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## Transforming Education by Putting Kids First



### IDRA Newsletter – This Issue's Focus: Combatting Classroom Censorship

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## A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing – The Attacks Against Equity through School Censorship and How Educators Can Still Teach the Truth

by *Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D.*

From the start, this school year was marked with state scrutiny over campus libraries, classroom bookshelves and teachers' discussions of history, current events and racial justice. Texas' House Bill 3939 and its replacement, Senate Bill 3, are censorship policies masquerading as "civics education reform" that negatively impacts racial and gender inclusivity.

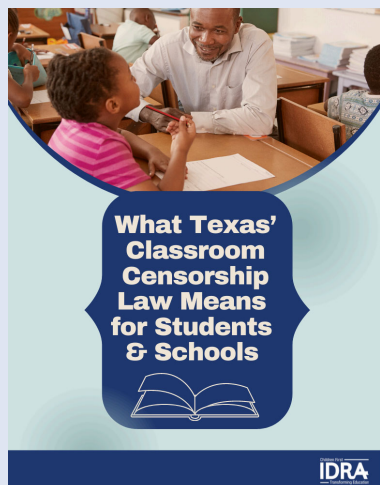


Proponents of school censorship use veiled language to disguise state scrutiny as "transparency," whitewashing as "patriotism" and attempts to roll back educational equity as "parental control."

Indeed, censorship laws are wolves in sheep's clothing, cloaked in superficially innocent language as they prey upon school books; diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives; and culturally-sustaining teaching practices.

All members of school communities – teachers, students, leaders and families – can take steps to continue to speak up and teach the truth so that all students learn and are prepared for tomorrow.

[Read: A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing](#)



## What Texas' Classroom Censorship Law Means for Students & Schools

IDRA's detailed guide of Texas Senate Bill 3 contains analysis and our interpretation for how components of the law impact educators and what this means for continuing to teach the truth in schools. Educators should still consult with their district administration for local policies.

[See eBook](#)

## Playing Defense is Not Enough – Let's Recommit to a Vision of Public Schools that Values Every Child, Every Educator, Every Community

by Michelle Castillo, Ed.M.

We are facing a coordinated effort to “sanitize” this country’s complicated history, particularly when it comes to discussions of racism. Since January 2021, at least 37 states have introduced laws seeking to ban “divisive” content in classrooms and school libraries. Legislation seeking to censor schools and educators uses language to silence equity and inclusion efforts in the classroom.



But families universally want to see their children succeed and want an education that will foster empathy, curiosity and the ability to grapple with challenging issues. The efforts of educational advocates are more important than ever. Let us offer a vision of public education that values the humanity of every child, teacher, and cafeteria and custodial support staff. We invite you to join IDRA's community of advocates, particularly considering recent classroom censorship bills.

[Read: Playing Defense is Not Enough](#)

## Honoring the Arms that Lift Us – Southern Stories from Our Black Staff

This month, some of IDRA's Black staff members shared their experiences of how family, teachers and community, particularly Black women, have impacted their lives and sent them on a trajectory in working for justice and student opportunity in education.

[See stories](#)

## Reclaiming the U.S. Constitution – Legal Considerations for Combatting Classroom Censorship Laws

*by Paige Duggins-Clay, J.D.*

As classroom censorship bills have spread across the nation, particularly in the U.S. South, the writers have falsely co-opted the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment and/or state and federal civil rights laws to justify silencing conversations and removing content promoting equity and critical reflection on U.S. history. Let there be no mistake: invoking the U.S. Constitution as the basis for promoting and implementing classroom censorship policies is antithetical to the principles of freedom of speech and equal protection guaranteed by the First and 14<sup>th</sup> Amendments.



Learning about systemic racism in the United States is especially relevant to the many students today who are deeply impacted by racism, misogyny and other forms of discrimination. Critical thinking is an essential facet of individual freedom, and state-sponsored efforts to hide the truth and interrupt this critical thinking process must be called out for their attempts at erasure of diverse student identities and potential to roll back civil rights protections and interventions.

[Read: Reclaiming the U.S. Constitution](#)

## New Advocacy Guide Shares Tips and Lessons from Classroom Censorship Fight

*by Morgan Craven, J.D.*

Attempting to advocate for an excellent and equitable education for all students can be difficult. But it is critical especially for people of color, working families and young people who face many barriers to meaningfully contributing to school policy.

At IDRA, we believe that everyone – especially those from marginalized communities – should see themselves as advocates with important stories to tell and ideas to share.



