Id.* at 311. This means the school district cannot:

- Expend public school funds and resources for the program
- Use public school facilities or resources during school hours for released time programs, including allowing a bus, trailer, or other vehicle to be parked on school grounds for the program
- **Encourage participation in the program**
- Punish students who do not attend the program
- Allow released time instructors to solicit student participation during school hours or at school-sponsored events.

A public school may not in any way promote, advance, or otherwise endorse religion. The Supreme Court has said, "The touchstone for our analysis is the principle that the 'First Amendment mandates governmental neutrality between religion and religion, and between religion and nonreligion.'" *McCreary Cty. v. ACLU*, 545 U.S. 844, 860 (2005), (quoting *Epperson v. Arkansas*, 393 U.S. 97, 104 (1968); *Everson v. Bd. of Educ. of Ewing*, 330 U.S. 1, 15-16 (1947); *Wallace v. Jaffree*, 472 U.S. 38, 53 (1985)). Endorsing and encouraging students to attend religious released time classes runs afoul of this stricture.

A public school may not advance or endorse private religious classes. We request that the District investigate these concerns and ensure that its schools are not in any way promoting or encouraging attendance in released time classes. Students who do not attend should be given an adequate alternative, and the program should not be listed as an official class, nor should the District be coordinating signup and participation in the classes. Please inform us in writing of the steps the District takes to remedy these concerns so that we may inform our complainant that this issue has been resolved.

Sincerely,



Christopher Line  
Staff Attorney  
Freedom From Religion Foundation

Enclosure



## *Documented Violations & Issues*

---

### Specials:

Monday: Library and Tech

Tuesday: Lifewise

Wednesday: Gym

Thursday: Art

Friday: Music

# Documented Violations & Issues

**From:** Swartz, Greg gswartz@defianceschools.net  
**Subject:** Re: Invitation: G. Swartz OB @ Tue Feb 22, 2022 10:45am - 11:15am (EST) (gswartz@defianceschools.net)  
**Date:** January 21, 2022 at 11:54 AM  
**To:** Teresa Pfeiffer tpfeiffer@defianceschools.net

GS

Hey, we have lifewise leftover kids on Tuesdays so I think we'll want to pick a different day for the observation. Thanks.

On Wed, Dec 29, 2021 at 3:13 PM Teresa Pfeiffer <tpfeiffer@defianceschools.net> wrote:

You have been invited to the following event.

## G. Swartz OB

**When** Tue Feb 22, 2022 10:45am – 11:15am Eastern Time - New York [more details »](#)

**Joining info** Join with Google Meet  
[meet.google.com/rpt-wxgy-gvx](https://meet.google.com/rpt-wxgy-gvx)

**Join by phone**  
 +1 614-983-0773

**Calendar** [gswartz@defianceschools.net](mailto:gswartz@defianceschools.net)

**Who**

- [tpfeiffer@defianceschools.net](mailto:tpfeiffer@defianceschools.net)
- [gswartz@defianceschools.net](mailto:gswartz@defianceschools.net)

**Guests** [gswartz@defianceschools.net](mailto:gswartz@defianceschools.net) **Yes - Maybe - No** [more options »](#)

**Invitations from** [Google Calendar](#)

**Next step** [gswartz@defianceschools.net](mailto:gswartz@defianceschools.net)  
[gswartz@defianceschools.net](mailto:gswartz@defianceschools.net)

**Truly, organizing a meeting is a lot of work. We're here to help you.** <https://calendar.google.com/calendar/>

**Find out more** [Learn More](#)

<DES Staff>

..  
 Greg Swartz  
 Physical Education Teacher  
 Defiance Elementary School

<DES Staff>

## *Documented Violations & Issues*

From: Schaffer, Melanie MSchaffer@defianceschools.net

Subject: 9:15

Date: August 20, 2021 at 8:53 AM

To: Teresa Pfeiffer tpfeiffer@defianceschools.net

MS

ok...so after talking further to Julie and Chris .. are among the kids staying back at DES so Julie is going to stay here with them. My aide (Imthurn) and both of Matheny's aides will be going to Lifewise. I think that this should work. Fingers crossed. It's Friday! hahah  
Mel

