



FACT SHEET

Whitson v. Knox County Board of Education

ABOUT Whitson v. Knox County Board of Education

During the Spring 2005 semester, 10-year-old Luke Whitson and a few other students read their Bibles and discussed them together on the grounds of Karns Elementary School during non-instructional time at recess. After an unnamed parent complained about the students, the school's principal ordered a teacher to put a stop to the student-led Bible discussion. Karns Elementary School and Knox County School District officials have enforced a policy prohibiting students from reading and discussing the Bible during recess, which the officials contend is not "free time." Alliance Defense Fund attorneys filed a lawsuit against the Knox County Board of Education on behalf of the fourth-grader and his parents, arguing that school officials are enforcing an unconstitutional policy.

CURRENT STATUS OF Whitson v. Knox County Board of Education AS OF 10/26/09

ADF attorneys filed suit against the Knox County Board of Education on behalf of Whitson and his parents in June 2005. A motion for preliminary injunction was also filed by ADF attorneys against the board later that year in September in an attempt to keep the district from enforcing its policy while the case moved forward. ADF Senior Counsel Nate Kellum will present arguments in favor of Whitson at a trial before the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Tennessee, which is scheduled from Oct. 27 through Oct. 30.

FOCUS OF HEARING – WHAT IS AT STAKE?

The trial will determine whether the school board will be allowed to continue to enforce a policy that violates students' constitutional rights. If the court rules against Whitson, the school district will be granted permission to keep students from reading and discussing the Bible during non-instructional time.

CONTACT

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ABOUT ADF

ADF is a legal alliance of Christian attorneys and like-minded organizations defending the right of people to freely live out their faith. Launched in 1994, ADF employs a unique combination of [strategy, training, funding, and litigation](#) to protect and preserve religious liberty, the sanctity of life, marriage, and the family.

ABOUT Nate Kellum

Nate Kellum serves as senior counsel with the Alliance Defense Fund at its Memphis Regional Service Center in Tennessee, where he focuses his litigation on defending religious free speech rights in the public square. Kellum joined ADF in 2004 and is admitted to the bar in Tennessee, Mississippi, and numerous federal appellate courts. He has practiced law since 1988 and earned his J.D. from the University of Mississippi.