

EDUCATION NEEDS RELIGION

Religious Education is Essential for a Concept of Education that Values Individual Freedom and Responsibility and Seeks to Address the Whole Person's Needs!

All subjects in the curriculum are challenged by the continual reform in German education. Increased autonomy of individual schools, independent curricula, a sixth form characterized by specific profiles (Profiloberstufe) and a reduced number of school years all mean that every subject struggles to lay a sound foundation while meeting the profile and goals of the school. In this situation, competition between different subjects and fields of activity is an inevitable outcome. This is especially the case for so-called "soft" subjects such as Art, Music, and Physical Education, but also for Religious Education, Philosophy, and Ethics. That is the case despite their great importance for a concept of education that values individual freedom and responsibility and seeks to address the whole person.

Moreover, the importance of Religious Education is underlined by the fact that is guaranteed in the German Basic Law's Charter of Individual Rights (Articles 4 and 7 GG).

In this situation, the AEED wishes strongly to emphasize the importance of Religious Education and to call for its implementation in all grades. Religious Education must not be limited, prevented or 'starved out' in our schools.

Because we witness a loss of religious tradition in today's society, along with uncertainty and confusion, it is increasingly important for young people to understand the nature of questions related to fundamental values, basic concepts, the meaning of life, and ethical orientation. Moreover it is increasingly uncertain that purely pragmatic orientations or entirely rationalistic conceptions of the self and the world supply satisfactory answers to ultimate questions. Religious Education, that is properly conducted, addresses issues of the meaning of life, of truth, of justice and of the values and norms that govern responsible action within the range of experience of students today. It allows them to engage with different religious, philosophical and political positions that bear on our lives in current society. It operates on the assumption that religious tradition and a living faith hold possibilities for understanding both the self and the world and for responsible action and for an awareness of the world that may contribute to individual self-awareness and empowerment. In our culture it is particularly important to engage with the traditions and tenets of the Christian faith and theological thinking. Our culture has been fundamentally shaped by Christianity. The identities and actions of many individuals and groups are founded on their Christian faith. The influence of the churches is apparent in the spheres of both politics and social activity.

Religious competence and mature judgement (Religionsmündigkeit) are particularly important for the individual development of our students. They are equally necessary for the educational mission of the school and for a critical constructive dialogue.

The AEED calls upon all decision-makers concerned with educational policy to take seriously the expectations that they have already expressed in respect of our schools, and to give effect to those expectations in the provision of the staffing, equipment and funding so as to ensure that the education of students is not reduced simply to training for future employment. The Associations of Protestant Teachers of Religious Education are ready to enter into constructive cooperation. Religious Education must have its place within the curriculum, for the sake of our students and of our society.