<DES Staff>



# Documented Violations & Issues

**From:** Phil Notziger phil@lifewiseacademy.org  
**Subject:** Re: 4/27  
**Date:** April 27, 2022 at 8:35 PM  
**To:** Pfeiffer, Teresa tpfeiffer@defianceschools.net  
**Cc:** Emily Wallace emilywallace@lifewiseacademy.org, Meyer, Nikki NMeyer@defianceschools.net

PN

Mrs. Pfeiffer,

I am sorry to add to the situation brought to you but I found out something else happened on the bus before LW started. I would prefer to tell you in person but I have family that Robin and I were with all weekend.

Our female volunteer, Barbara Leatherman called me this evening and told me that she is the last to exit the bus when the 3rd graders exit to go into the YMCA. This morning she was waiting for the last 3 boys to get off the bus as they were arguing who would be the last one off. Our volunteer stopped the boys and said that they shouldn't be concerned about that because she would be the last off. To this actually got in her face and said, "go, go, go". Our bus driver, Bob Kroeger, must have got off the bus to use the restroom (he usually never gets off the bus). In order not to escalate the situation, she got off the bus and waited for the 3 boys to exit. She said, who was last, sat in the driver's seat and had to act like he was driving. was one of the other boys and she said who the third one was but I didn't catch who he was.

Emily knows that I believe that we should handle most inappropriate behavior issues that happen while the students are under our authority but certain situations school officials need to be notified. After hearing Barbara tell me what happened before LW, along with the punching incident that no adults witnessed, I agree with Emily that needs to be held back from LW for a minimum of two weeks.

We want this type of student to be involved in LW as we all know he needs it, but I will not tolerate blatant disrespect and failure to obey an adult in authority. Barbara admitted that she felt intimidated and wondered what she should have done. I assured her she had done the right thing.

Knowing that had issues earlier in the year I asked her if behavior had been getting worse. She said his behavior hadn't been too bad lately, it was just the incidents today.

Sorry for adding to your plate but I knew you would want to know this before you met with him.  
 Phil

On Wed, Apr 27, 2022 at 3:09 PM Pfeiffer, Teresa <tpfeiffer@defianceschools.net> wrote:  
 Thanks for letting us know. I will do the write up and send it home. Thanks!

Nikki, I'll call down tomorrow morning to talk to him.

On Wed, Apr 27, 2022 at 1:44 PM Emily Wallace <emilywallace@lifewiseacademy.org> wrote:  
 Good afternoon!

Sorry for the delay in getting this email out and to you. I just wanted to extend as much information as I have on what exchange happened on the bus between and .

My volunteer returned from the bus ride to take the 3rd graders back to school and told me that although she didn't see it, had punched in the face. She told me the students had exited the bus, but was hiding in the seats. When she went back to him, she saw he was crying, and he told her had punched him in the face. She touched base with who said that had called him a name, so he punched him. By the time she made it up to the door with the boys, the teachers weren't there anymore (I'm sure you guys were just leading the way back to classrooms, the teachers are always gone in that way when students are coming back into the building, not a problem!), so she wasn't able to tell anyone.

I called the school as soon as I was able to give a heads up as to why may have come back crying, but wanted to offer this information as well to add to what may have already been gathered from the boys.

It is my request that be held back from attending LifeWise for at least one week (on May 4th) as a consequence for his behavior on the bus and intentionally harming another student. If you feel his behavior warrants a longer LW suspension, please let me know. We would really like to see him again this school year, but also need to know all the other students are safe and able to learn effectively, especially given we are transporting them off school property.

Thank you!  
 Emily Wallace

<DES Staff>

Phil Notziger  
 Defiance Area Director  
 Northwest Ohio Field Director  
 419-576-6446  
 lifewiseacademy.com

# Documented Violations & Issues

**From:** Emily Wallace emilywallace@lifewiseacademy.org  
**Subject:** 1/3 LifeWise:  
**Date:** January 3, 2022 at 4:18 PM  
**To:** Reiman, Jaide JReiman@defianceschools.net, ECikity@defianceschools.net  
**Cc:** DHeld@defianceschools.net

EW

Welcome back!

