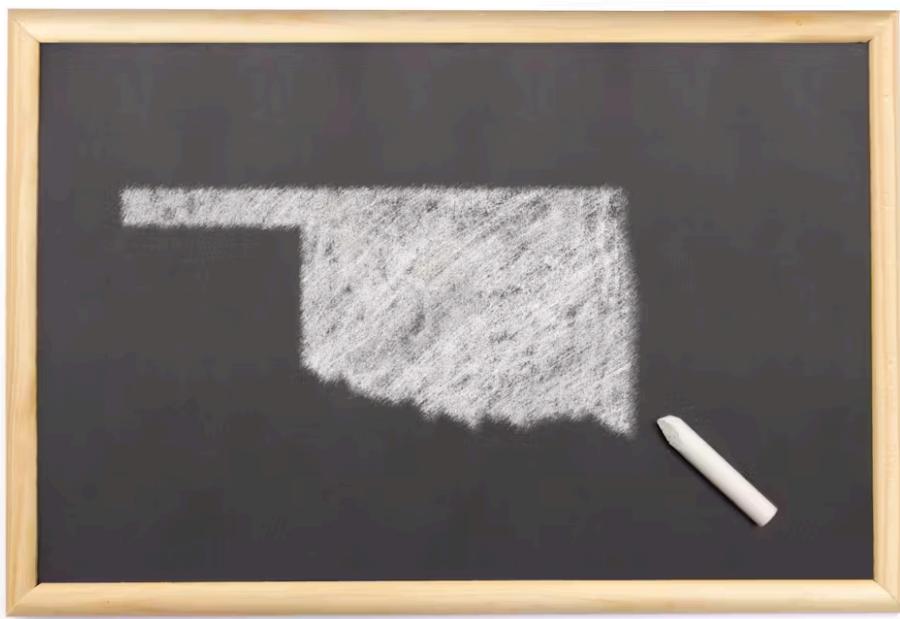


Oklahoma tried out a test to ‘woke-proof’ the classroom. It was short-lived, but could still leave a mark

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Oklahoma's short-lived PragerU teacher assessment was one of the final projects under former Superintendent Ryan Walters, who resigned in September 2025.

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Oklahoma has become a testing ground for reshaping public school curriculum to reflect conservative viewpoints, Make America Great Again priorities and a push for Christian nationalism in the classroom.

Oklahoma's former state education Superintendent Ryan Walters oversaw several controversial education policies in recent years, including mandating in 2024 that all Oklahoma public teachers incorporate the Bible into their lesson plans.

Walters resigned from his position in September 2025 to lead Teacher Freedom Alliance, a conservative advocacy group that opposes teachers unions.

One unprecedented move Walters made was adopting a teacher assessment called The America-First Assessment, designed by PragerU, a conservative nonprofit media company. Walters said the purpose of this exam, which went live in August 2025, was to screen out “woke indoctrination.”

By authorizing this assessment, Walters signed off on a conservative and far-right political organization having a say in which prospective teachers from out of state receive their Oklahoma teaching licenses.

The exam was short-lived. Walters’ replacement, Lindel Fields, announced at the end of October 2025 that Oklahoma would no longer use this assessment. Fields also rescinded the Bible mandate for Oklahoma schools.

But other states could still adopt the exam, free of charge. The exam and its controversy offers a window into the current politicization of state education systems, this time with respect to the licensing of teachers.

As an education researcher, I have written about other teacher assessments and some of the issues surrounding them, such as screening out Black teachers.

Walter’s “anti-woke” teacher exam is a unique kind of experiment. The test was not made by a professional assessment company and does not legitimately assess professional knowledge related to the subjects teachers teach.



Ryan Walters bows his head in prayer alongside the state’s Board of Education members in April 2023, during his time as Oklahoma’s education superintendent.

Sue Ogrocki/Associated Press

A politicized test for teachers

The America-First exam consists of 34 multiple-choice questions that ask about the U.S. Constitution, government, religious liberty, history and Supreme Court cases. One question asks, “What are the first three words of the Constitution?” Another question asks, “What does the Second Amendment protect?” Other questions inquire about gender and sex, with questions like, “What is the fundamental biological distinction between males and females?” and “Which chromosome pair determines biological sex in humans?”

Walters made the political purpose of the exam clear.

“We have to make sure that the teachers in our classrooms, as we’re recruiting these individuals, aren’t a bunch of woke, Marxist activists,” Walters said in August 2025.

Walters has also said the exam was designed to specifically root out liberal teacher applicants who might fill teacher vacancies in Oklahoma and bring progressive training on race and gender with them, or what Walters called “blue state indoctrination.”

When the test went live in August, it expanded to all teachers from other states trying to get a license to teach in Oklahoma.

An exam you cannot fail

The America-First Assessment is not like the typical licensure exams made by professional assessment companies. These other exams cover the specific subject matter teachers should know to do their job: math for math teachers, science for science teachers, and so on.

