

Religious Schools



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Religion has always been a touchy subject in today's society, as any inappropriate language used, whether you mean it or not, will be marked down as "racial discrimination". Thus, religious education in schools has been one of the most debated topics, as it concerns the education of our future generation, and consequently, the future society. Religious schools may prevent students from socializing with students from other religions and give a wrong concept of the society that we live in, but it helps shape children's morals and improve their academic achievement.

Being stuck in a religious school prevents students from interacting with students of other religion. They'll have no idea how to deal with people of other religion or even people with no religion at all! Gang fights between ethnic groups and terrorist attacks can be prevented by sending all students to public school. At school, they will be exposed to other religions and cultures, and eventually learn to accept others. The difference between different religions can be eliminated through interaction in a classroom. Giving religious schools preference by separating them and allowing them to study in a different school with a different social background is not only unfair to other students in public schools, but also, in a way, harming the students themselves. They get less exposed to the society they live in, and they are not fully prepared to live in such a society in future. Separate religious schools are seen as "antithetical to Canadian multiculturalism and tolerance, not to mention unity" (Todd, 2009). Religious schools say that having religious students in the same classroom as public students is a sign of racism, as the religious students don't have their 'rights'. However, "The curious thing is that, while the existence of Roman Catholics is considered a sufficient reason for spending public money on educational propaganda designed to increase their numbers, the existence of

Communists and the existence of freethinkers is not considered any ground for spending public money upon schools designed to instill their opinions into the young" (Russell, 1930). There is no better way to let students of different faiths to get to know each other than being in the same classroom.

Furthermore, precious time used for prayers and religious studies in faith schools can be used to focus on other useful and real-life courses at school. Religious studies that don't support real-life applications should be a private matter occurring before or after school hours, as opposed to during school hours. Schools can organize after religious school activities after school, and students who are interested can join these groups to know more about their religion. Science and religion have lots of conflicts, and "a Jewish student remarked that although she believed in creationism, she was confused about the conflicts between the Bible and evolution, and said, 'There is no actual proof that God created earth.'" (Cosner, 2008). According to students, the Bible says that God created earth, while their science teachers tell them about an explosion billions of years ago, and the dust created earth and all living objects on earth. The students end up confused. Religion is mostly based on superstition, which helps people who don't understand science to make sense of reality. "Religion relies on authority — from a person, book, or tradition — and its Truth is supposed to be universal and eternal. But in science, the authority is in the evidence and reasoning, which are always open to challenge; so science's truth is relative and tentative" (Willett, 1999). The purpose of education is to educate our next generation, so that they can make the society into a better one for their generation. Useful courses like Earth and Space science should be taught as opposed to courses like Bible studies, as these religious courses will just get students confused as to what they should believe, and the future generation will not be able to continue the researches and findings of the older generations, which defeats the purpose of education.

However, religion is actually, in some way, beneficial to education and a child's morals. Students with high levels of religious commitment do better than students with low levels of religious commitment, and they also have more resistance to cheat on a paper-and-pencil test than children from public schools. "Kids with religious parents are better behaved and adjusted than other children, according to a new study that is the first to look at the effects of religion on young child development" (Wenner, 2007). The values that religious schools teach their students are still helping to shape students into better students. The students tend to be self-sacrificing and pro-family. This is very important in shaping how parents relate to their kids, and how their kids response in return. For religious people, having a clean conscience is way more important than having a good life, and they tend to do good deeds that will make them end up in heaven as opposed to hell. Religious children will be influenced by their environment to be a good and caring citizen. Using religious reasons to constrict children's behaviour will enable them to learn to care for others, and they will grow up to be desirable citizens who will do their best for the society.

So as we can see, religious schools have their advantages and disadvantages. Although they prevent religious students from interacting with the outside world more often and use up precious time teaching religion courses, they produce students with higher morals and better academic achievements. There will be no end to this controversy, but improvements can definitely be made. For example, religious schools can try organizing more trips to public schools and let religious students mix with those from public schools. These interactions will enable religious children to have a better view of the society. Schools can also try reducing the amount of class time spent on prayers, and instead organize religious clubs and activities outside school time, so that students who wish to get involved can enjoy themselves praying, while students who don't can have more free time.

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