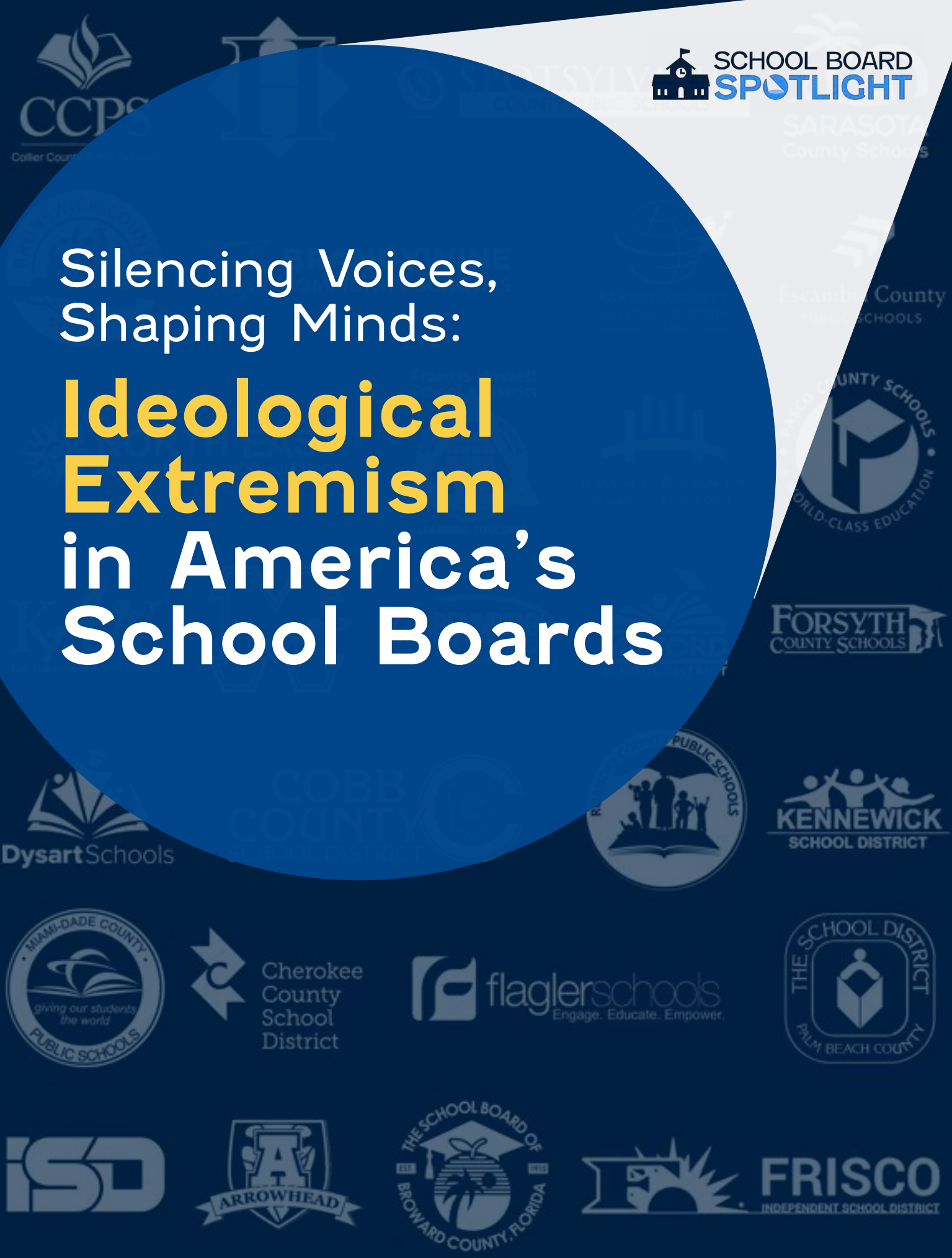


Silencing Voices,
Shaping Minds:
**Ideological
Extremism**
in America's
School Boards



Introduction

School board members are the policymakers closest to America's students, with enormous decision-making power and outsized impact on student lives and education. Across the United States, school board members steward \$800 billion in funds, serving 51 million students in more than 13,000 school districts. They have authority over school policies, curriculum, budget, and other academic, legal, and financial issues that affect student lives and public education broadly. Yet, many of these stewards of our children's education have not only neglected their duties, they've also actively worked to worsen public education in order to further a partisan political agenda.

