

## Ask Teaching Tolerance



**Q.** Can we just *stop* talking and teaching about religion in the classroom? These are beliefs and should not be taught in any public school.

It is certainly true that public education has a checkered history when it comes to adhering to the separation of church and state. However, it is also true that religious intolerance lies at the heart of countless interpersonal and intergroup conflicts—even hate crimes. The upshot? Not talking about religion is *not* an option if U.S. schools are to succeed in preparing students to interact with the larger world. The more students understand about the diversity of beliefs held

around the country and the globe, the less likely they are to develop biased or hateful behaviors.

The key distinction educators must understand is that teaching religion and teaching *about* religion are two very different things. One is illegal in public schools; the other is both legal and important if we are to foster understanding and tolerance of *all* religious and nonreligious beliefs.

Not sure which is happening in your school? Ask yourself this: Is the

material focused on influencing students' beliefs or on what students should know *about* the beliefs (or nonbeliefs) of others?

It may not always be clear, which is why Teaching Tolerance and the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding have teamed up to deliver a series of webinars on how to make sure this teaching happens in a safe, respectful way. You can find them at [tolerance.org/seminar/religious-diversity-classroom](http://tolerance.org/seminar/religious-diversity-classroom).

### Are the texts in the *Perspectives for a Diverse America* Central Text Anthology leveled?

Each text in the Central Text Anthology was quantitatively leveled using a range of tools including Lexile, Flesch-Kincaid, ATOS and DRP. But that's not all! The text's complexity was also evaluated using qualitative dimensions: meaning/purpose, structure, language and knowledge demands.

To determine the level of each text, use the advanced filter to locate texts in your desired grade band. From there, each text is labeled with the Common Core State Standards text level and an exact Lexile score in gray just above the title.

Did you know you can replicate the process we used to level the texts in *Perspectives* with our new tool, *Appendix D*? This interactive PDF walks you through both quantitative and qualitative leveling considerations. You can even share your leveled text with other TT readers by submitting it to [appendixd@tolerance.org](mailto:appendixd@tolerance.org).

### ASK TEACHING TOLERANCE!

Need the kind of advice and expertise only Teaching Tolerance can provide? Email us at [editor@tolerance.org](mailto:editor@tolerance.org) with "Ask TT" in the subject line.