



EQUIPPING PARENTS FOR **BACK-TO-SCHOOL** 2026

A LETTER TO PARENTS

AUGUST 2026

Welcome to another school year! If you're like most parents, you're probably asking, "What do we need to do to 'reset'?" "What do I need to know?" or "How can we make this school year go well?" We know you're busy, so we created this easy-to-reference guide to save you some time.

For 2026, we've updated *Equipping Parents for Back-to-School* to reflect the latest changes in education. A lot has happened to our school systems and policies. We want you to feel confident as you advocate for your child's well-being and growth. Here's what you'll find inside:

KEY UPDATES & ACTION STEPS

- » **Stay Informed:** Recent legal decisions, such as the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Mirabelli v. Bonta*, affirm your rights as parents. New federal investigations and lawsuits are protecting girls' sports and private spaces, and Congress has approved the [Education Freedom Tax Credit](#) to support educational choice.
- » **Build Relationships:** Most teachers and school officials care deeply about your children. Take time to connect with them and keep the lines of communication open.
- » **Advocate Respectfully:** For every topic discussed, we offer suggestions on how to advocate for your child, guidance for talking about sensitive subjects, and links to helpful articles and resources.
- » **Use Our Resources:** Each chapter now begins with a synopsis and update, so you can quickly find what matters most to your family.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

- » What are your hopes for your child this year?
- » How can you support their growth in faith, character, and academics?
- » Are there areas where you'd like more guidance or support?

ENCOURAGEMENT & FAITH INTEGRATION

Even with positive moves in many school districts and agencies, challenges remain. Some local school districts and state legislatures still threaten parental rights, educational freedom, and privacy. National test scores show that many students are not achieving basic proficiency in core subjects. It's vital that parents stay vigilant concerning academic achievement, radical ideologies, sex education, health clinics, internet safety, and inappropriate content in schools¹.

Remember, "Train up a child in the way they should go; even when they are old, they will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6) Research shows you are the most important influence in your child's life. I want to cheer you on as you champion their healthy growth—educationally, spiritually, physically, intellectually, and relationally.

If that sounds like a lot, don't worry—my team and I are here to help! Our goal is to equip and empower you to act with confidence, wisdom, and courage rooted in Christ. We believe most educators have the best interests of children at heart, and we encourage you to foster positive relationships with school staff.

INVITATION FOR ONGOING DIALOGUE

If you have questions, concerns, suggestions, or would like prayer, please don't hesitate to reach out. We're here to support you and your family as you navigate the school year.

May God bless you and your family,



Dr. Danny Huerta
Vice President of Parenting and Youth
Focus on the Family

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CHAPTER 1:

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

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NEW DEVELOPMENTS

SUPREME COURT DECISIONS

Two particularly important Supreme Court decisions reaffirmed parental rights in education. In [Mahmoud v. Taylor](#) a group of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian parents in Maryland asked to opt their young children out of public-school-mandated LGBT materials.

In June 2025, the Court ruled 6-3 in favor of the parents, finding that when schools expose kids to sexuality content conflicting with parents' sincerely held religious beliefs, they substantially burden the rights of religious parents. The ruling protects parents' rights to guide their children's education.

A second decision, [Mirabelli v. Bonta](#) in March 2026, struck a blow against the California requirement that schools hide information from parents about a child's sexual identity confusion. In a 6-3 decision, the justices affirmed parents' rights over school "transgender exclusion policies," saying these policies likely violated parents' constitutional rights. (Chapters 2 and 3 of this resource describe these transgender policies in more detail.)

However, *Mirabelli* did not have a full hearing by the Court, did not cover all school districts in the U.S., and did not deal with the aspect of the case where teachers sued because schools forced them to withhold information from parents. The suit was sent back down to the lower courts, and it will be a while before it is completely decided.

Lower courts have decided differently about whether schools may hide a student's sexual identity confusion from parents, with some ruling in favor of schools and others in favor of parents. We're hopeful that the Supreme Court will settle the disparity between these outcomes.

EXECUTIVE ORDERS AND FEDERAL AGENCY POLICIES

President Donald Trump signed an executive order to [End Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling](#). As a result, the Education Department [sent a “Dear Colleague” letter](#) warning all federally-funded schools that they must eliminate discriminatory “diversity, equity and inclusion” (DEI) trainings and curriculums or risk losing federal funds. The department also [launched an “End DEI” portal](#) for parents, students, teachers, and the broader community to report discrimination based on race or sex in publicly funded K-12 schools.

In addition, the Education Department [directed schools](#) to comply with parental rights laws under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) – or risk losing education funding. (For more on this, see Chapter 2 and Appendix E.) The department began investigating states, such as [California](#) and [Maine](#), that hide information about students’ “gender transitions” from parents.

It’s important to know that there are ongoing battles between the federal government and states and local school districts on these issues. The president’s executive order and Education Department actions have been challenged in courts, and it will take some time for these cases to be settled.

STATE LEGISLATURES AND BOARDS OF EDUCATION

California, Colorado, Illinois, Nevada, New Jersey, Oregon, and Washington are among the states requiring instruction about LGBT-identified individuals in social studies classes from kindergarten through 12th grade. School districts and educators in many states may also include inappropriate, sexualized materials in social studies and English curricula. It will take time and court cases before we know how these laws are affected by [Mahmoud v. Taylor](#).

On the flip side, at least eight states have implemented restrictions on these topics in elementary school or have

opt-out options for parents. These include Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, and North Carolina.

Other states require “cultural competency” programs or “equity training” for educators, including California, Illinois, Minnesota, New Jersey, Virginia, and Washington. Most often, these programs include radical concepts from DEI, gender ideology, and critical race theory.

In contrast, states like Florida, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, and Utah have proposed or passed laws banning DEI training, programs, offices, or curriculums in K-12 schools. Several of these policies have faced lawsuits which, again, will take time to make their way through the courts.

Parents should be aware that [teachers unions](#) and many teacher training colleges promote [radical](#) dogmas, often under the guise of [“equity and social justice,”](#) “inclusivity,” or [“LGBTQ safety.”](#) So even with states banning these practices and ideologies, students may still encounter them in the [classroom](#).

As far as schools hiding students’ sexual identity confusion from parents, [Defending Education](#) reported that, as of May 2026, more than 21,300 schools still have such “transgender policies” – affecting more than 12.3 million students.

The bottom line is that the education landscape is constantly fluctuating. States and school districts don’t always follow federal guidance or court decisions, so it’s important for parents to be informed about changes in federal, state, and local policies related to classroom content and parental rights in education.

HELPFUL RESOURCES:

Many education and legal groups offer sample parental opt-out forms for parents to keep children from being exposed to damaging sexual or ideological materials – including intrusive, data-mining student surveys:

- » *Advocates for Faith and Freedom* – [Parental Opt-Out From LGBTQ+-Related Instruction and Curriculum](#)
- » *America First Legal* – [Parental Consent Letter](#) and [Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment Tool-Kit](#)
- » *Child & Parental Rights* – [Parental Notification Letter](#)
- » *Courage is a Habit* – [Collection of Opt-Out Forms](#)
- » *Defending Education* – [Opt-Out Requirement After Mahmoud v. Taylor](#) and [Opting-Out Resources](#)
- » *Family Research Council* – [Parental Rights](#)
- » *Pacific Justice Institute* – [State-Specific Public School Opt-Out Forms](#)
- » *Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty* – [Parental Toolkit and Parental Opt-Out Form](#)

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION:

- » [A Parent Guide to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#)
- » [End DEI Portal](#)
- » [Office for Civil Rights: File a Complaint](#)
- » [Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment General Guidance](#)

CHAPTER 1

SUMMARY

Parents are ultimately in charge of their children's education; this is a right the Supreme Court has upheld. But the government also has a role in education, and when you send your child to a public school, the school is empowered — to some degree — to act on your behalf. State legislatures and boards of education mandate policies and requirements for schools and student attendance. The federal government provides funds for different educational programs. Local school boards oversee local schools. And school administrators and teachers also influence what's taught in the classroom. Find out more about how these all fit together — and how to safeguard your rights and protect your child — in the section titled: ***"Understanding Your Educational Rights and Parental Authority."***

There are major issues and problems in many public schools: Many of our nation's schools are failing — children are not learning basic skills — even as education spending has increased dramatically. Some schools are focusing on teaching children radical ideologies, such as Critical Race Theory, and many are sexualizing and confusing children by teaching about homosexual and transgender identities and behaviors. Some states even mandate teaching about LGBT issues to all students — grades K-12 — in social studies lessons. Make sure you're aware of what's being taught in many public schools by reading more about ***"Radical Ideology in Public Schools" and "LGBT Curriculum Mandates."***

You can take steps to safeguard your children: Parents have the right to review curriculum and lesson plans and to observe classes. Your child's free speech and religious freedom are protected. And you can advocate for your child by joining local parents groups, engaging in the curriculum and textbook review process, and participating in school board meetings. Find out more in sections like ***"Know Your Child's Rights" and "Ways You Can Protect and Advocate for Your Child."***

Finally, you can help your child succeed in school and give them a solid understanding of important topics like sexuality, identity, relationships, marriage, and the value of all people. Take an interest in what they're learning, get to know your child's learning style, and encourage them

as they learn and grow. Begin an important, ongoing conversation with your child about God's design of humans as male and female, how marriage unites a husband and wife, and that God loves everyone — even when we disobey. Learn more in the section labeled *"Talk With Your Children."*

“ Parents are ultimately in charge of their children's education





UNDERSTANDING YOUR EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PARENTAL AUTHORITY

“ 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.¹

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.”²

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.³

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 necessarily 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.⁴ 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** (ED) or the **Department of Justice**, would be best. For example, the ED 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.⁵

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.⁶

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.⁷ 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."⁸

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."⁹

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."¹⁰

EXPOSING RADICAL IDEOLOGIES

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.¹¹

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.¹²

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.¹³

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.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵

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.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷

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.¹⁸

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.”¹⁹

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.”²⁰

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.*”²¹

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.²² 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.”²³

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 highlight-

ed 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.²⁴

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.'"²⁵ 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."²⁶

Where did such radical teachings come from? How did they become embedded in our nation's 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.²⁷ 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,²⁸ including destroying the family, individuality, eternal truths, nations, and tradition.²⁹

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.³⁰

Critical Race Theory (CRT) metastasized out of these movements in the late 1980s, redefining oppressor and oppressed on the basis of race.³¹ 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.³²

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.³³

SO WHAT DOES CRT TEACH?

Delgado and Stefancic explain some of the basic ideas CRT now promotes in public and private schools.³⁴

- » **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.

- + **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.³⁵ 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).³⁶ 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.³⁷ 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.³⁸

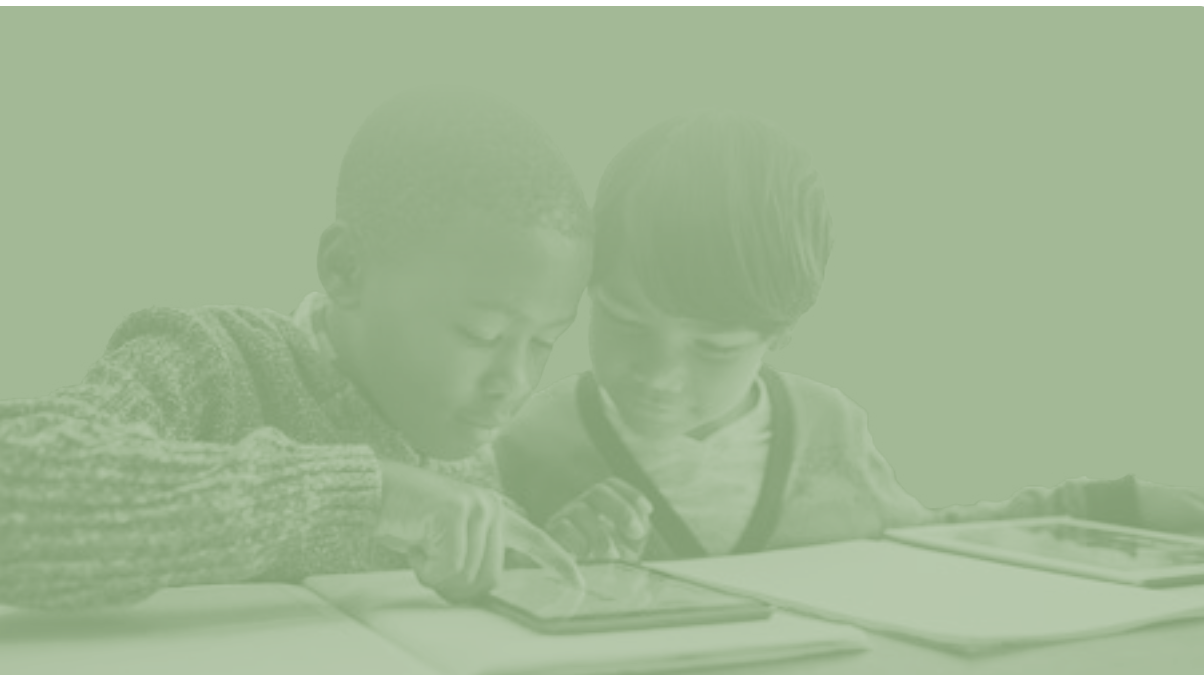
» OPT-OUTS FOR SURVEYS AND ASSESSMENTS:

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.

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.*

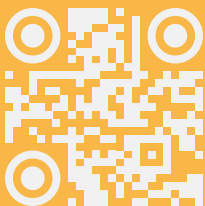




RIGHT HELP. RIGHT TIME.

We're sure you don't feel like you have the time or energy to just talk with your kids about these topics. Guess what? Now you do. Get weekly emails from Focus on the Family with age-specific content for your child's development right now.

Now you can spend more time being the intentional parent you want to be.



MyKidsAge.com

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.³⁹) 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.⁴⁰

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 WITH 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?](#)

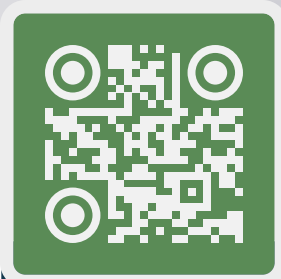
[More Resources for Schools and Related Issues](#)

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.



LaunchIntoTheTeenYears.com

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 FocusOnTheFamily.com/parenting/homeschool*

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 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 service by phone, call 1-855-771-HELP (4357) weekdays 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. (Mountain Time). Please be prepared to leave your contact information for a counselor to return a call to you as soon as possible. Alternatively, you can fill out our [Counseling Consultation Request Form](#).*

CHAPTER 2:

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN SEXUAL EDUCATION, HEALTH ROOMS, CLINICS, AND COUNSELING OFFICES

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NEW DEVELOPMENTS

SUPREME COURT DECISIONS

In [*Mahmoud v. Taylor*](#) the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 6-3 that when schools force exposure to sexuality content conflicting with sincerely held religious beliefs, they substantially burden the rights of religious parents. So schools must offer parents the right to opt children out of inappropriate sexual education materials.

In the case [*Mirabelli v. Bonta*](#), a 6-3 decision handed down in March 2026, justices affirmed parents' rights over "Gender Nonconforming Student Policies" which force educators to hide a child's sexual identity confusion from parents. With more than 21,300 school districts implementing "[transgender policies](#)", including in health rooms, clinics, and counseling offices, it will take some time to settle the issue in the courts and make certain that schools stop infringing on parental rights.

EXECUTIVE ORDERS AND FEDERAL AGENCY POLICY CHANGES

The Biden administration redefined "sex discrimination" to include "sexual orientation" and "gender identity," but President Trump overturned this with an [executive order](#) that says, "It is the policy of the United States to recognize two sexes, male and female." The order defines sex-related terms, like male and female, based on biology, adding that "'sex' is not a synonym for and does not include the concept of 'gender identity.'" The president also signed an executive order "[Protecting Children from Chemical and Surgical Mutilation.](#)"

As a result, the [Department of Health and Human Services](#) (HHS) demanded that 40 states and six territories "remove all references to gender ideology in their federally-funded Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP) educational materials within 60 days." PREP

provides funding to state agencies to educate students about abstinence, contraception, and pregnancy prevention. HHS also “[terminated](#) California’s PREP grant after the state failed to meet its demand to remove gender ideology from its educational materials.”

Various federal agencies, including [HHS](#), the [Federal Trade Commission](#), and the [FBI](#), are working to stop “transgender” medical interventions for minors. These actions affect school-based health clinics that steer children toward transgenderism and transgender medical interventions.

HHS announced “actions to protect the rights of parents within the practice of pediatric medicine.” The agency reminded health care professionals – including those at school clinics – “about federal law requiring them to provide parents access to their children’s health information.”

STATE ACTIONS

A coalition of 16 states [filed a lawsuit](#) against HHS over its defunding of PREP if it includes “gender ideology.” A judge issued a preliminary injunction blocking the order while the case winds its way through the legal system.

Across the nation, the number of school-based health clinics has grown to [more than 4,000](#), with states like California, Connecticut, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, and Washington increasing funding for new clinics.

The federal government has restricted [Medicaid and Medicare](#) access for transgender medical interventions. But school-based clinic funding also comes from grants, hospital sponsors, and state and local funds, so school clinics may still move sexually-confused children toward transgender social and medical interventions – sometimes without parental knowledge or consent. In addition, clinics may follow state laws giving minors, depending on their age, access to mental and medical health care. Again, without parents’ knowledge or consent.

In an April 2026 report in [JAMA](#), researchers noted that from 1950-2019, many states lowered age of consent laws for medical and mental health care. But the article points to a slight reversal of that trend in several states, beginning in 2019, as conservative states move to protect parental

rights. Parents will want to know the laws in their state and policies in their school district.

The bottom line is that both sexual education and school-based health clinics are in a state of flux. To protect children, parents should know what type of sex education their school provides, whether the school has a health clinic and the services provided, and the age of consent laws in their state.

RESOURCES:

Groups providing opt-out forms for sexual education and school-based health care:

- » [America First Legal - The AFL Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment: A Toolkit for Parents](#)
- » [Liberty Council - Instructions for Parents Regarding Non-Consent to Human Sexuality Instruction](#)
- » [Pacific Justice Institute: For Parental Rights, Sex-Ed Parental Rights in California, Parental Opt-Out Rights for Sex Education in Colorado, and Parent Opt-Out Form](#)
- » [Wisconsin Institute for Law and Liberty - Parental Toolkit and Parental Opt-Out Form](#)
- » [Moms for Liberty: Know Your Parental Rights and Opt-Out Forms](#)

Be sure to check your school district’s policy for forms related to health care, mental health treatment, and school-based health care clinics. Remember, in [some states](#) the [age of consent](#) for different types of health services is as low as 12, so children can receive [health care](#) and [mental health](#) treatment without parental knowledge or permission.

Parents can file a complaint with [HHS’ Office for Civil Rights](#) if a school-based health clinic or counseling office violates their parental rights. Parents can also file a complaint with the [U.S. Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division](#) if their parental rights are violated.

CHAPTER 2

SUMMARY

Many parents have been shocked in recent years to learn that sexual education in schools doesn't focus on basic facts about biology, pregnancy and STIs — or place an emphasis on waiting until marriage to engage in sexual activity. Instead, activist groups like Planned Parents and the LGBT group Advocates for Youth promote Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE). CSE sexualizes and confuses children by teaching about "safer sex" and that sexual activities are "rights" that children can "consent" to. These groups create sex ed standards and curriculums that are adopted by state legislatures and boards of education. Find out more by reading sections like *"What's Happening at School?"* and *"Why Should I Be Concerned?"*

CSE teaches elementary school children their "gender" might be different from their biological sex and there are an infinite number of "gender identities." CSE teaches that sexual and romantic attractions define a person — and that being attracted to the same sex is no different from being attracted to the opposite sex. CSE teaches that abortion is a normal pregnancy outcome. While claiming to be medically accurate and effective, the research shows something different. We explain more in *"How Do I Recognize Comprehensive Sex Ed in the Classroom?"* and *"Sex Education Words We Don't Like."*

Risk Avoidance education (SRA) is a healthier alternative which teaches about relationships and sexuality. SRA gives a science- and health-based perspective on sex and stresses the benefits of abstinence until marriage. Here you'll find information about helpful resources like "Universal Standards for Optimum Sexual Development" and groups that produce healthy sexual education. Check out *"Comprehensive Sex Education vs. Sexual Risk Avoidance Education"* and *"Sex Education Words We Do Like."*

Delaying sexual activity until marriage is best for children. While most parents support sexual education, they want it to reflect their values and beliefs. You usually must give consent before your child is taught sexual education; you have the right to review curriculums, lesson plans, and textbooks; you can advocate for SRA to be taught in your school district; and you can usually opt your child out of unhealthy, ineffective CSE.

“ Many parents have been shocked in recent years to learn that sexual education in schools doesn’t focus on basic facts about biology, pregnancy and STIs.

Learn more in sections like ***“Know the Facts,” “Know Your Rights,”*** and ***“Ways You Can Protect and Advocate for Your Child.”*** Learn tips to help you talk with your child about these important — but sensitive and personal — topics.

School health clinics and counseling offices have become a serious area of concern for families in recent years. More than 3,900 school-based health centers are active across the country, often offering in-person and telehealth care; reproductive services such as contraception and abortion; and information about topics like transgenderism and homosexuality — often without parental knowledge or consent. At least 10.85 million students are in districts where schools hide information about mental health issues like sexual identity confusion from parents. This section explains areas of concern, helps you know the facts about these key issues, explores relevant state and federal laws, and helps you understand your rights and your child’s rights.

Finally, you’ll find gives lots of guidance about ***“Ways You Can Protect and Advocate for Your Child”*** and how to ***“Talk With Your Child.”*** For example, when you sign a consent form for treatment, you can limit the scope of that treatment. You can be proactive in reviewing materials from health staff and monitoring resources and information from your child’s school. It’s good to connect with like-minded parents and maintain good relationships with your schoolteachers and administrators. Invest consistent time for relationship and conversation with your child — help them think through who they trust and why. We give even more guidance and point to helpful resources below.

SEXUAL EDUCATION

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT SCHOOL?

+ INTRODUCED TO PORNOGRAPHY

"I began reading all these lessons for children as young as five that talked about sexual intercourse, how their private organs worked, and even introduced pornography to really young children."⁴¹

CONCERNED MOTHER IN WASHINGTON STATE

For decades, basic sex education promoted abstinence until marriage with a focus on biology, pregnancy, and sexually transmitted disease/infection (STD/I) prevention. Even today, many states and schools offer this kind of healthy sexuality education, sometimes under names like "Sexual Risk Avoidance," "Abstinence-Centered," or "Abstinence Focused."⁴²

But a completely different message is offered — and even mandated by state legislatures and departments of education — in many schools, under names like "Comprehensive Sex Education" (CSE), "Abstinence-based" or "Abstinence-Plus." These are "rights-based" and "pleasure-based" sexuality curriculums, taught in many public schools, sexualizing and confusing children, and replacing the facts- and marriage-based sex education of the past.

WHO'S DRIVING THIS AGENDA?

Parents may be surprised to learn **Planned Parenthood** is one of the largest writers and distributors of sex education curriculum in the world — a curriculum framework teaching that every child, of any age, has "sexual rights," including the right to experience sexual pleasure, no matter what, as long as there is "consent."

For example, **International Planned Parenthood Federation** (IPPF) has produced a resource, "Exclaim — young people's guide to 'Sexual rights: an IPPF declaration.'"⁴³ The publication explains what this means:

! **Young people are sexual beings.** They have sexual needs, desires, fantasies and dreams. It is important for **all young people around the world to be able to explore, experience and express their sexualities in healthy, positive, pleasurable and safe ways.** This can only happen when young people's sexual rights are guaranteed.

"Exclaim!" says these sexual rights are "universal, inalienable, and indivisible" — just like constitutionally protected rights. The document, promoted to young people around the globe, defines "inalienable" this way:

! Everyone is entitled to human rights simply for being human. Human rights cannot be taken away or given up from anyone, **irrespective of their age**, gender, ethnicity, race, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, disability, HIV status or health status (emphasis added).

So Planned Parenthood believes that sexual rights exist at any age and are as important as other human rights, like religious freedom and free speech. The organization does go on to say that these rights and education about sexuality should be "age appropriate." However, Planned Parenthood and other CSE advocates decide what is "age appropriate," not parents.

"Exclaim!" states that sexual pleasure is a sexual right, arguing, **"All young people are entitled to sexual well-being and pleasure**, whether or not they want to have children."

Certainly sex is pleasurable, but CSE separates sex from two of its main purposes, which are to unite a husband and wife in a one-flesh, faithful, monogamous marital union and to bring new life into the world.

Planned Parenthood is not the only organization promoting radical sexualization of children. SIECUS recently changed its name from the Sexual Information and Education Council of the United States to **SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social**

Change. The organization says, **"Sex ed is a vehicle for social change.** Full stop." Here's what the organization means by this:

! With sex education, we have a golden opportunity to create a culture shift — tackling the misinformation, shame, and stigma that create the basis for many of today's sexual and reproductive health and rights issues, such as: reproductive justice, LGBTQ equality, sexual violence prevention, gender equity, dismantling white supremacy⁴⁴

You may rightly wonder what some of these have to do with teaching children about biology, reproduction, and delaying sexual activity until marriage.

Another group working to sexualize children is **Advocates for Youth**, a policy and advocacy organization that trains and organizes youth activists; created and supports the expansion of School-Based Health Centers/Clinics (more on these, below); and promotes "racial justice and intersectionality," homosexuality, and sexual identity confusion.⁴⁵ The organization develops and distributes sex ed curriculum and resources, such as ***Rights, Respect, Responsibility (3Rs)*** and online sex ed videos for children through its managing partnership with AMAZE.⁴⁶

Parents should also be aware of the organization **Answer: sex ed**, honestly, based in the Center for Applied Psychology at Rutgers University. The organization "provides and promotes unfettered access to comprehensive sexuality education for young people and the adults who teach them."⁴⁷ Answer launched the magazine and website ***Sex, etc.***, "to offer sexuality education directly to teens," with articles written by teenagers.⁴⁸

Together, Advocates for Youth, Answer, and SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change created a partnership called Future of Sex Education (FoSE). That organization released ***National Sex Education Standards: Core Content and Skills, K-12 (Second Edition)***.⁴⁹ This sounds like an official government resource, but it promotes CSE and was developed by extremist organizations that work to confuse and sexualize children — beginning at age five.

COMPREHENSIVE SEX EDUCATION VS. SEXUAL RISK AVOIDANCE EDUCATION



GENDER DIVERSITY

“Young children (as young as pre-school) are **quite capable of understanding and discussing issues related to gender diversity, including gender expectations, gender nonconformity, and gender-based oppression**” (their emphasis).

ANSWERS FOR YOUTH – “THE CASE FOR COMPREHENSIVE SEX EDUCATION: IMPROVING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF GENDER AND GENDER NORMS”⁵⁰

CSE curriculum is written and taught based on the faulty assumption that every student is not only thinking about sex but is going to have it, sooner rather than later. In reality, the majority of American teens are choosing abstinence. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control’s “High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey, 2021” reported that 70% of high school students have not had sex.⁵¹

But with this faulty assumption about students’ sexual activity, these often explicit materials are focused not on teaching children how to abstain from sexual activity and avoid negative health risks. Instead, they teach children how to practice “safe” or “safer” sex, while even providing tips on maximizing pleasure.

These curriculums also advocate for and promote all FDA-approved contraception, including drugs that cause abortions (known as abortifacients). In addition, CSE “objectively” teaches that abortion is a “natural pregnancy outcome.”

CSE also teaches the spurious concepts of “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” to young children, beginning in kindergarten. CSE advocates for self-determination and expression of dozens of “sexual identities” for children.

In contrast, Sexual Risk Avoidance Education offers healthy sex education curriculum that places the physical and mental health of our children first by promoting or at least stressing the long-lasting benefits of abstinence until marriage. It does not come from a “sexual rights” perspective but a science- and health-based perspective. Most

importantly, it is not driven by multimillion-dollar organizations that put profits before people. Healthy sex education is driven by parent communities who know what’s best for their children and have the power to define the limits of “safe,” “healthy” and “age-appropriate” for their children.

Parents overwhelmingly support SRA, with different surveys showing support for teaching the dominant themes of SRA, such as instruction in skills that help students wait for sex and education that shares “the medically accurate limitations of condoms for preventing pregnancy and disease.”⁵²

While proponents tout the effectiveness of CSE, research has not demonstrated this. One analysis of 103 studies of CSE effectiveness (60 in the U.S. and 43 outside) found:⁵³

» *Lack of Effectiveness: Only six found evidence of effectiveness (improvement on a protective outcome—abstinence, condom use, pregnancy, or STDs—12 months after the program, for the intended population, without other negative effects). Only one of the six studies was by an independent evaluator (not the program’s developer) and the results have not been replicated.*

» *Failure Rate: School-based CSE programs that attempted to show effectiveness — by producing sustained (12-month) effects on a key protective outcome for the intended population — failed 87% of the time.*

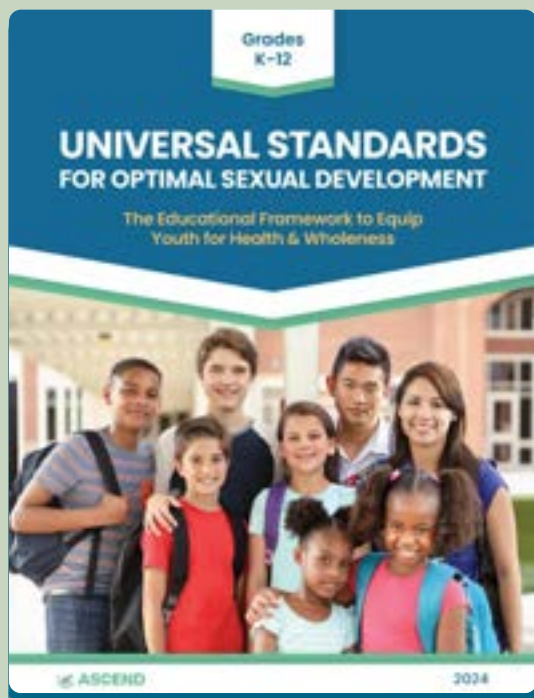
» *Negative Effects: Sixteen studies (16%) found 22 instances of harmful effects by school-based CSE, such as decreased condom use or increased sexual activity, number of partners, oral sex, forced sex, STDs, or pregnancy.*

In contrast, “Out of 17 studies of AE [Abstinence Education] in the U.S., seven found evidence of effectiveness: an increase in teen abstinence at least 12 months after the program for the intended population, without other negative effects. Five of the seven studies were by independent evaluators, and the results have not yet been replicated.”⁵⁴

UNIVERSAL STANDARDS FOR OPTIMAL SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT

K-12 Standards for Optimal Sexual Development, from The Medical Institute For Sexual Health, provides an alternative to the so-called “National Sex Education Standards.” Created by SRA proponents, The standards: “set clear expectations for attitudes and behaviors that will help students succeed in elementary, middle, and high school, as they journey toward adulthood. Offering a researched-based framework for empowering health and wholeness through clearly defined learning objectives during each stage of youth development, these standards are a guide for local and state decision-makers to set responsible sex education policies.”⁶¹

States and school districts can use these as an alternative to the age-inappropriate and damaging FoSE standards.



