



An investigation of some aspects and implications of released-time for religious education
by James W Zottnick

A THESIS Presented to the Division of Education and the Graduate Division in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Education
Montana State University
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Abstract:

The thesis is entitled An Investigation of Some Aspects and Implications of Released-Time for Religious Education. By way or orientation, "released-time" is the designation assigned to a period of religious education that falls within the hours of a recognized public-school day. The pupils who desire to participate are excused for part of the school day to go to a nearby church for religious instruction. Released-time is designed to bridge the gap between the limitations of the public school in teaching religious belief, and the inadequacies of traditional church agencies in meeting the spiritual needs of children.

The author had several purposes in undertaking the study. First, to reveal the historical background and movements that created a favorable environment for the beginning of released-time. Second, to reveal the rational foundation that gave meaning and direction to the movement. Third, to analyze some of the legal decisions and ramifications of these decisions to determine the present legal status of released-time.

The procedure followed in the study consisted of a survey of the literature available in the areas of religion and public education. Direct mail inquiries were sent to each state that has taken legislative action regarding the released-time program. A sampling of letters to various city church councils with active released-time programs produced some pertinent information.

On the basis of the study the following conclusions were drawn regarding the released-time program. Religion expressed in sectarian, theological, doctrinal, or dogmatic terms cannot be introduced into the public school without endangering the principle of church-state separation. When properly established, the released-time plan can provide religious instruction and experiences on a sound educational basis without violating the principle of church-state separation.

In summary, there are several possible ways in which the released-time program could be emphasized in a community.

First, the desire for such a program must be established as far as the community is concerned. This means that active support must be forthcoming from church, school, and community. Second, the type of program to be offered must be agreed upon, whether denominational, interdenominational, or community type program. Last, solid financial backing must be assured to obtain qualified, trained personnel and good instructional equipment.

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