I hope you each had a great, restful Christmas break. So sorry to be reaching out so immediately our first day back, but could use some assistance with

has displayed some behaviors leading up to this point. The first day he had issues at LifeWise, I wasn't there. When I got back, I spent a couple weeks observing his behaviors, and I spent Christmas break coming up with ideas to help him in the classroom.

Today, my co-worker rode the bus over to pick up the kiddos. She got off the bus and told me was refusing to come off. She took the rest of the class inside, and I went on to talk to (our bus driver stayed on with us for accountability). He was curled in a ball in the seat, against the window. Anytime I'd talk to him, he'd start screaming. I tried encouraging him that he and I could be a team, that I wanted to help him, etc., but at that point he started punching in the air and kicking the walls of the bus. I informed him he wasn't allowed to kick things that weren't his, to which he responded by screaming and kicking the plexiglass pretty hard. I placed his feet on the ground, held my leg over his to keep him from kicking, and reminded him he wasn't allowed to kick the bus. He screamed, crawled under the bus seat, and in a jumbled way shared that his frustration was from school and wanting to be second in line, but not being able to. I told him at that point I had suckers and tootsie rolls in my classroom, and IF he could come inside and show me he could obey, then he could have a reward. It took awhile, but eventually he decided he wanted that.

The entire walk inside he was ranting that he hated life and wanted to be dead, repeating phrases similar to that, threw peers' coats off chairs as he passed them, and ran to the back of the classroom (where I let him stay) curled up in a ball. I told him once he was in his assigned spot, he could choose his reward, and after about 10-15 minutes, he got himself there. After he had his sucker he brightened up, and he was excited to share that since their class had earned a reward today of 1 sucker each, he was going to give his 2nd sucker to his brother.

I share so much detail just to give insight as to what happened and wanting to understand if this is normal behavior for , if there was something I could have done differently/can do differently in the future, if this is unusual for him, or anything else you can pass along to help me help to be successful. If you have any further questions, I'd also be able to share more from today, a typical class's structure, how I do reward systems, or anything else!

I hope you all have a great week,  
 Emily Wallace

## Avery Elementary - Hilliard City Schools - Hilliard, OH

The school accommodated and scheduled a LifeWise [presentation](#) during a teacher professional development day which caused FFRF to send a [letter](#) about teachers being required to attend training session led by LifeWise and published this follow up [article](#).

## Columbus Grove Local Schools - Columbus Grove, OH

[Superintendent Report](#) discussing the local LifeWise program's expansion and soliciting participation.

# Documented Violations & Issues



## Superintendent's Report

Submitted by Nick Verhoff

January 12, 2023

### School Board Approves 2022-2023 School Calendar

At the December 21 meeting, the Columbus Grove Board of Education approved the 2023-2024 school calendar. The main purpose for approving this schedule so far in advance is that county schools have more time to collaborate with one another for transportation purposes. Most schools in the county transport resident students to other schools that house ESC units. Secondly, parents of seniors have ample time to plan accordingly for graduation parties. Like last school year, this year's commencement exercises will take place on the Sunday of the weekend BEFORE Memorial Day weekend. This year's commencement will take place at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, May 21. To view next year's school schedule, go to <https://cg.noacsc.org/> and click on "Calendars" on the left column of the homepage. If you have any questions regarding the school calendar, please contact my office at 659-4301.

### Lifewise Program's Enrollment Continues to Grow

Now in its second year, all CG students in 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grades have the opportunity to participate in Lifewise, which is a Released Time Religious Instruction (RTRI) program that allows students to attend off-site non-denominational Bible-based classes with an emphasis on character education. These classes take place during either a student's academic assist or specials period in the basement of the St. John's United Methodist Church. Former CG teacher Carla Wyant serves as the teacher for these classes. There are now over 140 students enrolled in this program. If parents would like their child to participate in this program, they can contact the elementary office (659-2631) for more information. If you have any questions, please contact directors Dave and Kristy Nusbaum at [columbusgroveoh@lifewiseacademy.com](mailto:columbusgroveoh@lifewiseacademy.com).