As part of the organization's work promoting the perspective of diverse communities, IDRA created an **advocacy guide** with lessons learned and key advocacy tools, including the importance of centering young people and families of color, building cross-sector coalitions, identifying clear messaging, and engaging in collective policy and decision-making. These strategies can help community members become advocates and use their voices to reject classroom censorship efforts.



[Read: New Advocacy Guide Shares Tips and Lessons from Classroom Censorship Fight](#)

## Families Must be Centered in Education Policymaking, Not Used as Puppets

The expertise and experiences of all families must be part of building excellent and equitable schools regardless of their racial or ethnic background or socioeconomic status. It is critical for district and school leaders to develop authentic relationships and ensure their voices are represented regardless of their access to financial means or political influence.

This statement points to IDRA's principles for family leadership in education as a tool for implementing a truly inclusive vision of family engagement in schools that centers traditionally marginalized families and focuses on building more just, culturally-sustaining schools for all students.

[Read: Families Must be Centered in Education Policymaking, Not Used as Puppets](#)

## We're Hiring!

### Full-Time Position

- Senior Policy Researcher

### Consultants

- Communications Specialist Consultant
- IDRA EAC-South Consultants
- Grant Writer Consultant

[Learn More!](#)

- Computer Science or Game Design Curriculum Consultant

## We're Looking for Interns!

IDRA's internship program is designed for undergraduate and graduate students who will develop work projects and learn with our diverse staff.

Summer positions include

- Communications Intern
- Research Intern
- Educational Practice Intern
- Policy, Advocacy, and Community Engagement Intern



[Learn about internships](#)



## Recent News

### Recent Media Coverage

[Bill would restrict teachers from 'divisive' race lessons in Georgia](#), Doug Richards, 11Alive WXIA Atlanta, February 9, 2022

[State Senate panel advances bill to ban transgender athletes from girls' school sports](#), Ross Williams, Georgia Recorder, February 9, 2022

[Georgia House panel advances broad school voucher plan](#), by Jeff Amy, Atlanta CW 69, February 2, 2022

[School-choice scholarships get initial nod from Georgia House](#), by Nyamekye Daniel, The Center Square, February 1, 2022

### Other News

February 17, 2022 – [Knowledge is Power: Students Testify; Share How Classroom Censorship Laws are Impacting You; Using Primary Resources • \(Español\)](#)

February 16, 2022 – [Representing Texas Communities of Color in the Room Where it Happens – IDRA’s First Education Policy Fellows Reflect on their Experience and the Texas Legislature](#)

February 16, 2022 – [Serving All Students – Promoting a Healthier, More Supportive School Environment](#)

- Plus new [infographic: Corporal Punishment is Violence Against Children](#)

February 15, 2022 – [Black History Month! – Honoring Black Lives and Contributions During Black History Month](#)

February 3, 2022 – [Knowledge is Power: New Guide to Texas Censorship Bill; Fighting Classroom Censorship in Georgia; Advocacy Tools](#) • (Español)

February 2, 2022 – [Georgia Education Policy Update – Advocacy News – Week of January 31, 2022](#)

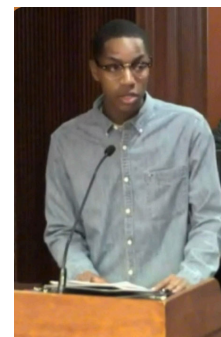
February 1, 2022 – [Meet Paige Duggins-Clay, J.D., IDRA Chief Legal Analyst](#)

## New Videos

[Student Testimony Against Classroom Censorship](#) – Videos added from Georgia

Federal Congressional Testimony

- [Serving All Students – Promoting a Healthier, More Supportive School Environment](#) (written testimony PDF)



IDRA Testimony for Georgia Education

- [Senate Bill 377 Threatens Cuts to School Resources for Students to Thrive](#), February 14, 2022
- [SB 226 Will Prohibit Books for Students From Marginalized Communities](#), February 9, 2022
- [Transgender Students Need Affirmation and Support, Not Exclusion](#), February 9, 2022
- [Schools Should Value Student's Lived Experiences, Not Censor Them](#), February 9, 2022
- [Students Deserve to Attend Fully-Funded, Diverse Public Schools](#), February 1, 2022
- [SB 226 Poses Risks to Curricula that Affirms All Students, Especially LGBTQ Youth](#), January 25, 2022

## New Classnotes Podcast Episodes

[STEM Journeys of Two Young Women of Color – Part 1](#) – Podcast Episode 218

[STEM Journeys of Two Young Women of Color – Part 2](#) – Podcast Episode 219



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The Intercultural Development Research Association is an independent, non-profit organization. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.

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February 28, 2022