



**2024** EDUCATIONAL AUTHORITY,  
RADICAL IDEOLOGIES, AND  
**WHAT'S HAPPENING  
IN THE CLASSROOM**

*EQUIPPING PARENTS FOR BACK-TO-SCHOOL*

# A LETTER TO PARENTS

You've heard the news reports about what's happening in public schools — and you're deeply concerned. Or maybe you're aware of troubling incidents like these in your own school or community:

- » *Public schools near Raleigh, North Carolina, "held an equity-themed teachers' conference with sessions on 'whiteness,' 'microaggressions,' 'racial mapping' and 'disrupting texts.'"*<sup>1</sup>
- » *California parents discovered elementary schools promoting secret "Gender & Sexualities Alliance" (GSA) clubs on elementary school campuses.<sup>2</sup> GSA Network claims to have a network of 40 statewide organizations and more than 4,000 such groups in K-12 schools across the country.<sup>3</sup>*
- » *A fifth grade student asked to start a prayer club at her elementary school, but school administrators denied her request, violating her religious freedom. Creekside Elementary, near Seattle, Washington, denied the request even though other student groups are allowed to meet on campus.<sup>4</sup>*

How would you respond if you discovered your school clinic was dispensing contraceptives to children — without informing parents? Or if a boy took a spot on your daughter's high school soccer team because he "identified" as a girl? Or if you found out your six-year-old child's teacher is reading books about gender-confused children to the whole classroom?

In addition to incidents like these, parents are becoming more aware of dropping test scores and the failure of many schools to adequately educate their children. Nationally, the Urban Institute's National Assessment of Educational Progress "shows that two thirds of U.S. children are unable to read with proficiency. An astounding 40 percent are essentially nonreaders."<sup>5</sup>

***We're concerned too.*** We follow the news and receive numerous phone calls, emails, and letters from parents, grandparents, family members, and church leaders. They tell us what's happening at their children's schools and ask for help responding.

That's why Focus on the Family and Family Policy Alliance wrote [\*Back-to-School for Parents\*](#).<sup>6</sup> The first edition was released in 2020, but since then many more problems in our nation's schools have come to the forefront. Because of the COVID-19 school closures, many parents

gained greater knowledge of educational issues affecting their children.

So we're releasing a revised edition of this helpful resource as [\*Equipping Parents for Back-to-School\*](#), first in six PDFs, covering topics such as inappropriate or biased material in the classroom, what to do when you find offensive or explicit books in your school library, and how to guard your child's safety in school restrooms and locker rooms. Then we'll release all the sections together in a free download.

Each PDF explains what's happening in schools with specific issues, why parents are concerned, and what you can do for your child. We help you understand your rights and your children's rights and explain important state and federal laws.

We're not offering legal advice, but simply describing the legal landscape today – something that can change quickly because of school board decisions, legislative actions, or court rulings. By becoming more aware of the law, you are better equipped to protect your child.

For every topic discussed, we offer suggestions about how to respectfully advocate on behalf of your child, give guidance for how to talk with children about sensitive and difficult subjects, and provide links to helpful articles and resources.

Each download points to helpful resources and offers guidance for talking with or writing to schools, school boards and legislators.

**Please be aware** that some incidents described in *Equipping Parents* are disturbing. And the cumulative effect of reading about all these public education issues can be very troubling.

Our intent in relating these actual incidents is not to engender fear, but to keep parents well informed and offer helpful tools and language so that you can address problems in

a reasonable, respectful manner. Our goal is to equip and empower you to take action with confidence, wisdom and courage.

We believe most teachers and school officials do good work and have the best interests of children at heart, so we know how important it is for parents to have good working relationships with school staff and keep communication as open as possible.

But we also know, as author and educator Cynthia Tobias writes in her book *Reclaiming Education*:

“ The public school system is stacked against the educators who want to make their students the top priority. Teachers actually have little control over curriculum and administrative policy.<sup>7</sup>

Some individuals and groups have a political or social agenda for children and schools – one that may not be in line with your beliefs and values. We trust *Equipping Parents for Back-to-School* provides information and ideas as you protect your children and equip them children to succeed.

Finally, we are grateful for concerned parents, family members, church leaders, and citizens like you, as you work to improve local schools for your own children and all children in the community.

#### FOCUS ON THE FAMILY AND FAMILY POLICY ALLIANCE

Links to outside articles and resources are for informational purposes and do not imply an endorsement from Focus on the Family or Family Policy Alliance.

# UNDERSTANDING YOUR EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PARENTAL AUTHORITY

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PARENTAL AUTHORITY 4

- Governmental Role and Authority: Shaping Education Policies* 5
- Navigating Parental and School Authority: Finding Balance* 6
- Safeguarding Parental Rights: Advocacy Strategies and Resources* 7

## WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE CLASSROOM? 8

- Exposing Radical Ideologies Infiltrating American Classrooms* 9
- LGBT Curriculum Mandates* 10
- Why Should I Be Aware?* 11
- Leftist Bias and Radical Politics in the Classroom* 12
- Radical Ideology in Public Schools: Critical Race Theory* 13
- Get Informed: Be Aware of What Your Children Are Being Taught* 15
- Knowing and Protecting Parental Rights in Education: Legal Safeguards* 16
- Know Your Child's Rights* 17
- Ways You Can Protect and Advocate for Your Child* 18
- Talk to Your Child* 19
- Help Your Child Succeed in School* 19
- Talk With Your Children About Your Beliefs — And Address Radical Bias in Education and the Culture* 20
- Talk With Your Children About Identity, Relationships, Sexuality and LGBT Issues* 21

## NOTES 22

## APPENDIX A 23

“Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, takes off your relish for spiritual things, whatever increases the authority of the body over the mind, that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may seem in itself.”