### National Mentoring Month-Thank You Kids Hope Mentors!

January marks National Mentoring Month and we would like to thank our Kids Hope mentors at Columbus Grove. Under the wonderful leadership of Jackie Brinkman, Kids Hope is now in its ninth year at Columbus Grove! We want to say thank you to the following individuals who give an hour a week to come into our building to mentor one of our students: Deb and Jack Myers, Jackie and Roger Brinkman, Brent Stechschulte, Bruce Remlinger, Geoff Eubanks, Elaine Kiene, Julie Shafer, Libby Oswald, Joy Halker, Lynn Bryan, Diane Miller, Mike Ebling, Becky Fuerst, Breann Bogart, Shelley Shafer, Bethany Moore, Terrie Smith, Holly Zarse, Cindy Hizer, and Kevin Schumacher.

### January is School Board Appreciation Month!

January is also designated at School Board Appreciation Month in Ohio. School board members exemplify local citizen control and decision-making in education. They volunteer hundreds of hours and an immeasurable amount of energy to ensure that our schools are providing the best education possible for the children of our community. For all are their dedication, we are taking this opportunity to show them our appreciation during School Board Recognition Month.

School board members are citizens whose decisions affect our children —what they learn, who will teach them and what kinds of facilities house their classrooms. These are men and women elected to establish the policies that provide the framework for our public schools.

# *Documented Violations & Issues*

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## **Ashland City School District - Ashland, OH**

FFRF [letter](#) to Superintendent about promoting LifeWise in his official capacity during proponent [testimony](#) for Ohio's HB 445. Ashland's mayor also spent federal American Rescue Plan Act [funds](#) on LifeWise.

## **Culver Community School Corporation - Culver, IN**

FFRF [letter](#) about students being forced to attend a mandatory assembly about LifeWise.

## **Fredericktown Local School District - Fredericktown, Ohio**

FFRF [reports](#) the school allowed representatives of LifeWise to come into the schools in order to promote LifeWise and recruit students.

## **Paulding Exempted Village Schools - Paulding, OH**

School [website](#) integrated and hosted LifeWise information and promoted it under parent links. There are also vetted reports of students being [sent](#) to LifeWise without parental consent forms, as well as LifeWise being permitted to get students directly from the [classroom](#) and pass out [Bibles](#) in the school.

## **Cloverleaf Local Schools - Seville, OH**

Posted LifeWise [flier](#) and solicited participation on the district website.

## **Fairview Elementary - Central Local Schools - Sherwood, Ohio**

School listing LifeWise on the elementary [schedule](#) & calling LifeWise employees “[staff](#)”.



# Documented Violations & Issues

JANUARY 2025						
S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
			1 ⊗	2 ⊗	3 ⊗	
	6 D	7 A	8 B	9 C	10 D	
	13 A	14 B	15 C	16 D	17 A	
	20 ⊗	21 B	22 C	23 D	24 A	
	27 B	28 C	29 D	30 A	31 B	

FEBRUARY 2025						
S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
	3 C	4 D	5 A	6 B	7 C	
	10 D	11 A	12 B	13 C	14 D	
	17 ⊗	18 A	19 B	20 C	21 D	
	24 A	25 B	26 C	27 D	28 A	

MARCH 2025						
S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
	3 B	4 C	5 D	6 A	7 B	
	10 C	11 D	12 A	13 B	14 C	
	17 D	18 A	19 B	20 C	21 D	
	24 A	25 B	26 C	27 D	28 A	
	31 B					