Despite their nonpartisan responsibility to make sure our kids are safe, supported, and successful in school, school boards have become ideological and political battlegrounds in recent years. In response to the racial justice uprisings of 2020, extremist, right-wing groups and politicians manufactured a moral panic over public school curricula to motivate their base and sell themselves as a political solution ahead of the midterm elections. From banning books, undermining educators who teach our nation's full history, to attacking transgender students and more, these ideologues are putting politics over our children's education.

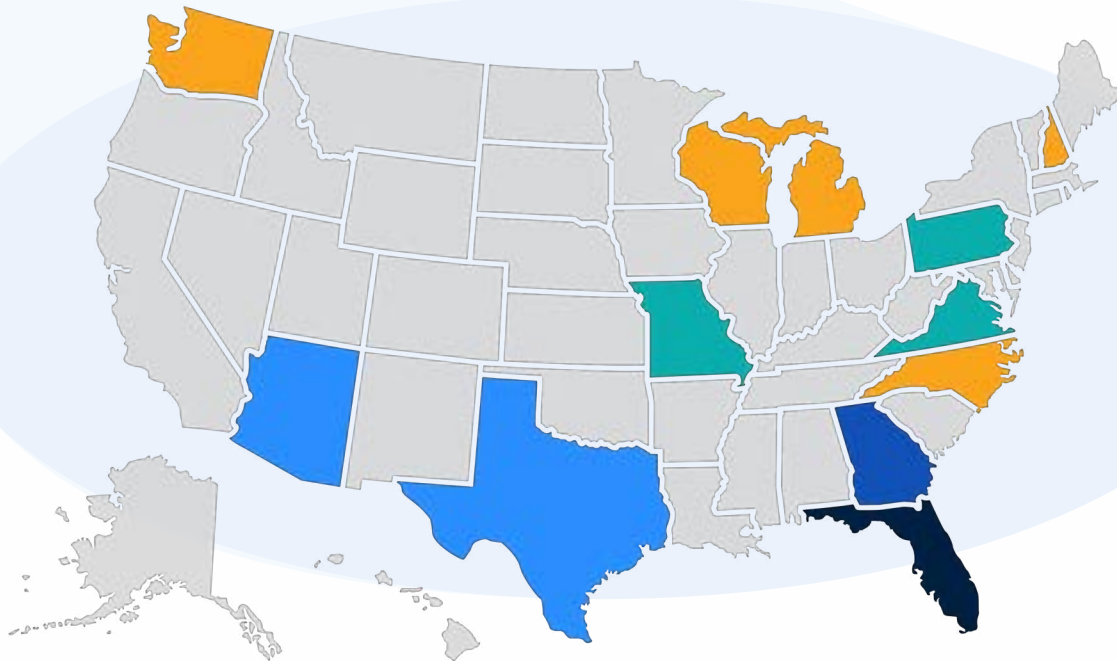
These politically motivated efforts to roll back equity in public education have taken the form of attacks on critical race theory, a legal theory not taught in K-12 settings; diversity, equity and inclusion efforts designed to increasing opportunities for all students no matter who they are or where they come from; and social-emotional learning, a research-backed process that can improve academic performance and help students develop healthy interpersonal relationships. That these terms are well-known to trained educators and education administrators but little known outside of academia made it possible for opponents of education equity to redefine and weaponize them in service of their extremist political agenda. Troublingly, there has been a recent shift to tactics targeting teaching of LGBTQ+ history and attacks on educators and students based on their LGBTQ+ identity. As a result of the ensuing climate of [educational intimidation](#), many schools and libraries have voluntarily pulled potentially controversial books and topics from libraries and curricula out of fear of attack.

According to [PEN America](#), 247 school districts have banned books in just the last two years. And extremist school boards have censored honest education in at least 894 school districts, impacting over 17 million students, or 35% of the K-12 population, by banning or severely restricting the teaching of accurate history, science, sexual education and other core topics. Not buying the misleading argument that these restrictions are simply “protecting the children,” 71% of voters oppose efforts to have books removed from their local public libraries, including a majority of Democrats (75%), independents (58%), and Republicans (70%), according to polling from the [American Library Association](#) (ALA). ALA found that most voters and parents hold librarians in high regard, have confidence in their local libraries to make good decisions about what books to include in their collections, and agree that libraries in their communities do a good job offering books that represent a variety of viewpoints.

These attacks have brought an unprecedented level of partisanship to the work of local school boards compromising the ability of school board members to represent their communities and pass policies that support high quality public education.