SUSANNA WESLEY

Parents have the right to direct the educational upbringing of their children. This flows naturally from a parent’s fundamental right to parent — to provide for the care, nurturing, and moral and religious upbringing of their children. This right has been recognized by the United States Supreme Court. It is deeply embedded in the foundations of our nation that children are given to their parents to be known and protected by them, without unreasonable state interference.

The court recognized that parents love their children and have their best interests at heart. Several Supreme Court cases affirm parents’ right and duty to provide for the education of their children, in line with their family’s moral and religious beliefs.<sup>8</sup>

In the case *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, for example, the court famously declared, “The child is not the mere creature of the State; those who nurture him and direct his destiny have the right, coupled with the high duty, to recognize and prepare him for additional obligations.”<sup>9</sup>

## GOVERNMENTAL ROLE AND AUTHORITY: SHAPING EDUCATION POLICIES

The U.S. Constitution doesn't include a right to education, but every single state recognizes in its own state constitution it has a duty to provide public education and every child has the right to be educated. The Supreme Court has also declared that states have this constitutional right to require that every citizen must be educated until age 16 (with few exceptions) and also offer a chance to be publicly educated.

**State legislatures** get their authority to set up educational systems through their state constitution and state law. Your state is indisputably in charge when it comes to educational policy.

State governments are not directly involved in the day-to-day management of schools, instead delegating much of this authority to local school boards. They do, however, create policies and requirements through state departments of education, which often oversee the activities of local school boards.

**State boards of education** get their authority from state legislatures and are a special extension of the state government. The state board or department of education is often empowered to make regulations for all schools in the state.

**The federal government** provides education dollars to states or directly to local school boards through a variety of programs. Some federal educational programs you may be very familiar with are No Child Left Behind and Common Core, where the federal government has offered significant education grants to states if they agree to follow these federal curriculum standards and guidelines.

The federal government also provides education dollars to states or directly to local school boards for low-income youth; homeless youth; youth with disabilities; preschool programs; special education services; the youth of migrant families; the youth of rural families; youth who do not speak English; science, technology, engineering and mathematics programs; and so much more. Billions of tax dollars are given to states, and schools must follow federal regulations to receive and keep the grants.<sup>10</sup>

Generally, though, the federal government simply supports the primary authority of states and monitors state schools to make sure they comply with constitutional law (e.g., schools are not discriminating or abusing their authority). Every state takes federal money, so they are subject to federal law and standards, in addition to state law and standards.

**Local school boards** are considered special forms of government that oversee local schools. Local school boards choose curriculums, establish teacher hiring criteria, set student achievement standards, write bathroom policies, select books for libraries, choose research databases for students, contract with other districts for school choice transfers, and more.

## FINDING BALANCE

The fundamental authority of parents is so powerful, courts have had to create a constitutional doctrine that would give schools authority to make choices on behalf of students when parents are not present. This doctrine is called *in loco parentis*, which is a Latin phrase meaning “in the place of a parent.”

! When you send your child to a public school, you are giving the school authority to act as a temporary guardian for your child, taking on decision making, responsibility, and custody. This gives schools a lot of power over the education of your child.

As you read *Equipping Parents for Back-to-School*, you can see this authority sometimes clashes with or even contradicts the rights of parents, particularly when the moral direction of the school contradicts that of your family. For example, *in loco parentis* is how some schools can make curriculum content a graduation requirement and prohibit parents from opting out, even if the curriculum is controversial.

While schools have broad authority, they cannot infringe upon the basic constitutional rights of parents or children for any reason. For example, schools can limit, but not prohibit, your child's right to free speech and free exercise of religion. The school can't require your child to complete a homework assignment where they are forced to speak or write things they disagree with or that contradict their beliefs, but it can prohibit your children from speaking words or phrases the school finds offensive.

Schools must also respect the basic privacy, safety, and dignity rights of students and parents. For example, the school must provide private spaces for girls and boys to change and use the bathroom, but parents cannot nec-

essarily dictate how those private spaces will be laid out (e.g., stall doors versus curtains). However, federal agencies and some states and school boards have redefined “sex” — being male or female — to include those who identify as a different sex or “gender identity.” With lawsuits filed against these regulations, the courts are now deciding whether parents' desires to protect sex-segregated restrooms, showers, and locker rooms will prevail over these mandates.

Keep in mind, you do have the absolute fundamental right to direct the education of your child. But sending your child to public school is considered a choice. If a school isn't violating the fundamental rights of your child, schools have broad discretion in what they can do, because parents always have the “option” to leave (no matter how impractical this option might be).

All this to say, when you send your child to public school, you are giving up a lot of parental authority. The same is technically true when parents send their child to private school. Yet parents have much more say in what kind of private school their child will attend and have more power to choose a private school that is in line with their beliefs.

That being said, *private schools* are not governed or managed by the state government. They generally are not funded by the state or federal government and therefore are not subject to many public education guidelines or standards. In recent years, states have even passed programs promoting educational freedom, such as vouchers, education savings accounts, and tax-credit scholarships. Some of these allow parents to use education funds for private schools, home schooling, or hybrid options.

Private schools have more authority over your child than even a public school. A private school also does not have an obligation to honor the constitutional rights of students and parents in the same way as public schools. For example, a private school can engage in harsher disciplinary measures, or a private Jewish day-school, for example, can decline admittance to an evangelical Christian student. These are actions that would be ruled unconstitutional for public schools but are perfectly acceptable for private schools.

# ADVOCACY STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES

As far as public schools are concerned, *Equipping Parents for Back-to-School* is intended to help you understand the most controversial issues your child might be facing in schools and explain your rights and your child's.