WHY SHOULD I BE CONCERNED?

+ ADVOCATES FOR YOUTH

“Not only are younger children able to discuss sexuality-related issues but that **the early grades may, in fact, be the best time to introduce topics** related to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, gender equality, and social justice related to the LGBTQ community before hetero- and cisnormative [referring to those who accept and embrace their biological sex] values and assumptions become more deeply ingrained and less mutable” (their emphasis).

ADVOCATES FOR YOUTH⁵⁵

Comprehensive Sex Education (CSE) teaches our children radical and controversial ideas that many families object to, often uses explicit and graphic language and illustrations, and leads to increased sexual activity and other adverse mental and physical health outcomes for our children. CSE, as a whole, is not based in science but extremist social dogma which is disparaging of traditional notions of monogamy, marriage, committed relationships, and abstinence until marriage.

Here are some examples of statements about indoctrinating youth from CSE resources, curriculum, and advocacy groups. These groups also advocate for teaching sex ed not just in health or science classes, but across the curriculum. Advocates for Youth writes:

! Children need safe spaces in which to experience, play with, and begin to challenge the naturalized assumptions about gender.⁵⁶ Many of the positive outcomes and promising approaches that worked toward creating affirming, inclusive school environments occurred not in traditional health or sex education classes, but in social studies, English, physical education, mathematics, music, and art.⁵⁷

FoSE's "National Standards" say children in grades 3-5 (ages 8 to 10) should be able to:⁵⁸

- ! Explain common human sexual development and the role of hormones (e.g., romantic and sexual feelings, masturbation, mood swings, timing of pubertal onset). Describe the role hormones play in the physical, social, cognitive, and emotional changes during adolescence and the potential role of hormone blockers on young people who identify as transgender. Define and explain differences between cisgender, transgender, gender nonbinary, gender expansive, and gender identity.

The so-called "National Standards" say adolescents in grades 6-8 (ages 11 to 13) should be taught how to:⁵⁹

- ! Define sexual identity and explain a range of identities related to sexual orientation (e.g., heterosexual, bisexual, lesbian, gay, queer, two-spirit, asexual, pansexual). Define vaginal, oral, and anal sex. Explain there are many methods of short- and long-term contraception that are safe and effective and describe how to access them. Define racism and intersectionality and describe their impacts on sexual health.

There are myriad examples we could give⁶⁰ — but you get the picture. Children are not meant to bear the weight of adult sexuality, and CSE teaches them, at early ages, an ideology that sexualizes and confuses them.

APPROACHES TO SEX EDUCATION

Grab this helpful PDF from Lori Kuykendall at Beacon Health Education Resources:

APPROACHES TO SEX EDUCATION		
Comprehensive Sex Education Sexual Risk Reduction	Abstinence-Based Abstinence-Only	Abstinence-Contained Abstinence-Forced Abstinence-Only
Focuses on reducing rates, " safer" sex	Focuses on abstinence, safe, keeping students safe	
Goal message: Guide children to make abstinence (which can mean different things to different people) a common goal, while also using contraception	Goal message: Guide children to make abstinence (keeping all sexual activity until "long-term, mutually monogamous relationship" (CSE), clearly message)	
Right to sexual pleasure, sexual health, reproductive system	Science-based, health-based (reproductive system)	
Consistent to contraception, emphasizing effectiveness and increasing effectiveness	Education about contraception, both effectiveness and effectiveness in real-world use (safety, timing, and side effects)	
Teaches consent and negotiation skills for sexual activity	Teaches about consent and negotiation skills for sexual activity	
Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and "normal" and common	STIs and "normal" and common	
Education appropriate to students at different sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) "focused" lessons	Education appropriate to students at different sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) "focused" lessons	
Education appropriate to all, "safe, reproductive health, safe sexual" and "right"	Education appropriate to all, "safe, reproductive health, safe sexual" and "right"	
Parental involvement, knowledge and resources, engagement, students also engaged with other topics	Parent involvement, knowledge and resources, engagement, students also engaged with other topics	
Both approaches need to provide students:		
• Accurate, science-based, age-appropriate, culturally sensitive, and inclusive information • Evidence-based on evidence-informed content and classroom methodology • Healthy, supportive relationships, including communication skills • Positive values including self-esteem and decision-making, self-care, self-respect and self-love • Comprehensive support for those who have been harmed in the past		
 CONTACT: Lori Kuykendall, BEACON President, lori@beaconhealtheducation.com 970-492-9820		

HOW DO I RECOGNIZE

COMPREHENSIVE SEX ED IN THE CLASSROOM?

Not all CSE curriculums will go by this name. Many are called “abstinence-plus” or “abstinence-based.” Here are specific examples of content to be aware of that may indicate your school is teaching radical comprehensive sex education.

Teaches Abortion: Often these programs require or permit the teaching of abortion as a “natural pregnancy outcome” or “pregnancy options.”⁶² Some states, like Colorado and California, require teachers to teach abortion as morally equivalent to other pregnancy outcomes like adoption or parenting.⁶³ If a teacher teaches adoption or abstinence, that teacher must also teach abortion and not emphasize any choice as ethically good or better.

Even in states that don’t mandate this, many schools are already teaching our children about abortion. Schools even allow Planned Parenthood instructors to come into the classroom and teach sex education and push their abortion-driven agenda. Some schools even pass out specific information about where a child can get an abortion and how the state government can pay for the expenses.

Some states *do prohibit* schools from providing abortion referrals; it’s important to be aware of laws in your state.⁶⁴

Advocates for Contraception and Potentially Promotes Abortifacients: Many states require that students be taught about contraception, and some require the list of FDA-approved contraceptives be taught, which includes abortifacient (day-after) pills like Plan B and Ella.⁶⁵ Some schools also give information about where to find contraceptives.

Teaches LGBT Sexual Experiences: Several states now require the teaching of “the experiences and needs of communities of color; immigrant communities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities,”⁶⁶ others use code language for LGBT experiences like “culturally sensitive” or “culturally appropriate” content. One of the more controversial aspects of CSE is these lessons often include graphic and explicit discussions of sexual positions and the promotion, description, or depiction of various sex acts.

Curriculums, classroom resources, and videos portray various sexual identities, attractions and behaviors as safe, healthy, normal, and desirable aspects of a relationship. In truth, it is the sole right of parents to define the boundaries of safe, healthy, and normal for their child, with consideration for their own sincere religious and moral beliefs. It is certainly not the right of the state to do so.

Often CSE stresses children have “healthy” attitudes and behaviors regarding sexual activity, sexual identities, and sexual orientations: For example, Colorado’s law *requires* that the CSE curriculum must not use “shame-based or stigmatizing language,” “employ gender stereotypes,” or exclude teaching on the experiences of LGBT individuals.⁶⁷ This law specifically targets sincere beliefs and values about gender identity and sexual relationships (such as abstinence and opposite-sex monogamy in marriage), marginalizing them as hateful views that should not be taught in the classroom and should be censored from the mouths of teachers.

Prohibits Stressing Abstinence-Only Education: More current CSE laws prohibit abstinence-only sex education from being taught or even stressed! Most parents actually want their children to practice abstinence until marriage. In fact, the nation’s abstinence trend has been increasing, meaning the majority of teens are choosing to wait.⁶⁸

Requires Sex Education for Elementary Students: Some states require even kindergarteners to be taught basic “sex education.”⁶⁹ States and school districts that adopt the FoSE “National Standards” will follow this practice. This includes teaching impressionable elementary school students that “biological sex” is a “social construct” and they may have been “born in the wrong body.”

Activists use popular and colorful graphics like the “Gender Unicorn” or “My Genderbread Person” to teach about “sexual orientation” and “gender identity.”⁷⁰ The resources are readily available online, for any teacher that wants to introduce this into the classroom, with activity plans and “fill-in-the blank” worksheets to go along with them. (See page 9 for examples.)

SEX EDUCATION WORDS WE DON'T LIKE:

The phrase “comprehensive sex education” isn’t always used by schools, school districts, or legislators. Usually, the following terms will pop up in the law or curriculum guidelines, raising red flags that you might need to take additional steps to protect your child. While some of these phrases may seem harmless or even like a good thing, liberal activists have found new and twisted ways to reinterpret the definitions of some of these innocuous phrases. If you see all or most of these phrases in your curriculum guidelines, you’re almost certainly dealing with Comprehensive Sex Education.

✖ ABSTINENCE-BASED OR ABSTINENCE PLUS:

These are substitute terms for CSE, promoting a dual message: Students can choose abstinence, “which can mean different things to different people” or consensual sexual activity using contraception. The focus is still “rights-based” and “pleasure-based,” rather than teaching that sex unites a husband and wife in marriage, with the potential to create new life.

✖ AGE-APPROPRIATE:

In more liberal states, this phrase is almost sure to mean the content will not be age-appropriate. This very subjective term allows activists and large organizations like Planned Parenthood and SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change to push schools to teach elementary school students about homosexuality, by highlighting different types of families, and “gender identity,” by blurring male-female distinctions.

Looking at the “Gender Unicorn” and “Genderbread Person,” you can see that neither of these graphics teaches young children about biology or embracing their innate masculinity or femininity. They introduce confusing and very adult ideas about sexual attraction and identity to elementary, middle, and high school students:

- 1 Your head — mind and thoughts — might be a different “gender” than your body.
- 2 The way you dress can express a different “gender” than how you feel in your head, different than your bodily sex, or different than both!

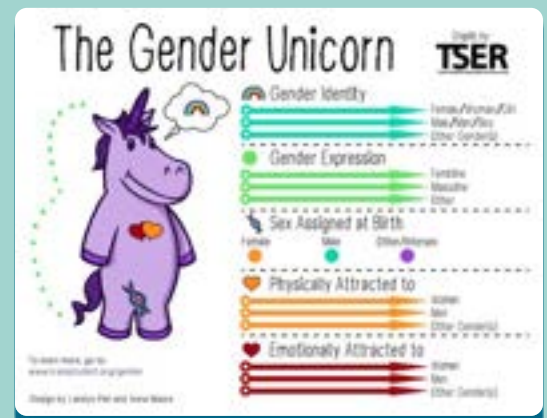
THE GENDERBREAD PERSON

BY SAM KELLERMAN



GENDER UNICORN

BY TRANS STUDENT EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES



- 3 Biological sex has nothing to do with “gender.”
- 4 There are an infinite number of “gender identities.”
- 5 Sexual, romantic, and physical attractions define a person.
- 6 Boys being romantically and sexually attracted to boys is as normal as boys being sexually attracted to girls. And girls being romantically and sexually attracted to girls is as normal as girls being attracted to boys.

All of this is intended to indoctrinate children into affirming and unquestionably accepting the LGBT ideology that has no basis in science or fact.

Most people believe our biological sex and gender identity are — or should be — one and the same, with our biology informing our identity. Bodily sexual reality is not chosen or changeable. Also, many people of different faiths only affirm and encourage heterosexual romantic and sexual relationships and sex only within marriage. Their faith does not support the idea that same-sex relationships are normal and healthy. Many families also object to their young children being taught sex education, period.

✖ **CONSENT EDUCATION OR “TEACHING CONSENT”:**

Sounds very reasonable right? While lessons teaching consent make it clear all sexual activity should be consensual, they also subtly teach all sexual activity is okay provided consent is obtained. It teaches children “yes, means yes!”, instead of “no, means no!” and may not allow students to understand the implications of grooming by predators, coercive or other abusive behaviors, or even abusive sexual relationships.

Being empowered to say “no” is an entirely different idea than “being empowered to say yes” or learning to negotiate for sexual activity. Many families are not okay with the government teaching their child all sex is good sex — provided there is consent. Children have extreme difficulty discerning grooming and other abusive behaviors, particularly from older students or adults, and this type of education might make a child believe this abuse is okay.

While we want to teach our children to say “no” to unwanted touch or activities, teaching “consent” puts the onus on children to protect themselves, rather than on the adults around them who should shield and defend them.

Finally, children cannot legally consent to sex to begin with. But this is usually not addressed in CSE teaching about consent. Adults and even more mature teens are in a far easier position to exploit, manipulate, and harass younger teens and children all under the guise that “they consented.” This is why the law draws a bold, non-negotiable line that children cannot consent to sex. Yet CSE teaches children as young as elementary school all the different ways they can say “yes to sex.”

✖ **COMPREHENSIVE:**

This word, unlike many of the others, is not a euphemism, it means exactly what it says. The sex education your child will receive is all-encompassing, meaning your child could be taught the full gamut of human sexual experience, controversial or not, healthy and safe or not.

✖ **CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE OR CULTURALLY SENSITIVE:**

These are catch-all terms that allow liberal states, school boards, teacher unions or individual teachers to force into the curriculum a variety of controversial sexual experiences. The phrase often refers to addressing the potential romantic and sexual experiences of LGBT-identified youth, but this category could certainly expand in the future to include the ever-growing number of “sexual orientations” or “sexual identities.”

✖ **MEDICALLY ACCURATE OR SCIENTIFICALLY ACCURATE:**

These words sound great together. However, the current major medical organizations are left-leaning and support controversial ideologies such as transgenderism, same-sex relationships, and abortion. When curriculum is referred

to as “medically accurate” or “scientifically accurate” these controversial practices get a green light in the classroom. If you see medical organizations in your guidelines or laws, look them up and check out their stance on abortion, teen sexuality, and other topics.

As part of medical accuracy, many states require that sex education curriculum include instruction about HIV, the sexually transmitted virus that can lead to the development of AIDS. “Scientifically accurate” CSE often advocates for contraception — without teaching all the science about the ineffectiveness or risks of various methods. “Medically accurate” CSE also teaches that abortion is a “pregnancy outcome,” without describing the scientific truth that life begins at conception, the reality of what happens to the preborn child, or the truth about emotional and physical health risks for the mother.

✕ **SAFE AND HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS OR “SAFER SEX”:**

This language is also deceiving. Unfortunately, these phrases mean the government and extremist groups are defining for your children what “safe and healthy” and “safer sex” are. Safe and healthy looks different for many families, depending on their religious, moral, and ethical beliefs. Many families would object to children being taught to give consent and that all “consensual relationships are safe and healthy.” Many families would rightfully object to homosexual relationships and transgenderism, with body-damaging puberty blockers, hormones, and surgeries, touted as safe and healthy options for their children. Again, the science backs them up.

Most states use the word “healthy” in their sex education curriculum guidelines, so check to see if the words “safe,” “safer,” and “healthy” are paired with any of the other red flag terms above!



PUBLISHERS, GROUPS, AND PROGRAMS TO WATCH OUT FOR:

Look out for curriculums and resources developed and published by Planned Parenthood, SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change, Advocates for Youth, and ETR Associates. And watch for curriculums and resources that claim to comply with FoSE's *National Sex Education Standards: Core Content and Skills, K-12 (Second Edition)* or with SIECUS' *Guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education*.

These are commonly used CSE curriculums:

- » *Above the Waist*
- » *Be Real. Be Ready*
- » *Discovery Dating*
- » *Get Real: CSE that Works*
- » *FLASH, It's Perfectly Normal*
- » *Native Stand*
- » *Project AIM*
- » *Rights, Respect, Responsibility (aka 3 R's)*
- » *Teen Outreach*
- » *Teen Talk*

These are some federally-funded CSE programs:

- » *All4You! Positive Prevention Plus*
- » *Be Proud! Be Responsible! Be Protective!*
- » *¡Cuídate!*
- » *Draw the Line or Respect the Line*
- » *HealthSMART*

- » *Healthy for Life*
- » *It's Your Game: Keep It Real" (IYG)*
- » *Making a Difference*
- » *Project SNAPP*
- » *Reducing the Risk*
- » *Safer Choices*
- » *Teen Outreach Program (TOP)*

SCHOOL PROGRAMS TO AVOID:

Some schools adopt programs that, under the guise of being anti-bullying or protecting various sexual orientations and identities, promote a variety of sexual orientations and gender identities. Extremist groups also provide curriculum, school resources, and school policy guidance, including:

- » *Gay-Straight Alliance Network (GSA)*
- » *The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) — LGBTQ Youth & Schools Resource Library*
- » *GLSEN - LGBTQ Students and School Sports Participation and Rainbow Library*
- » *GLSEN and National Center for Transgender Equality — Model School District Policy on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students*
- » *Human Rights Campaign — Welcoming Schools*
- » *Southern Poverty Law Center — Learning for Justice*
- » *National Black Lives Matter at School*

WORDS WE DO LIKE:

✓ SEXUAL RISK AVOIDANCE

Other phrases to describe SRA education include “Abstinence-Centered,” “Abstinence Focused” or “Stress Abstinence.” The term “Abstinence Only” was created by opponents of this approach and is not used by SRA proponents. SRA curriculum is an alternative to CSE that focuses on teaching students the individual and social benefits of self-control, goal setting, personal responsibility and healthy decision-making. Sexual Risk Avoidance education stresses the numerous benefits of teens delaying sex.

Ascend is a group that works to help youth delay sexual activity and avoid risky sexual behaviors. They explain that SRA “is the only behavior that completely protects youth from the possible consequences of sexual experimentation and is completely compatible with a strong risk avoidance public health model—SRA is the only real solution to the problem of STI’s, teen pregnancy, and emotional harm often caused by teen sexual activity.”⁷¹

This approach is intended to help teens avoid all the negative outcomes of becoming sexually promiscuous early on, usually defined as before graduating from high school.

Keep in mind, just because the law permits teachers to stress abstinence does not mean it is required. In fact, in many cases, the curriculum not only does not stress abstinence, it teaches that all “consensual” sex is good sex for teens. To find out if your school is actually teaching an SRA curriculum, review the content and test it against the “Words We Do Not Like List,” on page 9. You can also check out Ascend’s resources, such as “Authentic Sexual Risk Avoidance Curricula. What You Need to Know.”

✓ OPT-IN AND OPT-OUT:

Most states allow you to opt your child out of sex education. Though your child might be automatically enrolled in sex education, you can often opt your child out of all lessons, and they should not be penalized for it. Some states even have “opt-in” programs, which means your child will not be enrolled into sex education classes without your explicit permission — placing the burden for obtaining permission on the school



rather than parents. Check out “Know Your Rights” below for steps you can take to opt your child out!

Parents should be aware that they may not be able to opt their children out of material that is part of regular school subjects, such as when the contributions of LGBT-identified individuals are taught in social studies classes.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ON OPTING-IN OR OPTING OUT:

- 1 Where will my child go during the sex ed instruction?
- 2 Are other children opting out? How many?
- 3 What is my child going to learn or overhear from other students about the sex ed lesson?
- 4 What messages or misinformation is my child already exposed to?
- 5 How strong are my child's convictions on our family's values?

If you send your child to the main sex ed instruction, before the class: Teach your child your values and help them know what to expect. Afterward, process the information and reinforce your values.

» *Note: There is a difference between excusing your child from class and opting your child out of a class. Excused absences are often temporary, and the student is often still responsible for missed classwork. Also, the school can decline to grant permission to excuse an absence for some reasons. Opting out your child ensures they are not responsible for attending classes that are objectionable, and the student does not have to complete classroom work. (Although a school may provide alternative lessons for your child to complete.) Opting out for religious purposes is a legally protected right. (Excused absences may not be a legally protected right, depending on your reasons or the importance of the classwork.) Ensure you and the school principal and teachers are very clear about which option you are requesting and why!*

✓ PARENTAL NOTIFICATION AND/OR CONSENT

Many states require that parents must be notified prior to their child being taught or enrolled in a sex education program. These laws vary state-by-state. Check-in with your local school board or state department of education to find out if you have to be notified prior to controversial content being taught in the classroom. If not, feel free to reach out to your student's teachers and respectfully ask if they'd be willing to keep you personally informed. You have the right to examine all classroom resources and curriculum in your child's school, including sexual education materials.

HELPFUL SEXUAL EDUCATION GROUPS, POLICY ORGANIZATIONS, AND CURRICULUM PROVIDERS:

- » [Ascend](#) — Provides information about CSE and SRA curriculums; training; programs and resources for schools, parents and educators; and information about CSE.
[Authentic Sexual Risk Avoidance Curricula](#)
[Sexual Risk Avoidance Works](#)
[Sex Ed by State](#)
- » [Beacon Health Education Resources](#) — Offers training, consulting, and advocacy resources for schools, parents, and legislators.
- » [Daily Citizen](#) — Focus on the Family's culture and policy outlet, providing news, analysis, and research on issues of importance to families.
- » [Family Research Council](#) — Provides resources and analysis on issues related to faith, family, and freedom.
[Sex Education in Public Schools: Sexualization of Children and LGBT Indoctrination](#)
- » [Family Policy Alliance](#) — Policy and activist organization that provides resources and tools for families.
[Save Girls Sports Education](#)
[State-Based Family Policy Councils](#)
[School Board Academy](#)

- » [Family Watch International](#) — Works to protect and promote the family as the fundamental unit of society at the international, national and local level.
Protect Child Health Coalition — Opposes efforts to sexualize children.
- » [Heritage Foundation](#) — Provides research, policy recommendations, and toolkits on various issues of concern to parents, including sexual education.
[Comprehensive Sex Education vs. Authentic Abstinence: A Study of Competing Curricula](#)
[What Do Parents Want Taught in Sex Education Programs? You're Teaching My Child What? The Truth About Sex Education](#)
- » [Institute for Research and Evaluation](#) — Helps youth thrive by identifying elements of program effectiveness and measuring program impact using proven scientific methods.
- » [K-12 Standards for Optimal Sexual Development](#) — Offers a healthy alternative to “National Standards” from CSE activist groups.
- » [Medical Institute for Sexual Health](#) — Equips people worldwide with medically accurate information to make well-educated decisions about their sexual health.
- » [Moms for Liberty](#) — Works to improve education, stop sexualization of children, and protect parental rights.
- » [Parents Defending Education](#) - A national grassroots organization working to reclaim our schools from activists imposing harmful agendas.
- » [Stop CSE](#) — Parents’ organization working to defend the innocence of children by educating and equipping parents.

SEXUAL RISK AVOIDANCE CURRICULUMS AND CURRICULUM PROVIDERS:

- » [Aspire](#)
- » [For Keeps](#)
- » [Game Plan](#)
- » [Healthy Futures](#)
- » [Heritage Keepers](#)
- » [Positive Potential](#)
- » [Pure & Simple](#)
- » [REAL Essentials](#)
- » [Relationships Under Construction](#)
- » [Local Pregnancy Resource Centers](#) — These groups often teach sexual risk avoidance and create curriculums and resources for schools. Many are affiliated with PRC networks such as [Heartbeat International](#), [Care Net](#) or the [National Institute of Family and Life Advocates](#), while others are independent or part of smaller networks.

LEGAL GROUPS

Providing legal aid and information for free speech, religious freedom, and parental rights:

- » [Alliance Defending Freedom](#)
- » [The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty](#)
- » [Child & Parental Rights Campaign](#)
- » [First Liberty Institute](#)
- » [Liberty Counsel](#)
- » [Thomas More Society](#)

KNOW THE FACTS

- » *The delay of a child's sexual initiation past the age of 18 — and ideally until marriage — has long-lasting benefits. Teens who delay sexual activity past the age of 18 do better in school, are less likely to be exposed to sexual abuse, have increased beneficial physical and mental health outcomes, have more stable relationships, are less likely to engage in other risky behaviors like drinking, smoking and experimenting with drugs, are more social, and have greater net worth over time.⁷² Researchers are not exactly sure why early teen sex has a cascade of negative consequences, but the evidence clearly tells us one thing: Science proves it's better to wait!*
- » *Parents generally support basic sex education, but most parents do not support education that promotes early engagement in sexual behavior.⁷³*
- » *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.*
- » *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 (such as refusing to allow your child to opt out of sex education), you may be able to file a complaint with the Department of Justice.*

SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL BOARDS

- » *In many states, education is locally controlled, with school boards having the ability to choose curriculums for schools. School boards often have opportunities for parents to join review committees, speak publicly, and share thoughts and concerns. So get involved! Write — kindly but honestly — 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.*

KNOW THE LAW

§ RELEVANT FEDERAL LAW:

States and local school districts are mostly responsible for the type of content they'll have in the classroom. While the federal government does not mandate sex education curriculum in state classrooms, it does fund certain sex education programs. The federal government will pay schools for using their programs. Here are some of the federally-funded programs that you may come across:

Title V State Sexual Risk Avoidance Education Grant Program/Competitive SRA Grant Program⁷⁴: These funds are available to programs that promote abstinence through Sexual Risk Avoidance Education. See list of those receiving Title V dollars by visiting the Administration for Children and Families here: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/grant-funding/title-v-competitive-sexual-risk-avoidance-education-srae-grantees>

Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program⁷⁵: This program funds schools that claim to be teaching teens how to practice safe sex or "safer sex." In the past, these federally-funded sex education programs were focused on abstinence and teen pregnancy prevention. Today, much of the government's Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program has now been outsourced to Planned Parenthood and its allies. A lot of the programs we have red-flagged above, in the section titled: Publishers, Groups and Programs to Watch Out For, are funded through this grant.

Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP): This federal program educates youth on abstinence and the use of contraceptives and pregnancy prevention, and it targets children as young as 10. It focuses on underserved communities, such as rural communities or those with high birth rates, and provides support to pregnant teens.

State Personal Responsibility Education Program (PREP):⁷⁶ This program awards grants to states that will teach contraception and abstinence with a target for reaching vulnerable youth such as homeless youth or those in foster care.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Parental Consent: Many states allow a parent to consent to their child taking sex education or health classes. This means you can say, “No!” and opt your child out of sex education classes entirely. In addition, if classroom content violates your religious beliefs or rights of conscience, you have the right to opt your child out of specific lessons. Be sure to submit your opt-out to your school officials in writing!



NOTE:

Planned Parenthood and other radical groups are fierce advocates of eliminating parents from a child’s sexual decision-making, including the consequences of teen sex. These groups want your child to be able to access contraceptives, birth control, STI treatment, and even abortion without your knowledge or consent. Some state laws allow parents to be excluded from these decisions their child may make.⁷⁷

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.⁷⁸ School districts may also post school curriculums on their websites. School curriculum is usually considered a matter of public record and is 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, games, etc.).⁷⁹ 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.⁸⁰ 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.⁸¹



REAL CLEAR EDUCATION

Eric and Caroline Licwinko grew concerned when they discovered North Hunterdon High School, in New Jersey, would be giving their two sons a survey, which “asks all kinds of prying questions, including gender and sexual orientation and views on racial issues.” They opted their sons out, but the school still gave them the survey.

Caroline Licwinko states, “They are data mining and psychologically profiling our kids. The questions they are asking are absolutely inappropriate in a school setting. Schools have sold our children’s privacy to a data analytics company that is tracking attendance, behavior, and family’s financial status.”

REAL CLEAR EDUCATION⁸²

Opt-Outs for Surveys and Assessments: Federal law requires schools 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.

Parental Notification: One U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study found that only about 69% “of high schools notify parents or guardians before students receive instruction on human sexuality topics.”⁸³ Most states require parents to be notified prior to the start of sex education, health, or other related classes. (This notification does not apply if the “sex education” topic is brought up in another class, like social sciences.) Check with your school to find out if they must notify you before your children receive human sexuality instruction. 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. When it comes to protecting your child from comprehensive sex education, most of the rights and responsibilities rest with parents and the schools. 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 their personal religious beliefs, help them submit a letter to the school in writing with their objections.*
- » *Your child has 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 for expressing their 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, i.e., 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 should never be censored, disciplined, or experience other negative consequences from expressing their beliefs or opinions.

WAYS YOU CAN PROTECT

AND ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CHILD

Be sure to read all materials your child's school sends home and check your school and district websites. The school or 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, don't be afraid to look over what books, pamphlets and other resources your student might be checking out from the school library or receiving from teachers.

Be proactive in monitoring resources and information your child's school uses and produces. Read all 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 make 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, resources available in the nurse's office, and more.

Connect with other like-minded parents and review material together. Another parent might catch something you miss. And other parents can check out what's happening in higher grades — so you are aware of what your child will encounter in upcoming grades.

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, or other 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. Meet with them again 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.

TALK WITH YOUR CHILD

ABOUT SEXUALITY, RELATIONSHIPS, AND MARRIAGE

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. It's important to be intentional about sharing your values and beliefs with your children in an ongoing dialogue and relationship.

Your children will be heavily influenced by the first person who talks with them about these topics or the first entertainment, media, or social media they see addressing these issues. So you want to be the one leading the conversation with them about marriage, healthy relationships, being made in God's image as a boy or a girl, and other key issues. Here are some specifics to keep in mind:

1. START AN ONGOING CONVERSATION

We suggest starting early with sexuality education, beginning with simple concepts for younger children. Focus on the Family has developed an easy-to-use guide for parents, [“The Talk: Healthy Sexuality Education.”](#) The booklet gives basic goals and guidance for each age level. In the first three years of life, for example, parents should mainly focus on bonding with their young child, helping the child to realize he is a boy or she is a girl, and teaching proper references for body parts. Parents can also begin teaching their children about privacy and safety, helping them start developing healthy boundaries.

From ages three through seven, the guide suggests continuing those basic goals but building on them. Parents should teach children their bodies are good, explain God's design for marriage and family, and teach children more about healthy relationships. Parents can talk more about being a boy or being a girl, explaining that while they are distinct, both are good, both are created in the image of God, and both should be valued

and respected. Parents can continue building on early lessons about privacy and safety, explaining that our bodies are good and providing guidance about how to protect them.

Parents who provide this solid foundation can go deeper and talk more with their children as they move into adolescence about changing bodies, sexuality, anatomy, and reproduction. Starting with simpler concepts makes moving into these more advanced areas easier. Because parents know their children well, they can gauge their child's development and move ahead at a pace that's best for the child. “The Talk” also suggests more resources for parents as they provide their children with a healthy sexual education.

2. ASK YOUR KIDS QUESTIONS

As your children grow and develop, ask them questions about what they're hearing and learning at school and church, from friends, entertainment, books, and online resources. Maintain an ongoing dialogue with your kids. Let them know, too, that as they grow, they'll encounter ideas that are different from what your family believes, and tell them you want to discuss and explore what they hear in other places. Explain that even though we disagree with people on important issues, we can still show them kindness and respect.

