



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on August 9, 2011

Summer School Program Teaches Tea Party Values

Students attending a summer school program in Louisville, Kentucky, were treated to lessons on American liberty that focused on the superiority of the free market, the gold standard, the American Constitution, and the failures of tyrannical regimes.



USA Today [reports](#):

During the five-day Vacation Liberty School, talks, skits and activities mixed conservative values and early American history, including stories about how colonists' prayers once helped turn back a threatening French fleet and the principle of equal opportunity, but not necessarily equal results.

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There have apparently been a number of Vacation Liberty Schools for children aged 10-15, which *USA Today* describes as a "mix between vacation Bible school, U.S. history and Tea-Party-style conservative ideas that supporters say aren't taught in public schools."

The five-day program holds three-hour daily classes, and most are free, though some charge a minimal fee. For the most part, they are funded by donations, coordinated by volunteers, and held in churches.

The Vacation Liberty Schools are coordinated by members of conservative pundit Glenn Beck's 9/12 Project, and the principles of the 9/12 Project are touted in the summer school, including "America is good" and "God is the center of my life."

The curriculum for the schools includes lessons such as "understanding false extensions of separation of church and state," "faith's role in the Revolutionary War," "avoiding the enslavement of debt" and how the federal government cannot force charity as it "enables dependency."

The [first](#) of the Liberty schools began in 2010 in Georgetown, Kentucky, and was hosted by 9/12 member Lisa Abler (pictured above with Glenn Beck), who created the curriculum and made it available for free online on the Vacation Liberty School website.

Tim Fairfield was a teacher at the opening class of Vacation Liberty School in Georgetown, Kentucky. On the first day, he greeted students in a three-cornered hat at the opening class.

"If we're going to take our country back, we've got to remember where we came from — not only as adults, but we need to teach our children."

According to *USA Today*, approximately 1,000 students have benefited from the program, having attended 40 similar schools across the nation in states such as Florida and Michigan, most of which use the curriculum created in Kentucky.



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The curriculum places a heavy emphasis on the principles of the Founding Fathers, and encourages faith and patriotism.

“What we need to do is get this country back on track,” explained Penny Lister, who enrolled her 9-year-old son in the summer school session to “learn about responsibility.”

Eric Wilson, head of the Kentucky 9/12 Project, remarks that the popularity of the program is indicative of the growth of conservatism and the liberty movement across the country.

“There’s a growing liberty movement in the past couple of years,” Wilson explained, as the schools are modeled on the notion of “self-governing leadership and personal responsibility [that] this country was founded on.”

Not everyone views the program as a positive one, however. Joseph Conn, for example, a spokesman for Americans United for Separation of Church and State, opines that the teachings are “clearly biased toward a particular religious and political viewpoint [and] a Christian version of American history.” He contends that such a version “take[s] history and rewrite[s] it.” He adds, “We see it as very troubling.”

Those who run the programs assert that despite Conn’s assertions, the material is based in fact and relies on original documents. According to Wilson, the course leans heavily on the writings of the Founding Fathers, and Abler adds that the programs are apolitical and should not be construed as political indoctrination.

“People say it’s politically driven — it’s not,” said Abler. “I look at it as revealing the truth.”

Abler’s curriculum is based on the 1981 book *The 5,000 Year Leap*, written by anti-communist author W. Cleon Skousen. The book advocates principles of private property, minimum government regulation, and the notion that the Constitution is founded on biblical principles.

Abler notes that the book gained popularity after Glenn Beck touted it on his Fox News program. Likewise, Beck discussed the formation of the Vacation Liberty Schools on his program, asserting that they gave him “great hope” because it provides students an opportunity to learn about faith, the Founding Fathers, and the Constitution.

At the [Tampa Liberty School](#), students are awarded hard, wrapped candies to use as currency for a store, meant to symbolize the gold standard. The hard candies are then replaced by paper money, and students discover on their own that the paper money has less purchasing power than the hard candies did.

The website for the Tampa Liberty School outlines its goals, which include teaching the lesson that “with freedom comes responsibility,” urging students to “read original sources,” and stressing the importance of promoting “principles rather than specific men or political parties since these can be corrupted.”

Emily Knetsche, a 12-year-old student who attended the summer program in Kentucky, said that she has enjoyed the liberty school, particularly the lessons on the economy and self-sufficiency.

Emily’s mother, Lisa, is thrilled to have enrolled her daughter in the program. “The values are in line with what we teach in our household. We want our kids to understand that we need to defend the Constitution ... to get back to our roots.”



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