*Equipping Parents* provides practical suggestions for how you can protect your family's religious and moral beliefs while on school grounds. This guide will give you tips on who you should talk to, who has the authority to make certain decisions regarding these issues, what laws protect your position in schools, how you can advocate for your child and work to change policies, and more. Each section will help highlight your rights and compare them to the rights of the school, helping you navigate the best ways to protect your child.

! Your first source of information and route for advocacy will be your child's **teachers and administrators**. "Back-to-School" nights and parent-teacher conferences are important sources of information about curriculums, lesson plans, textbooks, and other educational resources.

Connecting with other parents is another way to learn more about what going on in your child's school. Remember, many teachers and school officials care deeply about children and want them to succeed. So good relationships with school employees are very important.

Because of the primary role of **local school boards**, many of the recommendations in this guide encourage you to speak to your local school board members and testify at local school board meetings on issues that concern you.<sup>11</sup> This is because it is often the local school boards that have

the power to make the necessary changes. We'll help you to effectively address your local board with grace, wisdom, and courage.

However, in some cases, school boards may simply be following state education policies and approved curriculum standards from the **state department of education**. In these situations, your advocacy may be better directed to the state board of education.

The **state legislature** determines graduation requirements, including controversial classes such as sex education or mandated "diversity, equity, and inclusivity" training in schools. The state legislature also designates funding amounts for schools and writes laws regarding school choice. In these cases, your advocacy should take place at the legislative level and be directed at state representatives and senators.

Such advocacy could involve writing letters or emails, making phone calls, rallying other parents, gathering signatures for petitions or ballot measures, or even testifying in committee hearings.

Finally, there are times when targeting your advocacy toward your **federal representatives** — senators and representatives — can be beneficial. Other times, contacting a federal department, like the **Department of Education** (DOE) or the **Department of Justice**, would be best. For example, the DOE was inundated with almost two hundred thousand comments when it proposed redefining "sex" in Title IX to include "sexual orientation" and "gender identity." Agencies must consider these comments when creating new rules and regulations.<sup>12</sup>

As you work to care for and safeguard your child, each section of *Equipping Parents* offers suggestions about whom to connect with and how best to do so. Ultimately, you are responsible for your children's education — not the state.

We want you to be informed and empowered to ensure that your child receives a quality education in a safe, healthy environment.

# WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE CLASSROOM?

## SOARING PUBLIC EDUCATION SPENDING AMID FAILING SCHOOL SYSTEMS

### § PROJECT BALTIMORE

An investigative reporting initiative analyzed school test scores released by the Maryland State Department of Education and found a startling lack of math proficiency among students. In 23 Baltimore City schools, with 2,000 students, no students tested proficient in math. The organization also found that 13 Baltimore high schools had no students who tested proficient on the state's math examination, pointing to an urgent need for reform.<sup>13</sup>

Many parents are concerned that despite total federal, state, and local government funding of \$810 billion in 2023, or \$16,390 per pupil, students are not learning basic skills like arithmetic, reading, and writing.<sup>14</sup> They are also failing to learn subjects like history and civics. While there are some excellent teachers and schools across the nation, national test scores show steep declines in academic achievement. Continued underperformance in public education is prompting calls for accountability and innovative solutions.

As *City Journal* reports, "The latest National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results in reading and math, released in June, are appalling."<sup>15</sup>

Known as "The Nation's Report Card," results from the NAEP U.S. history and civics test "revealed that just 13 percent of eighth graders met proficiency standards for U.S. history, meaning that they could 'explain major themes, periods, events, people, ideas and turning points in the country's history.'" For civics, "About 20 percent of students scored at or above the proficient level."<sup>16</sup>

National math and reading scores also show low levels of academic success. As *Fortune* reported, "American students are in trouble. About a third of students in the youngest grades are behind on reading. Only 36% of fourth graders are proficient at grade-level math."<sup>17</sup>

# INFILTRATING AMERICAN CLASSROOMS

## § GLASSBROOK ELEMENTARY

Glassbrook Elementary, in Hayward, California, contracted with Woke Kindergarten for three years of consulting. The organization's founder, Akeia Gross, self-identifies as neither male nor female and is an "abolitionist educator." Woke Kindergarten teaches five-year-olds about topics like abolishing the police, eradicating borders, eliminating the military, and disrupting capitalism. Two years in, almost none of Glassbrook's students can read and write.<sup>18</sup>

The common theme in some of the most controversial material appearing in our children's classrooms is that it is content promoted mainly by a radical political agenda that expresses hostility toward Christianity, basic moral principles, and conservatism. Parents who are religious, have a traditional sexual ethic, or are politically conservative are complaining about classroom lesson plans that teach Christianity is a myth or their moral beliefs on sexuality are bigoted. Some classroom textbooks and supplemental materials portray a distorted view of U.S. history — or even promote Marxist ideology.<sup>19</sup>

In multiple news accounts, teachers have been reported bringing in radical leftist protestors without a balancing perspective, watering down the murderous history of communism, and downplaying the significant ideological differences that drove the Cold War.<sup>20</sup>

In addition, there is a very palpable "social justice warrior bent" inside our children's classrooms that teaches children to embrace the idea that there are only two classes of people, the oppressed and the oppressor — such as the wealthy vs. the poor or male vs. female.<sup>21</sup> Exposing the infiltration of radical ideologies, such as critical race theory and gender ideology, into American classrooms has become a pressing issue for parents and education advocates. No matter one's political or social ideology, it is the job of the public education system to present political and social ideas in a fair and unbiased manner with a balanced approach to both sides of an issue. After all, the job of the public education system is to partner with parents to educate our children, not indoctrinate them.