Instead of a subject-specific focus, the America-First Assessment is mostly aligned with President Donald Trump’s “America first” talking points, particularly through its focus on gender and sex.

The most striking aspect of the exam, however, is that it is impossible to fail. If you don’t know the first three words of the U.S. Constitution, you can guess answers until you get it right. In fact, the test will advance to the next question only after you register a correct answer. Everyone who finishes the test will get 100% correct.

As a result, as some observers have pointed out, the exam resembles a political ideology test and not a legitimate assessment of professional knowledge.

Unlike the SAT, which considers its content proprietary, legally protected information, many of the America-First Assessment questions are publicly available.

Further, unlike established exams such as the SAT and GRE, the America-First exam has no technical information about how it was designed or what the questions are supposed to measure. As a result, the exam resembles a “MAGA loyalty test,” according to American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten.

A conservative media company expands into teacher assessment

The America-First Assessment’s unique format and political content reflect the priorities of PragerU, the conservative media company that created it.

Conservative radio host Dennis Prager founded PragerU in 2009. The company produces educational and entertainment videos rooted in conservative ideology.

PragerU’s more than 5,000 online videos include short segments such as “Make Men Masculine Again,” “How Many Radical Islam Sleepers are in the United States?” and “America Was Founded on Freedom Not Slavery.” Prominent far-right influencers including Ben Shapiro, Candace Owens and Charlie Kirk have appeared in videos.

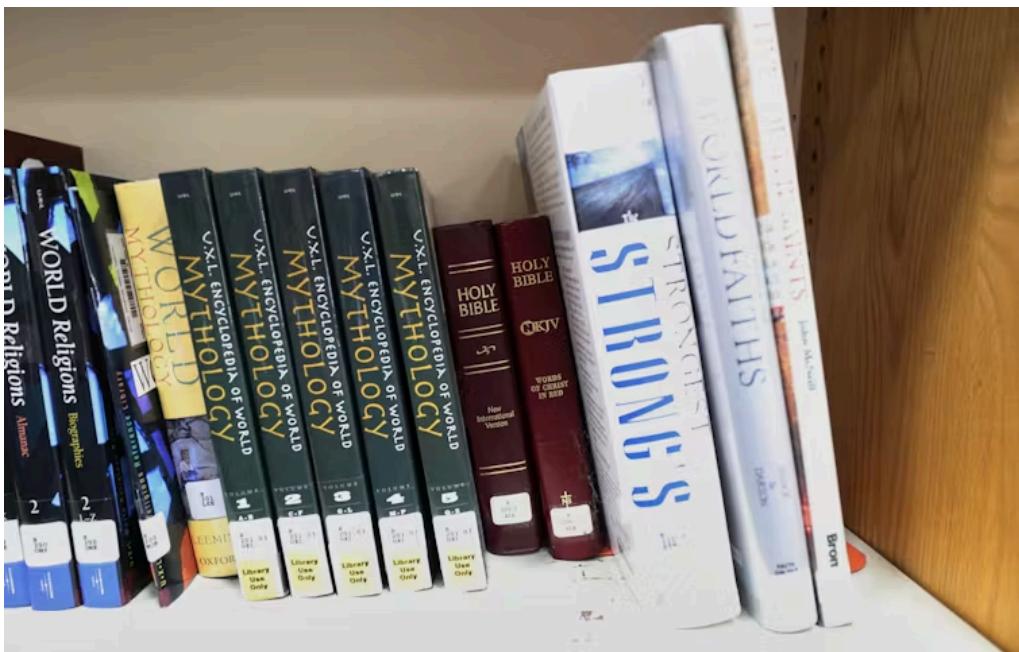
PragerU’s primary YouTube page has more than 3.4 million subscribers.

Scholarly analysis of PragerU videos have found the content minimizes the impact of slavery and promotes misinformation on topics including climate change.

In its children’s video “Frederick Douglass: The Outspoken Abolitionist,” the fictionalized cartoon of Douglass warns children to “stay away from radicals” who want to change the American system rather than work within it. “Our system is wonderful, and our Constitution is a glorious liberty document. We just need to convince enough Americans to be true to it,” he concludes.

In 2021, the company launched PragerU Kids, an offshoot targeting school-age children and educators with lesson plans, worksheets and other learning materials tied to its videos. Some other states, including Florida, New Hampshire and Montana, have approved PragerU’s videos as curriculum for their public schools to consider using since 2023.

The company’s move into teacher assessments in 2025 expands its influence beyond curriculum into who can earn a teaching license.



Copies of the Bible are displayed in August 2024 at the Bixby High School library in Bixby, Okla.

Joey Johnson/Associated Press

A possible strategy for other states

Both Walters and PragerU CEO Marissa Streit pitched the exam as an option for all “pro-America” states at its launch in August 2025. Some conservative policy analysts have also praised this strategy’s goals of ridding public schools of all “woke” teachers.

As a result, it is unlikely this is the last people will hear of PragerU or other private media companies trying to screen teachers.

Emery Petchauer does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organization that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond their academic appointment.

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