## Fairview Elementary

### 2024 - 2025 Rotation Schedule For Related Arts

Phone # 419-658-2511

Kindergarten	A	B	C	D
Gearhart	Music	PE	Art	Tech.
Reinig	PE	Art	Tech.	Music
Speiser	Art	Tech.	Music	PE
Slivinski	Tech.	Music	PE	Art
1st Grade	A	B	C	D
Ciolek	Music	PE	Art	Lifewise
Imm	PE	Art	Lifewise	Music
Meyer	Art	Lifewise	Music	PE
Nusbaum	Lifewise	Music	PE	Art
2nd Grade	A	B	C	D
Baker	Music	PE	Art	Lifewise
Ford	PE	Art	Lifewise	Music
Panico	Art	Lifewise	Music	PE
Willitzer	Lifewise	Music	PE	Art
3rd Grade	A	B	C	D
Alvarez	Music	PE	Art	Lifewise
Heyerly	PE	Art	Lifewise	Music
Roose	Art	Lifewise	Music	PE
4th Grade	A	B	C	D
Monroe	PE	Art	Lifewise	Music
Snyder	Art	Lifewise	Music	PE
Sumpter	Lifewise	Music	PE	Art
5th Grade	A	B	C	D
Kime	Art	Lifewise	Music	PE
Nusbaum	Lifewise	Music	PE	Art
Zipfel	Music	PE	Art	Lifewise

APRIL 2025						
S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
		1 C	2 D	3 A	4 B	
	7 C	8 D	9 A	10 B	11 C	
	14 D	15 A	16 B	17 C	18 ⊗	
	21 ⊗	22 D	23 A	24 B	25 C	
	28 D	29 A	30 B			

MAY 2025						
S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
				1 C	2 D	
	5 A	6 B	7 C	8 D	9 A	
	12 B	13 C	14 D	15 A	16 B	
	19 C	20 D	21 A	22 B	23 C	
	26 ⊗	27 D	28 A	29 B	30 C	



= No School

Make-up days: May 29-30, June 2-6

1 Hour Early Dismissal Days:  
Nov. 26, Dec. 20, May 28

2 Hour Delay Days:  
Oct. 28, March 24

## Documented Violations & Issues



**LifeWise Academy - Central Local** • [Follow](#)

11h • 🌐

Congratulations to Mr. Davis! Staff Superstar!!  
Thank you for impacting the elementary students  
at Fairview and faithfully sharing the Gospel with  
the next generation. 🧡❤️🧡



**Central Local Schools** • [Follow](#)

Sep 16 • 🌐

Staff Superstar: Mr. Davis



👍❤️ 22

7 comments 1 share

# Documented Violations & Issues

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## **Continental Elementary School, Continental, OH**

Official school Facebook page promotion [video](#).

## **Elmwood Local Schools - Bloomdale, OH**

District violations include:

- [Renting](#) school buildings and providing security badges to LifeWise.
- Giving [wifi](#) access and tech support to LifeWise.
- Providing LifeWise a classroom [phone](#) tied into their system as well as a school number and extension.
- [Soliciting](#) participation for LifeWise.
- Principal using his position and school email to [endorse](#) LifeWise to other districts.
- Principal using his position and school email to [endorse](#) LifeWise to churches.
- Principal receiving LifeWise's promotional [marketing](#) his school email.
- Teachers buying LifeWise [shirts](#) through school email.
- Not meeting required [IEP](#) minutes because of LifeWise.

These are only a few examples. Many more not listed here can be found in this [records](#) request.

The superintendent [admits](#) they are “crossing the line” and hopes they can continue to do so once the school is “not under the radar”.

## **River View Intermediate Schools - Warsaw, OH**

District [solicited](#) participation and promoting [fundraising](#) for LifeWise on the school's official Facebook page. Additionally concerning (although not a violation by the school) is the fact this local LifeWise program is hosting students in a garage ([1](#), [2](#)), raising questions about sanitation, safety measures, fire code as well as zoning and building regulations.

## **Greenville City Schools - Greenville, OH**

School listed LifeWise as part of students' weekly [schedule](#).

## **Liberty Center Local Schools - Liberty Center, OH**

LifeWise claimed a teacher had to discuss the [Bible](#) with students because of LifeWise.