3. HELP YOUR CHILD NAVIGATE ADOLESCENCE

[“Launch Into the Teen Years”](#) is a helpful resource for parents of pre-teen adolescents between the ages of nine and twelve. The resource is not just about sexual development. Although it does include this, it teaches pre-teens about building a healthy identity, developing good relationships, and dealing with fluctuating emotions. The curriculum, which includes videos, a parents' guide, and a workbook, discusses how to make and keep friends, cope with bullies, and deal with technology, providing help for parents as they talk with their children about these sensitive topics.

PROTECTING YOUR CHILD

IN SCHOOL HEALTH ROOMS, CLINICS, AND COUNSELING OFFICES



+ ROCKFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT

Dan and Jennifer Mead sued the Rockford School District in Michigan after school employees — including a counselor and a social worker — began treating their daughter as a male. Dan Mead writes, “The people we considered partners in our efforts had, months earlier, decided to socially transition our daughter, using a boy’s name and male pronouns with her at school without our knowledge or consent. They hid their actions by referring to her only by her real name when talking to us and carefully removing any reference to a male identity in records they shared with us.”⁸⁴

SCHOOL HEALTH CLINICS AND NURSES OFFICES

School health rooms, clinics, and counseling offices can be conduits for gender ideology and other controversial ideologies involving abortion, contraception, vaccinations, and more. Some schools only have school nurses who care for minor cuts and injuries, dispense prescription medications, provide health assessments, and may provide referrals to outside care. Other school districts provide full-blown health-care clinics, writing prescriptions for medications and covering all medical and mental healthcare needs of a student.⁸⁵

According to the School-Based Health Alliance, as of 2022, 3,900 school-based health centers were active across the country,⁸⁶ offering both in-person and telehealth care, with 77% of the clinics providing reproductive health services including contraceptive provision or counseling; pregnancy testing; or sexually transmitted infection prevention, testing, or treatment, respectively.⁸⁷ The organization reports that school health centers and clinics receive funding from a variety of sources, including federal agencies, state governments, private foundations, local governments and school-system funding.⁸⁸

As far as school counselors are concerned, virtually every school has counselors who can offer mental health care treatment to your child — including serious situations involving suicidal thoughts, addiction, bullying, sexual activity, pregnancy, and gender-identity struggles. School counselors can also refer students to outside health-care providers, such

as addiction programs, abortion-counseling, and clinics that provide opposite-sex hormones. In some instances, schools do not have to inform parents about these referrals.

+ NONCONFORMING POLICIES

At least 1,062 school districts have “Transgender/Gender Nonconforming Policies” that allow schools to hide a child’s sexual identity confusion from parents, covering more than 10.85 million students, reports Parents Defending Education. The report includes districts in 39 states, but the organization warns that the list is not comprehensive.

The policies mean that school counselors, health clinics, teachers, and administrators can work with students struggling with sexual identity confusion to “change their gender,” without parental notification or consent.⁸⁹

WHY SHOULD I BE CONCERNED?

School nurses, healthcare clinics, and counselors may give advice and recommendations — or worse, referrals and treatments — to your child that contradict your family values and religious beliefs. Parents should look out for controversial care, which might promote radical, liberal ideology, like the “healthiness” of same-sex relationships, transgenderism, abortion, and controversial drugs that can cause early abortions (like Plan B and Ella). If a school has a full health clinic, it is likely able to write prescriptions for pills (e.g., the abortion pill or cross-sex hormones) or implant IUDs without your express consent or even your knowledge. These clinics can and do provide students with Planned Parenthood resources or referrals, treat your child for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and coach your child on gender identity and sexuality.

When it comes to mental health care, a counselor could be treating your child for suicidal thoughts, providing therapy that affirms and encourages a child’s unwanted same-sex attraction or gender-identity struggles, or providing referrals for addiction programs, abortion services, or cross-sex hormone treatment — all without your knowledge and consent. In fact, in some of these scenarios, state and even federal law may require the counselors to keep this information from you to protect your child’s medical privacy. This is why it’s imperative you know exactly what kind of care your child might receive under a school’s health program.



EVANSTON TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL

Registered nurses at Evanston Township High School told reporters that the school's health center "offers pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection testing, as well as contraception, including the morning-after pill, free to students." They have also "worked with students to help them find abortion care, if that is what they are seeking.

While the nurses "explain other options, such as carrying the pregnancy to term and adoption," they also "help provide resources for students to use parental notification judicial bypass programs and abortion funds, like the Chicago Abortion Fund, that offer financial assistance." ⁹⁰

HOW CAN SCHOOLS DO THIS?

Most parents will sign a general consent form for their child's medical care and/or mental healthcare at the beginning of the school year. But this form often does not begin to inform parents about all the "care" their child might receive, nor do these consent forms clearly signal to parents the sheer scope of their consent. As far as financing, most school-based health clinics are funded out of the school's budget and/or through the state Medicaid program. This means you may never see a bill or receive notice of the details of care your child is receiving. This is why it's important you know the scope of care the school's nursing/clinic and counseling office provides and what your consent means.



KNOW THE FACTS

Read all paperwork regarding school healthcare very carefully. Pay close attention to packets and forms that come home at the beginning of the year, which often include medical consent forms. Some forms might have an itemized list of what kind of care you consent to if you sign, but generally, the forms will have much broader statements regarding care, making no mention of the more drastic measures a school can take to treat your child.

School-Based Health Clinics/Centers (SBHC) are full-service health clinics with a licensed doctor or R.N. and can even act as your child's primary healthcare provider, treating and diagnosing all your child's physical and mental health needs. SBHC's provide similar care to nurses' offices such as physicals, vision and hearing screenings, and scoliosis screenings — but they can also do much more. SBHC's can write and dispense prescriptions, prescribe and implant contraceptives, provide vaccinations, and more.⁹¹ Review consent forms for these clinics with particular care.

School nurses, doctors, and mental health counselors will, in most circumstances, be treating your child without your presence. School health staff will often — and are even encouraged to — discuss sensitive personal issues with your child like sexual activity, the use of contraceptives, abortion access, drug use and addiction, and STI treatments.

Although you might provide limited consent for your child to be treated by a school health clinic, just know once a school health clinic decides that a particular treatment is "medically necessary" for your child, this could mean, you, as the parent, have a legal obligation to ensure your child receives that treatment. Religious objections are still constitutionally strong reasons for parents to decide against treatment, but other reasons for objecting may not be.

In an extreme example, an Ohio court took custody away of from parents of their teenage daughter because the parents declined to allow their daughter to be treated with opposite-sex hormones that cause irreversible sterilization and other extreme irreversible bodily changes. The Court ruled these hormones were necessary care for the daughter and

placed the daughter in the care of her grandparents, who would allow the daughter to take these hormones.⁹²

Parents have a duty to provide care for their child in emergency situations. They also have an obligation to follow the advice of doctors treating their child and dispense prescribed medication if it would substantially benefit their child. In some states, parents can get a religious exemption from treatment if the treatment would violate their sincerely held religious beliefs (e.g., if receiving a vaccination would violate one's religious beliefs). However, some states do not allow religious exemptions for specific conditions or treatments.

This is only to say that if you choose to have your child seen by a school nurse or doctor, you might also be obligated to follow certain treatment recommendations.

Schools have a general duty to aid and protect their students and provide a generally safe environment for them. If a child experiences an emergency medical situation, the school must take action to help the child (like providing first aid) or get immediate help (like calling an ambulance). The school does not have to obtain parental consent first because, in an emergency, time is of the essence.

Yet, many school districts are defining "emergencies" in broader and broader situations to keep parents in the dark, such as deeming a child's mental health regarding gender dysphoria or an unwanted pregnancy an "emergency" where the school can refer the child to a gender resource clinic or abortion clinic without parental knowledge or consent. It is always good to limit your consent to these services in writing at the beginning of the year. You can also request that if the school treats your child in an emergency, they notify you of their actions to help your child as soon as possible.

KNOW THE LAW

§ RELEVANT FEDERAL LAW:

HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act): This federal law protects individuals' medical privacy. HIPAA allows parents to access their child's private medical records so long as access does not violate other state or federal laws. For example, if your child can consent to their care or is being treated for STIs, addiction, or serious mental health concerns, you may not be able to access your child's medical records. Also, if you provide consent that your child can have a confidential relationship with the school medical staff, you might not be able to have access to your child's records.

On his first day in office, President Biden signed an executive order telling every federal agency to review their regulations, guidance, and policies so that "sex discrimination" laws include "gender identity" and "sexual orientation."⁹³ The Department of Education and other agencies are releasing rules so that it is illegal for any group — including schools — receiving federal funds to "discriminate" based on these attractions, behaviors, or identities.⁹⁴

§ RELEVANT STATE LAWS:

+ POLICY VIOLATES PARENTS' RIGHTS

"All persons, including students, have a right to privacy, and this includes the right to keep one's transgender status private at school. Information about a student's transgender status, legal name, or gender assigned at birth constitutes confidential, personally identifiable, and medical information. Disclosing this information to other students, parents, or third parties may violate privacy laws, such as the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), as well as constitutional privacy protections."

MODEL SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICY ON TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NONCONFORMING STUDENTS. CREATED BY GLSEN (FORMERLY THE GAY, LESBIAN, AND STRAIGHT EDUCATION NETWORK) AND THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR TRANSGENDER EQUALITY.⁹⁵

Check your state's consent laws. Some states allow minors to consent to their own medical care in exceptional circumstances. For example, the majority of states allow minors to consent to their own medical care if they are married, legally emancipated, or seeking treatment for addiction/STD/HIV treatment, pregnancy care, access to contraceptives, and certain types of mental healthcare.

State laws vary regarding the ability of minors to consent to medical and mental health care without parental knowledge or consent. Some states allow children as young as 12 to make these important decisions without their parents' involvement.⁹⁶ Thirteen states and the District of Columbia allow minors to procure abortions without any parental consent, so SBHCs, counselors, and social workers can work with abortion providers without your knowledge.⁹⁷ Remember that these state laws are subject to change depending on legislative and gubernatorial election outcomes.

While some states are pushing back against President Biden's executive order and agency mandates, many states and school districts use them to give sexual orientation and gender identity protected status.⁹⁸ Other states use this federal mandate to teach about these issues — to children as young as kindergarten. They work to "protect the privacy" of those struggling with these issues, based on these nondiscrimination laws, by mandating that notification from parents be withheld when their children struggle with these issues.

In addition, many states and municipalities have passed laws adding "sexual orientation, gender identity, and "pregnancy or related status" (which includes abortion) to nondiscrimination laws — including in education. They then use these laws to promote transgenderism and homosexuality and to exclude parents from these aspects of their children's education and school counseling and health care.⁹⁹

+ NOTE:

If your child is receiving services through Title X (family planning) or Medicaid, you most likely cannot access your child's private medical records.¹⁰⁰

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

If you choose to sign a consent form for your child to receive medical care from a school nurse or clinic, you have the right to limit the scope of healthcare you consent to based on your personal, moral, and ethical beliefs. For example, “I consent to my child being treated for minor cuts and scrapes, but for anything further, I require the school to get my express consent.”

You have the right to know who provides medical services to your child unless state law has other restrictions. (For example, some states do not allow healthcare providers to release information regarding pregnancy healthcare for your child.) However, suppose your state legally allows your child to consent to their own healthcare in some situations (like prenatal care or addiction counseling). In that case, this information cannot be released to parents without your child’s consent.¹⁰¹

You have the right and legal duty to provide necessary medical care for your child. This may seem obvious, but it’s important to note that licensed healthcare professionals have a lot of power in deciding what care is “necessary.”

Usually, necessary care includes care to prevent your child from experiencing serious harm. This becomes important if the professional’s idea of “necessary care” and “harm” differs greatly from your own. If there is a disagreement, a healthcare official can file a complaint with the state, and a court can override a parent’s decision and require treatments for a child.¹⁰²

You have the right to refuse treatment for your child that isn’t mandated by law or considered “medically necessary.”

You have the right to talk with school officials about your child’s treatment and share your concerns or questions. Don’t hesitate to inform healthcare staff or other school officials, calmly and respectfully, if you believe your parental rights have been violated (such as your child being treated without your consent). These are serious issues that demand a swift resolution. Ensure clarity on your expectations and boundaries for your child’s treatment and submit these to your school officials in writing.

Schools often distribute surveys to students regarding sexual activity, identity, mental health problems, illegal activity, religious affiliation, income, and more. The school must notify you in advance of these surveys and obtain your consent, although parents have reported surveys being distributed without their knowledge. You have the federally protected right to opt your child out of taking these surveys.¹⁰³

KNOW YOUR CHILD'S RIGHTS

Parents **cannot** consent to medical treatments that might violate their child's constitutional right to bodily integrity or reproductive privacy. For example, parents cannot consent to have their child's organs removed for organ donation, sterilization procedures for their child, or the termination of a pregnancy without court intervention.

In some states, **minors** are given the legal right to consent to certain types of medical care. In these instances, your child can obtain care without your knowledge and/or consent.¹⁰⁴

Some states allow minors who are deemed sufficiently mature (i.e., in possession of the ability, capacity, and motivation to make their own informed medical decisions) to consent to their own medical care. Often, a doctor will make this determination, or at other times, it might be the court.¹⁰⁵

Minors have the right to consent to abortion access without your knowledge or consent in some states. In **every** state, a minor has the right to seek permission from a court **instead** of their parents. Keep in mind that abortion providers are all too happy to walk your child through the court process.

You have the right to make medical decisions on behalf of your child without the consent of your child's other parent unless a court order has said otherwise or in circumstances that involve removing life-sustaining treatment from your child.

In some states, minors have the right to consent to substance abuse or mental health treatment without parental consent. And in many states, your child may have the right to refuse substance abuse and mental health therapy, even if you request it.¹⁰⁶

More than 100 municipalities, cities, and 26 states have laws prohibiting mental health professionals from counseling minors struggling with unwanted homosexuality or sexual identity confusion — even if the minor **wants** help and support to deal with these issues.¹⁰⁷ Therapists in these states may only help a child embrace homosexuality or transgenderism — even if their religious and moral beliefs oppose these identities and behaviors. Such bans threaten religious freedom and free speech of minors, as well as parents' rights.¹⁰⁸

WAYS YOU CAN PROTECT

AND ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CHILD

When signing a consent form, you can limit the scope of your consent. You can write on the form directly or submit a separate letter that the school/SBHC does not have your permission to, e.g., write prescriptions or provide referrals to outside agencies without your specific notification and consent.

Ensure your child's primary care doctor is someone you and your family can trust, who will respect your beliefs. If your child's primary care is through their school, build a relationship with their school nurse/doctor and make your beliefs and desires clear. It's always a good idea to put your religious beliefs and what they mean for your expectations regarding medical care in writing, and a good school will record this information in your child's file.

Ask to review materials your school health staff may distribute to students in group sessions, classroom activities, or assemblies before these activities. School health staff often update students throughout the year on their services or provide pamphlets or flyers with advice, recommendations, and even referrals for some of the controversial issues we've covered here. If you object to the content, you might be able to excuse your child from these activities. At the very least, you can talk to your child ahead of time if you know what's coming.

Be aware school health clinics may also distribute surveys to students that can be intrusive and sexually explicit (e.g., such as asking a student if they have had sex and what kind). The federal government pays schools for each survey they return, so they are incentivized not to notify parents before distributing them. However, they are required by law to notify you. If you are uncomfortable with your child taking surveys regarding sex, sexuality, and/or gender identity, submit your opt-out to school officials in writing.

Be sure to read all materials your child's school sends home and check your school and district websites. The school or 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, don't be afraid to

look over what books, pamphlets, and other resources your student might be checking out from the school library or receiving from teachers.

Be proactive in monitoring resources and information your child's school uses and produces. Read all 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 make 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, resources available in the nurse's office, and more.

Connect with other like-minded parents and review material together. Another parent might catch something you miss. Other parents can check out what's happening in higher grades so you are aware of what your child will encounter in upcoming grades.

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, or other 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 content may be taught that could cause you concern or when they plan to have outside speakers come into the school. Meet with them again if your 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.

“

It's always a good idea to put your religious beliefs and what they mean for your expectations regarding medical care in writing.

TALK WITH YOUR CHILD

Today's youth often deal with difficult issues such as depression, anxiety, bullying, sexuality, relationships, identity, and worldview questions. Schools may even guide your children in a different direction than you would, without informing you and without your consent. Listed below are a few basic ideas you could consider using to connect with your child:

1. INVEST CONSISTENT TIME FOR RELATIONSHIP AND CONVERSATION

It's easy in our busy world to let important things slide — including your connection with your children. We encourage parents to be intentional about giving time, attention, affirmation, and love to their children as they grow. Be a safe person for your children to talk with: Ask questions, listen well, and encourage them to speak freely.

2. HELP CHILDREN WRESTLE THROUGH QUESTIONS ABOUT WHO THEY TRUST AND WHY

Your children will hear messages from entertainment, social media, friends, and their school that oppose traditional faith and values. Help them connect with trusted mentors, role models, coaches, and friends who can speak into their lives. Safe and trusted family members, youth pastors, Sunday school teachers, teachers, and other parent — who clearly share your values — are key allies in helping your children grow and learn.

3. BE INVOLVED IN THEIR LIFE

Adolescents and teens often begin talking more with others and less with parents about serious issues they may be struggling with. Staying connected with your children also means connecting with their friends and other adults who know and love them. These relationships can be helpful if you find your child is struggling with serious issues. Their choices in who they spend time with can also give you important information about what may be going on in the deeper places of who they are. In other words, help your child learn that they will become more like the five closest people in their life.

4. TALK ABOUT THE TOUGH STUFF

As your children grow, have age-appropriate individual and family conversations about the difficult issues we face in the world. Be sure to sign up for Focus on the Family's age and stage content to be sent to you as you navigate the realities and challenges that come with your child growing up. Go to [MyKidsAge.com](https://www.mykidsage.com) to register. It's free!

Explain that they will sometimes hear messages that can be confusing and don't match up with God's truth. These don't change God's clear design for human identity, relationships, marriage, and life. Explain what God's Word says, and present factual information and solid arguments as you pass on your beliefs to the next generation. Remember that beliefs and worldview are best transferred within a trusting relationship. Research affirms that parents are the most influential in a child's development and faith formation when they learn how to balance warmth and sensitivity with boundaries and limits. You can learn how to live this out in your parenting by taking our free parenting assessment at [FocusOnTheFamily.com/7traitsassessment](https://www.FocusOnTheFamily.com/7traitsassessment)

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY HAS RESOURCES TO SUPPORT YOU AS YOU NAVIGATE DIFFICULT ISSUES:

- » [Alive to Thrive — a preventative approach to suicide](#)
- » [Counseling Consultations and Referrals from Focus on the Family Christian Counselors Network](#)
- » [Launch into the Teen Years — Resources to help you guide your 8 — 12-year-old child into early adolescence](#)
- » [Parenting Articles and Resources — Biblically based, research-based guidance and information to strengthen your parenting and your child](#)
- » [When Transgender Issues Enter Your World: How Christians can respond with compassion, courage, truth](#)
- » [Parenting Questions and Answers](#)
- » [The Talk: Healthy Sexuality Education — Healthy sex ed for every age and stage of your child's development](#)

CHAPTER 3:

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN LOCKER ROOMS, IN RESTROOMS, AND ON SPORTS TEAMS

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NEW DEVELOPMENTS

SUPREME COURT DECISION IN WEST VIRGINIA V. BPJ AND LITTLE V. HECOX

In June 2026, the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a [6-3 decision](#) in favor of West Virginia and Idaho laws that reserve girls and women's sports for females. The case has enormous ramifications for female sports.

Idaho passed the [Fairness in Women's Sports Act](#) in 2020, limiting participation in women's and girls' sports in public schools to those who are biologically female. The law was immediately [challenged](#) by the American Civil Liberties Union on behalf of Lindsay Hecox, a male who wanted to run on Boise State University's women's cross-country team.

In 2021, [West Virginia was the fifth state](#) to pass a [law](#) protecting female athletics. The Sports Act, HB 3293, clarified that male and female sports teams in public secondary schools and colleges must be based on biological sex.

Again, the law was challenged in court by the ACLU along with Lambda Legal, another radical LGBT activist group.

The Court combined the two cases and ruled in [West Virginia v. BPJ](#) that Title IX allows states to protect girls sports from male athletes:

Title IX allows schools to provide separate women's and men's sports teams defined by biological sex, and West Virginia has permissibly maintained female sports for biological females consistent with Title IX.

ALL GENDER
RESTROOM

The Court also rejected the argument that sex-segregated sports violate the Constitution, explaining:

The States' interests in ensuring safety and competitive fairness amply justify the States in maintaining women's and girls' sports for biological females. Under the Equal Protection Clause, therefore, schools may determine eligibility for women's and girls' sports based on biological sex.

HERE ARE SOME OF THE EFFECTS OF THIS MOMENTOUS DECISION: :

- » [Twenty-nine states](#) have similar laws or agency regulations protecting girls and women's sports in education, requiring participation in sex-segregated activities based on biological sex, rather than gender identity. The ruling means these laws are constitutional and can be enforced.
- » Transgender-identified activists and their allies have challenged almost all state "Save Girls Sports" laws. The decision overturns lower courts that ruled against "Save Girls Sports" laws, and it gives courts direction on how to rule when males try to compete in female sports.
- » 20 states have laws protecting privacy and safety in K-12 restrooms, locker rooms, and showers based on sex, rather than gender identity. While [West Virginia v. BPI](#) doesn't directly address these laws, it lends support to the idea that they don't violate Title IX or the Constitution.
- » [West Virginia v. BPI](#) supports President Trump's executive order "[Defending Women From Gender Ideology Extremism And Restoring Biological Truth To The Federal Government](#)." The order affects all government agencies, including the Department of Education, stating, "It is the policy of the United States to recognize two sexes, male and female. These sexes are not changeable and are grounded in fundamental and incontrovertible reality."
- » The ruling also bolsters a second executive order "[Keeping Men Out of Women's Sports](#)," which directed agencies to rescind funds from educational programs that "deprive women and girls of fair athletic opportunities."
- » As a result of these two executive orders, the U.S. Department of Justice and the Education Department launched a [Title IX Special Investigations Team](#) to investigate schools and states that allow boys in girls sports. Since then, the DOJ has filed lawsuits against [California](#), [Maine](#) and [Minnesota](#) for violating Title IX, and the Special Investigations Team has [initiated dozens of investigations](#) into [school districts](#) for Title IX violations. The Supreme Court decision supports these – and more – investigations and lawsuits.

- » The decision lends support to [girls and women](#) who filed lawsuits against schools and states that violated their Title IX rights by allowing boys to compete against them. They could also open the floodgates for more lawsuits against states and schools that have violated girls and women's rights.

[West Virginia v. BPI](#) provides backing for parents who challenge state and school district policies that privilege males – who claim to be girls – over real girls and women.

The decision also assists [boys who don't want girls in their private spaces](#).

STATE ACTIONS

Twenty-one states and Washington, D.C., do not have laws protecting girls sports from male athletes. Some of these states actually mandate – through laws or agency regulations – that boys who identify as girls be allowed to compete in girls sports.

It's important for parents in these states to realize that [West Virginia v. BPI](#) does not automatically protect girls sports across the nation. The ruling does not mandate that states follow Title IX guidelines or overturn state laws or state agency regulations that allow boys in girls sports. The battle is ongoing.

In addition, many states have education laws or regulations allowing boys in girls restrooms, locker rooms and private spaces – some even have policies allowing transgender-identified boys to share rooms with girls on overnight trips. The ruling lends support for these to be overturned in the future, but it does not directly affect these laws or regulations.

Parents must still be aware of their state and local school district policies and act accordingly.

RESOURCES:

If your school, school board, or state has violated your child's civil rights in education, you can file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education: [Office for Civil Rights](#).

The following organizations provide legal aid, resources, toolkits, and information for protecting free speech, religious freedom, and parental rights in education:

- » [Alliance Defending Freedom](#)
- » [America First Legal](#)
- » [Becket - Religious Liberty for All](#)
- » [Child & Parental Rights Campaign](#)
- » [First Liberty Institute](#)
- » [Founding Freedoms Law Center](#)
- » [Liberty Counsel](#)
- » [Pacific Justice Institute](#)
- » [Thomas More Society](#)

CHAPTER 3

SUMMARY

“Transgenderism” is not rooted in objective truth, yet millions of young people now claim this identity.

In schools across the country, students who “identify” as the opposite sex have been allowed to use sex-segregated restrooms, locker rooms, showers, and hotel rooms with students of the opposite sex. Well-funded activist groups have pushed an agenda that teaches “gender” is different from biological sex, there are an infinite number of genders, and students can identify as and live as the opposite sex. At least 1,062 school districts have *“Transgender/Gender Nonconforming Policies,”* created by transgender activist groups. See *“What’s Happening at School?”* and *“Why Should I be Concerned?”* for more on the effects of this agenda on schools and children.

“Transgenderism” is not rooted in objective truth, yet millions of young people now claim this identity. Opening private spaces to the opposite sex endangers students, but the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice are promoting this ideology and these policies, as are a number of states that have public accommodations laws that privilege transgender identity. States, boards of education, local municipalities, and school districts also have policies supporting transgenderism over the needs of other students. Some policies require that school hide information about students identifying as transgender from parents. Find more information by reading, *“Know the Facts”* and *“Know the Law”* in the restroom and locker room section.

To advocate for and protect your child, ask your administration about your schools “transgender policy” — specifically about their locker room and restroom policies. If your school policies threaten privacy and safety, join together with other parents, talk to teachers and administrators, and speak out at school board meetings.

Talk with children about your growing concern, giving them a biblical and scientific foundation about humans being born either male or female, the confusion some children feel about this, and the truth that no one can change from one sex to the other. Get helpful guidance and

more resources by checking out ***“Ways You Can Protect and Advocate for Your Child”*** and ***“Talk With Your Child.”***

Schools across the country have allowed boys who identify as girls to play on girls sports teams. Boys who have gone through puberty have significant physical advantages in sports, and schools that allow this are endangering girls. Some girls, who identify as male, take testosterone and are allowed to compete on girls teams, giving them an unfair advantage, too. Parents should know that all this violates Title IX, the 1972 law designed to protect women and ensure equal access to educational and athletic opportunities. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that sports teams can have sex-based classifications. For more details, see the section on sports teams and the information in ***“What’s Happening at School,” “Know the Facts,”*** and ***“Know the Law.”***

For fairness and safety, girls deserve the right to play on teams without biological males. Advocate for your children by talking with school administrators and coaches. Connect with other parents and talk with school board members about your concerns. Parents can even file discrimination complaints with federal and state Departments of Education. While “Save Girls Sports” laws have been passed in 24 states, if your state doesn’t have similar laws help establish them. Bless and affirm a son’s masculinity and a daughter’s femininity, and teach your children about God’s good design for humans — created male and female in His image. For guidance and encouragement, see the sports section’s information: ***“Know Your Child’s Rights,” “Ways You can Protect and Advocate for Your Child,”*** and ***“Talk with Your Child.”***



THINGS TO BE AWARE OF IN YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL LOCKER ROOMS, RESTROOMS, AND OTHER PRIVATE SPACES



STONE BRIDGE HIGH SCHOOL

On June 22, Scott Smith was arrested at a Loudoun County, Virginia, school board meeting, a meeting that was ultimately deemed an “unlawful assembly” after many attendees vocally opposed a policy on transgender students.

What people did not know is that weeks prior, on May 28, Smith says, a boy allegedly wearing a skirt entered a girls bathroom at nearby Stone Bridge High School, where he sexually assaulted Smith's ninth-grade daughter.

LUKE ROSIAK, THE DAILY WIRE¹⁰⁹

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT SCHOOL?

LOCKER ROOMS, RESTROOMS, AND PRIVATE SPACES

“Transgender” ideology espouses false, confusing, and contradictory ideas, such as men and women are not essentially different; there are an infinite number of “genders;” people can be trapped in the wrong body, and people can “transition” into the opposite sex.

This dogma has permeated our education system and affected our schools in deeply unsettling ways, as radical activists demand that students who “identify” as the opposite sex should be allowed to use sex-segregated restrooms, locker rooms, showers, and hotel rooms with students of the opposite sex.

This extremist socio-political ideology demands that a boy be treated as a girl in the school environment if he “identifies” as a girl and vice versa. Transgender-identified activists and their allies include powerful media outlets, teachers unions, politicians, and businesses. They include well-funded LGBT groups such as the Human Rights Campaign, GLSEN, and the National Center for Transgender Equality. And they include legal

WHAT IS “GENDER IDENTITY”?

This is a good question. Many states don’t even bother to define gender identity because it means different things to different people. States that do provide a definition use language that’s so broad that the words can have endless meaning—including referring to students’ clothing choices, language, actions, name preferences, hairstyles, use of cosmetics, and, of course, what bathroom they use and sports teams they play on.

organizations like the ACLU, Lambda Legal, the Transgender Law Center, and the Southern Poverty Law Center.

These groups all argue it would be *sex discrimination* not to allow a transgender-identifying boy to use girls restrooms or other private spaces. To push their agenda, organizations like these bury schools in lawsuits and publicly shame families, students, teachers, and school officials who disagree.



ENORMOUS POWER

“The LGBT rights agenda — note the addition of “T” — has become a powerful, aggressive force in American society. Its advocates stand at the top of media, academia, the professions, and, most importantly, Big Business and Big Philanthropy. Although activists present the LGBT movement as a weak, powerless group suffering oppression and discrimination, in truth, it wields enormous power and influence — power it increasingly uses to remake our laws, schools, and society.”

JENNIFER BILEK — FIRST THINGS¹¹⁰

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

In the 1950s, Dr. John Money coined the term “gender identity,” using the phrase to differentiate between sex (*being male or female, a biological reality*) and gender (*a psychological or spiritual condition, including a person’s thoughts, beliefs, and feelings about being male or female*). Money believed children were blank slates and could be brought up to be either gender — regardless of bodily sex. The term “gender” also came to describe the *roles* men and women take and how they *express* their gender through language, dress and behavior.

The social turmoil of the 1960s and 1970s helped spread Money’s false ideas and beliefs. In addition, those decades brought the rise of other social and ideological movements, including radical feminism, the sexual revolution, and the gay activist movement, which latched onto some of these new ideas.

