

By: Senator(s) Jordan (24th)

To: Education

SENATE BILL NO. 2121
(As Sent to Governor)

1 AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO DEVELOP AND
2 IMPLEMENT A COMPREHENSIVE K-12 PROGRAM FOR CHARACTER EDUCATION; TO
3 REQUIRE THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO REVIEW SCHOOL DISTRICTS'
4 PROPOSED CHARACTER EDUCATION PROGRAMS; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

6 SECTION 1. The local school boards of the public school
7 districts, in their discretion, may develop and implement, at the
8 beginning of the 1999-2000 school year, a comprehensive program
9 for character education in Grades K-12. The definition of the
10 character traits chosen by the school district for implementation
11 shall reflect and be in keeping with both the spirit and the
12 letter of the following founding documents: the Mississippi
13 Constitution of 1890; the Constitution of the United States of
14 America; the Declaration of Independence; and state and federal
15 law. A public school may not define or teach character or
16 character traits in any manner that might promote or encourage
17 students to participate in conduct that would violate any state or
18 federal law.

19 SECTION 2. Assessment of the students' understanding of the
20 character traits chosen to be taught in public school shall be
21 limited to and must reflect the material taught in the classroom.
22 Students shall not be evaluated in any way as to whether or not
23 the students evidence a specific character trait in their own
24 lives.

25 SECTION 3. The State Board of Education shall review the
26 proposed character education programs of the individual school
27 districts to ascertain if the programs comply with the criteria
28 set forth in Section 1 of this act. Review of the programs shall

29 not exceed a time period of sixty (60) days. If a review extends
30 beyond this time period, the proposal will be deemed in compliance
31 with the law.

32 If the proposed character education program is rejected, the
33 State Board of Education shall set forth in writing the specific
34 areas of objection. These objections must be based on and limited
35 to the following criteria: the definition of the character traits
36 chosen by the school district for implementation shall reflect and
37 be in keeping with both the spirit and letter of our founding
38 documents; no instruction shall promote or encourage participation
39 in any conduct that would violate existing state or federal law;
40 and no student shall be assessed or evaluated as to whether or not
41 the student evidences a specific character trait in his or her own
42 life.

43 SECTION 4. This act shall take effect and be in force from
44 and after July 1, 1999.