The Pipeline Education Fund launched [School Board Spotlight](#) (SBS) to track how harmful policies like book bans and curriculum censorship are advanced by school boards across the U.S. We've commissioned national research to shine a light on the school board members who are putting their political ideologies ahead of America's students. Our mission is to empower parents, families and communities with information on school board members, districts, and harmful policy hotspots so the public is aware and can take action.

Methodology



NOT INCLUDED

LEAST MENTIONS (1)

MOST MENTIONS (8)

This report documents the nearly 30 school districts in 12 states (Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin) that have advanced the greatest number of policy threatening students and public education: book bans, anti-LGBTQ+ policy and rhetoric, and educational censorship.

In the fall of 2023, our researchers identified 262 school boards that had been mentioned in news coverage relevant to our key issues. We then narrowed the districts by reviewing official policies on the boards' websites, minutes, and agendas for comments, actions, and agenda items related to these issues. In addition, we reviewed news or social media coverage of school board members' public statements relevant to the scope issues, and official board policy, minutes, and agendas. Districts were then ranked by the breadth and severity of their and their board members' records on the scope issues.

After the late 2023 school board elections, we reassessed our findings and removed districts which had voted out the most egregious members. We then updated the spotlight district with new information released or publicized in early 2024.

The following research exposes school boards with records of putting politics above students' needs, in the form of book bans, anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric, restrictions to honest education, and refusal to honor or even acknowledge the diversity of our students. Please note that highlighted school boards may include members who do not support book bans, curriculum censorship or anti-LGBTQ+ policies.

SPOTLIGHT

School Boards

All 28 school boards covered in this report can be described as putting politics above students' education. School Boards are ranked in order of most extreme, based on our independent assessment.

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01 FLORIDA Flagler County School Board



Since 2022, the Flagler County School Board has been influenced by multiple extremist groups. At least three candidates who ran for school board in 2022 [received endorsements](#) from the radical 1776 Project, a Political Action Committee focused on providing far-right, “patriotic education.” One incumbent candidate, Jill Woolbright, [received campaign contributions](#) from Moms for Liberty, an extremist organization that supports anti-LGBTQ+ and pro-censorship policies.

In 2023, the Flagler County School Board [removed three books from all shelves in the county, one of which had been requested for removal by Moms for Liberty](#). Later, in the Spring of 2023, Flagler Palm Coast High School removed two books from shelves [without even completing a review of the material](#). As recently as August 2023, Flagler County High Schools has [eliminated AP Psychology](#) because of content regarding “gender identity and sexual orientation.”

The district [gave parents the option to “opt-out” their children](#) from accessing library books, with the option to stipulate exactly which

books their students can check out. A Flagler County School Board member filed a complaint in 2022 with the local sheriff’s office over the content from ‘All Boys Aren’t Blue’ by George M. Johnson, a memoir about growing up Black and LGBTQ+.

Board member Will Furry, [endorsed by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis](#), said in his campaign that DeSantis’ ‘Parental Rights in Education Bill’ [didn’t go far enough](#), and claimed without evidence that Critical Race Theory (a favorite talking point of the far right, not actually taught in high schools) stemmed from [“Marxist ideology.”](#) Member Christy Chong, who was also endorsed by Desantis during her campaign, [supported the Governor’s ‘Don’t Say Gay’ Bill and falsely referred to banned books as “porn.”](#)

In 2023, a Flagler County elementary school was met with outrage from the country when [Black students were singled out and pulled into an assembly due to “underperforming on standardized tests.”](#) Parents reported that the 4th and 5th grade students were told they would end up “dead or in jail” if they did not perform well.

02 MISSOURI Independence School Board



The Independence School Board’s book ban attracted attention for granting significant power to any individual parent or student. If a book’s content related to sex, sexuality, or race was objected to by a single parent or student, it could be [immediately removed from the curriculum or library](#). In 2022, the board made headlines when it voted to ban the book *Cats vs. Robots Volume 1: This Is War*, citing objectionable content due to its inclusion of a gender-nonbinary character.

The school district put in place a policy [requiring parental consent](#) for teachers to use students’ preferred pronouns and [removing students’ ability](#) to display their pronouns on virtual platforms. And in 2021, an incident occurred during a school board meeting in which a mother falsely [called a teacher a “pedophile”](#) for sponsoring a Gender

and Sexuality Club. The School Board President, Denise Fears, did not “correct her or react” at all.