# LGBT CURRICULUM MANDATES

## § BOULDER VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

In Colorado, parents from Boulder Valley School District filed a complaint after first graders at Superior Elementary School watched a YouTube video in class. Titled “He, She, and They?!?”, the video is produced by a group called “Queer Kid Stuff.” The students also attended a musical presentation, “Raven’s True Self,” presented by “Phoenix, Colorado’s Transgender Choir,” about a transgender-identified bird.<sup>22</sup>

Several states have passed laws that require schools to incorporate the contributions and experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals into lessons across many different subject areas, usually history, civics, and government classes. Currently, California, Colorado, Illinois, Nevada, New Jersey, Oregon, and Washington mandate LGBT content be included in certain classes and student textbooks. Other state boards of education and local school districts also include LGBT indoctrination in curriculums.

This means LGBT ideology is no longer limited to sex education and health classes, but it is being shoe-horned into a variety of subject areas where it has little relevance.

Many parents might question what LGBT identities and behaviors have to do with American history, scientific discovery, or mathematic innovation. There is little to no connection, just a radical sexual ideology being imposed upon our children through all subject areas — from kindergarten through 12th grade. These mandates sexualize children, ensure their indoctrination into identity politics, and also censor speech in classrooms.

For example, California’s LGBT curriculum law actively censors speech by prohibiting textbook or curriculum content that “reflects adversely” on the LGBT community.<sup>23</sup> The California law also bans content that promotes a discriminatory bias on the basis of LGBT identity. This law prohibits material that is as simple and factual as informing students about the health risks of transgender medical interventions.<sup>24</sup>

The largest concern with these laws is there is no opt-out for LGBT-focused curriculum. Parents are unable to opt their child out of this teaching because the material is covered in multiple content areas (not just in sex education) and is considered academically necessary by school administrations and required for graduation by state boards of education.

# WHY SHOULD I BE AWARE?

## § “A PEOPLE’S HISTORY”

The radical Marxist Zinn Education Project offers free teaching materials to educators. The project is named after Howard Zinn, a Communist-Anarchist who wrote *A People’s History of the United States* – best-selling high school and college textbooks that promote a demonstrably false, plagiarized, anti-American view of history. The Zinn Education Project has more than 160,000 educators registered to access and disseminate its radical materials.<sup>25</sup>

There are countless reasons parents should be concerned about radical and biased content in the classroom.

***Underperforming Schools*** mean students are not learning basic skills and are not mastering important subjects like science, history, civics, economics, English and technology. Such students are ill-equipped to enter college or the work force. Schools should be preparing students for success, rather than setting them up for failure.

***City Journal*** shows what a serious problem this is in “Our Failing Schools Are a National Crisis,” explaining, “Recent test scores show a 50-year downward trend for American students. We need to change course immediately.”<sup>26</sup>

COVID-19 lockdowns contributed to the decline, but the ***Journal*** notes that scores were sliding even before the pandemic shut down in-person learning. While teachers unions, the media, and politicians blame the issue on lack of funds, “per-pupil spending rose from \$7,089 in the 1971–72 school year to \$17,013 in 2019–20, a whopping 140 percent increase (figures are adjusted for inflation).”

! So we’re spending more tax dollars, for lower results.

A poor education contributes to numerous personal and social ills. A research report from the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond states, “Lower educational attainment is associated with lower earnings, higher crime rates, poorer health and mortality outcomes, and reduced participation in political and social institutions.”<sup>27</sup>



## LEFTIST BIAS AND RADICAL

# POLITICS IN THE CLASSROOM

### § A IS FOR ACTIVIST

A Minnesota school district changed its stated goals from the pursuit of academic excellence to a quest for “equity and cultural competence.” Math and reading scores have dropped significantly as a result of this shift. Among other resources, an elementary school in the district promoted an alphabet book, for young children, called *A Is for Activist*. The publisher describes the book as an ABC board book “for the next generation of progressives: families who want their kids to grow up in a space that is unapologetic *about activism, environmental justice, civil rights, LGBTQ rights, and everything else that activists believe in and fight for.*”<sup>28</sup>

Teaching one philosophy or social ideology to public school students is indoctrination, not education. Parents across the nation have reported hundreds of incidents of this radical bias in school hiring policies, teacher trainings, classrooms, curriculums, and textbooks.<sup>29</sup> The California Family Council gives just one example, reporting on a Sacramento high school teacher who was “arrogantly detailing his efforts to indoctrinate his students with radical, pro-Antifa material,” even displaying “a poster of notorious Communist mass-murderer Mao Zedong in his classroom.”<sup>30</sup>

Liberal bias in the classroom trends toward extreme social perspectives, not based in fact, that are wildly subjective and political. If taught, these ideas should be presented fairly and neutrally, where students are exposed to different sides of an argument or idea. Instead, our children are being indoctrinated into contentious and debatable perspectives with no room to disagree.

Instead of earning a well-rounded education, students are trained to hate and denigrate the United States, our Christian heritage, the Founding Fathers, and our nation’s founding documents. Instead of learning to think critically — to do research, analyze, listen, understand and objectively evaluate, they are often taught a radical perspective on social issues. Teaching one perspective also tends to shut down opposing views and perspectives, stifling free speech.

**LGBT Curriculum** encourages revisionist history and leans dangerously close to teaching our children they are nothing more than the sum of their sexual desires. These laws require publishing companies and textbook authors to determine and discuss the sexual activities and “gender identity” of historical figures, out of historical context, with little relevance to their significant historical contributions. LGBT curriculum mandates require that LGBT-identifying individuals are high-

lighted in classrooms and textbooks based solely on that individual's sexual attraction, behavior, or identity, which signals to our children that sexual identity is one of the more important factors for making meaningful contributions to society.

