

Released Time Education:

The Wilcox Christian Learning Center represents a form of education known as "released time education". Upon completion of each course, the student will receive one (1) elective course credit toward high school graduation. What follows is an explanation and background of "released time education".

The idea of releasing public school students for devotional religious study off school premises in the United States was first discussed in 1905 at a conference in New York City. The proposal was at first that public elementary schools should be closed one day during the school week so those parents who so desired could have their children attend religious instruction outside of the school building.

However, it was not until 1914 that Dr. William Wirt, an innovative educator and superintendant of the Gary, Indiana schools, established a program in which 619 students participated in off-campus religious education. Dr. Wirt believed that the church, home, playground, library and school were all components in a child's education. The public schools, however, had and still have no responsibility for teachers, curriculum, conduct or achievement within the Released Time classes.

Released Time grew and flourished. In 1922, for example, Released time programs were active in 23 states. 40,000 students from 200 school districts were participating. By 1932, thirty states had active Released Time programs in 400 communities with an enrollment of 250,000 students. Ten years later, in 1942, participation reached 1.5 million students in 46 states. Released Time peaked in 1947 with 2 million students enrolled in 2,200 communities. During this time, 12 states adopted favorable Released time legislation.

Currently, it is estimated that there are over 1000 Released Time programs in operation involving more than 250,000 students in kindergarten through high school.

The legality of a Released Time program recognizes and reinforces the constitutionally protected right of parents to direct the religious education of their children. Released Time gives the opportunity for all children to be released from school time for off-premises attendance at the religious education classes of their choice, or not to be released. Before school and after school programs would not allow equal access for all children due to transportation problems and extra-curricular activities.

The U.S Supreme Court has upheld the constitutionality of Released Time program. "We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being. When the State encourages religious instruction or cooperates with religious authorities by adjusting the schedule of public events to sectarian needs, it then follows the best of our traditions, for it then respects the religious nature of our people and accommodates the public services to their spiritual needs. To hold that it may not be constitutional would be to find in the Constitution a requirement that the government show a callous indifference to religious groups. That would be preferring those who believe in not

religion over those who do believe. We find no constitutional requirement which makes it necessary for government to be hostile to religion and to throw its weight against efforts to widen the effective scope of religious influence.

--Justice William O Douglas, *Zorach v. Clauson* (1952)

Entrance Requirements:

The only requirement for taking any course offered by the Christian Learning Center is **written permission from a parent or legal guardian**. Students who do not obtain written permission within the **first week** of any course will not be allowed to continue and will need to meet with their counselor for drop/add. **There is no cost to the student for any Christian Learning Center course. WCLC is totally privately funded and receives no public funding.** There must also be signed contracts for internet use and permission to be transported by the Wilcox Christian Learning Center.

Required forms to be on file for each student:

1. Parental Permission to take the course/transportation release form.
2. Contract regarding use of the Internet.
3. Parent/Student Response Sheet

Grading System:

The grading system for the Christian Learning Center is the same as that of the Wilcox County Public School System and is as follows:

<u>GRADING SCALE</u>		<u>BREAKDOWN OF FINAL GRADE</u>	
A	90-100	Tests	30%
B	80-89	Journals	20%
C	70-79	Quizzes	25%
F	Below 70	Class Participation	25%

Attendance:

Students are expected to attend class daily and be on time. It is the student's responsibility to be on time and ready for transportation from his or her school to the Christian Learning Center. Students that miss transportation may not walk to WCLC. They must report to ISS immediately and complete the provided assignment there. Students who do not report to ISS will be written up for skipping class. Students are responsible for any work missed during class.

Attendance is taken at the beginning of each class and reported to the attendance officer at the high school immediately. WCLC follows the school policy for accumulated tardies.