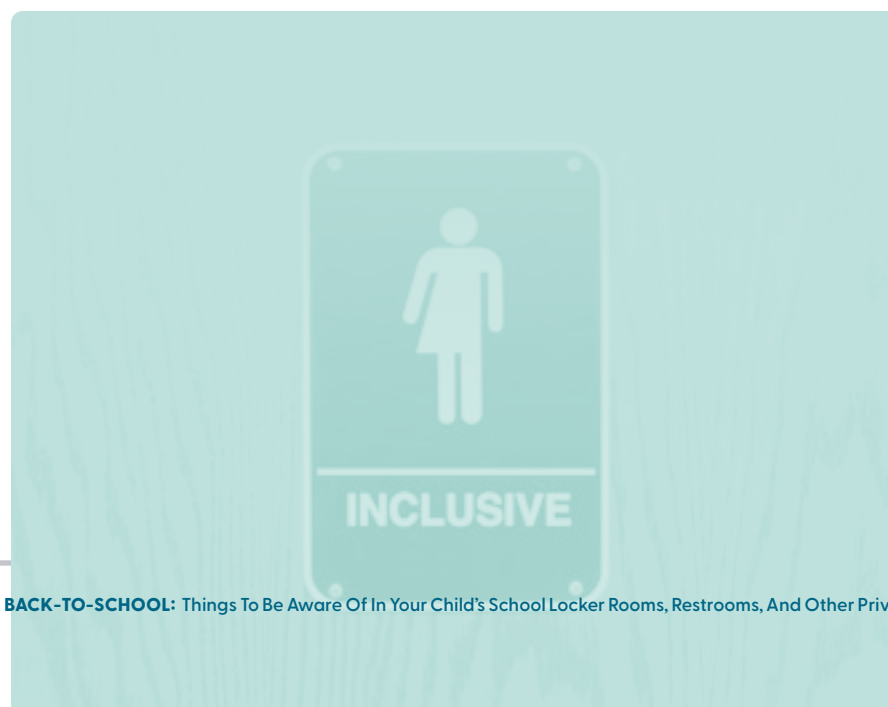
Decades later, the LGBT activist movement has become a powerful, well-funded force, affecting every area of society, including business and advertising; K-12 schools, colleges and universities; celebrities and sports teams; the media and social media; and churches and denominations. In addition, federal agencies and state and local governments passed nondiscrimination laws privileging homosexuality and transgenderism.

A tipping point came when the U.S. Supreme Court redefined marriage in 2015 in *Obergefell v. Hodges*.¹¹¹ The Court essentially said that sex — being male or female — did not matter for marriage. Since individuals now had the right to “same-sex marriage,” activist groups shifted their focus toward pushing the transgender agenda.¹¹² For example, the Arcus Foundation, which promotes rights for the greater apes and LGBT-identified individuals, began funding the Global Trans Initiative with over \$20 million dollars.¹¹³ Other billionaire donors joined Arcus in the fray as well, providing multiple millions to LGBT extremist groups to promote transgenderism.¹¹⁴ That accelerated an already growing movement to add “gender identity” as a protected status in state and local education policies.

In 2018, two activist LGBT groups, GLSEN (Formerly the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network) and the National Center for Transgender Equality, published a “Model School District Policy on Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students.” The policy states:

*With respect to all restrooms, locker rooms, or changing facilities, students shall have access to facilities that correspond to their gender identity. Schools may maintain separate restroom, locker room or changing facilities for male and female students, provided that they allow all students equal access to facilities that are consistent with their gender identity. Students, including nonbinary students, should determine which facilities are consistent with their gender identity.*¹¹⁵

At least 1,062 school districts, covering more than 10.85 million students, now have “Transgender/Gender Nonconforming Policies,” often based on this “Model School District Policy.” Schools use these to hide a child’s sexual identity confusion from parents, to mandate students and teachers use a student’s “preferred name and pronouns,” and to allow students to use sex-segregated facilities according to their “gender identity.”¹¹⁶



WHY SHOULD I BE CONCERNED?

All citizens, including children, have the constitutional right to privacy, dignity, bodily integrity, and safety. These are fundamental rights that must be protected. Parents have the right to expect their children to be protected on school property or in school activities. Young children and teens should never be forced into intimate spaces with children of the opposite sex, particularly in situations where adult supervision is minimal.

Just as concerning, **schools do not have to inform parents an opposite-sex child is using private facilities with other children**. This dramatically decreases parents' ability to protect their children.

All students deserve to feel safe, not just the one percent.

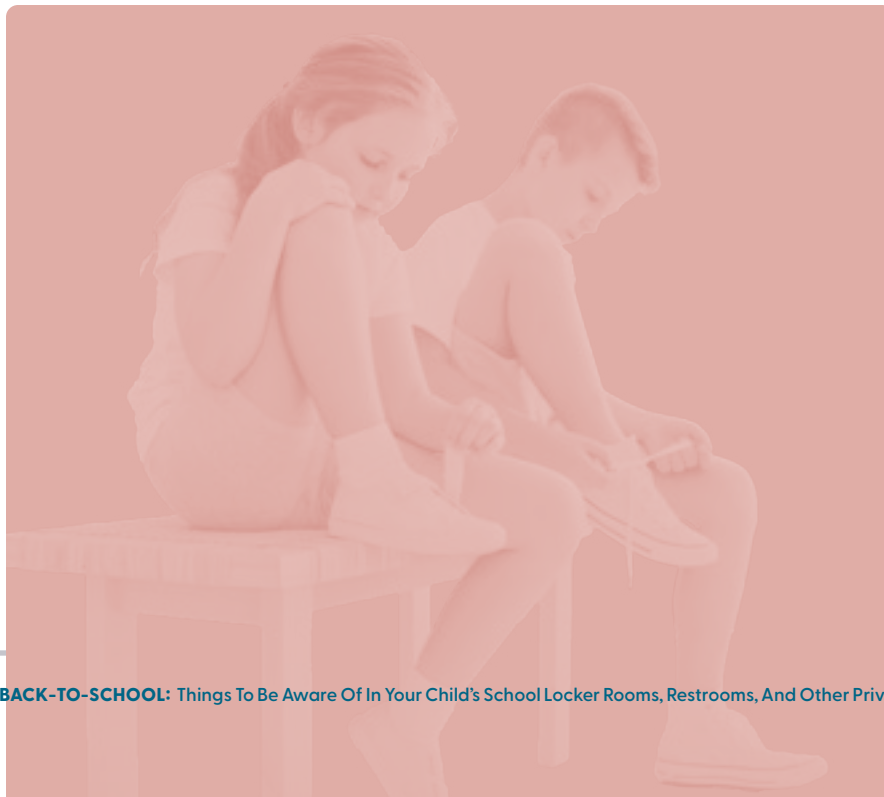
No student should have to suffer anxiety, humiliation, or embarrassment from sharing a sex-segregated space with a student of the opposite sex.



MY SCHOOL DIDN'T EVEN BOTHER TO TELL ME

"[My school] didn't even bother to tell me or the other students that they changed school policy to allow students to choose their locker rooms and restrooms based not on their sex, but their beliefs about their gender. . . The moment I walked into our girls restroom and found a boy standing there, I turned and fled. ..."

ALEXIS L., PENNSYLVANIA¹⁷



KNOW THE FACTS

Transgenderism is not rooted in scientific, objective truth; it is a belief system, an ideology. And gender identity is a completely subjective, social construct, divorced from the truth that humans come in two types — male and female.

The majority of Americans believe multi-person restrooms that are segregated by sex should not be open to members of the opposite sex, even if that individual identifies as transgender.¹¹⁸

A growing number of young people now identify not as male or female but as “transgender,” “nonbinary,” or one of the multitudes of other recently invented “genders.” This is due to several factors, including: Transgenderism has become a socio-political identity; there is a social contagion aspect to transgenderism, where schoolchildren are applauded and celebrated for “coming out as trans”; and more children are diagnosed and treated as transgender, with medical and mental health professionals ignoring and not treating other psychological co-morbidities.¹¹⁹

Keeping sex-segregated facilities does no harm to transgender-identifying students. These students have access to the same restroom that matches their biological sex, just as every other student does. For students who demand special accommodations based on their sexual identity confusion, there are other options, such as staff restrooms. However, students should not have their privacy and safety violated by other students claiming to be the opposite sex.

Mixed-sex changing rooms and restrooms can increase the likelihood of sexual offenses; as the Minnesota Family Council explains, “Anyone can take advantage of mixed-sex policies. A 2018 study showed that there were three times more voyeurism offenses in Target retail stores after the public announcement of their mixed-sex restroom and fitting room policy. Furthermore, a UK investigative report found that “almost 90% of reported sexual assaults, harassment, and voyeurism in swimming pool and sports-centre changing rooms” take place in mixed-sex facilities.¹²⁰

This does not mean transgender-identifying individuals are more likely to show predatory behavior. It **does** mean

free-for-all bathroom policies signal to perpetrators they are easier places to gain access to victims.

According to the Department of Justice, “30-50 percent of youth are sexually abused by other juveniles.”¹²¹ The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention teach that a primary strategy in preventing sexual abuse is creating protective environments. This means “improving safety and monitoring in schools.”¹²² Schools are already falling behind in creating protective environments for students, with almost 857,500 violent incidents (including rape, attempted rape, and sexual assault) being reported by public schools in 2021-2022.¹²³ Schools should be working hard to ensure the safety of all students, not pushing policies that risk student safety for the sake of a political agenda.

In states where laws give special privileges based on gender identity in schools, parents may not have much to do except consider private school options or special accommodations for their child (for example, a nurse’s or staff restroom).



KNOW THE LAW

Unfortunately, many schools will claim they have a transgender “friendly” restroom policy to “follow federal law.” Yet, there is no federal law that requires schools to allow restrooms, locker rooms, and other sex-segregated spaces to be available to the opposite sex. When schools mention “federal law,” they are most likely referencing the laws below. Here’s a quick run-down of what these laws actually say.

§ RELEVANT FEDERAL LAWS, COURT DECISIONS, EXECUTIVE ORDERS, AND AGENCY REGULATIONS:

Title IX (Title Nine): Title IX was part of a suite of civil rights laws passed in 1972 to ensure that girls have equal access to educational and athletic opportunities with boys.

The law states:

*No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.*¹²⁴

When communicating with school officials, it’s good to mention Title IX’s actual language and the meaning of “sex discrimination” at the time the law was passed. Remind them that Title IX specifically permits schools to maintain sex-segregated private spaces.¹²⁵ However, as we explain below, the DOE is changing Title IX’s definition of sex to include sexual orientation and gender identity.

2016 Dear Colleague Letter on Transgender Students: Many schools created transgender policies after President Obama’s Department of Education issued this letter.

This letter encouraged school districts to reinterpret the word “sex” (biologically male or female) to also mean “gender-identity” under Title IX.¹²⁶ Many schools began opening their bathrooms and locker rooms to opposite-sex students who identified as transgender, citing the letter as guidance. The Trump Administration rescinded the letter in 2017.¹²⁷ Still, many districts kept the policy in place, ignoring the revocation and using the 2016 letter as justification.

Bostock v. Clayton: This Supreme Court Decision might not come up. But if school officials or school board members do bring it up, you can be prepared by reminding them that this decision does not apply to schools.

In the **Bostock** case, the Court said that “sex discrimination” in **employment** non-discrimination laws included homosexuality and transgenderism.¹²⁸ Despite the fact that the Court said the decision did not address “sex-segregated bath-

rooms, locker rooms, and dress codes,” the case unleashed a flood of transgender lawsuits.¹²⁹ At some point, the Court will have to address these.

Executive Orders 13988 and 14021: President Joe Biden has signed executive orders directing government agencies, and specifically the Department of Education, to implement policies redefining “sex” to include sexual orientation and gender identity. These are not laws — but administration policies implemented by federal agencies.

On his first day in office, January 20, 2021, President Biden signed an “Executive Order on Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation.” Using *Bostock* as justification, the order requires all federal sex discrimination laws — including Title IX — must now “prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation” and agencies must enforce “Prohibitions on Sex Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation.”¹³⁰

A second order was signed on March 8, 2021, “Executive Order on Guaranteeing an Educational Environment Free from Discrimination on the Basis of Sex, Including Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity.” The order reversed policies by the Trump administration that limited sex discrimination to being male or female and excluded homosexuality and transgenderism from that definition.¹³¹

U.S. Department of Education New Title IX Rule: In April 2024, the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) implemented the two executive orders, mandating that “sex discrimination” in Title IX must now include “sex stereotypes, sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics.” Effective August 1, 2024, any state, school, or district that receives federal education funds will have to comply with this redefinition.¹³² Many states say they will not follow the regulation, and multiple lawsuits have been filed against the mandate.¹³³ The lawsuit from Tennessee and four other states says:

The Final Rule’s distorted definition of sex has radical ramifications. Start with schools’ ubiquitous distinctions between male and female areas — in bathrooms, locker rooms, changing facilities, and the like. Now, drawing these lines is illegal discrimination unless

schools permit persons to access even private spaces “consistent with their gender identity.”

§ RELEVANT STATE LAW:

Many states have a law that requires all public accommodations to allow transgender-identifying individuals to use the public bathrooms, locker rooms, showers, etc., that match their gender identity.

The term “public accommodations” usually refers to government buildings and entities generally open to the public — such as restaurants, places of business, gyms, and hotels. In some states, the term includes schools — and even school restrooms.

Other state laws directly mandate protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity in education. As of June 2024, 20 states and Washington, D.C., have laws prohibiting “discrimination” based on gender identity in schools, and 17 states and D.C. have “explicit guidance for the treatment and inclusion of transgender students.”¹³⁴

On the opposite side, several states now have laws protecting privacy and safety in schools, requiring students to use facilities based on their sex, not on their gender identity.¹³⁵

§ CITIES, COUNTIES, AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS:

Local authorities also have laws affecting school restrooms, locker rooms, and showers. Currently, hundreds of cities and counties have ordinances that also require the gender identity of an individual take precedence over biological sex in public accommodations, with many including public schools.¹³⁶

As we noted above, school districts and even individual schools also implement policies allowing transgender-identified students to use opposite-sex facilities. Be sure to ask your school if such a policy is in place.¹³⁷

KNOW YOUR CHILD'S RIGHTS

Your child has the right to bodily privacy, meaning the right to use a sex-segregated restroom, locker room, changing room, and shower, as well as hotel rooms on overnight outings. Unfortunately, many states have determined transgender restroom policies do not violate other students' rights to privacy, provided the school provides options for the students who are uncomfortable sharing bathrooms with the opposite sex. These options include allowing your child access to a staff, nurse's, or single-stall restroom.

Students also have the right to attend school without being in a hostile environment, harassed, or bullied. If your child is being harassed or bullied in a private space, take detailed notes and report these incidents immediately to school officials. If the harassment and bullying are persistent, you may be able to file a complaint with your state Board of Education or even the federal Department of Education.



TRAVIS AND BLAKE ALLEN

With the rise of radical gender ideology, some schools are attempting to erase the distinctions between male and female — and punishing those who dissent. This was the experience of Travis and Blake Allen, a father and daughter who spoke out against a school policy that allowed a male student (who identifies as female) to change in the girls locker room while the girls volleyball team was also changing. When Blake, a freshman and member of the volleyball team, expressed her opinion, she was suspended from school. And when her father Travis voiced his concerns, he was suspended from his coaching position on the middle school girls soccer team.”

ALLIANCE DEFENDING FREEDOM¹³⁸



WAYS YOU CAN PROTECT & ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CHILD

Ask your school if they have a policy permitting students to use restrooms and locker rooms based on gender identity. If yes, be aware and talk with your child.

Ask your child's school if they have a **transgender student policy guide or gender inclusion/diversity guide**. If yes, this guide may provide clear statements on the school's restroom, locker room, and overnight accommodations policy.

Read your school's **anti-bullying policy** carefully (or check your state law for anti-bullying directives for schools). These policies may also discuss gender identity, which is a sign that private spaces might be open to the opposite sex.

Ask if your school has a policy that allows transgender-identifying students access to opposite-sex restrooms, locker rooms, hotel rooms, or other private spaces. In that case, you can request the school provide your child access to a single-stall, nurse's, or staff restroom. Your school may have other solutions to make sure your child feels safe.

Record all incidents your child encounters in a sex-segregated private space that cause you concern. If you have any discussion with school personnel regarding this topic, keep detailed records for future reference.

Write a letter or send an email to the school board requesting that all children's rights be respected — and encourage other parents to do the same.

Most states require that school boards allow community members to voice their concerns. Find out when these opportunities are available, and speak at your local school board meeting.

If school board members vote to support a policy allowing students of the opposite sex to access locker rooms and bathrooms, you have the power to hold these members accountable. Find out when they are up for election, vote against them, and vote for candidates who share your values.

Talk to other parents and students to find out if they share the same concerns that you do. While some are afraid to share their real beliefs, usually, you'll find you're not alone, and your child is not the only one who feels uncomfortable in situations where schools elevate gender identity over biology. Parent voices are powerful, so join together in talking with the school principal, speaking out at school board meetings, and ensuring your child's rights are recognized.

Write letters to your state representative and share your concerns with them. Ask them to support or sponsor legislation that will protect all children in schools and not just a minority of students.

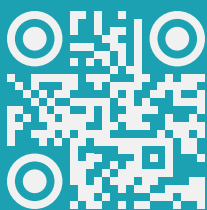
If you think your child is unsafe or their privacy is threatened at school, you may need to consider homeschooling or other school choice options.





READY TO LEARN ABOUT YOU?

7 Traits of Effective Parenting: this simple framework is an embraceable opportunity to be a more effective parent—one who leverages strengths and grows beyond imperfections.



ParentingTraits.com

TALK WITH YOUR CHILD

One of the most important jobs for any parent is to educate and equip their children on essential topics, including sexuality and how they can protect their bodies. This education should start early, be age-appropriate, biblically sound, and involve ongoing dialogue with children. Here are some tips to help you talk with your children. Intentionality on this topic is essential and is one of the 7 Traits of Effective Parenting. Check out our free parenting assessment [here](#). You will receive research-based and biblically based insights as you do your best at loving and guiding each of your kids.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

When talking with your child, **keep it simple and relaxed**. As a parent, you are the **authority** in your child's life; but you don't have to be an **expert** on every subject — including transgenderism. Here are a few simple truths you can communicate to your child:

- » *God made humans in His image — male and female. Read Genesis 2 together.*
- » *Individuals are born either male or female.*
- » *Boys and girls are different — both are important and valuable.*
- » *Because we are made in God's image, we are worth protecting.*
- » *Your body is good and was designed by God for a purpose.*
- » *Some people get hurt and confused and don't like how God made them.*
- » *As a result, some people wish they were the opposite sex.*
- » *Nobody can change from one sex to the other.*
- » *Mom and Dad are available any time and can help.*
- » *If a boy or man is in the girls restroom or changing room, leave and tell Mom or Dad.*

In addition, teach your children that certain parts of their body are private, and we keep those parts covered and protected. When at school, if the restrooms are open to opposite-sex students, find other options for your child or encourage your child to go to the bathroom with a friend of the same sex. (If this is a problem at school, talk to your child's teacher or principal and explain why your child might not want to go to the restroom alone.) Teach your child easy and basic responses if someone tries to see or touch private body parts inappropriately:

- » *Say, "No."*
- » *Walk away.*
- » *Tell Mom and/or Dad (or other trusted adult).*

KEEP IT A DIALOGUE

When children ask questions, use the occasion to connect with them. Find out what they are learning, where they learned it, and what they are thinking. Ask questions, such as:

- » *Where did you see that?*
- » *Where did you hear that word?*
- » *Why do you think God made both boys and girls?*
- » *What do you think gender identity means?*
- » *What are the two meanings of the word sex? (bringing the differences together and male or female)*
- » *Why do you think you were created as a _____ (boy or girl)?*
- » *What is unique about you as a _____ (boy or girl)?*
- » *What do you think "transgender" means?*
- » *Do you think a boy can really turn into a girl?*
- » *What does it mean to be created in God's image and in His likeness?*
- » *What do you think about boys competing in girls sports? What about girls competing in boys sports?*

You may feel angry and upset at the school, and your children may sense this. Reassure your children that you are not angry with them but are trying to figure out how to respond best. Let them know it's okay to come to you and talk to you about big topics like these.

Explain to your children that not everyone will agree with your family on these issues. Encourage them to be kind and respectful toward those struggling with gender confusion while holding to the reality that there are two sexes — male and female. You and your family will need grace, wisdom, and courage as you stand for truth about the biological reality that humans come in two types — male and female.

Older children and teens may have more questions, so we have a list of helpful resources here. You should read some of these additional resources before reading and discussing them with an older child.

RESOURCES

Focus on the Family has developed helpful resources for understanding transgenderism and advice for parents discussing this, and other sexuality issues, with their children:

- » [How to Talk To Your Children About Homosexuality: A guide for parents](#)
- » [Launch Into the Teen Years](#)
- » [Focus on the Family: Transgender Resources](#)
- » [The Talk: Healthy Sexuality Education — Basic Goals and Guidance from Focus on the Family](#)
- » [When Transgender Issues Enter Your World: How Christians can respond with compassion, courage, and truth](#)

Family Policy Alliance, working with groups like Minnesota Family Council and The Heritage Foundation, has developed a resource for parents to understand more about transgenderism, and especially its impact on children, teenagers, and schools. If gender ideology is impacting your family and school, you'll want to download or purchase your copy of "[Parent Resource Guide: Responding to the Transgender Issue](#)."

PROTECTING YOUR CHILD ON SPORTS TEAMS

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT SCHOOL

MY CHILD AND SPORTS



FAIR AND LEVEL

"Sports are competitive, and like any competition they should be played on a fair and level playing field. There are divisions, age brackets, and weight classes for a reason. College sports are for college athletes. Professional sports for pro athletes. And female sports should be for female athletes."

FAMILY POLICY ALLIANCE ¹³⁹

Schools across the country are allowing transgender-identifying students to play on the sports team of their choice, rather than reserving girls teams for girls and boys teams for boys, for the sake of appeasing activists with a political agenda.

WHY SHOULD I BE CONCERNED?



Girls and women's sports should be reserved for females. Boys and men's sports should be reserved for males.

Boys playing on girls sports teams is fundamentally unfair for several reasons.

First, when a boy competes on a girls sports team, he inherently changes the nature of the competition and steals athletic opportunities reserved explicitly for girls. Boys who have already gone through

puberty have a biological advantage over girls, regardless of whether the boy is currently taking female hormones and medication to block testosterone. Boys are bigger, with more muscle mass and muscle strength. They have larger bones and greater cardiovascular capacity. Once a boy has gone through puberty, testosterone blockers and female hormones don't change this. These advantages make it next to impossible for even an elite female athlete to beat a good male teen athlete.

+ SEVERE INJURIES

Severe injuries can occur to girls when boys enter the athletic arena. Recently, a female high school volleyball player suffered a severe head injury after a biological male who claims to be “trans” spiked a ball into her face during a game. She promptly dropped to the ground and didn't get up, as coaches rushed to her side. One district board member said, “A coach of 40 years said they'd never seen a hit like this.” The girl is “experiencing long-term concussion symptoms, such as vision problems, and has not been cleared to return to play.”¹⁴⁰

When a boy wins in a girls sport, as he generally will, he is stealing a podium spot, athletic opportunities, scholarship money, recruitment opportunities, and all the benefits of being on a team, from a girl. He is stealing the girl's spot because he already has an equal opportunity to play fairly on a boys team, where he is entitled to an even playing field and equal rewards. By instead choosing to play on a girls

team, he significantly increases his odds of winning purely due to biological advantages.

The issue of girls playing on boys sports teams has not become nearly as explosive as the opposite situation for a few reasons. First, there are not many cases where girls choose to play on boys sports teams, so in terms of numbers, the problem doesn't come up as often. Second, if a girl does play on a boys sports team, she is typically not dominating her teammates or competitors, and her male teammates are still, in most instances, able to beat her in a competitive sport.

However, there is a growing problem with girls who identify as boys, or some other transgender identity, taking testosterone while competing against fellow females.¹⁴¹ Just as when boys are permitted to compete on girls teams and have unfair advantages, girls who inject testosterone as part of a gender transition regimen gain an unfair competitive advantage over their fellow female athletes.

GET INFORMED

+ FIFTY YEARS AFTER TITLE IX

In 2022, fifty years after Title IX was enacted, “Eight times as many young women are participating in college athletics than in 1972. In America's high schools, more than 2.6 million young women are participating in sports, nine times as many as in 1972.”

RICHARD NIXON FOUNDATION¹⁴²



KNOW THE FACTS

There is a substantial difference in the athletic performance of biological males and biological females, which for reasons of fundamental fairness, is why many school and professional athletic teams are segregated by sex.¹⁴³

+ PERFORMANCE ADVANTAGE

Testosterone is not the only thing that gives boys an advantage. Once a boy has gone through puberty, even if he takes opposite sex hormones along with drugs to lower his testosterone levels, he still has a performance advantage over girls because he naturally has longer and stronger bones (giving him a height and weight advantage), greater bone density (making him less likely than girls to get injured in some respects), increased muscle mass, and greater cardiovascular capacity than girls.¹⁴⁴

With the influx of boys who identify as girls playing girls athletics, there is an increased risk of greater injuries to girls.

Allowing boys to play on girls sports teams denies girls the opportunity to compete in events that are exclusively female and puts them at a competitive disadvantage.

When schools allow boys (who say they're girls) to play on girls sports teams, it's often because they have a policy prioritizing gender-identity — a mental or psychological state — over biological sex. This means the school might claim it would be discriminatory, illegal, or bullying to deny the transgender student the opportunity to play on girls sports teams. Or, state and local laws may mandate this. Voicing your concerns to the school, while a good thing, might not move the needle much.

Title IX is a federal civil rights law enacted with the specific purpose of protecting girls from discrimination in education. And while boys have benefited from this law, the law radically changed the landscape of girls sports. Before Title IX, girls sports were very much an after-thought, underfunded with few competitive opportunities for girls in school and almost no college scholarship or recruitment dollars being distributed to girls or female teams.

KNOW THE LAW

§ RELEVANT FEDERAL LAW, RULES AND REGULATIONS:

STATUTES

Title IX: Title IX is part of civil rights laws passed in 1972 to protect girls and women by ensuring they have equal access to educational and athletic opportunities with boys and men. It's good to mention Title IX when you communicate with school officials (for example, if you testify at school board meetings or write letters to the principal) and remind the school Title IX (federal law) specifically permits schools to allow competitive and contact sports to be segregated based on sex. It is a deep twisting of the law for political activists to claim Title IX allows boys to steal athletic opportunities from girls.

However, Title IX is under assault from presidential executive orders and the release of new regulations that redefine "sex" to include "sex stereotypes, sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics." The new rule is being challenged by states that say they will not comply and by many lawsuits from individuals, organizations, and state attorneys general. See our discussion of this above, in the section on "School Locker Rooms, Restrooms, and Other Private Spaces."

45 CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) § 86.41 – The Department of Health and Human Services: This is a federal regulation supporting Title IX. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex but specifies that educational institutions "may operate or sponsor separate teams for members of each sex where selection for such teams is based upon competitive skill or the activity involved is a contact sport."¹⁴⁵ This is important to know when talking with school officials because it demonstrates that federal law and regulations have long recognized the fundamental differences between boys and girls in sports.

Again, with every federal agency required to redefine all federal sex discrimination laws to "prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation," this

regulation may be changed at some point. And, with states, boards of education, and school districts also redefining "sex," this regulation could be viewed as permitting athletes to compete in sports based on gender identity.

34 CFR § 106.41(a) – The Department of Education: This federal regulation explicitly prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. But if the sport is a competitive or contact sport, this rule permits sex-segregated teams in sports. This is a good regulation to use in testimony to prove that even the federal Department of Education's own regulations declare it is not discrimination to prohibit boys from playing on sports teams with girls.

Unfortunately, the DOE announced in April 2023 that it was proposing a new Title IX rule that would allow students to compete in sports based on gender identity.¹⁴⁶

The rule was presented in April 2024, stating that Title IX "protects against discrimination based on sex stereotypes, sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics."¹⁴⁷ This certainly seems to cover sex-segregated facilities and sports, as it gives students the right to claim discrimination if they are denied access to facilities and activities based on their gender identity.

The agency also said it will announce a final rule specifically covering athletics later in 2024, saying,

*The Department's rulemaking process is still ongoing for a Title IX regulation related to athletics. The Department proposed amendments to its athletics regulations in April 2023, and received over 150,000 public comments, which by law must be carefully considered.*¹⁴⁸

§ SUPREME COURT DECISIONS

O'Connor v. Bd. Of Ed. (1980): If certain sports teams do not have "gender-based classification in competitive contact sports, there would be a substantial risk that boys would dominate the girls program and deny them an equal opportunity to compete in interscholastic events." This case might be useful to quote in more formal advocacy efforts like letters and testifying.¹⁴⁹

Bostock v. Clayton, (2020): This Supreme Court Decision might not come up. But if school officials or school board members do bring it up, you can be prepared by reminding them this decision does not apply to schools.

The ***Bostock*** decision stated that it was “discrimination on the basis of sex” for **employers** to fire gay or transgender employees on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation. But the federal DOE, and many state Boards of Education have used the decision to justify their policies that allow students into the private spaces of the opposite sex based on gender-identity. So it’s good to know this Supreme Court decision **only** applies to **employers** and does not apply to schools and their activities, or locker room and restroom policies.

Sorry, we know this is complicated. But to protect your child, you’ll have to pay attention to new agency regulations and upcoming court cases to see how the legal landscape changes with regard to school facilities and sports.



WOMEN ARE LOSING ATHLETIC OPPORTUNITIES

“Two male athletes who identify as female have won 15 women’s high school track championships that were once held by nine different girls in the state of Connecticut. Young women are losing athletic opportunities, dreams of competing at the next level, and even potential scholarships.

Thankfully, three female athletes, Selina Soule, Chelsea Mitchell, and Alanna Smith are taking a public stand against the harmful policies that allow this to happen.” In 2019, they filed a lawsuit against the Connecticut policy, which is still wending its way through the courts.”

ALLIANCE DEFENDING FREEDOM¹⁵⁰

§ RELEVANT STATE LAW:

Save Girls Sports Laws: In June 2020, Family Policy Alliance launched a campaign to “Save Girls Sports.” Earlier that year, Idaho was the first state in the nation to pass a law specifically declaring biological boys cannot play on any sports teams that were designated for biological girls in 2020. As of June 2024, 23 states now have a similar law in place protecting fairness in girls sports.¹⁵¹

State Anti-discrimination Laws: By contrast, many states have “anti-discrimination laws” that provide special privileges to transgender-identifying individuals, including allowing boys who claim to be girls to play on girls sports teams. The fight for girls sports is not over, as many cases involving female athletes work their way through the courts.¹⁵²

KNOW YOUR CHILD'S RIGHTS

For reasons of fundamental fairness and safety, girls have the right to play on a sex-segregated team that does not include biological boys. Courts have recognized there are fundamental physical differences between boys and girls that give boys a biological advantage in most sports. This is why we have sex-segregated teams in public schools and professional sports.

The Supreme Court has stated when it comes to competitive contact sports, boys and girls have the right to compete on sex-segregated teams.

Your child has the right to be safe and protected in school, including when playing sports. If a girl is playing a contact sport with a biological boy on a girls team, the girls are at a higher risk of being injured.



WAYS YOU CAN PROTECT

& ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CHILD

If your daughter is directly affected by these policies, do not be afraid to share your concerns with your daughter's coach and/or principal. Connect with other parents and encourage them to share their concerns with the coach as well. Record your interactions and what is said. This may come in handy if you feel the need to file an official complaint.