## **Wynford Local Schools - Bucyrus, OH**

District was [renting](#) buses to LifeWise and using school resources & employees for coordination.

# *Documented Violations & Issues*

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**Shawnee Local School District - Lima, OH**

School sending home enrollment [advertisements](#) in kids bookbags unsolicited.

**Miamisburg City School District - Miamisburg, OH**

District hosting LifeWise information [flyer](#) on their website.

**Wadsworth City Schools - Wadsworth, OH**

Hosted LifeWise information [flyer](#) on the district website.

**Mechanicsburg Exempted Village Schools - Mechanicsburg, OH**

District set up an online form ([1](#), [2](#), [3](#)) and integrated a cafeteria ordering system specifically to accommodate LifeWise employees picking up school meals ordered by parents.

**Marysville Exempted Village Schools District - Marysville, OH**

District Board of Education Member praising and [promoting](#) LifeWise while using his official title and position.

**Southwest Licking School District - Pataskala, OH**

The district took it upon themselves to dictate which students were “eligible” for LifeWise and which students were not based on the child's homeroom class schedule rotation. Additionally they solicited participation & polled interest by creating forms and sending unsolicited official school emails to student's parents about their children's [eligibility](#) for LifeWise. The district is also making their cafeteria staff and teachers coordinate the students [lunches](#) being ordered and providing them to LifeWise staff.

**Perrysburg Schools - Perrysburg, OH**

District [promotes](#) LifeWise in mass school flyers [emails](#).

**North Union Local School District - Richwood, OH**

Elementary [advertising](#) on their website that LifeWise is the only outside organization present at their open house.

**Franklin Monroe Local School District - Arcanum, OH**



# *Documented Violations & Issues*

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District allowed LifeWise to [fundraise](#) on school property.

## **Bellaire Local Schools - Bellaire, OH**

Elementary promoted and solicited participation for LifeWise by [advertising](#) the program and encouraging students to sign up on their official Facebook page.

## **Elida Local Schools - Elida, OH**

District allowed LifeWise to host an informational [meeting](#) on school property in the Middle School Commons during a teacher work day.

## **Fairbanks Local School District - Milford Center, OH**

Morning announcements regarding LifeWise were made to students in both the [High School](#) (promoting a fundraiser) and [Middle School](#) (soliciting enrollment) buildings, then also sent to parents as an email.

## **Versailles Exempted Village Schools - Versailles, OH**

Middle School held and advertised LifeWise's participation in a prayer [vigil](#) at the school gym.

## **Norwalk City Schools - Norwalk, OH**

Teachers expressed concerns students were missing Science and Social Studies classes. Another teacher questioned how they were supposed to handle grades for students who missed their class.

# Documented Violations & Issues



Kraus, Brenda <krausb@norwalktruckers.net>

## LifeWise Information

8 messages

Kraus, Brenda <krausb@norwalktruckers.net>

Thu, Oct 26, 2023 at 7:59 AM

Attached is the LifeWise roster. The start date is Tuesday, Nov. 7th and the time will be from 1:45 to 2:45. I will distribute name badges to your mailboxes for the students soon. The name badges have either a red or blue dot on them differentiating the two classes. Please ensure the students wear their badges for every class. Thank you.

 LifeWise Rosters 1 st Quarter 2023-24

---  
**Brenda Kraus**  
*Principal's Secretary*  
*League Elementary*  
*16 E. League St*  
*Norwalk, OH 44857*  
*Phone: 419.668.2450 ext 1617*  
*FAX 419.668.6794*

@norwalktruckers.net>

Thu, Oct 26, 2023 at 8:05 AM

The students will be missing part of our Science or SS class in the afternoon. We only meet 3 times a week to begin with. Are we okay with having them make up the work they miss?

[Quoted text hidden]

@norwalktruckers.net>

Thu, Oct 26, 2023 at 8:08 AM

It is science/social studies time for our team also.

[Quoted text hidden]

@norwalktruckers.net>

Thu, Oct 26, 2023 at 8:18 AM

What day/time is Lifewise? I'm wondering who will be leaving during their Title I Time and how I can do some rearranging if possible.

