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IDRA's Knowledge is Power is a national resource for educators and advocates to help you do your work for equity and excellence in education in the midst of classroom censorship policies.

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See previous editions of [Knowledge is Power](#) and related resources online.



Communities List their Priorities for Federal Funds to Build Supportive Schools

By Morgan Craven, J.D.

IDRA hosted a policy series this year to engage with students, families and advocates in Texas and Georgia around education policy and advocacy issues. The series featured legislative updates, policy explainer sessions, and a multi-session focus on the use of federal COVID-19 emergency relief funding for schools.

During the series, IDRA held four listening and learning sessions to gather community-based recommendations for how federal funds should be used to promote an equitable response to the pandemic and address long-standing education equity issues. The community sessions brought together young people, families, advocates and other education experts.

IDRA's report, [Building Supportive Schools from the Ground Up](#), highlights the main strategies identified during the sessions. These strategies are grounded in the lived and learned expertise of session participants and focus on how school districts can use federal funds to invest in strategies that ensure culturally-sustaining schools for all students.



War on Obscenity is Classroom Censorship on Another Front

By Mikayla Arciaga, M.A.Ed.

Some policymakers are organizing their classroom censorship drives on another front by calling for legislation that would “protect” children and young people from “obscene materials” in the learning environment.

At face value this seems like an obvious win – no one wants students to experience obscenity at school. Unfortunately, the use of the word “obscene” is intentionally coded language that has historically [conflated “pornography” with non-obscene educational materials](#) about gender and sexual identity.

U.S. policymakers have used “obscenity” as an excuse to censor schools as far back as [1953](#) during the Cold War and the social emphasis on conformity. Most recently, it has been [used to censor](#) the inclusion of texts or materials that might educate students about same-sex relationships or the gender identity spectrum.

As with other forms of classroom censorship, these efforts predominantly serve to disrupt learning, diminish the experiences of historically marginalized students, and distract from real issues that impact students and schools. Despite this, legislative efforts have already been initiated this year by policy leaders in [Georgia](#), [Iowa](#), [South Carolina](#), [North Carolina](#), and [Texas](#) to censor schools and particularly libraries. These states and others have launched investigations, distributed obscene or banned book lists and, more distressingly, threatened educators with litigation for providing such materials.

This is where the real threat lies. The fear of retaliation can create a chilling effect, leading teachers to self-censor. This in turn obstructs students from the exposure to broader perspectives that equips them to navigate an increasingly diversified world – exposure they may otherwise never experience. Additionally, censorship is associated with [negative mental health](#) symptoms, with disproportionate harm caused to [our most marginalized young people](#), including queer students and students of color.

Because we know the harms of censoring learning, school leaders should take this opportunity not to ban books, but to create contemporary community standards that reinforce [culturally sustaining](#) school communities. These practices can protect educators, while also making our schools safer, more engaging places for all of our students.



Educator Survey about Classroom Censorship

Tell us how classroom censorship policies and proposals are affecting your school!

Fill out our educator survey



IDRA is an independent, non-profit organization whose mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.

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