Talk to individual school board members when possible. Have face-to-face conversations at lunch, coffee, or somewhere outside the board room setting. Find out the board member's position on the topic and the reasons for it. This will help you specifically address the intent and concern of the board member.

Testify at your local school board meeting. See if other parents share your concerns and ask if they will also be willing to testify at the school board meeting. It helps to put your testimony in writing. Use some of our "Know Your Facts" and "Relevant Law" cases to help you state your argument clearly. You can read your testimony at your school board meeting, give a verbal testimony, or both!

This may seem like a huge step, but if your school is refusing to budge and your child has been or is being harmed by your school's transgender sports participation policy, you can file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education. How the complaint is handled will, of course, depend on the presidential administration and whether the DOE's final rule changes about sports go into effect or are defeated in court.

State Boards of Education also have procedures for complaining if your child is harmed by a school's transgender policies. Again, how the complaint is handled will depend on your state's laws on these issues.

Write to your state representative and senator and ask them to support or sponsor their own Save Girls Sports law if one does not exist in your state.

TALK WITH YOUR CHILD

Transgender ideology has rapidly moved toward acceptance and celebration in our culture. Many in media, business, advertising, politics, entertainment, and academia now promote and applaud those who identify as the opposite sex. In addition, transgenderism has become a huge fad among children, adolescents, and teens today.

At this point, it's no longer a question of *if* your children will encounter transgenderism, but rather *when* they'll be exposed to gender confusion. Now, more than ever, it's important for parents to talk with their children about the truth about biological sex — that humans come in two forms, male or female. Both are good and both are valuable, but they are distinct and different.

Some things to consider:

- » *Teach your children about God's design for humanity. God created us in His own image and likeness and separated humans into two sexes, male and female. Each is distinct and valuable. Both separately and together, men and women reflect the image and likeness of God. Not only does Moses write about this in Genesis, but Jesus and the Apostle Paul also point to the male-female creation as a foundational truth. You can make this a foundational truth in your children's lives, too, before they are exposed to the growing transgender trend. Start teaching this at a very early age (3 to 5 years old).*
- » *If your children are older, and they encounter those of the opposite sex in sports events, here are some things you can do to help them (Generally, this will be daughters encountering boys who think they are girls, either trying out for the girls team or playing for an opposing team).*
- » *If a boy wants to play on your daughter's team, she may not want to remain on the team. Talk through the decision with her and let her know that you love and support her no matter what.*
- » *If your child is in danger from boys on her or an opponent's team, or if you feel strongly about how wrong this is, you may decide to remove your daughter from the team. If that's the case, you'll have to talk through with her why you've made that decision. And you may want to investigate club sports as another option.*

If she remains on the team, you'll have to discuss with her and the school what provisions they'll make for her privacy and safety. Sadly, in many cases, the gender-confused boy will be allowed to use girls facilities. The onus is often on biological females to ask for separate locker rooms, restrooms, and showers if they don't want to be exposed to male bodies.

On some girls teams, there are girls who believe they are boys or are "nonbinary" and are taking estrogen blockers and male hormones. This situation is equally unfair. The girl will have elevated testosterone levels, giving her a clear advantage over other girls.¹⁵³ Again, you and your daughter will have to decide about competing against girls who take male hormones.

WHAT TO SAY

Here are a couple things to discuss with daughters facing this difficult situation:

Affirm your daughter in her femininity and in her understanding that boys and girls are different. There is tremendous pressure on young people today to embrace transgender ideology. Help her — and even her fellow athletes — to understand that there are inherent biological differences between boys and girls, and that someone can't change their bodily sex through beliefs, clothes, drugs, hormones, and surgeries. Every cell in the body is XX or XY, and there are thousands of genetic, sex-based differences between males and females. Explain that Title IX was passed because of these differences — creating a level, but separate playing field in athletics and activities for girls and women.

Acknowledge and affirm your daughter's emotional responses. It's *not* right and it's *not* fair that boys are allowed in girls sports. Your daughter may cycle through a whole series of emotions as she grapples with this injustice. You can be a tremendous help as she works through her thoughts and feelings about this situation.

Help your daughter work through to forgiveness, as Jesus calls us to do. This will probably take time, prayer, and engaging the will, as you and your daughter forgive the gender-confused boy, the school district, state and school leaders, and individuals who don't understand the truth about the distinct differences between the two sexes.

Encourage your daughter to stand for truth and be gracious toward those who will disagree with her. You and she will need wisdom and courage to hold onto the truth about biological sex differences — in a world that increasingly embraces transgender ideology.

Become an advocate for your daughter, and let her know you are advocating for her. You're also fighting for equity for girls and women everywhere who have worked to succeed in girls and women's athletics. Some ideas and tools for this advocacy are listed above. You may not win the battle, but you will be a force for truth on this topic.

RESOURCES

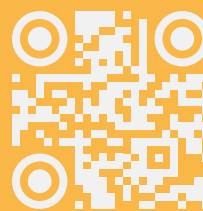
Focus on the Family has developed helpful resources for understanding transgenderism and advice for parents discussing this, and other sexuality topics, with their children:

- » [How to Talk To Your Children About Homosexuality: A guide for parents](#)
- » [Launch Into the Teen Years](#)
- » [Focus on the Family: Transgender Resources](#)
- » [The Talk: Healthy Sexuality Education — Basic Goals and Guidance from Focus on the Family](#)
- » [Talking to Your Children About Transgender Issues](#)
- » [When Transgender Issues Enter Your World: How Christians can respond with compassion, courage, and truth](#)

RIGHT HELP. RIGHT TIME.

We're sure you don't feel like you have the time or energy to just talk with your kids about these topics. Guess what? Now you do. Get weekly emails from Focus on the Family with specific content for every age and stage to help your child's development.

Now you can spend more time being the intentional parent you want to be.



MyKidsAge.com

CHAPTER 4:

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN SCHOOL LIBRARIES, ON DATABASES, INTERNET, WI-FI, AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES

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NEW DEVELOPMENTS

NEW TECHNOLOGIES

Technology is rapidly evolving, so parents must be vigilant to protect children from harmful online content.

Every year, the National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE) compiles a [Dirty Dozen List](#) naming people and companies which facilitate, enable, or profit from sexual exploitation and abuse. Many of the listed companies create electronic devices, social media platforms, operating systems, and apps that are available to or popular with school children.

Parents should be aware of these companies and products listed on NCOSE's 2026 Dirty Dozen List:

- » Google's [Chromebook](#) and [Android Operating System](#).
- » Apple's [App Store](#).
- » xAI's chatbot, [Grok](#), and Grok's avatar for kids, Good Rudi.
- » Meta's platforms [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Messenger](#), and [WhatsApp](#).
- » Messaging apps [Snapchat](#), [Discord](#), and [Telegram](#).
- » Social media platforms - [TikTok](#) and [X](#).
- » The videogame marketplace [Steam](#) and online gaming platforms like [Roblox](#).

Parents should also be aware of OpenAI's ChatGPT, which has been implicated in young people's [violence](#), [mental health issues](#), and [suicide](#). AI chatbots including [Google Gemini](#) have been linked to similar safety problems.

RESEARCH

Recent studies demonstrate that too much screentime damages children's [academic achievement](#), [mental health](#), and [relationships](#). Social psychologist Jonathan Haidt [explains](#) that smartphones and social media damage young people's mental development and contribute to mental illness. They also contribute to less sleep, shorter attention spans, and attention fragmentation, leading to lower academic achievement. Haidt and his organization, [The Anxious Generation](#), recommend:

- » *No smartphones before high school.*
- » *No social media before 16.*
- » *Phone-free schools, from bell to bell.*
- » *More independence, free play, and responsibility in the real world.*

STATE LAWS AND POLICIES

Across the country, states and local school districts are taking action to limit the use of smartphones, tablets, and other wireless devices in public schools. [Florida](#) was the first to begin the trend of limiting cell phones in schools in 2023, with most other states following over the next three years.

According to [Ballotpedia](#), 44 states have now enacted laws or policies on the use of cellphones in K-12 schools or classrooms. They report:

- » *35 states ban or limit cellphones in classrooms.*
- » *Five states – Alaska, Colorado, Maryland, Minnesota, and New Mexico – require K-12 public school districts to adopt policies around student cellphone use.*
- » *Four states – Washington, Idaho, and Montana – adopted policies encouraging districts to limit cellphone usage in classrooms.*

Parents will want to be familiar with their state and local school district's policies regarding cellphone usage in school, advocate for strict policies, and [make sure their children comply](#).

SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND DATABASES

Parents can only challenge and remove objectionable content from their school libraries in certain states and dis-

tricts. Court rulings and government actions in other places continue to stifle parents' rights.

FEDERAL AGENCIES

In June 2023, the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) created a ["book ban coordinator"](#) to develop guidance and training to block parents' efforts to remove age-inappropriate, sexualized, violent, or racially divisive materials from school libraries.

In January 2025, the OCR [reversed that guidance and training](#), eliminated the "book ban coordinator" position, and dismissed complaints to OCR about books removed from school libraries. The department stated that school districts, with "parents and community stakeholders," should decide these questions about removing age-inappropriate materials.

STATE LEGISLATURES AND LOCAL SCHOOLBOARDS

About a dozen states have passed "Freedom to Read" or "Right to Read" acts since 2023. These laws make it more difficult to challenge offensive books and may include provisions like:

- » *Only parents of enrolled children may request a review.*
- » *A parent may only challenge a limited number of books at a time.*
- » *Challenges and reviews must be made public.*
- » *There must be a waiting period before a previously reviewed book can be challenged again.*
- » *Schools must have clear policies for removing books.*

States with measures like these include California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, New Jersey, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington. More states are considering similar legislation.

On the other hand, states like Arkansas, Florida, Idaho, Iowa, Louisiana, Missouri, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Utah have passed laws safeguarding children by:

- » *Mandating that school districts develop clear challenge procedures.*
- » *Allowing schools to remove or limit access to books with sexually explicit content.*

- » *Tying school funding to compliance in protecting children.*
- » *Removing books statewide that have been excluded by multiple schools.*

While state legislatures are weighing in on battles over books, local school boards usually create library policies and make final decisions keeping or removing challenged books. It always behooves parents to be aware of and engage with their local school board's decisions.

NATIONAL LIBRARY ASSOCIATIONS AND TEACHERS UNIONS

The American Association of School Librarians (AASL) is a division of the [American Library Association](#) (ALA). Both groups promote the falsehood that challenging books to protect children is “censorship” and “book banning.”

The AASL provides [resources](#) to resist book challenges, while the ALA launched the [“Unite Against Book Bans”](#) campaign in 2024. The organizations collaborate with hundreds of groups, including [PEN America](#) and the [ACLU](#), to influence lawmakers and school boards to shield teachers and school librarians keeping unsuitable materials available to children. These groups often threaten legal action to keep objectionable books in school libraries.

The National Education Association and the American Federation for Teachers — the two biggest teachers unions in the country — also use their power and finances to fight parents’ rights to protect their children. The unions provide resources to educators to circumvent parents’ attempts to remove sexualized, violent and vulgar content from school libraries.

COURT DECISIONS

In [Little v. Llano County](#), the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit ruled there is no inherent First Amendment “right to receive information from the government in the form of taxpayer-funded library information.” In other words, the Fifth Circuit found libraries can remove books at parents’ request if they have clear policies for doing so.

But [other courts](#) ruled against school libraries removing offensive books, saying the books were removed for ideological reasons or that removing students’ access to the material violated their First Amendment rights.

RESOURCES:

See our Update for Chapter 1, as well as Appendices D and E, for sample forms and letters to challenge inappropriate library materials, see your child’s library record, and opt out of library activities. [Courage Is a Habit](#) has a form that completely opts children out of any library visits or activities.

Focus on the Family: [Plugged In’s Parents’ Guide to Technology 2026](#)

Focus on the Family’s Parenting Department has guidance about navigating inappropriate online content and responding to children when they see explicit material.

Jonathan Haidt: [The Anxious Generation](#)

Reviews of objectionable books often found in school libraries and guidance for taking action:

- » [Book Look](#)
- » [The Kitchen Table Activist](#)
- » [Rated Books](#)
- » [Take Back the Classroom](#)
- » [Texans Wake Up](#)

CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY

Virtually every school in America has internet-connected devices, library databases and Wi-Fi for teachers and children to use for instruction, study, research, and completing assignments. But with this useful technology comes a variety of threats, where children can be — purposely or inadvertently — exposed to online bullying, pornography, violence and other harmful materials. In particular, early exposure to pornography can lead to sexual exploration and activity at an early age, distorted views of sex, negative attitudes toward women, and higher levels of body dissatisfaction. With numerous incidents where students have been exposed to damaging material in schools, you need to learn more about your school's filtering technology as well as internet use and devices policies. Get more informed about tech issues in schools, by checking out these: ***"What's Happening in Schools"*** and ***"Know the Facts."***

The Children's Internet Protection Act requires schools and libraries that receive federal funding to have a policy regarding internet safety for minors and implement filtering software. The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act prohibits website operators and app services from collecting personal information from children under 13. In addition, various state laws require public schools to install blocking software. Still, you need to be vigilant, as tech-savvy students can work around filtering software and malicious actors can target children with inappropriate materials. Advocate for your children by making sure schools have filtering software and internet-connected device policies for students and parents to sign. Children need to know that there are bad actors in cyberspace, that computers can be used for hurtful purposes, and that you want to protect them from harm. Students must be informed that sharing inappropriate images is illegal and has serious consequences. Find guidance in the sections on electronic devices ***"Know the Law," "Ways You Can Advocate for Your Child,"*** and ***"Talk With Your Child."***

News outlets have spotlighted confusing, sexualized, and even pornographic books in school libraries and classrooms and on school databases. Parents have exposed materials with profanity, rape, radical ideologies, explicit descriptions of sexual acts, and sexually graphic illustrations. These words and images have a strong negative impact on

children. Most school districts have policies about how to challenge controversial materials, and we've provided a sample letter for ***"Objecting to Library Material."*** You have the right to oversee your child's education — and to protect them from harmful books, curriculums and resources. Another sample letter is included in this PDF, ***"Letter to Access Child's Library Record."*** For more guidance, see ***"What's Happening at School," "Why It's Important," "Know the Facts"*** and ***"Know Your Rights"*** in the library section of PDF 4.

“ This useful technology comes a variety of threats, where children can be — purposely or inadvertently — exposed to online bullying, pornography, violence and other harmful materials.

School boards generally have authority to select instructional books and materials — which means they can set policies for including or challenging and removing books in school libraries and classrooms. But some states are passing laws prohibiting schools from removing challenged books. Other states have laws protecting children and parents' rights in education. It's good to know your school district's and state's policies on these issues, which you can find under ***"Know the Law."*** This section also explains the ***"Obscenity Exemption,"*** a loophole which allows questionable material that has "scientific, educational, governmental value, or other justification." Still, library content should generally reflect local community standards — not ideology imposed from extremist librarian groups.

Despite inappropriate materials in some school libraries, you can work to safeguard your child. Join your schools collection review committee, connect with other like-minded parents and teachers to explore your school's library resources, and speak up at school board meetings when you find objectionable materials, as we explain in ***"Ways You Can Protect and Advocate for Your Child."*** In addition, the section "Talk With Your Child" offers support and resources when your child has been exposed to inappropriate materials. Assure your child that they can come and talk with you, that they are not alone, and that God can help them become free from shame and guilt. Also, establish tighter boundaries with computer devices, review your child's books and school resources, and discuss with them God's good design for relationships, sexuality, and marriage.

PROTECTING YOUR CHILD

ON SCHOOL INTERNET, WI-FI, AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN SCHOOLS

+ PORNOGRAPHY ON SCHOOL-ISSUED LAPTOPS

Parents in Montgomery County, Maryland, were shocked to find pornography on their children's school-issued laptops. The father of a 9-year-old third grader "described the material as graphic depictions of sex acts, accessed over a period of a month and a half." He told reporters, "He's a little boy, and he saw things that no one should see, especially a child."¹⁵⁴

Similarly, "The parents of an 11-year-old sixth grader said they checked their son's browser history and were stunned to find out he'd been searching for explicit images."¹⁵⁵

Parents sent a letter of complaint, asking the school board "to take immediate action to remedy the harm done to their children and protect their children and other Montgomery County students using these [school system] accounts and Chromebooks from further harm."¹⁵⁶

Virtually every school in America has internet-connected devices your child will have access to in order to receive instruction and complete their schoolwork. This might be through traditional computer labs and classroom smart technology, schools requiring your child to download apps and programs on their personal computers, or schools issuing your child a laptop or tablet for the entire school year. In any of these cases, it certainly pays to be an informed parent regarding your child and school technology.

But we all know the potential harms an internet-connected device can present in the hands of young children and teens. This section is to help guide you to protect your child from stumbling across violence, pornography, online bullying, profane sites, games, and other materials that are unsuitable and harmful for children.

The Institute for Family Studies gives details about some of the injurious effects when children are exposed to pornography:

Pornography proves to be especially detrimental to children and adolescents. According to many researchers, early exposure to pornography is connected to negative developmental outcomes, including a greater acceptance of sexual harassment, sexual activity at an early age, acceptance of negative attitudes to women, unrealistic expectations, skewed attitudes of gender roles, greater levels of body dissatisfaction, rape myths (responsibility for sexual assault to a female victim), and sexual aggression.

*Children's brains are not equipped to process the adult experiences depicted. Early exposure to pornography also increases the likelihood that depression and relationship problems develop.*¹⁵⁷

In Douglas County, South Dakota, a school employee sued a local school district because they weren't doing enough to protect young children from pornography. The lawsuit claimed the school was in violation of a federal law that requires schools to actively protect children from explicit content online. The employee's suit further alleged that children as young as second grade were "able to access pornographic and inappropriate digital content on their classroom iPads" and an "unnumbered body of minors were accessing and were able to access pornographic and obscene materials daily."¹⁵⁸

The school superintendent acknowledged that it was hard to "keep up with changing technology and student knowledge of how to work around safeguards in place." He said, "You always try to stay ahead of the kids, but they are pretty smart. There are times where they have been able to breach our content filter."¹⁵⁹

In addition to these concerns, the rampant increase in online streaming classrooms, driven at first by COVID-19 school closures, caused an increase in students streaming pornography through their virtual classrooms. From March through May 2020, the FBI received more than 240 reports of child pornography streamed in Zoom meetings and online classes. The agency stated:

The FBI considers this activity to be a violent crime, as every time child sexual abuse material is viewed, the depicted child is revictimized. Furthermore, anyone who inadvertently sees child sexual abuse material depicted during a virtual event is potentially a victim as well.

It is vital that you, as a parent, are **crystal clear** with your child that sharing or streaming pornography online with other students is a crime. This is a crime **even if** the photo was first sent to them by another student or a pornographic picture was held up to a webcam.

If an obscene photo or video involves an underage minor, a student is almost sure to be in even more trouble under the law. It also doesn't matter if the content was of **themselves** or someone they were **dating**. Sharing inappropriate images of underage minors or pornography through a virtual classroom is not only a state crime but a federal crime.

In August 2020, the Henry County Police Department of Georgia put an alert on social media after a high school student "was found to have shared inappropriate imagery" during a remote class. The department warned students, "If you stream pornography, nudity, or any sexual acts in an online class, we will find you and charge you with life-altering charges." And parents were told, "Talk to your kids. This is not a joke. They could face manufacture and distribution of child pornography charges, child molestation charges, and have to register as a sex offender."¹⁶⁰ Children need to know this kind of behavior can ruin their lives. For these reasons and more, having internet safety conversations with your child and taking steps to protect their safety is essential!

KNOW THE FACTS

99% of public schools are connected to high-speed internet.¹⁶¹ Many of these schools will have a school internet use and device policy manual that explains acceptable and prohibited uses for school internet and devices. These policies often make internet and device use a privilege for students. They are broad policies covering such things as inappropriate content, harassment, unauthorized use, tampering, and hacking.

The school manual may also guide parents on how to use filters, block certain websites, monitor websites visited, and provide suggestions for parental control apps and filters.

Know exactly what online school devices your child has been issued or has access to. Find out what the device, app, or program is supposed to be used for, how often your child has access, and if access is supervised. Also, find out how much time school assignments should take so you can better gauge when your child is spending too much time on their device.

If your child has a school device, check to see if programs or apps can be downloaded onto it. If so, ensure you also know how the school monitors or safeguards the device from inappropriate content.

Your school most likely has filtering technology enabled on their school internet that protects internet-connected devices at school. Be aware: Many children are adept at getting around filters. Also, filters on school devices may not work when the child brings the device home unless the school has also downloaded blocking software on it.

Find out your school's policy for personal internet-connected devices like cell phones, smartwatches, and tablets. Keep in mind teachers might have students download class apps on their personal devices. Find out what these programs are, what they do, and, most of all, how your school ensures your child's safety and privacy on their device.

Many researchers have sounded the alarm about students' increased screen time and their growing dependence on smartphones and computers for both academic work and leisure activities. Social psychologist Jonathan Haidt, for example, argues that smartphones and social media have led to social and sleep deprivation, attention fragmentation, and addiction in young people.¹⁶²

A 2024 study of content filtering and circumvention found, "Children employ a variety of techniques to circumvent content filters, showcasing creativity and adaptability." The researchers also looked at 63 videos on YouTube and 29 on TikTok, targeting children, that "teach users how to gain unrestricted access to webpages without content filtering constraints." Other videos showed children how "to circumvent time-based restrictions on internet usage imposed by their

parents.” The study concluded that children have an advantage over parents in “navigating the online landscape.”¹⁶³

Don’t forget about “cyberbullying” — internet bullying and harassment on social media networks, discussion, and image- and video-posting sites. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control explains the high incidence rates for children: “Reports of cyberbullying are highest in middle schools (33%) followed by high schools (30%), combined schools (20%), and primary schools (5%).”¹⁶⁴ Virtually all schools have anti-bullying policies that address cyber-bullying. Be aware of what the policy is and know internet bullying can be just as devastating to a child as physical bullying.

Virtual classrooms have been hacked or “bombed” by malicious users gaining entry into the classroom lesson and then posting or streaming harassing or explicit content. Make sure the school has safeguards against this type of activity, such as requiring passwords to enter a virtual classroom, not hosting public virtual classroom meetings, engaging “waiting room” settings to monitor classroom entrants, and locking the meeting after it starts.¹⁶⁵

Even if your school has excellent filtering and blocking technology, some schools use online sexual education materials, such as YouTube channels and videos, that children can then access online. While these videos may not have graphic content, they promote messages many parents find objectionable. For example, one California mom found that her school’s fifth-grade curriculum included videos from the comprehensive sex ed group Amaze. The video encouraged students to check out more of Amaze’s YouTube videos, which include several about masturbation and pornography. One video tells children that it’s normal to watch porn, “After all, it’s right there and it’s free.”¹⁶⁶

HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR PARENTS ABOUT CHILDREN AND TECHNOLOGY:

- » [StopBullying.gov: How to Prevent Cyberbullying: A Guide for Parents, Caregivers, and Youth](#)
- » [The Anxious Generation](#)
- » [Focus on the Family: Plugged In Parent’s Guide to Today’s Technology](#)

KNOW THE LAW

§ RELEVANT FEDERAL LAW/REGULATION:

Children's Internet Protection Act¹⁶⁷ (CIPA): This law requires schools and libraries that receive federal funding to have a policy regarding internet safety for minors and implement filtering software. This means virtually all public schools are required to have an internet policy and filtering in place. If your school does not have an official policy or internet filtering software, urge your school principal to prioritize it!

Children's Online Privacy Protection Act¹⁶⁸ (COPPA): This federal regulation prohibits website operators and app services from collecting personal information from children under 13. For example, website operators and app services targeting children cannot track personal data like GPS location, name, or birthdate without **verifiable** parental consent. Note: this law only applies to website operators and service developers, **not** internet service providers like Comcast or Google.

§ STATE LAWS:

Blocking Software: Many states have laws requiring public schools to install blocking software that will protect children online from harmful content like obscenity (which includes already illegal content like child pornography and sexual abuse), pornography, nudity, violence, weapons advertisements, and more.

+ STUDENT EXPOSED TO PORNOGRAPHY IN CLASS

Parents in Norman, Oklahoma, packed a school board meeting to complain after the school district supplied students with computers and iPads. Parents told about students exposed to inappropriate content and said the district lacked appropriate guidelines for the devices. Drew and Amy Nichols said that "their 11-year-old son witnessed another student display pornographic images on a computer screen while in class." Amy Nichols stated, "A piece of his innocence was taken from him that day with no warning, no explanation, and no malicious intent. My son was 11 years old when he was first exposed to pornography. It happened on a school device while he sat in a sixth-grade classroom."¹⁶⁹

! Be vigilant, approachable, and honest with your child about expectations and boundaries while online. Encourage them to be open with you if they encounter explicit or questionable content.

WAYS YOU CAN PROTECT

AND ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CHILD

If your school does not have a safe internet usage policy, advocate for one! If your school has a parent-teacher organization or if you are connected to a group of like-minded parents, you can work with them to help raise awareness of the importance of an official policy. You can also testify at your local school board meeting to encourage the adoption of an internet usage policy.

Encourage the school to have all students sign a paper agreeing to its internet and safety device policy, especially if they are bringing devices home. This helps ensure the policy is reviewed verbally with all students and that they have committed in writing to understanding and following the usage policy.

Some schools allow parents to opt out of receiving a school device or decline to use specific technology. Exercise your options to protect your family as needed. If your school does not provide this as an option, talk to your child's teacher and school principal and ask for accommodations for your child. You can also testify at your local school board meeting and explain why it's important for schools to allow families to have a choice about whether their child brings school devices home.

If your school does not conduct parent trainings for school internet and device use, encourage them to provide them. Also, ask the school to include information on recommended filtering and parental control software they can download onto their child's personal devices and use at home. Let the school know you would like more information on how your child is protected at school and how they can be protected at home while using school devices. For example, you may want to know how the school engages filters, what kind of content the filters block out, and if device use is supervised.

Encourage your school to take the opportunity to educate parents about common social media sites and what the potential harms of those sites can be. Some parents might not know that sites like Spotify, Roblox, Discord, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and OnlyFans are rampant with cyberbullying, sexual and financial predation, and explicit violence and pornographic content.¹⁷⁰

When your child has their school device on campus, the websites are most likely filtered through the school's content filtering system. But when your child brings the device home, this system may not work. If the devices do not appear to have a filter, ask if you can download your own filter and website-blocking technology. Ensure your home internet has filtering enabled. You can call your internet service provider to find out how. You can also purchase a special router to minimize the time your child is online and check screen content.

When dealing with your child's personal devices, you can download filtering technology or parental controls to ensure your child is not using their device during class time and not accessing websites or apps your family has decided shouldn't be accessed while at school.

If your school doesn't ban personal smart devices from the classroom, take action within your family to set expectations for your child's personal device use at school.

Talk to your child's teacher about how your child is doing in class with personal device use and other technology.

If your state does not have a law requiring schools to implement internet filters and blocking software, contact your state legislator and urge them to sponsor legislation that will protect your child in school!

Never underestimate the power of talking to your child about family boundaries, expectations, what's not allowed, and what is expected.

TALK WITH YOUR CHILD

In addition to taking action with your school, your own internet filters, and blocking software, it's essential to have a trusting relationship with your children where you can talk openly about what they're doing and seeing online. This takes patience, time, and intentionality.

Let your children know that you deeply love and want to help guide and protect them. You don't want them to be anxious and fearful, but they should be aware that some people aren't safe, good, and trustworthy — and some of those people are online.

Older kids may feel indignant when you talk with them about internet use.

Explain that ...

- » *there are people in cyberspace that you don't know and who don't have good intentions.*
- » *even good things — like computers and the internet — can be used for hurtful purposes.*
- » *people have been hurt by what they've seen and read on the internet*
- » *even school devices can be hacked and used for bad purposes.*

GUIDE YOUR CHILDREN TO:

Maintain privacy.

Tell them to not post personal information — especially facts that would allow someone to track them down — or private information related to their family and friends. Remind your kids to limit who can see their posts to real-life friends and to not share their passwords with anyone. Be ready to answer the “whys” behind your instructions.

Maintain integrity.

Even “good kids” often check their morals and judgment at the keyboard. While they'd never stroll naked through a stadium, they might not think twice about posting suggestive photos of themselves. Encourage your child to consider what it would be like to have God or one of their parents next to them while they were using technology or enjoying entertainment. What would it say about what catches their attention? Make it clear that your desire to know what they're doing online is motivated by a desire to help them. This opens up opportunities for important conversations if things go sideways. Your direction is about guidance, not control.

Think about long-term consequences.

Reinforce the value of a good reputation. Deleting content from a social networking site may not make it disappear permanently; some pages are archived and retrievable! Let teens know that college admissions staff members and potential employers often look kids up online to get a feel for their character. In addition, help them realize that the words they write or pictures they post or send to others — even in jest — can leave lasting scars.

Focus on the Family has developed several resources for helping families navigate internet technology:

- » [Bullying and Cyberbullying](#)
- » [Age and Stage — Teens, Technology and Entertainment](#)
- » [Launch Into the Teen Years](#)
- » [Plugged In Parent's Guide to Today's Technology- Take The Internet Safety Pledge!](#)
- » [Becoming a Screen-Savvy Family](#)
- » [Talk with Your Kids About Online Safety](#)
- » [Tech Support for Parents](#)
- » [Virtual Choices ... Real-World Consequences](#)
- » [7 Traits of Effective Parenting Assessment](#)
- » [Phone Contract](#)

If your children have been harmed by internet cyberbullying or exposed to online pornography, Focus on the Family offers a [one-time complimentary consultation](#) with our ministry's professionally trained counselors. The consultation is free due to generous donor support.

To reach Focus on the Family's counseling service by phone, call 1-855-771-HELP (4357) weekdays 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. (Mountain Time). Please be prepared to leave your contact information for a counselor to return a call to you as soon as possible. Alternatively, you can fill out our [Counseling Consultation Request Form](#).