[Quoted text hidden]

@norwalktruckers.net>

Thu, Oct 26, 2023 at 8:21 AM

every Tuesday beginning November 7th.

1:45 - 2:45

[Quoted text hidden]

Kish, Nick <kishn@norwalktruckers.net>

Thu, Oct 26, 2023 at 9:34 AM

Students who are attending Lifewise should be able to makeup their work at home if possible. If parents are ok with their students attending Lifewise then they have agreed upon their students missing some instructional content.

Thanks,

nick

[Quoted text hidden]

---  
**Nick Kish**  
*Principal League Elementary*

# Documented Violations & Issues



Dupont, Joyce <treasurer@norwalktruckers.net>

## Fwd: Lifewise Academy and art class, I need direction

1 message

Crawford, Alison <crawforda@norwalktruckers.net>

Thu, Oct 24, 2024 at 10:28 AM

To: Joyce Dupont <treasurer@norwalktruckers.net>, Brad Cooley <cooleyb@norwalktruckers.net>, Daniel Bauman <baumand@norwalktruckers.net>, NCSD Board of Education Members <ncsd-boed@norwalktruckers.net>

Hi Brad, Joyce and Dan,

I know Brad is out of town so this is no rush but I would like more information on how LifeWise is being run in each grade that has the option to attend. When it was introduced to the board, it was only at Pleasant and when asked, we were told it was only being offered during their "extra period". If this is not the case for other grades/buildings, I do want to discuss it again with the board.

Thank you,

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Crawford, Alison <crawforda@norwalktruckers.net>

Date: Thu, Oct 24, 2024 at 10:26 AM

Subject: Re: Lifewise Academy and art class, I need direction

Hi [REDACTED]

I appreciate your question and would like to respond. I want to clarify first that the board did not vote on LifeWise or the district policy that allows these organizations to offer their programs to our students per parent decision. This policy was already established within our district for years (from my understanding when I asked Joyce). We were given a presentation where we were able to ask questions, but did not vote (you can refer back to the meeting for confirmation). I did ask when these classes were going to be offered during that meeting. At the time, it was only being introduced at Pleasant and I was told it is happening one day a week (on Friday I believe) when students had an "extra period" so they would NOT be missing any classes (including art, gym, etc). With that being said, my stance was as long as it was not falling during any class time, and it was not a burden on our admin/staff, I believe in parent choice and was ok with it.

I know this program was expanded to some of our other elementary buildings, but I was not made aware of it taking place during any classes. I am not happy to hear students are missing [REDACTED] attend and do not believe it should be an option to miss any classes at all. If there is a study hall or extra period available, and a parent decides THAT is worth missing, I can understand the parent making that decision. But, I agree with you, that we should not be willing to have a child miss [REDACTED] am obviously only one board member so this is something we will need to discuss as a board in a meeting to make any official decision, change or make any official stance on the subject. I will follow up with Brad and Joyce on this subject and how it is being implemented for all grades.

Again, I appreciate your question and your dedication to our students.

Thank you,

On Thu, Oct 24, 2024 at 9:57 AM [REDACTED]

I had a quick question about the board's position on students attending Lifewise Academy. I teach [REDACTED] This year about 11 students are missing

[REDACTED] because their parents are choosing to send them to Lifewise. I have no problem with this however, how do I handle grades for these students? [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] My schedule is already full so I can't add another class just for these children. We could add these

children to a class but that will interrupt the subject we pull them from. If their parents are choosing to send their child to Lifewise, then special accommodations should not be made.

I am not coming to you as a union leader. I'm coming to you as a teacher that does not have direction. I don't have a problem with the teachings of Lifewise. The board made the decision to include Lifewise in the school day. I support that decision (I don't agree with it, but I support it.)

I need to know what the official board position on missed classes, grades, and participation [REDACTED] is very important to me and I want to be able to reach all the students. Lifewise Academy is interrupting that goal.

Thank you,



## *Documented Violations & Issues*

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