

NYSUT INFORMATION BRIEF:

Supreme Court Decision on Religious Opt-Outs from Curriculum in *Mahmoud v. Taylor*

UNDERSTANDING THE RULING: MAHMOUD V. TAYLOR

On June 27, 2025, the U.S Supreme Court ruled in favor of a group of parents in a Maryland school district, granting them the right to receive advance notice and opt their children out of K-5 classroom instruction involving specific LGBTQ+-inclusive storybooks.

The Court's reasoning was explicitly based on the specific facts of this case. The majority opinion held that requiring young children to participate in lessons that imparted "normative values" contrary to their parents' sincerely held religious beliefs, without providing notice or an option to opt out based on religious beliefs, constituted a violation of the parents' First Amendment rights.

KEY LIMITATIONS OF THE RULING:

It is critical to understand what this ruling does not do. The decision is narrow in scope:

- It is NOT a blanket opt-out right. It applies specifically to the facts of the case: LGBTQ+-inclusive books used to impart normative values in grades K-5.
- It does NOT mandate the removal of books. The ruling does not require any book to be removed from a library or classroom.
- It does NOT apply to all grades. The decision was focused on elementary school instruction (K-5).
- It does NOT apply to neutral presentation. It does not necessarily apply to secondary grades or to instruction that presents material in an objective, neutral manner that is not "hostile to religious viewpoints."



NYSUT'S RECOMMENDED GUIDANCE: WHAT TO DO AND NOT DO

The most important response right now is a measured one. Policy decisions rest with the school district, not with individual educators. Teachers should not act unilaterally.

✓ WHAT YOU SHOULD DO:

Wait for Formal District Guidance.

Your school district administration is responsible for interpreting the legal ruling and developing a formal, uniform policy, if one is deemed necessary. Do not make changes unless you receive official direction.

Know Your Current Policies.

Familiarize yourself with your district's existing, board-approved procedures for addressing curriculum challenges and notifying parents. Please direct any parent inquiries to the established channels.

Continue Teaching Approved Curriculum.

When appropriate, teachers are expected to teach the curriculum that has been approved by their district. Continue to do so with confidence.

Collaborate with Union Leadership.

Keep in touch with your local leaders and NYSUT labor relations specialist. They are your primary resource for navigating this issue.