PROTECTING YOUR CHILD

IN SCHOOL LIBRARIES AND ON SCHOOL DATABASES



+ CONCERNED PARENTS RAISED THE ALARM

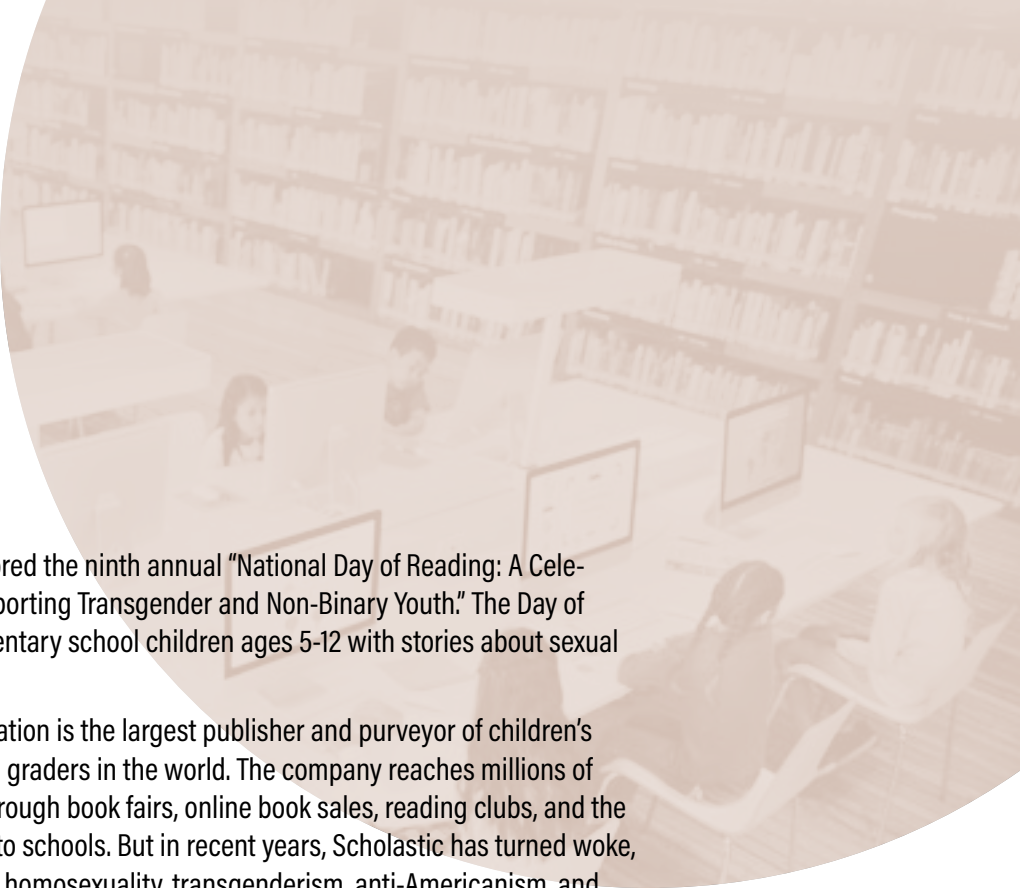
Loudoun County Public Schools spent almost \$2 million to purchase 3,400 new books for K-12 students as part of a “diverse classroom libraries” program. Parents were shocked to discover what was in some of the books that were placed in school classrooms and libraries. Concerned parents raised the alarm ... that many books incorporated LGBTQ themes in grades as early as kindergarten, including the promotion of Queer Theory concepts, as well as sexually inappropriate and even explicit language in other grades, including frequent descriptions of underage drinking, fondling, masturbation, orgasms, oral sex, sexual intercourse, sexual abuse, statutory rape, incest, and rape.¹⁷¹

WHAT’S HAPPENING AT SCHOOL

We know how important it is to raise children who love reading. This is why most schools have libraries and schoolteachers often have classroom shelves filled with books for students to borrow. Parents expect schools to offer age-appropriate materials to their children and present controversial topics in a fair and unbiased manner without undermining the values families teach their children at home.

But in recent years, parents have been shocked to discover library and classroom books containing profanity, obscene sexual activity, homosexual and transgender ideology, extreme violence, and anti-Christian and anti-conservative polemics.¹⁷² In addition, librarians and teachers with a social and political agenda sometimes reject books that are pro-American, teach family values, advocate for healthy sexuality, or have other socially conservative perspectives.

Teachers, schools, and school libraries sometimes host reading events sponsored by radical extremist groups. In March of 2024, for example, the National Education Association, the American Association of School Librarians, and the Human Rights Campaign (the nation’s largest LGBT



activist group) sponsored the ninth annual “National Day of Reading: A Celebration of Stories Supporting Transgender and Non-Binary Youth.” The Day of Reading targets elementary school children ages 5-12 with stories about sexual identity confusion.¹⁷³

The Scholastic Corporation is the largest publisher and purveyor of children’s books for pre-K to 12th graders in the world. The company reaches millions of children every year through book fairs, online book sales, reading clubs, and the donation of materials to schools. But in recent years, Scholastic has turned woke, promoting books with homosexuality, transgenderism, anti-Americanism, and critical race theory to school children.

Finally, schools will often pay for “closed” database systems with abundant academic content that your child can use to research school projects and assignments. However, parents still need to be diligent to make sure that closed database systems like EBSCO, Cengage, ProQuest, and Overdrive do not allow pornographic content.

Any time children are allowed online, there’s the potential for them to access inappropriate content — or for other students to do so and show it to your child. In addition, parents should be aware that these database systems can allow children to download e-books and audiobooks that may not be suitable for them.

+ LIBRARIAN AT ECKSTEIN

A middle school librarian at Eckstein Middle School, in the Seattle Public Schools, used her TikTok account “to recommend books about queer relationships and visibility for bisexual and pansexual people during ‘Pride Month,’” reports Parents Defending Education. She also used the library’s Facebook page to promote “queer history” and offer “pronoun pins; suggested transgender and homosexual topics for research; and instructed students about “How to browse LGBTQIA+ books at Eckstein!”¹⁷⁴

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Children are significantly shaped by their school experiences, including the lessons they are taught and the material to which they are exposed.

It is important that the material our children are exposed to at school is **age-appropriate**. Yet the bar for age-appropriate content is being set lower and lower by activists who want to push their sexual agenda on our children. This often explains why our children are stumbling upon books in the school library that celebrate sexual promiscuity, experimentation, and all manner of sexual relationships in material that is made available to younger and younger students.¹⁷⁵

Study after study reveals that pornography exposure at a young age can have a detrimental effect on the minds of children.¹⁷⁶ Schools may justify the content and claim these books offer educational value, but that does not change the negative impact such content has on a developing child. Pornography doesn't just mean explicitly sexual illustrations either. It also includes written descriptions of sexual behavior.

One researcher documented serious harms from pornography, saying, "Today's Internet porn is nothing like your father's *Playboy* magazine" — a periodical which had a damaging enough impact on several generations.

He writes:

- 1 Research of popular pornography films found that in 88% of the scenes — not just the movies, but the scenes in these movies — there was verbal or physical aggression, usually toward a woman.
- 2 Pornography teaches boys to hit girls — and shows girls that they should like it.
- 3 There are over 100 studies showing that pornography use is both correlated with and is the cause (shown through experimental studies) of a wide range of violent behaviors.
- 4 The more men view pornography, the more they think that women are lesser creatures who they can dominate.¹⁷⁷

School libraries and teachers' classrooms may contain books with explicit language, sexual descriptions, depictions of rape, homosexuality and transgenderism, and extreme violence. In fact, one Kansas middle school posted a notice from the school librarian informing parents, "We do not censor literature," and told parents that literature with these themes and topics was readily available for students!¹⁷⁸

When parents challenge books as inappropriate for children, individuals and groups decry this as "book banning," "discrimination," or "censorship."¹⁷⁹ Such activist critics, who work to keep unsuitable books in school, include groups like the American Civil Liberties Union, the American Library Association, and teachers

unions; legislators and elected officials; educators, administrators, and school board members; as well as the mainstream media.

Of course, this is a nonsensical falsehood: Real censorship occurs when the government controls what books can be published, sold, or even read by the public. This is an entirely different issue from parents and concerned citizens challenging books in libraries and classrooms because they contain content harmful to students.

The American Association of School Librarians is a division of the American Library Association, an organization with a “Library Bill of Rights” that says libraries should challenge all “censorship.” The organization says, “A person’s right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, **age**, background, or views” (our emphasis). The association also says that all people — regardless of age — have the right to “privacy and confidentiality in their library use.”¹⁸⁰

Parents should be aware that while individual librarians may support parental rights and safeguarding children, the national organization does not. The organization states:

“ Library policies and procedures that effectively deny minors equal and equitable access to all library resources available to other users violate the Library Bill of Rights. The American Library Association opposes all attempts to restrict access to library services, materials, and facilities based on the age of library users.”¹⁸¹

Bottom Line: These materials have no place in school libraries, classrooms, or online databases. Parents must already be vigilant about their children’s internet use, using filters and blocking websites. The last thing parents should have to be concerned about is their children stumbling upon destructive content in the school library or research database.

BE AWARE:

- » *Pornography creates brain pathways similar to those produced in drug addiction¹⁸² and can be just as addictive and harmful as cocaine.¹⁸³*
- » *Pornography use amongst teens “is associated with many negative emotional, psychological, and physical health outcomes,” including “acting out and violent behavior, younger age of sexual debut, sexual promiscuity, [and] increased risk of teen pregnancy.”¹⁸⁴*
- » *Pornography teaches adolescents, particularly boys, that their sexual urges can and should be gratified instantly, however and whenever they want, at all costs, whether violently, forcefully, or obscenely and in illegal ways.*
- » *While many parents are unaware their teens are accessing pornography, many children are exposed and become hooked at a young age. One survey showed that “51% of males and 32% of females claimed to have viewed pornography for the first time before they were 13 years old.”¹⁸⁵*

KNOW THE FACTS

Parents are finding controversial material in school libraries and classrooms across the country that include materials available to students with excessive profanity, rape, statutory rape, objectionable sexual acts, graphic illustrations, and more.

Some parents and organizations have reported finding similar objectionable material on school database systems.¹⁸⁶ Parents should also be aware that offensive books may be downloaded as e-books from school library databases.

Usually, school boards have criteria for selecting books for their collection. Parents should have the right to see the requirements for the school's book collection. With those criteria in hand, you may find it easier to make arguments against the selection of a particularly offensive book.

Community input is critical to adding books to a school library. Make sure your voice is heard! Contact your school and/or school board for information on whether they provide the opportunity to join a book collection review committee or a group that reviews potential research databases.

Children are harmed by being exposed to pornography and other obscene content. Pornography harms include increased rates of depression, anxiety, acting out, and violent behavior; sexual activity at younger ages; sexual promiscuity and increased risk of teen pregnancy; and a distorted view of relationships between men and women.¹⁸⁷

KNOW YOUR CHILD'S RIGHTS

Courts have ruled that children in public schools still have First Amendment rights, which include the right to be exposed to the free flow of ideas. Once a school places a book in the library, this student right is "activated." This makes it much more difficult for parents to have books and content removed (that aren't blatantly illegal), especially if other parents, teachers, or students object to the removal of the book or content.¹⁸⁸

Federal law gives your child the right to privacy *but* allows parental oversight of educational records. Generally, a child's library circulation record is considered an education record under federal law.¹⁸⁹ Parents have the right to view this record. If the school refuses to release your child's library circulation record, they could be violating federal law. (See Appendix E — Letter to Access Child's Library Record.)

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Your school most likely has a policy regarding parents', students', and teachers' rights to challenge controversial content in the school library and on school research databases. (See Appendix D — Letter Objecting to Library Material.)

Parents have the constitutional right to direct the education of their children. A school's primary goal is to educate children, which is also the overarching goal of the school library. In this sense, parents have the right to object to controversial content and expect action.

Parents have the right to direct the religious or secular upbringing of their children and to object to content in schools that promotes one viewpoint over another. The school's constitutional duty is to educate children in a neutral manner. This means parents have the clear constitutional right to have content removed that imposes a religious, moral, or secular viewpoint.¹⁹⁰

KNOW THE LAW

§ RELEVANT STATE LAWS:

Authority of School Boards: Most school boards have broad authority under state law to select books and materials that will be used in the instruction and supplemental education of their students. School boards then establish a process for selecting and removing books from the school library. Most school boards also have policies to challenge the inclusion of a book.

For this reason, it is good to focus any advocacy efforts on your school and school board. It would also be beneficial if you can offer your input about book selection while the process is ongoing. Email your school board members for information on engaging with this process. You can also address your school board about the content you and other parents find objectionable. If these efforts fail, parents might be able to file complaints with their state board of education, which oversees public local school boards.

Laws Prohibiting “Book Bans” and “Textbook Censorship” in Schools: The push from parents to safeguard children has led to legislatures, boards of education, and school boards passing legislation and regulations *restricting* librarians from removing inappropriate books that harm children.¹⁹¹ Depending on your state or school district, you might have to contend with this legislative barrier if you challenge a book in your child’s school.

Laws Protecting Children and Parental Rights in Education: On the other hand, after parents began exposing injurious materials in school libraries, many states, boards of education, and school districts made concerted efforts to protect children from inappropriate materials and to protect parents’ rights in education.¹⁹² With legal challenges from extremist groups, many of these laws are tied up in court battles.

Obscenity Laws, Exemptions, and Materials that are Harmful to Minors: Every state, *and* the federal government, has an obscenity law that defines obscenity and prohibits exposing minors to obscene materials. Obscene

material does *not* have “free speech” protections. (For example, child pornography is illegal because it is considered obscene and therefore can never be considered protected speech.) It is a crime for children to be exposed to obscene, lewd, and profane material, with one exception—the “obscenity exemption.”

The Obscenity Exemption — A Major Loophole: There is one enormous loophole to laws regarding obscenity and material that is harmful to minors: If the material that is being questioned can be viewed to have *scientific, educational, or governmental value, or other justification*, it is no longer illegal. This loophole is called the “obscenity exemption.”

Most school libraries can claim an “obscenity exemption” to material that is appalling to parents by arguing the content has “educational” or “scientific” value. This legal exemption is the reason parents keep finding obscene and pornographic content in their child’s sex education curriculums, school (and public) libraries, teachers’ bookshelves, and other classes.

It is important to note that the community has the right to decide what type of content is obscene. If a community of parents comes together and objects to controversial content in their school libraries, they may have a much better chance of getting that content removed.

+ NOTE:

If you or your child encounter obscene material in a school library, classroom, or research database, report it immediately to school officials and your state Board of Education.

WAYS YOU CAN PROTECT

AND ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CHILD

Consider donating books with moral and ethical values or socially conservative world views to your school library. (Keep in mind that books that promote a particular religion over another may not be allowed in school libraries in your state.)

Let the library staff know about explicit content that has been found in the library or on the school's research database. School staff don't read most books that come in but rely upon recommendations from other organizations, outside reviews, and community input when deciding what content to purchase. If the objectionable content remains, speak out against it to your school principal and contact your school board members.

Talk with other parents and see if they know about the explicit or unsuitable content you or your child have discovered. Encourage these parents to also report their concerns to the school and join you in speaking out at an upcoming school board meeting. Schools often rely on the parental community to inform them if content is unacceptable.

Talk with your child's teachers about objectionable content and ask if they would be willing to speak against it to school officials and at your local school board meeting. Teachers also have the right to object to content in the school.

Speak up at school board meetings about controversial content and encourage other parents to do the same. "Obscenity" and "material that is harmful to minors" are often defined by what the community believes is harmful. Having community voices sharing your concerns at public meetings is very powerful.

Most school libraries have policies to challenge books. **Look into these policies** and follow the prescribed course of action if you and other parents want to challenge a book or other resource.



NOTE:

The American Library Association (a liberal organization that sets standards for public libraries) will often step in to help public schools with their book challenge procedures. This organization often wants to keep controversial content in schools, and it labels all attempts to remove content as "discrimination" or "censorship."

If the school or school board refuses to remove objectionable books, **ask the school to label them with a "graphic content" label** as a warning to students and parents about what's inside. In addition, you may ask that the controversial book is only accessible to older students. Try to get other parents, teachers, or your school's parent-teacher organization to support you.

Ask the school to release the log-in information to your child's library account to monitor what they check out. It can also be good to **ask your child** for this information and use that as an opportunity to create an open dialogue on what type of content you'd like your child to be warned about. (See Appendix E — Letter to Access Child's Library Record.)

If your school has a parent-teacher organization, get involved!

Help your group educate parents and teachers on these facts and work together to remove explicit content from your school. (Though be aware, some of the state and national organizations may be leftist and radical.¹⁹³)

Sit with your child as they use the school research database to become familiar with it and see how it works. Have conversations with your child about any content they may have encountered that alarmed them. Walk them through what actions they can and could take and let them know you are open to discussing any questions they may have.

Contact your state senator and representative, and share with them copies of obscene, lewd, or profane materials that your child has come across, whether in the school library or database systems. Urge them to remove your state's obscenity exemption and explain why it's important to you to keep this type of content out of schools!

Use social media to alert your community about what type of content is being found in your child's school library or on database systems.

Connect with and support policy groups that promote parental rights in education and work to safeguard children.

STATE AND NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY ORGANIZATIONS:

- » [*Alliance Defending Freedom: Promise to America's Parents*](#)
- » [*American Enterprise Institute: Conservative Education Reform Network*](#)
- » [*American Federation for Children*](#)
- » [*Family Policy Alliance: Promise to America's Children*](#)
- » [*Heritage Foundation*](#)
- » [*Moms for Liberty*](#)
- » [*No Left Turn in Education*](#)
- » [*Parents Defending Education*](#)
- » [*Parental Rights*](#)
- » [*State Family Policy Councils*](#)

TALK WITH YOUR CHILD

In the first PDF from *Equipping Parents for Back-to-School*, “Educational Authority, Radical Ideologies, and What’s Happening in the Classroom,” we’ve given advice and additional resources about providing your children with age-appropriate information about their bodies, relationships, sexuality, and marriage. The suggestions there are relevant to protecting children as they’re accessing books from the school library and using school databases.

Remember: You want to be the one giving them information about these foundational issues and passing on your values and beliefs — not the school library, online database, or other students exposed to inappropriate content.

In the above section, “Protecting Your Child on School Internet, Wi-Fi, and Electronic Devices,” we’ve suggested ideas and resources for talking with your children about internet usage. As we explain there, encourage your children to maintain their (and family) privacy and integrity and think about the long-term consequences of their actions. Again, all this applies to protecting children in school libraries and on school databases.

But what do you do if your child has already been exposed to inappropriate sexual or pornographic material? It doesn’t take much to lure a child, preteen, or teen into seeing his or her first erotic or pornographic image. A text message with a link or a pop-up ad could be the gateway. The title of an article or an e-book in a school database might stimulate their curiosity. A young adult novel in the school library, with a sexually stimulating scene, could lead to searches for similar books.

Here are a few ideas about talking with your child when you find out they’ve viewed pornography — or even if you suspect it — along with some links to other resources.

Let your children know ahead of time that it’s safe for them to confide in you if they have questions or concerns or have made a mistake in this area. Fear or shame may keep a child from being open and help from parents is most effective when given with a balance of grace and truth.

You want your kids to make good decisions. **Remind them that there are bad influences in the world you want to help guide and protect them from.** As you do, share how you’re fighting for them — not trying to catch them doing something wrong.

If you find out they have viewed something inappropriate, **respond to your child with grace and kindness.** If you feel angry, reassure them you’re not mad at them but are angry with those who try to lure children into seeing these images.

! Be sure to explain to your kids how feelings like boredom, loneliness, anger, and discouragement, can fuel the temptation to look at pornography for relief.

Many who view porn feel shame and guilt. As you talk to your children about this, describe how feelings of shame can fuel addictions. You can guide them to receive forgiveness, healing, and freedom from shame through their relationship with God.

Feelings like boredom, stress, loneliness, anger, and discouragement can fuel the temptation to go to pornography for relief — so be sure to let your kids know. **Help them recognize their feelings**, choose healthy ways to express them, and work toward a better emotional state rather than looking at pornography.

Your son or daughter are not alone — let them know. Sadly, at some point most children will see pornographic images online. And most adults have struggled with relationships and sexuality on some level.

Pornography creates a thirst that it can't satisfy. **Talk with your child about its addictive nature** and how it affects and alters our brains.

If you find out they're regularly viewing pornography, **establish tighter boundaries** with computer, phone, and internet usage. Explain this isn't a punishment but a way to help them find freedom and to rebuild trust.

Ideally, fathers should discuss these matters with sons and mothers with daughters. But if that's not possible, as in the situation of a single mom raising a teen boy, you may want to enlist the help of a trusted male family or church member to talk with your son or help maintain accountability. Likewise, a single dad will want to enlist the aid of a trusted female family or church member to speak with your daughter.

HELPFUL RESOURCES:

Focus on the Family has several articles and resources available to help parents talk to their children about relationships, sexuality, and marriage, as well as help for parents whose children have been exposed to pornography or are fighting pornography addiction:

- » [Advice for Parents of Teens with Porn Addiction](#)
- » [The Truth About Porn and How it Affects You](#)
- » [Launch Into the Teen Years](#)
- » [How Do You Respond to Your Teen's Suspected Porn Use?](#)
- » [Seven Strategies to Combat Teen Porn Use](#)
- » [Use of Pornography Among Tweens and Teens](#)
- » [Overcoming Sexual Brokenness](#)

Our Focus on the Family Canada associate office has a helpful article with links to more resources, [Equipping Your Child to Resist Pornography](#). It includes ideas for protecting children, freeing children from memories of what they saw, recognizing emotional states that lead to temptation, and more.

To request a conversation with a professional counselor at Focus on the Family, call, **800-A-Family (232-6459)** weekdays from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. (Mountain Time) or complete our [Counseling Consultation Request Form](#). Please be prepared to leave your contact information so a counselor can return a call to you as soon as possible. The consultation is available at no cost to you due to generous donor support and will be with one of our licensed or pastoral counseling specialists.

CHAPTER 5:

THE TRUTH ABOUT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND FREE SPEECH

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NEW DEVELOPMENTS

EXECUTIVE ORDERS AND FEDERAL AGENCIES

President Trump signed an executive order in Feb. 2026 [“Eradicating Anti-Christian Bias.”](#) The order established the [Task Force to Eradicate Anti-Christian Bias](#) within the Department of Justice, along with representatives from federal departments, to review government violations of religious freedom and take steps to protect citizens.

In April 2026 the Task Force published its findings, [“The 2026 Report by the Task Force to Eradicate Anti-Christian Bias,”](#) listing instances where the Department of Justice (DOJ) and Education Department (ED), had violated religious freedom and free speech of students and parents. Here are just a [few examples](#) of First Amendment rights violations from the report and recent actions to correct them:

» *In 2020 participation and protests at school board meetings increased dramatically, as parents questioned harmful school policies and classroom materials. As a result, the DOJ [directed](#) U.S attorneys and the FBI to investigate and address concerned parents’ opposition to school board actions. The [memo](#) was finally rescinded in 2025.*

» *In 2023, the ED issued revised guidance on prayer in public schools which “removed language that would allow religious student groups ‘to meet during their lunch periods or other non-instructional time during the school day, as well as . . . before and after the school day.’” [New guidance](#) was released in February 2026, restoring students’ right to pray during non-instructional time.*

» *The ED issued a rule in 2024 defining “sex” in Title IX to include “gender identity.” The redefinition affected free speech and religious freedom, as students and teachers were forced to support transgender ideology. In January 2025, the executive order [“Defending Women From Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government”](#) defined sex in Title IX as being either male or female, and in April 2026, the [ED rescinded](#) the earlier Title IX redefinition.*

COURTS

In addition to the Supreme Court decisions [Mahmoud v. Taylor](#) and [Mirabelli v. Bonta](#) discussed in the Chapter 1 update, several key court decisions in the past two years affected religious freedom and free speech in education, including:

- » *In [Tennessee v. Cardona](#), the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Kentucky ruled the Education Department's 2024 Title IX redefinition of sex unlawful, vacating the rule nationwide. The result protects students and teachers from coerced speech and cooperating with policies that violate their faith.*
- » *Liberty Counsel, a nonprofit legal group, reports that Child Evangelism Fellowship and its Good News Clubs won religious freedom cases in [California](#), [Illinois](#), and [Hawaii](#) - all in the past three years. The key point in these cases is that schools must allow Christian groups to meet when other non-curricular groups are permitted.*
- » *A first grader (B.B.) in San Juan Capistrano, California, "drew a picture of herself and her friends holding hands." She wrote "Black Lives Mater" and "any life" on the picture, reports [Pacific Legal Foundation](#), adding, "She gave it to a classmate as a gesture of friendship."*
- » *"The school principal told B.B. the drawing was inappropriate and punished her - without notifying her parents. B.B.'s family did not learn of the incident until a year later," the public interest law firm explained. The U.S. Court Of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled in March 2026 that "elementary students' speech is protected by the First Amendment."*

The Supreme Court has stated, "It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate." However, parents must be vigilant in protecting their children's and their own First Amendment rights in education.

RESOURCES:

If your school, school board or state has violated your or your child's civil rights in education, you can file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education: [Office for Civil Rights](#).

These organizations provide legal aid, resources, toolkits, and information for protecting free speech, religious freedom, and parental rights in education:

- » [Alliance Defending Freedom](#)
- » [America First Legal](#)
- » [Becket - Religious Liberty for All](#)
- » [Child & Parental Rights Campaign](#)
- » [First Liberty Institute](#)
- » [Founding Freedoms Law Center](#)
- » [Liberty Counsel](#)
- » [Pacific Justice Institute](#)
- » [Thomas More Society](#)
- » [The U.S. Department of Education: Office for Civil Rights: File a Complaint](#)

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY

Religious freedom and free speech in public schools are under fire, for students, teachers, and parents — as we explain in *“What’s Happening in Schools”* and *“Why It’s Important.”* Schools have banned Bible studies, prayer times during lunch or free time, and student-led prayers at graduation. They’ve denied political and religious clubs the same privileges as other student organizations. In addition, parents rights are also under fire, with teachers reading sexualized and confusing books to children that oppose parents’ religious beliefs and values, and with schools hiding information about a child’s mental health from parents. Teachers rights are threatened when schools forcing them to lie about a child’s sexual identity confusion or use “transgender” language that is patently false.

Be aware that the same rights that give your child freedom to lead or participate in a student-led religious group also allow students to lead LGBT groups, often known as “Gender and Sexuality Alliances” or “Gay Straight Alliance Clubs” (GSA). The GSA Network boasts that it has a network with forty state-based organizations with more than 4,000 GSAs in elementary, middle, and high schools across the country. Activist teachers sometimes recruit children to participate in these groups, and sometimes they hide club memberships from parents. Read more in *“LGBT Clubs and Activist Groups on School Campuses.”*

School administrators may violate religious freedom protections in different ways. Some are openly hostile to religious expression; others are neutral — but don’t understand what the Bill of Rights says about religious liberty; others are influenced by outside groups like the ACLU that threaten schools with lawsuits; and some support religious expressions too enthusiastically. Students’, teachers’, and parents’ constitutional freedoms don’t end when they are in school, as the U.S. Supreme Court has affirmed. Students may not disrupt classroom time or other school activities, but they maintain their right to gather with other students and express their beliefs on campus. Schools may not require students to engage in religious activities — but they also may not show bias against religion. We explain this — and more — in sections titled *“Know the Facts,” “Know the Law,”* and *“Know Your Child’s Rights.”*

We explain how to protect and champion your child's rights in ***"Ways You Can Advocate for Your Child."*** If your child's rights and freedoms are violated, help is available. This resource offers strategies for talking with school administrators, filing complaints, and finding a legal aid group. We give guidance about how to educate and equip your children to understand their freedoms, and how to respond when they are violated, in the section ***"Talk With Your Child."***

“ If your child's rights and freedoms are violated, help is available.





YOUR CHILD'S FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHTS

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN SCHOOLS

+ PRAYING FOR LUNCH

"When 5-year-old Gabriella Perez innocently bowed her head over her lunch at school, she was stopped by a school employee and told 'it was wrong to pray.'¹⁹⁴

STUDENTS' RIGHTS ARE BEING VIOLATED

Chase was a Pine Creek High School senior in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Since his freshman year, he had been leading a small group of students who wanted to pray for the needs of fellow classmates and their school during non-instructional time.

One day, a school official called him in and said the group could no longer meet because of the "separation of church and state." A year later, the school "dropped its ban on student religious discussion and expression during free time," after Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), a legal aid group advocating for First Amendment rights, filed a lawsuit against the district.¹⁹⁵

Two students at Creekside Elementary School in Sammamish, Washington, asked to start a voluntary, student-led, interfaith prayer club. Although the school allows other student clubs, such as a Marimba Club, Pride Club, and Math Club, the principal denied the request and told the young girls they could fill out an application where they would pay for after-hours use of a school room.

First Liberty, a religious freedom legal aid organization, sent a letter to the school principal and the district's Board of Directors, explaining that the school had violated the girls' First Amendment rights to religious freedom and free speech. Only then did the school district relent and allow the club to meet on campus.¹⁹⁶

Nine-year-old Lydia Booth, a student at Simpson Central Elementary in Pinola, Mississippi, wore a mask to school with the words “Jesus Loves Me” printed on it during the COVID-19 pandemic. Her computer lab teacher warned the third grader against continuing to wear the mask, even though other students wore masks “with sports team logos, university logos, and the phrase ‘Black Lives Matter,’” ADF reported. School administrators pulled Lydia aside and forced her “to remove and replace the mask.”

Her mother, Jennifer, researched the issue and found no school policy prohibiting slogans or messages on masks. Still, the principal told her, “You can’t have religious or political things on masks at school.” ADF filed suit on behalf of Lydia and her parents. The school settled with them, agreeing to allow Lydia to wear the “Jesus Loves Me” mask to school and to pay attorney’s fees.¹⁹⁷

Sadly, these aren’t isolated incidents. Across the country, students — as well as parents and teachers — with religious values and conservative principles are finding their First Amendment rights curtailed by teachers, schools, and school districts.

! Across the country, students — as well as parents and teachers — with religious values and conservative principles are finding their First Amendment rights curtailed by teachers, schools, and school districts.

Most teachers, administrators, and school board members care for students and want to see them grow, learn, and succeed. Many of them are allies in the cultural battles we face.

However, sometimes, the attacks on free speech, religious freedom, and freedom of association come from school officials and teachers who don’t understand what the law allows regarding these issues. Other times, the threat is from a student, parent, or school employee who files a complaint with the school or school district.

Sometimes, schools will stop religious and speech discrimination after receiving a letter from a legal aid group. Other times, costly litigation can drag on for years, and courts may rule against students — denying their First Amendment rights.

The attacks also come from organizations outside the school, such as the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), the American Humanist Association, and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Here are just two examples.

The ACLU tried to shut down religious freedom and free speech in the Wilson County School System in Nashville, TN. *The organization asked a court to stop “See You at the Pole,” a student-led prayer event; National Day of Prayer observances; and the playing of a song with a religious reference in honor of a three-year-old cancer victim; and Christmas and Thanksgiving observances with religious references. The court ruled these activities did not violate the Constitution.*¹⁹⁸

FFRF threatened the West Branch School District in Cleveland, Ohio, with a lawsuit for allowing students to pray before sports events, a tradition of more than 30 years. *The district temporarily shut down the prayers while looking for a way to accommodate students. Community members and students responded by printing and selling more than six hundred t-shirts that said, “Prayer Matters.”*¹⁹⁹



SUBJECT TO ARREST?

