



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on August 2, 2023

Private Academy Finally Wins Approval From Local School Board

It took [a strong letter using strong language](#) giving the Greenfield (Massachusetts) School Committee a “drop-dead date or we sue all of its members” ultimatum to force it to do what it should have done in the first place: approve the curriculum of a newly formed private school in Greenfield, Massachusetts.

At issue was the curriculum that parents forming the Providence Christian Academy wanted to use: Abeka, published by Pensacola Christian College.

Abeka has been accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools and by the Florida Association of Christian Colleges and Schools. It takes a literalist and young-earth position in its science curriculum, and, among other things, denounces evolution as a “retreat from science.”



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This was too much for at least one of the members of Greenfield School Committee, Elizabeth Ann de Neeve. During the July 12 board meeting, when the issue came up for discussion, de Neeve attacked the Abeka curriculum as violating everything she personally believed in:

They use the Abeka Curriculum, which I believe is in direct opposition to the values of [Greenfield Public Schools].

The curriculum is full of false information and students who learn from it have a harder time getting into four-year colleges and universities because they will believe a whole set of things that are erroneous and be historically illiterate, which I think is a bad thing for our community and our country, and ultimately this is going to be reflected in a real breakdown in the separation of church and state, which is really the agenda of these curricula.

She also took umbrage at the idea taught by Abeka that the LGBTQ agenda is destructive to American culture, that “traditional American family values have dramatically declined, and when the traditional heterosexual family comes under attack, all of society suffers.”

This was, however, the agenda that parents wanted for their children, who certainly weren’t getting a good education in the district. The letter referred to the website Public School Review, which showed that the Greenfield School District ranks in the bottom half of all 395 school districts in the state.

The letter reminded the school board members that the parents have the right to determine the



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education of their children, quoting from Supreme Court rulings going back to 1925 that the “primary role of the parents is the upbringing of their children” is “now established beyond debate as an enduring American tradition,” and that “the child is not the mere creature of the State.”

It also reminded the board, quoting from another Supreme Court case, that “it is now axiomatic that ‘if there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion.’”

It quoted from the *Masterpiece Cakeshop* ruling in 2018: “It is not ... the role of the State or its officials to prescribe what shall be offensive.”

The letter then got serious:

The Committee’s failure to approve the Church School’s application is unlawful, and will subject [Greenfield Public Schools] to significant liability if not immediately remedied.

We would very much prefer to resolve this dispute without further legal proceedings.

Although we have already invested a significant amount of time and resources in this matter, we are willing to resolve the matter without any payment for Liberty Counsel’s extensive fees and costs to date.

After August 10, 2023, however, any settlement or resolution will necessarily involve the payment of our costs and legal fees, separate and apart from the damages payable to our clients.... [Emphasis in original.]

Please govern yourselves accordingly. Time is of the essence.

On Monday night the board convened to consider the letter and the board’s response. Following the advice of counsel, the board reversed itself and voted 4-1 to approve the school’s application.

Mat Staver, founder and chairman of Liberty Counsel, issued this statement following the board’s reversal:

The Greenfield School Committee needs to control the rhetoric and personal advocacy of some of its members. Personal advocacy coupled with unhinged false statements denigrating a Christian school will not play well in a court of law.

While we are pleased that Providence Christian Academy will begin accepting students this fall, we remain astounded concerning the statements made by some committee members.

The First Amendment stands as a reminder that those who serve in government must govern themselves in accordance with the Constitution.



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