There is no reason to sexualize children by teaching them about the sexual attractions or identities of historical and political figures. But these mandates begin with kindergartners. These lessons are not age-appropriate and force confusing and complicated discussions based on gender and sexuality in their classrooms.

These laws promote the special and privileged characteristics of one class of people over another. For example, these laws do not also require other important aspects of individuals to be taught, like marital status or religious identity. Sexual identity curriculum requirements say a lot to our children about what is a "morally correct" perspective to have on sexual identity, which may be against their family's values and do not add any relevant, factual, academic discourse to classroom discussions. [See Parental Authority Section]

Your state may not mandate teaching LGBT curriculum, but textbooks and curriculums produced for large states like California and Illinois, which have these laws, are often purchased and used in school districts across the country.

In addition, your school's library and individual classrooms may have books on LGBT topics — beginning as young as kindergarten. And individual teachers may bring homosexuality and "gender identity" into the classroom. Activist groups like the Southern Poverty Law Center, the National Education Association, and the Human Rights Campaign have created resources specifically for them.<sup>37</sup>

## RADICAL IDEOLOGY IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: CRITICAL RACE THEORY

§ Parents were shocked when an elementary school in Cupertino, California, asked "third-graders to deconstruct their racial and sexual identities, then rank themselves according to their 'power and privilege.'"<sup>38</sup>

The eight-year-olds were taught about the "dominant culture" and "intersectionality," and they were asked "to create an 'identity map,' listing their race, class, gender, religion, family structure, and other characteristics." For "gender," the children were given the options of "female, male, nonbinary, cisgender, [and] transgender."<sup>39</sup>

Where did such radical teachings come from? How did they become embedded in our nations schools? And what do they promote?

### EXPOSING CRITICAL RACE THEORY'S ROOTS

Critical Theory is a movement that began at the Frankfurt School, in Germany in the 1920s. Critical theorists were trying to understand why Germans had not embraced communist ideology and why Communism had not spread to the West. Leading thinkers in the movement came to the U.S. in 1935 and joined Columbia University, in New York, before moving to other universities across the country.

Critical theorists relied heavily on Nietzschean, Marxist and Freudian teachings. From Nietzsche, they took the idea that truth is relative and subjective.<sup>40</sup> Like Marx, they believed that society was made up of "oppressors and oppressed," and attacked Western institutions and norms in order to tear them down.<sup>41</sup>

including destroying the family, individuality, eternal truths, nations, and tradition.<sup>42</sup>

## CRITICAL THEORY'S INFLUENCE ON RADICAL MOVEMENTS IN EDUCATION

Critical Theory gained a foothold in American universities and influenced two new movements in the 1960s and 1970s: Critical Legal Theory (CLT) and radical leftist feminism, both of which sought to disrupt and dismantle society.

Radical feminism changed Marx's categories of oppressor and oppressed to males and females, called for the destruction of societal structures — including marriage and family — and disregarded and sought to eliminate basic male-female differences, paving the way for critical race theory in public schools.

CLT holds that legal issues are "intertwined with social issues," and many in the movement "want to overturn the hierarchical structures of modern society," using the law to achieve this goal.<sup>43</sup>

Critical Race Theory (CRT) metastasized out of these movements in the late 1980s, redefining oppressor and oppressed on the basis of race.<sup>44</sup> The movement sees race as the most important aspect of a person's identity and asserts that group identity is more important than individual identity.

In their seminal work *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic explain that CRT splintered and spread to LGBT interest groups, Latino-critical studies, Asian American legal studies, Critical Whiteness studies, and more. Beyond that, it penetrated academic fields like education, literature studies, political science, ethnic studies, and sociology.<sup>45</sup>

Which is how this ideology entered into our public schools. While no elementary or high school offers a semester-long course in Critical Theory, CLT or CRT, basic tenets from this ideology have entered the classroom through administrators and teachers steeped in this dogma. It also comes into schools through textbooks, library books, resources, and curriculums.<sup>46</sup>

## SO WHAT DOES CRT TEACH?

Delgado and Stefancic explain some of the basic ideas CRT now promotes in public and private schools.<sup>47</sup>

- » *Racism is systemic and deliberate and unchangeable: CRT teaches that "racism is ordinary, not aberrational," and it is "the usual way society does business." Racism is embedded in all institutions and is understood as "white supremacy," "white privilege," or "whiteness as property."*
- » *Intersectionality: Kimberlé Crenshaw, an early CRT activist, coined the term to describe how someone might be disadvantaged because of multiple aspects of their identity, such as race, sex, religion, "gender identity," language, and "sexual orientation." Various aspects of personality are seen as empowering or oppressed.*
- » *Activism: CRT is not just an ideology, it's an activist movement, seeking to demolish the culture. And critical race theorists mean all of culture: from religion to business, from family to education, and from media to government.*

The teachings of Critical Race Theory are divisive. Schools teach children that they are victims or victimizers — or some combination of the two. Specifically, CRT teaches that all "people of color" are victims and all "whites" are racist. Students are encouraged to view themselves on the basis of various group identities, including their "gender identity" and "sexual orientation." They are trained to become radical activists, working to tear down and redefine all aspects of society.