Megan Clegg signed up to speak at a Loudoun County School Board meeting in Northern Virginia. But the board “abruptly ended public comments.” School district Superintendent Scott Ziegler stated “that the entire public gathering was an ‘unlawful assembly’ making everyone in the room ‘subject to arrest’ unless they left the building immediately.”

The board continued the meeting, violating the state’s open meetings laws. The Founding Freedoms Law Center filed suit on behalf of parents, winning a victory when “the judge made clear that any time a public meeting is held in person, the public must be allowed access to the entire meeting, excluding certain statutory exceptions.”²⁰⁰

PARENTS’ AND TEACHERS’ RIGHTS ARE ALSO UNDER FIRE

Just as students’ rights are under assault, parents and teachers find their parental rights and First Amendment freedoms undermined by state laws, school boards, administrators, and school districts. While *Equipping Parents* is primarily about protecting students, sometimes parents and teachers find their freedoms threatened as they work to safeguard children in schools.

Here are just a few more examples:

*Children at two elementary schools in St. Louis Park, Minnesota, were introduced to books with LGBT characters and themes. The books for children in grades 3-5 included **Our Subway Baby**, about two gay-identified men who find a baby at a subway station and adopt him, and **My Shadow is Pink**, about a boy whose shadow likes to wear dresses. The legal aid firm First Liberty sent letters to the school explaining it had violated Muslim parents’ religious freedom, failed to provide advance notice or let parents review classroom materials, and denied opt-outs, violating state law and the First Amendment. The district finally met the parents’ demands.*²⁰¹

Elizabeth Mirabelli and Lori Ann West, teachers at Rincon Middle School, sued the Escondido Unified

*School District and the California State Board of Education “over policies requiring them to keep secrets from, and even lie to, parents about their minor-age students,” reports the Thomas More Society. When a student announced they were “transgender” or a different “gender, school employees were required to use the child’s requested name and pronoun — without telling parents.”*²⁰²

Joe and Serena Waites discovered their 11-year-old daughter “was assigned to share a room, and supposed to share a bed, with a male student on an overnight school trip without their knowledge.” Jefferson County Public Schools in Colorado had a district policy stating that transgender-identified students should be “assigned to share overnight accommodations with other students that share the student’s gender identity consistently asserted at school.” School officials lied to the parents about the situation, also instructing the daughter to lie to her parents. Alliance Defending Freedom is involved in the case, informing the district that the transgender policy violated student privacy and parental rights.

These are not isolated incidents, and they exemplify why parents need to be aware of what’s happening with state laws, school board, and school district policies, and school policies that affect their children. Connect with your child’s teachers, other parents, and your children and their friends so you know what’s happening in your school.

As explained in more detail in the first PDF in this series, “Who Has Educational Authority, What’s Happening in the Classroom and Radical Ideologies,” parental rights in education include the right to review curriculums, lesson plans, textbooks, and supplemental materials. Parents also have the right to interact with staff, observe their children’s classes, and opt out of surveys and assessments.²⁰³

HELPFUL RESOURCES ON PARENTAL AND FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHTS IN EDUCATION

- » *Alliance Defending Freedom:*
[K-12 Educators Guide to First Amendment
Freedoms in Public Schools
Parental Rights](#)
- » *First Liberty Institute:*
[Religious Liberty Protection Kit](#)
- » *Heritage Foundation:*
[Parental Rights: A Foundational Account](#)
[Education Power for Parents: A State
Legislation Tracker](#)
- » *Gateways to Better Education:*
[Promoting Religious Freedom in Public
Schools](#)
- » *Moms for America:*
[A Mom's Guide to Parental Rights](#)
- » *Moms for Liberty:*
[Parental Rights Model Policies](#)
- » *Parents Defending Education:*
[Parent Engagement Field Guide](#)
- » *U.S. Department of Education:*
[A Parent Guide to the Family Educational
Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#)

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Students' First Amendment rights are under assault in schools. These are significant issues involving the suppression of free speech, religious freedom, and freedom of association. Schools and districts are practicing "viewpoint discrimination" — deciding which viewpoints can be expressed on campus and which are unacceptable.

Bible studies or prayer times have been curtailed during lunch or free times. Schools have banned student-led prayers at graduation ceremonies. Political and religious clubs have been denied the same privileges as other student organizations. Student clothes and jewelry with symbols of faith are being banned from school property.

Schools have tried prohibiting students from distributing religious pamphlets or bringing their Bibles to school. They have barred student religious clubs from advertising on school bulletin boards. They have also banned student clothes and jewelry with symbols of faith from school property.

Smothering constitutional rights in schools is a growing problem. In his book *Undeniable: Faith On Trial in America*, Kelly Shackelford documents hundreds of such cases. He writes:

Freedom in America depends on the restraint and motivation supplied by religious activity such as prayer, Scripture reading, and open expression of religious beliefs.

And yet the freedom to openly exercise your faith is under intolerant, growing, damaging attack. If this hostility is not identified, defeated, and deemed socially unacceptable, then we will forfeit the benefits of religion and freedom. We will risk watching our freedom and our American way of life destroyed.²⁰⁴

In addition, parental rights and parents' and teachers' First Amendment freedoms are under fire, making it increasingly difficult to protect children. These infringements on God-given rights should concern all of us.

LGBT CLUBS AND ACTIVIST GROUPS

ON SCHOOL CAMPUSES

+ FALSE CLUBS

Her middle school art teacher invited Erin and John Lee's 12-year-old daughter to join an "art club" after school. After attending the club, their daughter announced that she was "transgender," and the Lees learned that the club was really a Gay Straight Awareness/Alliance Club. An LGBT activist came to the club the day the sixth grader attended, asking the children who they were sexually attracted to; handing out LGBT bracelets, flags, and toys; and explaining that they might be "queer" if they did not know who they were attracted to or "transgender" if they were not comfortable with their bodies. Children were also discouraged from telling their parents about the meeting.²⁰⁵

A growing concern for many parents is the proliferation of LGBT activist clubs on K-12 campuses. In 1990, a group of teachers formed the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network. The organization helped promote "student-led movements," such as the Day of Silence, No-Name Calling Week, and Ally Week. The group also promoted Gay-Straight Alliance clubs on school campuses.²⁰⁶

Now, with a budget of about \$15 million a year, the organization, known simply as GLSEN, claims to have a national network with more than 1.5 million student, parent, and educator members and 43 chapters in 30 states.²⁰⁷ Gay-Straight Alliances have now morphed into Gender and Sexuality Alliances (GSAs), and GLSEN offers professional development for educators, provides lesson plans and resources, promotes a whole school year of activist events and celebrations, and has broadened its reach to include "diversity, equity, and inclusivity" resources.²⁰⁸

Another group involved on K-12 campuses is GSA Network, which consists of "trans and queer youth uniting for racial and gender justice." The organization works to build "Genders & Sexualities Alliances" (again, GSAs), offers an adult advisor handbook for these groups, and provides a guide to help students start a campus club.²⁰⁹

GSA Network, founded in 1998, trains youth leaders and claims a network of forty state organizations with more than 4,000 GSA clubs. The organization describes itself as "a next-generation LGBTQ racial and gender justice organization that empowers and trains queer, trans, and allied youth leaders to advocate, organize, and mobilize an intersectional movement for safer schools and healthier communities."²¹⁰

GSA Network goes beyond LGBT activism, with a nine-point plan that calls for, among other goals: "the Abolition of the Police, ICE, Borders and the Judicial System"; "an End to Global White Supremacy"; and "an End of the Cisgender Heterosexual Patriarchy."²¹¹ "Cisgender" is a term invented to denote the opposite of "transgender," so it refers to people who accept and embrace their biological reality.

Another goal calls for "the Right to Self-Determination and Control of Our Destinies," stating: "We as trans youth have the right to control our narratives, spaces, and all aspects of our lives."²¹² There appears to be no lower age limit on this demand for "trans youth," as the group works to infringe on parental rights and the ability of parents to direct the upbringing of their own children.

Parents Defending Education, "a national grassroots organization working to reclaim our schools from activists imposing harmful agendas,"²¹³ warns that such clubs come under a variety of names, such as "Queer Straight Alliance," "Rainbow Club," "Affinity Group," "Belonging Group," and "Unity Club."²¹⁴

Parents should be aware that, in general, the same freedoms that allow their children to start Christian or conservative groups usually mean that radical sexual and activist organizations are also allowed to help students form clubs and groups on campus.

However, there are many areas of concern with these groups, which sexualize and confuse vulnerable children.

Parents should be aware that teachers sometimes recruit children to join these clubs and hide information from parents. As Abigail Shrier reported, the California Teachers Association hosted a conference titled "2021 LGBTQ+ Issues Conference, Beyond the Binary: Identity & Imagining Possibilities."²¹⁵

Workshops "advised teachers on the creation of middle school LGBTQ clubs." One workshop was titled, "How we run a 'GSA' in Conservative Communities," and presenters explained that they ran the club unofficially so that they did not keep rosters or records of attendance. Teachers also kept watch of students' Google searches and internet activity and eavesdropped on student conversations to find likely students to recruit for their club.²¹⁶



GET INFORMED

+ NO FCA?

Following the advice of Atheists in America, the Hardin County School District in Kentucky told a school club, Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA), that it could not meet at club time between second and third periods when other student groups were meeting. North Hardin High School also told FCA it could not use school facilities — such as bulletin boards, the public address system, and classrooms — to promote meetings and events. First Liberty sent a letter to the school, explaining that the policies were “overreaching and deprive students and teachers of their First Amendment rights to religious expression and assembly.” Within days, school officials relented, and the FCA group was told it could meet and access facilities like any other club.²¹⁷

School administrators who get into trouble when handling religious freedom-related issues in schools seem to fall into one of three categories:

- 1 They are openly hostile to religion and any religious expression in schools.
- 2 They are neutral. However, they’re ill-informed about the religious rights of students and teachers. They then inadvertently, or because of legal threats from outside secular groups, violate these rights in the name of the Establishment Clause.
- 3 They enthusiastically support religious expressions — perhaps too enthusiastically. They can cross the line into advocating, endorsing, participating in, or requiring participation in a particular religion or religious activity.

KNOW THE FACTS

The U.S. Supreme Court issued a ruling in a school case involving free speech, where school principals had told students they could not wear black armbands to school to protest the Vietnam War. The Court famously said:

First Amendment rights, applied in light of the special characteristics of the school environment, are available to teachers and students. It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate. This has been the unmistakable holding of this Court for almost 50 years.²¹⁸

Religious freedom in schools is usually exercised through speech, like-minded individuals assembling together, and other forms of expression such as clothing or jewelry. That liberty, however, must be balanced with the special setting and purpose of schools and the need to prevent disruptions that would impede the educational process.

The religious freedom portion of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution has two parts. The first part, “**Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion**,” is called the “Establishment Clause.” It means neither the states nor the federal government can create an “official” religion or favor one religion or denomination over another.

The second part, forbidding Congress from “**prohibiting the free exercise**” of religion, is called the “Free Exercise Clause.” It applies to organizations and individuals in all areas of American culture. It’s the flip side of the Establishment Clause.

In summary, the Establishment Clause prohibits the government from creating or favoring a religion. At the same time, the Free Exercise Clause forbids the government from preventing or outlawing how we practice our faith, within reason.

Finally, it should be noted there are many good, secular reasons for incorporating religious elements into public school curricula, such as studying the effect of religion on the founding of America, learning about religions in different countries, and performing religious music in well-rounded music programs. The Supreme Court has held that having a secular basis for including a religious element in a government activity, whether in public education or a town Christmas display, makes the inclusion perfectly fine and does not violate the Establishment Clause.

KNOW THE LAW

1. **Students maintain their constitutional rights of religious freedom, freedom of speech, and freedom of peaceful assembly at school.** These rights are still in operation at school, though there may be reasonable school limits.
 2. **Schools cannot prohibit or impede your child's free speech or their right to freely exercise their faith *unless* doing so at school causes a "material and substantial disruption" to the school's ability to educate students.** (The disruption cannot be hypothetical or potential. Your child must actually be disrupting education.)²¹⁹
 3. **Schools are considered "limited public forums."** This means your child can't say *anything* they want, which is why schools can ban cursing and verbal bullying. But your child still retains their right to "private religious speech." This means your school cannot prohibit your child from engaging in religious "speech," which can be verbal, written, or expressive. Examples would be your child speaking about their faith, writing about it, or expressing it through a school project, student club, or religious clothing or jewelry.
 4. **In addition, all school rules must apply equally to students.** For example, a school couldn't prohibit just religious jewelry, but it could prohibit all jewelry.
 5. **The Supreme Court has ruled, "A student's rights, therefore, do not merely embrace classroom hours.** When he is in the cafeteria, on the playing field, or on the campus during the authorized hours, he may express his opinions, even on controversial subjects ... if he does so without 'materially and substantially interfer[ing] with the requirements of appropriate discipline in the operation of the school' and without colliding with the rights of others."²²⁰
 6. **The school *must* be neutral towards religion.** The school cannot display a bias for or against a religion. Bias for religion could be if a public school allowed a Christian prayer club to meet while prohibiting a Muslim prayer club from meeting.
 7. **An example of bias against religion would be if a school allows students to form non-curricular clubs, like chess clubs, but prohibits your child from forming a Bible-reading club simply because it is religious in nature or because they find it offensive.** Another example is if the school allows most student clubs to advertise on a school bulletin board but does not allow your child's religious club to advertise on the bulletin board. These actions show open hostility towards religion, which federal law prohibits.²²¹
 8. **The Supreme Court has ruled that school-sponsored prayer is unconstitutional.** As the Supreme Court ruled in one case, a school cannot mandate prayer or even write and distribute a prayer for students to recite. This violates the Establishment Clause, prohibiting states from endorsing, favoring, or establishing a faith.²²²
 9. **Public schools cannot require students to engage in religious activities.**
 10. **Your school must ensure the right of students to engage in constitutionally protected prayer, or it risks losing its state funding.**
 11. **If your child's school grants excusal from class for nonreligious needs, the school must also grant excusal for religious reasons.**
-  Schools cannot restrict religious speech just because they may find it offensive or controversial.²²³

KNOW YOUR CHILD'S RIGHTS

✓ WHAT STUDENTS CAN DO IN SCHOOL:

- Your child has the right to free speech at school, provided their speech is not disruptive or against school rules. No rules prevent your child from talking about their faith, beliefs, or thoughts on issues in the classroom, to friends, in the lunchroom, on sports teams, and more.
- In general, students can voluntarily express their personal and religious beliefs to their classmates through verbal or written expressions as long as they follow school policy and do not engage in these activities during classroom or instruction time. Schools can enforce reasonable limits on times and locations where students can distribute materials, but these regulations must be applied equally to all students.
- Your child has the right to pray at school. Of course, your child can pray silently, asking God for wisdom and grace before taking a test. Still, students can also pray aloud or with others during lunch, before or after school, during other free time, and before or after a sporting event, provided they're not doing so in a disruptive manner. Student prayers are considered private, personal speech. They are allowed as long as they are student-led (rather than teacher-led or school-endorsed), aren't disrupting academic instruction, and are voluntary — meaning no student feels coerced to participate.
- Your child can start a political or religious club if the school allows other non-curricular groups. If other clubs are allowed to advertise at school (for example, distribute flyers, hang banners, or use a school's bulletin board), your child's club should also have this right.
- Your student can bring books that are religious, political, or even offer a different viewpoint from what's being taught in the classroom, just as students can bring other favorite books they are reading to school. A student can read these during free time and even use these books in a class assignment as long as he or she does so in a way that is relevant to the subject the teacher has assigned and meets the assignment's requirements.
- Your child has the right to undertake religious activities of their own accord. Students and religious clubs have equal access rights to participate in student-led events. Courts have said that school officials must remain neutral in how they treat students' activities and free-speech expressions.
- Your child has the right to be free from bullying and harassment for any reason.

✕ WHAT STUDENTS CANNOT DO:

- Your child cannot disrupt instruction time. While students have free speech rights, they cannot abuse those rights in a way that prevents the school from accomplishing its core mission of providing academic instruction. For example, a student cannot interrupt a teacher's lesson plan to distribute information if that would be inappropriate.
- Your child does not have the right to bully or harass other students, and students do not have the right to force their classmates to listen to them. On the other hand, students can voluntarily invite other students to participate in activities and student-led discussions.
- Your child cannot ignore school policies. It is a good idea to check for applicable school policies and notify school officials if your child plans to distribute materials, start a club, etc. While schools can enforce reasonable regulations, they can't enforce them in a biased way.



WAYS YOU CAN ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CHILD

Free speech and the free exercise of faith are rights that belong to your child. They are not rights you can exercise for them. As a parent, you still have the right to ensure that your child's rights are respected while on school grounds. If your child's rights are not protected, there are ways you can protect and advocate for them!

- » *If your child's free speech rights and free exercise of religion rights are being trampled, be sure to talk to your child's teacher or principal to seek a quick and amicable resolution. Tell them the law (as they may not be aware) and inform them of what you'd like to see happen. Be respectful, kind, and clear. It's always good to put your concerns and solutions in writing. Ask the school to write down what actions they plan to take.*
- » *If your child is being required or coerced to engage in religious activities by school staff, share your concerns with your child's teacher and/or principal. Public schools are not allowed to provide religious instruction, though they may teach about religion. Let them know the law and what you'd like to see happen.*
- » *If your child's school has denied them an excusal from class for a religious activity or observance, this violates your child's constitutional rights. You may talk with your school principal to request an excusal. Your child's school must take immediate steps to remedy religious discrimination.*

If a teacher, principal, or other school staff member refuses to take action to respect your child's constitutional rights, it may be time to do one or more of the following.

- 1** You can file a complaint with your state department of education.
- 2** You may also contact your state's office of civil rights to learn the procedure for filing a complaint about constitutional rights violations.
- 3** You may seek a civil rights attorney or legal aid group who might need to do as little as submit a letter of demand to pressure a school to comply with the law. Seeking legal counsel often results in the quickest action if a school, school board, or district is unresponsive to your written concerns and requests. We've listed different legal aid groups at the end of this section to assist you.
- 4** You may also be able to file a complaint with the federal Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice.
- 5** You may also file a discrimination complaint with the Office of Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Education if your child is treated negatively because they belong to a particular faith.

TALK WITH YOUR CHILD

Here are ideas for discussing these important constitutional rights with your children.

1. **Talk with your children about the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, two of our nation's founding documents.** Explain that we are a nation of laws, and those laws include certain God-given rights, such as freedom of religion, speech, and assembly. As you do, point out that none of these rights are absolute — we don't have the right to say what we want, whenever we want. Children love to claim, "It's a free country!" But that doesn't mean we can slander others, shout "fire" in a crowded theater, or disrupt school lessons.
2. **It is important for our kids to realize that rights come with the responsibility to exercise them appropriately.** So, your children can't jump up in the middle of class and start praying or reading the Bible aloud, but they can pray and read the Bible during free time, lunch, recess, and before or after school. They can also pray silently in the classroom. Teach them the importance of respecting other people's rights, even when we strongly disagree with them.

As your children grow and learn, teach them the following essentials:

1. **All people are made in the image of God.** Therefore, everyone is worthy of love, grace, kindness, and respect.
2. **A Christian worldview is in direct conflict with the secular worldview that dominates much of our culture — including schools, curriculums, and textbooks.** So, it is important to be able to think and speak articulately about these complex issues with patience, courage, and humble confidence.
3. **Healthy conflict is okay.** You can explain and demonstrate this at home when children face disagreements with family and friends. It is important they learn what healthy conflict looks like and how to stay engaged in a constructive way. That way, when

they encounter opposition, disagreement, or obstacles, they will recognize how to remain respectfully engaged, and/or when it is time to walk away.

If a principal or teacher (or someone else in authority) prohibits your student's from exercising their free speech or religious freedom reasonably at school, they must be respectful and should also stop their activity immediately — even if they're hurt, upset, and angry.

If an incident arises at school, direct your child to take the following steps:

1. **Talk with you right away to let you know what happened.** As you nurture an ongoing, healthy dialog with your kids, remind them that you want to know about anything that occurs and to support them. Then, document the details of the situation as soon and as accurately as possible. If the school official or teacher is punitive or unreasonably angry, encourage your child to remain as calm as possible and reassure them that you will help resolve the issue.
2. **Politely and with humility, tell teachers and school officials what you've taught them about their freedoms on campus.** They may need a sense of "permission" or boldness that you can provide. Or, they may need to know they have an option to wait and come talk to you before going back and explaining their position to the teacher or administrator.
3. **If the issue escalates, tell your child to let you advocate for them as their parent.** If the issue escalates further, first, talk to the school and explain your child's legal rights. If the response is not satisfactory, contact a school board member. If the situation is not resolved with these initial measures, you might want to contact a First Amendment legal aid group; see our list at the end of this section.

FOR MORE ON THESE ISSUES:

[Department of Education: Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer and Religious Expression in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools](#)

[Alliance Defending Freedom: Student Rights Handbook \(downloadable\)](#)

[Alliance Defending Freedom: K-12 Educators' Guide](#)

[Focus on the Family: Religious Freedom — Protecting how we practice our faith](#)

[Gateways to Better Education: National Free to Speak Campaign](#)

[Bringing Good News to Kids in Public Schools](#)

[Backpack Faith: Helping Your Child Live Confidently for Jesus in Public School](#)

LEGAL GROUPS

Providing legal aid and information for free speech, religious freedom, and parental rights:

[Alliance Defending Freedom](#)

[Becket: Religious Liberty for All](#)

[First Liberty Institute](#)

[Liberty Counsel](#)

[Pacific Justice Institute](#)

[The Thomas More Society](#)

BRING YOUR BIBLE TO SCHOOL DAY BY FOCUS ON THE FAMILY,

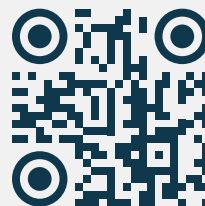
a student-led movement, often receives challenges and obstacles from schools. Below you can find articles and resources explaining how students and parents can respond to such challenges.

While these are specifically directed toward Bring Your Bible to School Day, they have helpful ideas for dealing with other First Amendment issues in school:

[Fast Facts About Student's Rights](#)

[Religious Freedom on Campus: What Students Can and Can't Do](#)

[Legal Memo on Students' Rights](#)



BringYourBible.com

CHAPTER 6:

EXERCISING AND ADVOCATING FOR EDUCATIONAL FREEDOM

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NEW DEVELOPMENTS

FEDERAL EXECUTIVE ORDERS AND ACTIONS

President Trump signed the Executive Order [“Expanding Educational Freedom and Opportunity for Families,”](#) directing the Education Department (ED) to “issue guidance regarding how States can use Federal formula funds to support K-12 educational choice initiatives.” Two ways the federal government does this are by offering block grants for states to expand school choice programs for low income, working families and by using discretionary ED funds for grants for state educational freedom funds.

As part of the Working Families Tax Cut, also known as the [One, Big Beautiful Bill Act](#), Congress created the [Education Freedom Tax Credit](#). The federal [program](#) gives taxpayers up to a \$1,700 tax credit for contributing to approved Scholarship Granting Organizations (SGO), nonprofits that provide scholarships for education-related expenses like tuition, fees, tutoring, and classroom supplies at public or private schools.

While anyone may receive the tax credit by donating to an approved SGO, states must opt-in through legislative or gubernatorial actions for families in that state to receive scholarships. [The Education Freedom Tax Credit](#) website provides more information about the program and lists the [participating states](#).

STATE LEGISLATURES AND LOCAL DISTRICTS

School choice programs have grown tremendously, as the State Policy Network [reports](#):

- » *Four years ago, zero states had a universal school choice program. West Virginia became the first state to adopt such a policy in 2021, and states across the country rushed to follow suit. Some states expanded eligibility for existing programs, like in Arizona and Indiana, while others established new ones, like Iowa and Alabama.*
- » *Today, 34 states have some version of a private school choice program and 17 of those states have enacted universal education choice programs.*

Universal school choice, they explain, “means every K–12 student is eligible to access a state-supported choice program, such as an education savings account or scholarship. Earlier versions of school choice laws typically limited eligibility to a narrow category of students.”

EdChoice [reports](#) that while traditional public schools serve roughly 70% of the nation’s 54-55 million students, other families choose these options:

- » *2.8 percent of students are utilizing an educational choice program (vouchers, educational savings accounts and/or tax credit programs).*
- » *6.1 percent attend private school by other means.*
- » *5.0 percent attend a magnet school (non-traditional public schools that specialize in a particular area of education).*
- » *7.2 percent attend a charter school (non-traditional public schools with a specific charter, operating independently from standard school district rules).*
- » *4.8 percent are homeschooled.*

Twenty-six states have passed some form of education-related Parents’ Bills of Rights, [reports](#) Ballotpedia. These vary by state, but often include:

- » *Curriculum transparency.*
- » *Access to student records.*
- » *The ability to opt out of courses or specific instructional topics.*
- » *Notification or consent rights.*

Parents in all states – even those with laws protecting parental rights in education – must still stay active and involved to preserve their and their children’s rights, assuring their children succeed in school.

RESOURCES:

- » *Help influence education policies in your state by connecting with your state-based [Family Policy Council](#).*
- » *Read your state’s Parental Bill of Rights at [Ballotpedia](#).*
- » *Keep updated about education issues through Focus on the Family’s [Daily Citizen Morning Headlines](#) and through the [Daily Citizen Weekly Newsletter](#).*
- » *Family Policy Alliance Foundation offers a [Statesman Academy](#) to train Christian men and women for public service and a [School Board Academy](#) that prepares school board members and candidates. The organization’s [Christians Engaged Academy](#) equips Christians to live out their faith in today’s culture.*
- » *Parents can file a complaint with [HHS’ Office for Civil Rights](#) or with the [U.S. Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division](#) if their or their children’s rights are violated.*

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY

“ Different researchers have found that school choice can improve academic achievement, save taxpayer’s money, strengthen student values, and even create more integrated classrooms.

Educational freedom includes school choice, freedom for schools and teachers to innovate, school transparency, clear reporting on educational outcomes, and parental rights in education. Educational freedom offers you the ability to choose the best schools and education for their children’s unique talents, abilities and learning styles. It is important — and greatly needed — because many school districts are failing to teach students fundamental skills, even while per-pupil spending and administration expenses have risen dramatically. In addition, many schools are pushing extreme radical and sexual dogma and anti-American and anti-capitalism ideologies. Teachers unions advocate for teachers — not students and families — and also promote an extreme, leftist agenda. Find out more about the growing movement by reading *“Why Educational Freedom is Important for Families”* and *“Providing a Better Future for Children.”*

The section on *“School Choice and Funding for School Choice Programs”* describes different school choice options, such as traditional public schools; private schools; homeschooling; magnet schools, which specialize in a particular area of education; charter schools; and intradistrict and interdistrict school choice, where students can move to a different school within their district or to one outside their school district. There are also online schools and hybrid models, offering students opportunities for success that match their strengths and learning styles. More and more states are funding these choices through different options, including Education Savings Accounts, vouchers, 529 College Savings and Prepaid Tuition Accounts, tax credit scholarships, and tax credits and deductions.

Different researchers have found that school choice can improve academic achievement, save taxpayer's money, strengthen student values, and even create more integrated classrooms. Hospitals, gas stations, grocery stores, and law firms must compete and provide good services — or go out of business. Why should schools be any different? In the sections ***“Know the Facts”*** and ***“Know Your Rights,”*** you'll learn good arguments for expanding educational freedom and find helpful groups and resources to advocate for school choice and parental rights in education. We also point out ***“Ways You Can Advocate”*** for these, like participating in school board meetings, contacting state legislators, writing letters to the editor, and connecting with state-based Family Policy Councils that advocate for educational freedom and parental rights in education.





UNDERSTANDING EDUCATIONAL FREEDOM, SCHOOL CHOICE, AND PARENTAL RIGHTS IN EDUCATION

“ It is a painful irony that people who are promoting the make-believe equality of ‘inclusion’ and ‘diversity’ in schools are attacking charter schools that are producing the real equality of educational achievement.

THOMAS SOWELL, CHARTER SCHOOLS AND THEIR ENEMIES²²⁴

Educational freedom has become a top priority for Americans of all political leanings because education is a vital key to success for our children. How our children are educated is also a moral and political question that has become increasingly controversial.

Former U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos writes,

! Every student should be able to choose from every educational option. No student in America should be denied opportunities to learn based on where they live or how much money their family makes. ... **Education freedom starts from the premise that every student is unique and every student learns differently.** This is something every parent knows. Yet we have a government-run school system that essentially treats children as if they were all the same – moving kids from grade to grade based on age, following an agrarian calendar, and forcing children to learn each subject at the same pace at the same time.²²⁵

Educational freedom is a broad concept that includes many components, including school choice, freedom for schools and teachers to innovate, school transparency and clear reporting on educational outcomes, and parental rights in education. Educational freedom also

includes the types of schools families can choose from and the various means to fund those school choices.²²⁶

School choice is a big component of educational freedom. Also known as educational choice or parental choice, school choice offers parents a variety of options for how and where to educate their children. As DeVos explains, “School choice is the power to choose the right school for your child, not just accept the one the government assigns to you.” In addition to the different school options available to parents, many states are passing legislation that provides funding options for families to increase school choice.²²⁷

School and teacher freedom to innovate includes decreasing the burden of government regulation of local schools, permitting alternative-certified teachers, state licensing that allows for certified teachers from other states, and eliminating unnecessary administrative positions like “chief diversity officers” or “diversity, equity, and inclusivity” departments which usually entail thinly disguised political activism.²²⁸

“Transparency in the education system gives parents information to make the best decisions about their children’s education,” explains The Heritage Foundation.²²⁹ Such transparency includes parental access to curricula, school board access, and clear reporting on students’ academic achievement and educational outcomes.

Parental rights in education refers to state laws that clearly codify and reinforce the fundamental right of parents to direct the care, education, and upbringing of their children.²³⁰ This would also include state laws that protect children from radical political, sexual, and social indoctrination, and laws that require schools to notify parents about a child’s mental health or sexuality struggles.²³¹

“ Raising a child has always been difficult and expensive. With rare exceptions, it has always been true that the parents who conceive the child raise him the best. And throughout American history, it has been thought that the family is the cradle of good citizenship and therefore of free and just politics. Public education is as old as our nation – but only lately has it adopted the purpose of supplanting the family and controlling parents.

DR. LARRY P. ARNN²³²

WHY EDUCATIONAL FREEDOM IS IMPORTANT FOR FAMILIES

A good education contributes many positive benefits to children, families, communities, and our nation. A quality education helps bring employment opportunities, economic benefits, and financial security; good communication and time management skills; problem-solving and critical thinking skills; and better health and longevity.²³³

In addition, parents want schools to help their children develop good character and grow into good citizens, able to contribute to their community and society in positive ways.

