

Combating Censorship

Attacks on Democracy: Fighting Discriminatory Efforts to Restrict the Freedom to Read and Learn

Schools, libraries, and curriculum should be inclusive of and accessible to all students, families, and communities. Yet right-wing extremists are pushing a censorship agenda. Across the country, state agencies, school boards, and countless other public officials supported by taxpayer dollars are pulling books from shelves, ripping out pages of curriculum, and eliminating decades of progress toward diversity and representation.

Censorship not only threatens who we see and hear from—it threatens the very fabric of our participatory democracy. Alongside our partners, we are investigating and pushing back on harmful censorship actions. Below are some examples from work in Florida and Texas.

- Florida law H.B. 1467 purports to improve curriculum transparency, but the law and its implementation are already chilling education, as some school districts have stopped acquiring new books for their libraries as implementation advances. Meanwhile, Florida's Department of Education is imposing onerous requirements on educators and schools before they can maintain comprehensive, diverse, book collections.
- Collier County, Florida placed a "parental advisory" on a wide array of books—overwhelmingly containing LGBTQ+ content—in the school library following complaints from a right-wing parents' group. The "advisory"—that some community members believe the content is "unsuitable" for students—was imposed without any transparent process and without context on the complainants or the nature of their grievances.
- Hernando County, Florida conceded that it removed certain books concerning LGBTQ+-related and race-related topics from its school library shelves because a school board candidate complained about the books while on the campaign trail. The school district circumvented the mandated, transparent process in favor of politics, removing the targeted books from school libraries.
- In Granbury, Texas, parent Chris Tackett sought to shed light on school district officials' efforts to censor voices in libraries and classrooms and prevent public officials from depriving families of the opportunity to hold public officials accountable. When Mr. Tackett requested all of Granbury ISD Superintendent Dr. Jeremy Glenn's text messages regarding efforts to strip books from library shelves, the district balked. Between claims that the Superintendent likely deleted records in accordance with a records retention policy that may violate the state law, and efforts to use the state Attorney General as a shield for further withholding, the district has provided only a handful of records.

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