

Questions and Answers

Regarding Scaled-Back Bible History Electives at some Hamilton County Public Schools

1. Why are some of the Bible History electives in our public schools being scaled back in 2009-10?

Many people are hurting right now because of the economy. For 87 years, Bible in the Schools has enthusiastically raised millions of dollars in community support for our local public schools, reimbursing 100% of the cost to employ Bible History teachers in several Hamilton County public schools. In fairness to Superintendent Dr. Jim Scales as he prepares his 2009-10 budget, Bible in the Schools recently notified him that the tough economy has already begun to hurt our fund-raising efforts for next year, preventing us from underwriting the program at its current level. In response, the school system has adjusted its budget by paring Bible History electives from a small number of schools in 2009-10.

2. How many Bible History teachers will be eliminated for 2009-10?

Only one part-time teacher and no full-time teachers will lose their jobs in 2009-10. As for the one part-time teacher, we have spoken to him in person, and I believe our conversation was very positive and went very well. We have been so very thankful for his commitment to teach Bible History electives. Three teachers are retiring but one of these will continue on a part time basis. One other teacher was serving on a temporary basis and will not be replaced. In total the net reduction is four. We are planning a special event this spring to recognize each one and to express our deep appreciation for their combined years of faithful service.

3. How many students will be denied the opportunity to enroll in a Bible History elective?

Very few. We have every reason to believe that, with a projected upturn in the economy and a generous response by our faithful donors, the program can return to these schools within a year or two. Few students, if any, would have missed an opportunity to enroll in a Bible History elective, even if the program were suspended for one or two years.

4. How many schools will suspend their Bible History electives for 2009-10?

Only 5 schools will suspend the program next year: Red Bank High, Brown Middle, East Ridge High, Brainerd High, and Ooltewah High. In addition, Red Bank Middle School will have a reduced program.

5. How many schools will continue to offer Bible History electives in 2009-10?

Most schools that currently offer Bible History electives will continue to do so in 2009-10. Bible in the Schools will continue to reimburse 100% of the salaries and

benefits of 12 teachers in 15 public schools: Central High School, East Ridge Middle School, Hixson High School, Hixson Middle School, Howard School of A. & T., Hunter Middle School, Loftis Middle School, Lookout Valley High School, Lookout Valley Middle School, Ooltewah Middle School, Red Bank Middle School, Signal Mountain Middle School, Signal Mountain High School, Soddy Daisy High School, and Soddy Daisy Middle School.

6. How did you determine which teacher positions would be suspended from the Bible History program?

Thankfully, only one part-time teacher and no full-time teachers will lose their jobs in 2009-10. This minimal impact is not an accident. From the beginning, we wanted to ensure that the Hamilton County Department of Education would only suspend the Bible History electives program in schools where teachers had already announced their retirement, were hired temporarily, or were part-time employees. We are grateful to Dr. Scales and his staff for their careful planning, which has kept most of the program intact during this economic downturn.

7. Will Bible in the Schools continue to reimburse 100% of the Hamilton County schools' total cost of Bible History electives?

Yes. As always, no taxpayer money will be used to pay for Hamilton County's Bible History electives program. All money is raised from private donations from individuals, businesses, churches and other organizations.

8. Is it safe to stake our children's education on private donations?

Yes. In fact, private donations from organizations like Bible in the Schools have continued to keep our taxes lower than they would have been otherwise. Private donations also have given our schools a financial safety net during the infamous "budget battles" of recent years. We've all witnessed favorite teachers or cherished schools fall to the annual budget axe. But while all this was happening, Bible in the Schools actually *increased* the total amount of funding (resulting in more teachers in more schools) pumped into the Hamilton County schools through private donations, which kept many teachers safe from budget cuts.

9. Are there plans to return the Bible History electives program to these schools?

Yes. Obviously, the decision to scale back the program did not come easily. We wish there were viable alternatives. Yet we have every reason to believe that, with a projected upturn in the economy next year, the program can return to these schools in the next year or two. We are convinced that our best days are ahead of us and that, over time, an even greater number of students will have the opportunity to expand their educational choices with Bible History electives.