- S** **PARENT RESOURCE LIST FOR COMBATTING CRT IN SCHOOLS**
- [Critical Race Theory Briefing Book](#), Christopher Rufo
  - [Critical Race Theory, the New Intolerance, and Its Grip on America](#), Jonathan Butcher and Mike Gonzalez
  - [Help Your Kids Discuss Critical Race Theory Through a Christian Worldview](#)
  - [Parents Defending Education](#)
  - [The SPLC's Radical "Learning for Justice" Program](#), Meg Kilgannon
  - [Woke Schooling: A Toolkit for Concerned Parents](#), Manhattan Institute

# GET INFORMED:

## BE AWARE OF WHAT YOUR CHILDREN ARE BEING TAUGHT

Parents should keep in mind that teachers often have limited control over curriculum content and subjects being taught. (This is usually controlled by the local school board, state board of education guidelines, and even federal law.) Although your teachers might really want to help you and respect your beliefs, their hands might be tied by state law or school board requirements.

Be sure to read all materials your child's school sends home. The school/school board sending a note home or posting on their website is often enough for the school to say they have "notified" you about content. Also, look over the books, pamphlets and other resources your child is checking out from the school library or receiving from teachers.

Be proactive in monitoring resources and information your child's school produces. Read your child's homework assignments, scan their textbooks, and ask them about their day and what they're learning in detail. What you learn can help you breathe easier — or alert you that you might need to take more steps to protect your child. Don't forget to ask about movies that may have been shown in class or educational resources provided by teachers.

Ask the school to inform you if they will have any outside speakers or assemblies. Schools have been known to bring in Planned Parenthood, drag queens, protestors, and other radical activists pushing controversial materials.

Form good, open relationships with your child's teacher, school counselors, assistant principal and principal. Meet with teachers and the school principal regularly and ask them to notify you when there may be content taught that could cause you concern or when they plan to have outside speakers come into the school. Attend back-to-school

nights, parent-teacher conferences, and other school events to stay connected.

Meet with teachers or administrators if you or your child's boundaries are violated or your rights are not respected. At times, open communication and good relationships just aren't enough and you might need to take more serious action. (See "Ways You Can Protect and Advocate For Your Child" for more specific tools to protect your family's rights.)

The Federal Department of Education does not explicitly protect the religious freedoms of students in schools, nor do their rules address religious discrimination. But the Department of Justice does enforce religious freedom protections for students and teachers in public schools. So if a school or school district is violating your religious beliefs, you may be able to file a complaint with the Department of Justice.

In many states, school boards have the sole right to choose curriculums for their schools. School boards often have opportunities for parents to join review committees, speak publicly and share their thoughts and concerns. So get involved! Write to your school board members about content that you have concerns about! There are likely other parents that share your perspective. This is where you can raise concerns, questions, and suggestions about controversial sex-ed content and content that is biased against Christians, conservatives, and others.

Vote for school board members who share your values, or run for your school board! Some school districts allow district members to vote for candidates for vacant school board positions. The school district website may have information on when and where to vote and running for a school board position.

KNOWING AND PROTECTING  
PARENTAL RIGHTS IN EDUCATION:  
**LEGAL SAFEGUARDS**

» **CURRICULUM REVIEW:**

*You have the federal (and often state) right to request a copy of your child's school curriculum from your local school board of education.<sup>32</sup> School districts may also post school curriculums on their websites. School curriculums are usually considered a matter of public record and are required to be released to families, although you may be responsible for copying costs. Take this opportunity to review curriculum for inappropriate content, biased material, or content that contradicts your family's values. Be prepared to talk with your child about your values and beliefs and what they are being taught.*

» **LESSON PLAN REVIEW:**

*You have the federally protected right to review teacher lesson plans and examine textbooks and other supplemental materials (like videos, activities, and games).<sup>33</sup> As a courtesy, be sure to give the teacher ample notice you'd like to review their lesson plans or other instructional materials. It is also important to build good relationships with your student's teachers to make access to content far easier.*

» **OBSERVE CLASS:**

*You have the federally protected right to observe your child's class.<sup>34</sup> You may need to provide the school notice beforehand. Some schools are actively seeking parents to sign waivers that they will not observe their child's classroom. You have the federally protected right to do so, even if you've signed a waiver and later change your mind.*

» **INTERACT WITH STAFF:**

*You have the federally protected right to speak with school staff and participate in your child's learning activities.<sup>35</sup>*

» **OPT-OUTS FOR SURVEYS AND ASSESSMENTS:**

*Federal law requires schools to allow parents to opt their children out of surveys and assessments that contain invasive or deeply personal questions about your child's sexuality; gender identity or expression; sexual experiences; moral, religious, or political beliefs; emotional or psychological problems; income level; immigration status; or criminal behavior — and more! Often this opt-out must be in writing.*

**!** Schools do not have to notify you about LGBT curriculum content or if there will be content that violates your family's religious beliefs.

# KNOW YOUR CHILD'S RIGHTS

Often the school environment has led to courts limiting the rights of students. Here are some protected rights your child has:

- » *The state cannot require students to act in a manner that violates their religious beliefs. If your child objects to classroom content because of his or her personal religious beliefs, help your child submit a letter to the school in writing with their objections.*
- » *Children have the right to express their beliefs in the classroom, provided they are not doing it at an inappropriate time or in a disruptive manner. Your child should never be censored, disciplined, or experience other negative consequences from expressing his or her beliefs or opinions. This right is protected under the First Amendment as free speech.*
- » *The right to free speech also includes the right not to speak, the right to be silent. So children cannot be forced to say things that violate their faith or conscience. For example, a child cannot be forced to use transgender pronouns or promote abortion in a classroom assignment. This right does apply to both verbal and written speech and sometimes actions.*
- » *Your child's school cannot withhold graduation from your child for opting out of classes due to their sincerely held beliefs. If the school provides alternative content that is acceptable to your family, your child has the traditional duty to complete this content for classroom credit. If the school does provide additional content, your child's opt-out should have no impact on his or her grades or graduation.*