If you've had the opportunity to look at other sections of *Equipping Parents for Back-To-School*, it's pretty clear that the public school system presents social, moral, and political challenges for families with more traditional, conservative, or faith-based worldviews.

In many public schools, classrooms have become more sexualized and politically radical, children are forced into vulnerable and uncomfortable situations in bathrooms and locker rooms, and school libraries expose children to pornography and other appalling material. These are all reasons why educational freedom is vital for families.

But the shocking moral decline of our public school system isn't the only reason families want school choice. Other top reasons are the growth and cost of school administrations and teacher union contracts that harm our children.

One argument you may have heard against school choice is that public schools already do not receive the funds they need to perform well. In most circumstances, it simply isn't accurate to say that public school systems are underfunded. In fact, education spending has risen dramatically in the past 30 years, as the Cato Institute reports,

*Inflation-adjusted spending per pupil has increased steadily, from \$12,272 in the 1990-91 school year to \$18,614 in 2020-21. Meanwhile, real total spending rose from around \$513 billion in 1990-91 to almost \$927 billion in 2020-21.*²³⁴

The United States ranks second among other developed nations on per-pupil spending each year, behind only Lux-

embourg.²³⁵ From 2010 to 2021, total taxpayer spending on public education has exceeded \$10.2 trillion.²³⁶

However, the spending increases haven't necessarily gone toward the instruction of students. As Hillsdale College President Larry Arnn explains, between 2000 and 2019, there was a massive growth in school and district administrative staffs:

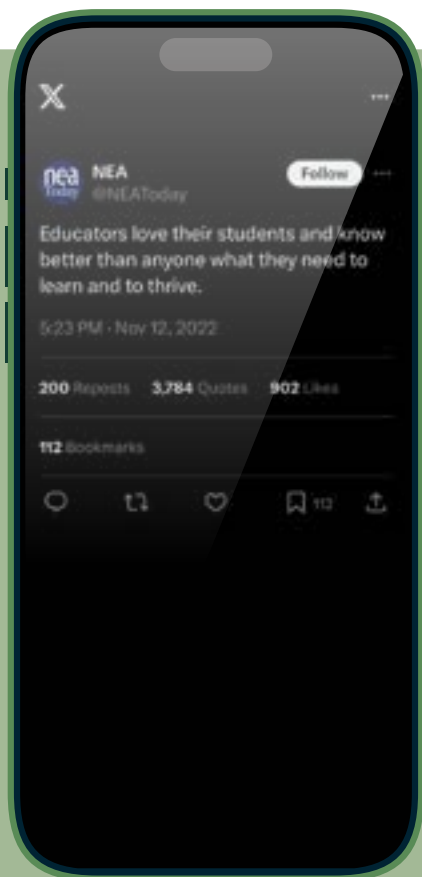
*The number of district administrators grew by a whopping 87.6 percent during these years, far outstripping the growth in the number of students (7.6 percent) and teachers (8.7 percent).*²³⁷

Despite these huge local, state, and federal expenditures, many students are not learning basic skills like arithmetic, reading, and writing. The 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress, known as "The Nation's Report Card," showed only 26% of eighth-grade public school students scored proficient or above in mathematics.²³⁸ In reading, only 31% of students were proficient or above.²³⁹

Combine all these negative statistics with the fact that public schools have very little competition, and it is apparent that there is little incentive to do better. This is why it's vitally important we work to support and expand school choice options for families. School choice ensures parents maintain the right to direct their children's moral and religious education.

Low educational achievement is not just the fault of teachers — certainly, parents are ultimately responsible for their children's education.

But most parents have trusted public schools to do a good job. One problem is that teachers unions play an oversized role in public education; they have significant power in negotiating contracts for teachers in their states and are organized for this purpose. Importantly, parents need to know that ***teachers unions do not exist to represent student interests.***



Unions represent the teachers. But while many teachers are conservative, the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers are overwhelmingly radical and leftist, donating to and supporting extreme activist policies and causes; promoting abortion, homosexuality, and transgenderism; and advocating for “diversity, equity, and inclusion” (DEI).²⁴⁰

For these unions, and many state teachers unions as well, activist indoctrination is taking priority over children learning basic skills.

The NEA has stated that it “knows better than anyone” — including parents — what students need to learn and thrive. The organization wants to transform education “into something it was never designed to be: racially and socially just, and equitable.”²⁴¹ It collaborates with LGBT activist groups and provides numerous resources for teachers to promote homosexuality and transgenderism in schools.²⁴²

The Heritage Foundation explains that, for decades now, “Union influence and power has continued to prevent meaningful education reform.” They have made “it more difficult for states to implement the common-sense changes that are needed to improve American education in the long run.”²⁴³

Educational freedom gives families a way to escape failing public schools that, instead of teaching the basics, work to indoctrinate, sexualize, and confuse children.

“ In most other circumstances outside of education, we have choices as consumers. We can choose which auto mechanic to go to, where to shop for groceries, and what deodorant to buy. It is time that choice is extended to our children’s education. Being bound to a particular school district because of your inability to move to another school district is akin to forcing someone to shop at the gas station next door rather than the supermarket down the street.

RYAN DELLINGER, EXCELINED²⁴⁴

SCHOOL CHOICE AND FUNDING

FOR SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAMS

Families are typically assigned a public school based on their ZIP code. In many cities and states, your children are legally required to attend their assigned school — unless they attend a private school or are homeschooled — and do not have the choice to attend another public school in the same or different district.

Your property taxes also fund your local school district. Public schools receive some funding through various state and federal programs, but the majority of funding comes from property taxes. This means schools in more affluent neighborhoods may receive more funding. This restricts the options of parents who cannot afford to live in more expensive neighborhoods, requiring their children to attend schools that may receive less funding.

Supporting educational freedom policies means backing laws that allow families to opt-out of their legally designated school or school district and choose to have their child attend a different public school or a private school — including a religious school. Educational freedom also allows families to choose a different educational system entirely — like homeschooling, online classes, or other programs that meet their child's unique needs.

Even though every family can, in theory, **choose** private school options, many families cannot **afford** private school tuition. If a family has an interdistrict choice, they may not be able to afford to have their child attend a more highly rated public school because transportation costs are not provided. Or, a family might have a child with disabilities who needs extra educational support that the public school they are assigned to cannot offer.

Supporting educational freedom policies means supporting school choice options for these families and supporting laws that help families cover the costs of choice, such as private school tuition, tutoring, transportation, and more.

“ The best form of school choice funding is where the money goes directly to parents so they have the financial freedom to build the education best suited for their children's needs.

The good news is school choice funding options have grown by leaps and bounds in the past decade!

SCHOOL CHOICE OPTIONS CURRENTLY INCLUDE:

- » *Traditional public schools*
- » *Magnet schools*
- » *Charter schools*
- » *Online learning*
- » *Private schools*
- » *Homeschooling opportunities*
- » *Hybrid options*

STATE FUNDS THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO FAMILIES TO EXERCISE THEIR SCHOOL CHOICE CAN BE IN THE FORM OF:

- » *Vouchers*
- » *Education savings accounts (ESAs)*
- » *Education saving scholarships*
- » *Tax credits*
- » *Tax deductions*

PROVIDING A BETTER FUTURE FOR CHILDREN

Families certainly have the right to provide the best education for their children that supports their family values. Educational freedom provides families with opportunity, protection, and empowerment:

- **Opportunity:** Parents can choose the best educational fit for their child, giving them the best foundation for success.
- **Protection:** With increasing violence in some public schools and increasingly radical policies, such as restroom, locker room, and sports policies that leave our children vulnerable, it is essential parents have the right to choose a safe environment for their child where he or she can thrive.
- **Empowerment:** Educational freedom empowers parents to be more than just a voice in the educational upbringing of their child, but also an active decision-maker. It also empowers students by giving them the best opportunities to reach their full potential.

School choice ensures a child's future isn't limited by mandatory school assignments based on ZIP code zoning requirements, gross fiscal mismanagement in many public schools, and self-interested but powerful teachers' unions.

WHAT DO SCHOOL CHOICE PROGRAMS LOOK LIKE?

SCHOOL CHOICE OPTIONS:

Intradistrict School Choice: Some states allow parents to choose any public school within the school district where the family resides during open enrollment. So, a family may not be required to attend their designated school based on their ZIP code. Depending on state law, the receiving school district's participation might be voluntary or mandatory.

Interdistrict: Most states offer students interdistrict choice, where families choose to send their child to any public school in the state during open enrollment. They are not required to send their child to the school district assigned to them based on ZIP code. In some states, students may only be allowed to transfer schools if they're low-income or from a failing school district. Depending on state law, the receiving school district's participation might be voluntary or mandatory.

Magnet Schools: A magnet school is a public school that receives public funding and is publicly managed, just like a regular public school. The difference is magnet schools specialize in a particular area of education and programs like STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), performing arts, vocational training, or college preparation. Though magnet schools have specialized themes and programs, they must meet the same academic standards as public schools across all subjects.

Charter Schools: Charter schools are public schools that receive a charter to educate students. Charter schools receive a "tuition" payment from the state government for each student they enroll. They may have application deadlines and admit students on a lottery, random, or first-come, first-served basis. They have more fiscal and educational decision-making power than traditional public schools because they are exempt from a lot of regulations and red tape that may hamper public schools. Charter schools are the most common school choice option available. Charter schools receive public funding, though sometimes a lower

percentage than what public schools receive, and they are privately managed.

Online Learning: This option can take a variety of modes, and can include private, public or charter schools.²⁴⁵ Many public schools used remote or virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic when schools were locked down. Students learn the regular school curriculum via computer. Full-time online schools are tuition-free public schools and existed before the pandemic. Blended learning offers a mix of in-person and online instruction.

Private Schools: Private schools, with some exceptions, do not receive regular funding from the state and federal government, though they may receive per-pupil money to assist students with disabilities or who are disadvantaged.²⁴⁶ They are not subject to the same curriculum standards or other requirements to which public schools must adhere. States may have different graduation requirements for private school students. Many private schools receive funds from individuals, foundations, or religious organizations. They are also under private management.

One of the most valued freedoms private schools have is that they can teach faith-based content and perspectives. In most states, private school tuition comes primarily out of the parents' pockets, although the growing number of state education savings accounts and voucher programs are helping to change this. Since private schools charge tuition, they tend to have better academic programs and are more likely to draw students from higher-income families. Private schools are less likely to be unionized and presumably more accountable for financial mismanagement. While all parents in our country technically have the choice to send their children to private schools, tuition and transportation costs are a considerable barrier for many families. This is where state programs like vouchers and education savings accounts can help the most families.

Homeschooling: This school choice option allows parents to teach their children at home, using their own resources, with little to no state oversight.²⁴⁷ Homeschooling is an option in every state, although states vary in how they regulate homeschooling. Some states require homeschoolers to take standardized testing, turn in periodic review documents, and teach certain subjects. Other states have no requirements. The growing education freedom movement means many states now offer tax credits, ESAs, education tax scholarships, grants, or other funding for homeschooling families.

Many homeschoolers will join together with other parents to form "learning pods," "micro-schools," or "homeschool co-ops." Pods and micro-schools bring small groups of students together to study in a home, while co-ops are designed to bring students together for activities and group learning.²⁴⁸ Some charter schools offer enrollment and hybrid programs for homeschooled students.

Hybrid Schools: Also called "blended education" or "mix-and-match learning," according to the Cato Institute, these programs "utilize a combination of at-school and at-home learning, but there can be much variety in how they are structured. Students may meet in person for two days and learn at home for three days or vice versa. Some hybrids meet half days in person, while the rest of the time is spent at home."²⁴⁹ Other hybrid models include online learning combined with in-class instruction or homeschooling.

“

If you choose to send your child to a private school, states with voucher programs transfer the money that would have gone to your public school to your private school of choice.

EDUCATION FUNDING OPTIONS:

Vouchers: Public schools receive a certain amount of state funding for each student that attends their school. If you choose to send your child to a private school, states with voucher programs transfer the money that would have gone to your public school to your private school of choice. Often, this amount is a smaller percentage of the full amount your child's public school would receive if your child were enrolled. For example, if your public school receives \$5,000 for your child's enrollment, the state may only transfer \$3,500 to your private school of choice. Vouchers are also one of the most common forms of school choice options available.

Education Savings Accounts: ESAs (not to be confused with 529 Plans, discussed next) are more flexible than school vouchers. Instead of the assigned public school transferring the money designated for your child directly to your school of choice, like vouchers, these funds are made available directly to the family (often through a debit card). The family then has complete control over the funds to spend on private school tuition, online tutoring, curriculums, transportation costs to and from school, and more.

529 College Savings and Prepaid Tuition Accounts: 529 Plans help parents pay their child's K-12 and college education expenses with tax-advantaged accounts run by the state.

There are generally two types of 529 accounts: savings plans and prepaid tuition plans. With the savings plan, parents contribute their earnings to an account where that money will not be subject to federal taxes upon withdrawal as long as it is used for their child's education expenses. The prepaid tuition plan locks in a tuition rate when the account is opened, and a parent makes payments on that tuition as their child grows up. Most states also provide a state tax credit or deduction for money contributed to the 529.

Tax Credit Scholarships: Some states offer tax credits to citizens who donate to nonprofits that distribute private-school tuition or transportation scholarships. Often, both individuals and businesses are eligible to receive the credit. The nonprofits that receive the money then redistribute the funds through grants or scholarships to cover private and public school costs like tuition, transportation, textbooks, tutoring, and more.

Tax Credits and Deductions: Tax deductions and credits help families fund school choice through a state's tax system. A tax deduction lowers a person's tax liability by not taxing income that a family uses to cover educational expenses. Tax credits allow families to have a percentage of money returned to them based on different factors, such as the amount of their child's tuition payment. Laws vary from state to state, but deductions and credits may be available for expenses like tuition, curriculum materials, transportation, educational supplies, tutors, and more.

KNOW THE FACTS

Your child has the right to a public education. Every state constitution reinforces this right.

Because educational freedom is on the rise, laws are changing quickly. We provide links in the endnotes to help you discover what school choice and funding options are available in your state.²⁵⁰

Education Savings Accounts are truly the “gold standard” when it comes to school choice because they allow you to fully tailor your child’s educational experience to your child’s individual learning needs.

Researcher Greg Forster, of the Friedman Foundation for Educational Choice, reviewed studies of school choice and found “that choice improves academic outcomes for participants and public schools, saves taxpayer money, moves students into more integrated classrooms, and strengthens the shared civic values and practices essential to American democracy.”²⁵¹

A meta-analysis of 19 voucher programs has shown school choice improves student math and reading test scores.²⁵²

The American Federation for Children (AFC) reports, “Seventeen empirical studies examined academic outcomes for students participating in private school choice using random assignment, the ‘gold standard’ of defensible social science,” with 11 studies showing improved test scores. Four found no significant effect, and two found negative impact.²⁵³

AFC also found that nine out of 10 “school choice programs move students into less segregated schools.”²⁵⁴

School choice advocate Corey DeAngelis reports that parents in open-enrollment charter schools in Arkansas were more likely to be highly satisfied with their school’s teachers, discipline, learning, safety, parental involvement, and overall performance.²⁵⁵

School choice provides the opportunity for families to hold public schools accountable for their policies, curriculums, budgets, teacher selection, educational outcomes, and more. If parents are allowed to vote with their feet, schools are required to find solutions that work to resolve the most significant objections families have — or be forced to close.

“Hospitals know they must do a good job or lose patients. Professionals like doctors and lawyers must provide good services or lose clients. Stores must provide good value or lose customers. This system is so critical to keeping institutions mission-focused that we take it completely for granted — everywhere but in K-12 schooling.

GREG FORSTER, EDCHOICE²⁵⁶

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

The state has the right to require all children are educated. But parents have the constitutional right to decide how to educate their child and to send their child to a religious school.²⁵⁷ School choice laws empower parents to exercise their right to provide a quality education for their children that comports with their values and beliefs.

If you have a serious moral, religious, or ethical objection to your child attending your local public school, you can argue (before a state legislature) that your right to direct your child's educational upbringing is being infringed upon, and the government has a duty to allow parents the flexibility to educate their children outside the public school monopoly.

You do not have the fundamental right to send your child to a public school that is better funded than another. The Supreme Court has recognized the vast differences in the type of public school education available (for example, the kind of education a public school in a wealthy neighborhood might provide compared to a poor neighborhood). This is helpful to know in your advocacy so you do not spend a lot of time comparing the educational quality of public schools.²⁵⁸

You have the right to direct and choose the direction of your child's destiny and not be forced to accept what the government dictates. This is one of the primary underpinnings for school choice options outside the public school system.

“ School choice laws empower parents to exercise their right to provide a quality education for their children that comports with their values and beliefs.

HELPFUL RESOURCES:

- » [2024 EdChoice 101: An introduction to the basics of school choice](#)
- » [2024 The 123s of School Choice: What the research says about private school choice programs in America](#)
- » [EdChoice: School Choice FAQs](#)
- » [EdChoice: School Choice In America — Dashboard](#)
- » [Education Freedom Report Card: State Rankings for Parents](#)
- » [Focus on the Family: School Choice](#)
- » [School Choice Facts](#)
- » [School Choice State Roadmaps](#)

LET PARENTS PARENT: GOLD STANDARD CHECKLIST

In an age when parental rights are threatened like never before, it's important that we protect them like never before. Here are *eight pillars* that form the *gold standard* of parental rights legislation. These pillars are drawn from Arizona's excellent House Bill 2161.

✓ LIST OF RIGHTS:

Lists specific parental rights that cannot be violated without meeting the highest legal standards

✓ INFORMED PARENTS:

Requires schools to inform parents of their parental rights

✓ SEX ED OPT-IN:

Establishes an opt-in system for sex education

✓ RECORD ACCESS:

Provides a robust process giving parents access to all their child's education and health records

✓ EDUCATIONAL REVIEW:

Establishes a system for parents to review and object to various educational materials and classes

✓ STUDENT SURVEY GUARDRAILS:

Ensures students are never given surveys with inappropriate content without their parents' consent

✓ PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT:

Requires schools to adopt a policy that promotes parental involvement in their child's education

✓ STRONG ENFORCEMENT:

Provides a very strong enforcement mechanism that allows parents to sue if their rights are not enforced

PROVIDED BY FAMILY POLICY ALLIANCE

WAYS YOU CAN ADVOCATE

FOR EDUCATIONAL FREEDOM, SCHOOL CHOICE, AND PARENTAL RIGHTS

- **Find out what kind of school choice options and programs are available in your state.**²⁵⁹
- **Attend your local school board meetings and be an active participant.** In states where interdistrict and intradistrict school choice is voluntary, school boards have a lot of authority to decide whether they will accept transfer agreements with other school districts or participate in public school choice. Let them know you support school choice and encourage them to participate. It's always good to invite other parents!
- **Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper and explain why your state needs school choice options.** Focus your writing on how school actually creates the best foundations and options for children.
- **Call your state legislators and ask them to support expanding educational freedom.** Ask them if they would be willing to sponsor school choice legislation. Encourage them to vote for your state to have an education savings account, voucher program, or other school choice option you believe would benefit your family and others like you. Ask them if school choice legislation has been introduced. If so, get information about the hearing time for the legislation and go testify. This is similar to testifying at your local school board, but better because legislators write the law!
- **Contact your federal member of Congress and senators.** Get an appointment with them when they're in your home state (and not in D.C.). Talk to them about how you think families could benefit from support from the federal government to exercise their school choice options. The federal government currently funds school choice options for children on tribal lands, children of military families, and families in Washington, D.C. Educational freedom should be expanded across the country!
- **Ask your representative to sponsor legislation that provides a federal tax credit or deduction when families utilize school choice.** They could also sponsor legislation that allows federal dollars assigned to schools (based on student enrollment) to follow the student — and not just attach to the school. You can also encourage your representative to sponsor legislation that funds state grants for charter schools or state grants for children to use for school choice.
- **Visit the federal Department of Education's (DOE) website and let them know you support funding for school choice for students.** Let the DOE know you believe eligibility for these federal grants should be expanded for all students. Note that different administrations may be more or less friendly toward school choice.
- **Join, contribute to, and volunteer with a state or national school choice advocacy group.** Your state most likely has a parent organization that advocates for school choice.
- **Connect with your state-based Family Policy Council to become an advocate for parental rights in education.**²⁶⁰

EDUCATIONAL FREEDOM AND PARENTAL RIGHTS ADVOCACY GROUPS:

- » [American Enterprise Institute: Conservative Education Reform Network](#)
- » [American Federation for Children](#)
- » [Cato Institute](#)
- » [EdChoice](#)
- » [Family Policy Alliance](#)
- » [Moms for Liberty](#)
- » [No Left Turn in Education](#)
- » [Parents Defending Education](#)
- » [State Family Policy Councils](#)

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FRIENDS
GOOD
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does
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NOTES

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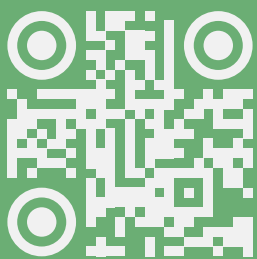
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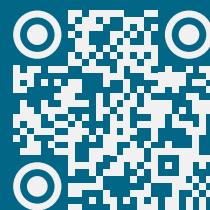
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APPENDIX A



COUNSELING, HEALTH, AND MEDICAL RESOURCES

Organizations offering counseling, position statements, research and information about parental involvement in healthcare

- » [American College of Pediatricians](#)
- » [Christian Medical and Dental Associations](#)
- » [Family Policy Alliance: Parental Rights](#)
- » [Focus on the Family Counseling Consultation and Referrals](#)
- » [Medical Institute for Sexual Health](#)

CULTURE AND POLICY INFORMATION, RESOURCES, TRAINING, AND ENGAGEMENT

Groups and resources providing education about and equipping for involvement in social and policy issues

- » [American Principles Project](#)
- » [Concerned Women for America](#)
- » [Family Policy Alliance](#)
- » [Family Policy Alliance Foundation](#)
- » [Family Research Council](#)
- » [Five Practical Tips for Contacting Your Legislator](#)
- » [Daily Citizen by Focus on the Family](#)
- » [The Heritage Foundation](#)
- » [How to Testify at a Legislative Hearing](#)
- » [State Family Policy Councils](#)

EDUCATION RESOURCES

Educational freedom, school choice, classroom issues, and parental rights in education

- » [American Enterprise Institute: Conservative Education Reform Network](#)
- » [American Federation for Children](#)
- » [EdChoice](#)
- » [Family Policy Alliance: Education](#)
- » [Focus on the Family: Education Resources](#)
- » [The Heritage Foundation — Education freedom for families](#)
- » [Gateways to Better Education](#)
- » [Moms for Liberty](#)
- » [No Left Turn in Education](#)
- » [Parents Defending Education](#)
- » [School Choice Facts](#)

HEALTHY SEXUALITY EDUCATION — RESEARCH, TRAINING, AND POLICY ORGANIZATIONS

Groups and resources for advocating for healthy sexuality education in schools

- » [Ascend](#)
- » [Beacon Health Education Resources](#)
- » [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](#)
- » [Stop CSE](#)

LEGAL GROUPS

Providing legal aid and information for free speech, religious freedom, and parental rights

- » [Alliance Defending Freedom](#)
- » [Becket — Religious Liberty for All](#)
- » [Child & Parental Rights Campaign](#)
- » [First Liberty Institute](#)
- » [Liberty Counsel](#)
- » [Pacific Justice Institute](#)
- » [The Thomas More Society](#)

LGBT ISSUES

Understanding and support for parents encountering these issues in the family, schools, and culture

- » [American College of Pediatricians: Sexuality Issues of Youth](#)
- » [Child and Parental Rights Campaign: Church Transgender Response Guide](#)
- » [Family Policy Alliance: Transgenderism and Gender Ideology](#)
- » [Focus on the Family: Resources When Your Child Encounters LGBT Ideology at School](#)
- » [Focus on the Family: Transgender Resources](#)
- » [Focus on the Family: Understanding Homosexuality](#)
- » [GenSpect](#)
- » [Independent Council on Women's Sports](#)
- » [Parent Resource Guide: Responding to the Transgender Issue](#)
- » [Save Girls Sports](#)

PARENTING AND SEX EDUCATION RESOURCES

Resources to equip parents from Focus on the Family's Parenting Department

- » [Focus on the Family: Parenting](#)
- » [Focus on the Family: Sex Education Resources](#)
- » [Launch Into The Teen Years](#)
- » [Parenting Questions and Answers](#)
- » [The Talk: Healthy Sexuality Education](#)

WORLDVIEW

Helping families and children develop a conservative, faith-based worldview

- » [Colson Center for Christian Worldview](#)
- » [God's World News](#)
- » [Hillsdale College Online Courses](#)
- » [Prager University](#)
- » [Summit Ministries](#)

APPENDIX B

LETTER OBJECTING TO TRANSGENDER RESTROOM POLICY



INCLUSIVE

NOTE:

Be sure to change the *[red text in brackets]* to fit your personal situation. When changing the text be sure to delete the brackets and remove the *red color*.

Dear *[Principal's Name, School Board, or Superintendent]*,

I write to object to my child being forced to use the same single-sex *[bathroom, locker room, hotel room and/or other private space]* as an opposite-sex *[biological boy/girl]*. My child has the right to feel safe in school. *[She/he]* also has a right to privacy and bodily integrity. When a *[boy/girl]* is allowed to use the *[girls/boys] [bathroom, locker room, or hotel room]* my child's right to privacy and dignity is violated and so are the rights of all the *[girl/boy]* students who use this bathroom.

I recognize all students, including transgender-identifying students, have the right to feel comfortable and safe, but not at the expense of the comfort and safety of the majority of students. If there are transgender-identifying students who are

suffering from anxiety or discomfort using the bathroom that correlates with their biological sex, I implore the school to make accommodations for these individuals that do not negatively impact the rights of my child and others.

These accommodations could be ensuring student access to a single-stall restroom, staff restrooms, or nursing office restrooms.

I even urge the school to consider installing or converting available private single-sex spaces into single-stall, gender-neutral spaces to accommodate any students who are uncomfortable using single-sex spaces. These possible accommodations will ensure the privacy rights of all students are protected (not just a minority of students) and are in complete compliance with the meaning and intent of federal law under Title IX.

Title IX requires that schools do not discriminate on the basis of sex, 20 U.S.C § 1686. It is not a violation of federal law for schools to maintain sex-segregated spaces to protect the privacy and dignity and our children, 34 C.F.R. § 106.33. In fact, it is this school's duty to treat everyone with respect and uphold the rights of all students, not just some students. Sex-segregated private spaces have persisted for centuries and for good reason. The fundamental differences between girls and boys is a fact of biology and life and should be honored in schools.

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE LETTER TO LEGISLATOR REQUESTING SUPPORT OF FAIRNESS IN WOMEN'S SPORTS

Dear *[Representative/Senator] [Name]*,

In 2020, Idaho became the first state in the nation to pass the Fairness in Women's Sports Act (Idaho Code Ann. § 33- 6201-6206 (2020)). This law will protect Idaho girls and women from unfair competition in girls sports by mandating that school athletic teams for females "shall not be open to students of the male sex." The law safeguards girls and women in competitive school sports from kindergarten through college.

The Idaho legislature reasoned that sex-specific teams "promote sex equality":

Sex-specific teams accomplish this by providing opportunities for female athletes to demonstrate their skill, strength, and athletic abilities while also providing them with opportunities to obtain recognition and accolades, college scholarships, and the numerous other long-term benefits that flow from success in athletic endeavors, H.B. 500 § 33-6202(8)-(12), 65TH Leg., 2nd Reg. Sess., 2020 (Idaho).

This law is needed in *[Your state's name]* to protect my daughter and other girls like her who have been disadvantaged by having a boy play on her girls athletic team in school. *[Explain how your daughter was disadvantaged. For example, "my daughter has been denied spots on the girls sports team" or "My daughter was prevented from winning a spot on the podium by a biological male." If you do not have a personal story but are just advocating for the law to pass, you can simply say, "Our daughters are put at a serious competitive disadvantage when boys are allowed to play on girls teams. They are also physically endangered when boy athletes, who are generally bigger, faster, and stronger than girl athletes, are allowed to compete in girls contact sports. Our daughters deserve better."]*

Preventing boys from playing on girls sports team has never before been considered discriminatory nor wrong. This recent, dramatic shift in public policy is hurting girls. Our state legislature should support

NOTE:

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APPENDIX D

LETTER OBJECTING TO LIBRARY MATERIAL

NOTE:

Be sure to change the *[red text in brackets]* to fit your personal situation. When changing the text be sure to delete the brackets and remove the *red color*.

Dear *[School Principal/School Board Members]*,

I object to *[Book title]* being stocked and circulated in the school library. This material is not age-appropriate for our children and is contrary to the values we teach our child at home.

Yes, our students have the right to access information and engage in the free exchange of ideas under the First Amendment. But this type of content undermines the spirit and purpose of the First Amendment, which was to ensure the people could come together to freely exchange ideas to bring about positive political and social change. The Miller Court stated years ago that the "portrayal of hard-core sexual conduct for its own sake" is not what the First Amendment was intended to protect.¹

This content is *[age-inappropriate/explicit/graphic/obscene/extremely violent/filled with profanity]* and contains controversial adult content, to which our children should not be exposed, especially in a school library *[you may want to photocopy the pages with offensive content to include with your letter]*.

Even if there are some students who are in support of this material remaining, I'd like to remind the *[school/school board]* it is the parents who get to set standards for the community as to what content is objectionable.² It is parents who have the fundamental duty to direct the moral upbringing of our children.³ It is also parents who elect the school board and pay the property taxes that support this school.

As a parent and an indispensable part of *[school name]* community, I believe this content has no place in our school library or in the hands of our children/*[or specific grade range]* and request that it is removed immediately.

Thank you,

[Signature]

[Printed Name]

¹ Oyez, *Miller v. California*, 413 U.S. 15, at 34-35, June 21, 1973 <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1971/70-73>.

² Oyez, *Pinkus v. United States*, 394 U.S. 557, 568, May 23, 1978, <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1977/77-39>.

³ Oyez, *Troxel v. Granville*, 530 U.S. 57 June 5, 2000, <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1999/99-138>.

APPENDIX E

LETTER TO ACCESS CHILD'S LIBRARY RECORD

Dear *[School Principal/School Board Members]*,

Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) I have the right to access all of my child's "education records," which includes "those records, files, documents, and other materials which (i) contain information directly related to a student; and (ii) are maintained by an educational agency or institution or by a person acting for such agency or institution," 34 C.F.R. Part 99.3.

I request that *[School Name]* immediately release *[Child's name]* library record with information as to what books my child has checked out, dates, any outstanding fees, and all other relevant details if these records are kept.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Printed Name]

NOTE:

Be sure to change the *[red text in brackets]* to fit your personal situation. When changing the text be sure to delete the brackets and remove the *red color*.



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