## WAYS YOU CAN PROTECT AND ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CHILD

### » CURRICULUM REVIEW WORKSHOPS:

*Your school or school district might host a workshop for parents to review curriculum, make comments, and offer suggestions and criticisms prior to the curriculum's adoption by the school district.*

### » FORMAL PETITION PROCESS:

*Some school districts allow parents to file a complaint with their local school board regarding school content. Most states allow families to file complaints with their state board of education if your rights are not being honored in schools. You can even file a complaint with the Federal Department of Education if these are serious and/or repeated violations. If a school has repeatedly violated your religious freedoms, you can even file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Justice.*

### » SCHOOL CHOICE:

*Given the serious concerns families may have about controversial content in the classrooms, and the difficulty some schools and school districts present for families exercising their rights, it is important families are aware of their school choice options in their state.*

### » PTA OR PTO:

*Join your school's Parent-Teacher Association, Parent-Teacher Organization, or other parent group, and stay up to date on content that's being taught in other classrooms. (Though be warned: some of the national organizations may be leftist and radical.<sup>36</sup>) Building close relationships with teachers and other parents can have an enormously positive impact, especially if teachers are getting continuous positive feedback on classroom content from active parents.*

### » SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS:

*Speak up at school board meetings about controversial content, content you find offensive, or content that undermines your family's religious, moral, or ethical beliefs. In addition, share if content is being taught in a patently offensive and biased manner and give examples. School boards have the authority to pull or change curriculum content.*

### » STATE-BASED FAMILY POLICY COUNCILS:

*Allied with Focus on the Family and Family Policy Alliance, each Family Policy Council works to promote state and local policies that support life, religious freedom, free speech, parental rights, and educational freedom. Connect with the organization in your state to learn more about the issues, get equipped for advocacy, and find opportunities to engage on these important culture and policy issues.<sup>37</sup>*

Many grassroots movements and policy advocacy groups are springing up — empowering parents to take an active role in shaping the educational landscape, promoting school choice, and holding school boards accountable.

# TALK TO YOUR CHILD

A resource like this can only skim the surface with advice on talking with children about these difficult and controversial subjects. So, we'll give some overall advice here and then point toward other helpful resources on these issues.

# HELP YOUR CHILD

## SUCCEED IN SCHOOL

Parents are ultimately responsible for their children's education — not teachers, schools, or governments. So, here are a few ideas to help your child learn and succeed in school.

- » **Take interest in what they are learning.** Ask questions and be curious. Kids, many times, want to teach or share about what they are learning, especially during the elementary school years.
- » **Get to know their learning style.** Each child learns differently. Check out *Focus on the Family's* articles on learning style differences.
- » **Be available to explain and clarify concepts.** This takes time and patience. Children who have parents available to wrestle through academic concepts and challenges tend to do better academically.
- » **Explore answers and concepts together with your child that may be difficult for your child to understand.** There are many resources online and at your local library.
- » **Be encouraging and patient.** Help your child discover what they are good at and where they can grow. Patience provides the necessary security for growth and exploration.
- » **Help your child learn how to be organized in their style of organization.** Your child needs to learn when they feel organized. It may not look like organization to you, but it may be the way they find order in their chaos. Help them find a consistent way to stay organized and on top of things.
- » **Come alongside your child as they learn how to manage the big emotions that come with moments of failure.** School is about learning and excellence, not about perfection. Encourage growth and exploration. Your words over time will reveal your hopes and expectations. The goal is a love of learning and growth.
- » **Celebrate hard work, discipline, and successes.** Celebrating is motivating and fun. It also provides opportunities for connection and enjoyment for the tiring and challenging work.

## RESOURCES:

The following are some resources to connecting with your child and his or her success.

### Broadcasts and Podcasts:

- » [Answering Your Back-To-School Questions](#)
- » [Choosing the Best Education for Your Child](#)
- » [Discovering the Best Ways to Educate Your Child](#)
- » [Intelligence: Discovering Your Child's Unique Gifts](#)
- » [Thriving Student](#)
- » [Putting Children First in Education](#)

### Books:

- » [8 Great Smarts: Discover and Nurture Your Child's Intelligences](#) by Kathy Koch, Ph.D.
- » [The Big What Now Book of Learning Styles](#) by Carol Barnier
- » [Every Child Can Succeed](#) by Cynthia Ulrich Tobias
- » [Planet Middle School](#) by Dr. Kevin Leman

### Articles and Web pages:

- » [5 Positive Effects Reading Has on Child Development](#)
- » [The Benefits of Reading to Your Children](#)
- » [Preparing Kids for Back-to-School](#)
- » [Schoolwork and Homework Responsibility](#)
- » [What Motivates Your Child to Learn?](#)

### More Resources for Schools and Related Issues

**THIS NEW SCHOOL YEAR BRINGS NEW PRETEEN DILEMMAS.**

*The teen years are an exciting time.* Your child will go through many changes — and challenges, too! We know you want to guide them well and *Launch Into the Teen Years* is just the tool to help you prepare for this phase of life together.

Adolescence is a pivotal time in your child's life. Let *Launch Into the Teen Years* help you prepare them to thrive!

LAUNCH INTO THE TEEN YEARS IS DESIGNED FOR PARENTS TO ENGAGE WITH THEIR 8- TO 12-YEAR-OLD CHILD.



## TALK WITH YOUR CHILDREN

ABOUT YOUR BELIEFS — AND ADDRESS RADICAL BIAS IN EDUCATION AND THE CULTURE

We advise starting young and teaching your children your views about American history, science, morality and religion, U.S. government, and economics before they start hearing and reading biased materials on these issues. You don't have to be an expert on these topics to teach your children — you can learn with them. Even if your children are older, you can explore these topics together, learning as you go.

Given the hostility toward people of faith in some school communities, sharing opposing ideologies may put children at risk for harassment and bullying. Parents will want to talk with children about using wisdom and discretion when, where, and how they share their faith or beliefs on social and political issues with others.

Some parents engage with their children during their early years and then step back as they move into middle and high school. We're not advocating for over-involvement; children need more space as they grow and develop. However, staying engaged in what's happening in their schools is essential, as middle and high school may be where they encounter the most damaging and inappropriate materials.

As you and your children read books and articles, listen to podcasts, and watch videos, discuss what you're all learning and what the authors and speakers have to say about our country — from economics to politics and from science to morality.

### RESOURCES:

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the U.S. and schools across the nation shut down, many experienced homeschoolers began putting out tips and resources for millions of parents who were thrust, unprepared, into homeschooling. Here are some of their recommendations, which you can use to communicate your values and beliefs to your children.

- » *"How To Homeschool When You're Not A Homeschooler," from our allies at the Massachusetts Family Institute, advises about where to find educational resources.*
- » *Julie Hamilton Batura is a homeschooling mother of three who suggests many "Practical Resources for Teaching Your Kids at Home."*
- » *Reclaiming Education [www.focusonthefamily.com/homeschoolresources](http://www.focusonthefamily.com/homeschoolresources)*

# TALK WITH YOUR CHILDREN

ABOUT IDENTITY, RELATIONSHIPS, SEXUALITY AND LGBT ISSUES

We believe that parents — not schools or the government — hold the responsibility for informing their children and communicating their values about sexuality, relationships, and marriage. Yet parents often feel uncomfortable and fearful about broaching these subjects, which means many children will learn about them from the media, entertainment, schools, and friends. In an ongoing dialogue and relationship, it's important to be intentional about sharing your values and beliefs with your children.

Before even addressing LGBT issues, it's important to give your children a solid understanding of God's good design for relationships, marriage, and sexuality. Here are a couple of key ideas to communicate with your children, not in a one-time talk, but in an ongoing conversation, in age-appropriate ways:

- » *Teach children about God's design of humans as male and female, in His image. Affirm and bless your sons in their masculinity and your daughters in their femininity.*
- » *Explain that marriage is the union of a husband and wife. Marriage has several purposes and is foundational for society as it unites a couple together with any children who may come into the world as a result of their union.*
- » *Tell your children that sexual expression is reserved for marriage between a husband and wife.*
- » *Explain that all people are affected by sin. As a result, we all struggle with relationships and sexuality. Homosexuality and gender confusion are just two of the many sexuality issues that people wrestle with because of sin.*
- » *Teach children that God loves everyone, even when we sin, and that He wants to restore people to a relationship with Him through His Son, Jesus.*

After you've given your children an appropriate education about sex and sexuality, it'll be easier to discuss LGBT subjects with them. It's vital to **communicate with grace and truth**. We talk about these subjects with respect for God's design for sexuality and love and respect for people. Your children are paying attention to you, and it's essential to speak with kindness about those struggling with gender confusion or same-sex attractions.

## RESOURCES:

Focus on the Family has developed many resources to help parents ground their children in healthy identity, relationships, and sexuality. We also have many helpful tools for understanding and discussing homosexuality and transgenderism.

- » [The Talk: Healthy Sexuality Education—Basic Goals and Guidance from Focus on the Family](#)
- » [Launch into the Teen Years](#)
- » [How to Teach Your Children About Marriage: Creative and Practical Ideas](#)
- » [Raising Children Who Honor Marriage: What You Should Know](#)
- » [How to Talk to Your Children About Homosexuality](#)
- » [When Transgender Issues Enter Your World](#)
- » [Talking to Your Children About Transgender Issues](#)
- » [Resources When Your Child Encounters LGBT Ideology at School](#)

For parents and older children who want to dig deeper into these topics, Focus on the Family's [Understanding Homosexuality](#), [Homosexuality Resources](#), and [Transgender Resources](#) provide links to broadcasts, Q&As, articles, and books.

For those struggling with LGBT issues themselves or in their families, Focus on the Family offers a one-time complimentary consultation from a Christian perspective. We also offer referrals for licensed [Christian counselors in your area](#).

- » *To reach Focus on the Family's counseling department by phone, call 1-800-A-Family (232-6459) weekdays 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. (Mountain Time). Please be prepared to leave your contact information for a counselor or chaplain to return a call to you as soon as possible. The consultation is available at no cost to you. You may also reach our counselors online by filling out our [Counseling Request Form](#).*

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# APPENDIX A

## PARENTAL RIGHTS, EDUCATIONAL FREEDOM, AND SCHOOL WATCHDOG ORGANIZATIONS

- » [American Enterprise Institute: Conservative Education Reform Network](#)
- » [American Federation for Children](#)
- » [Moms for Liberty](#)
- » [No Left Turn in Education](#)
- » [Parents Defending Education](#)

## HEALTHY SEXUALITY EDUCATION – RESEARCH, TRAINING, AND POLICY ORGANIZATIONS

- » [Ascend](#) – Provides information about sexual education curriculums; training; and programs and resources for schools, parents and educators.
- » [Beacon Health Education Resources](#) – Offers training, consulting, and advocacy resources for schools, parents, and legislators.
- » [Family Research Council: Sex Education in Public Schools: Sexualization of Children and LGBT Indoctrination](#)
- » [Institute for Research and Evaluation](#)
- » [K-12 Standards for Optimal Sexual Development](#) – Offers a healthy alternative to “National Standards” from sexual education activist groups.
- » [Stop CSE](#) – Parents’ organization working to defend the innocence of children by educating and equipping parents.