Further, the district [removed a Black Lives Matter poster](#) from a middle school.

In September 2023, former Independence School Board candidate Jason Vollmecke [sued the district](#), claiming that the board had retaliated against him by banning him from public meetings after he expressed opposition to policies intended to restrict discussion of racial or LGBTQ+ rights and support for policies to protect students from COVID-19. In January 2024, a federal judge [found that the Independence School District](#) had likely violated Vollmecke’s civil rights.

03

MISSOURI

Francis Howell R-3 School



In July 2023, the Francis Howell School District Board [revoked an anti-racism resolution](#) that had been in place for several years. The resolution faced [scrutiny from extremist board members](#) and parents who labeled it “woke activism,” using a common right-wing talking point for curriculum dealing with race or racism. In addition, the Francis Howell School Board also [removed anti-racist proclamations](#) from local school hallways. In December 2023, the Francis Howell School Board [voted to eliminate Black history and literature courses](#) from its curriculum. In response, civil rights attorney Ben Crump [called out the district](#) for eliminating courses that local students said they wanted. Within a week, the Francis Howell School Board faced such significant backlash over the decision to remove its Black history and literature courses that [they reinstated the courses](#), with the caveat that the board approve the curriculum as “politically neutral.” In January 2024, students from three local high schools [walked out of class to protest](#) the proposed changes to the district’s Black history and literature courses, voicing concern that the “politically neutral” mandate would whitewash Black history.

Ron Harmon, a school board member, campaigned on removing what he falsely called “[CRT-laced curriculum](#)” from the district. Another member, Adam Bertrand, [ran on a platform that would lead to educational censorship](#) by voicing his [opposition to the inclusion of Black History and Black Literature classes](#). Furthermore, tweets from Adam Bertrand indicated [discriminatory views](#) towards minority communities. Jane Puszkas, a board member, [went on record opposing](#) racially and LGBTQ+-inclusive curriculum. In a video shared on Reddit, she made claims [denying the existence](#) of transgender and nonbinary individuals. In late 2023, the Francis Howell School Board [proposed the prohibition of gender-neutral bathrooms](#) along with the requirement that students use restrooms and locker rooms “based on the sex assigned to them on their birth certificate,” regardless of whether their sex aligned with their gender identity.

The [Francis Howell Families](#) group, known for supporting education censorship, wielded influence amidst these controversies. The group [supported candidates](#) for the school board who shared their views [excluding racially and LGBTQ+-inclusive curriculum](#).

04

FLORIDA

Miami-Dade County School Board



Multiple current Miami-Dade County School Board members have focused on passing book bans and anti-LGBTQ and anti-Black policies in their role as board members. In 2022, [hate group](#) Moms for Liberty-endorsed candidates [Roberto Alonso and Monica Colucci](#) were elected to the Miami-Dade County School Board. In addition to her ties to Moms for Liberty, Monica Colucci [accepted an endorsement](#) from the extremist 1776 Project PAC in her run for the office. In 2023, the Board [elected Colucci as Vice-Chair](#) and Maria Teresa Rojas as Chair. Both were considered by the press to be [allies of Gov. Ron DeSantis](#), who himself led a crusade against racially and LGBTQ+-inclusive curriculum in Florida schools. In 2023, the Miami-Dade School Board added a misleadingly titled [“Parents Bill Of Rights”](#) which broadly, and without clarity, allowed students to be withdrawn from “any instruction regarding sexuality.”

Board Member Roberto Alonso ran for office on the platform of [“protecting female athletes”](#), a phrase meant to dehumanize transgender

athletes, despite no evidence of threat and no plan to protect the safety of female athletes beyond banning some students from participating in school sports. Once elected, he [made it his mission](#), unsuccessfully, to ban LGBTQ+ flags in the classroom. In 2022 and again in 2023, the Miami-Dade School Board [voted against recognizing LGBTQ History Month](#).

The board faced national backlash for book censorship, after a school restricted access to Amanda Gorman’s 2021 presidential inauguration poem.

In June 2023, the Miami-Dade County School Board [voted in favor of investigating](#) the feasibility of implementing a so-called “classical education system” that would emphasize the “centrality of the Western Tradition,” effectively whitewashing its curriculum. In October 2023, the board [continued to discuss](#) the implementation of a curriculum that according to a news report would focus on “white, Western European and Judeo-Christian principles.”

05

FLORIDA

Sarasota County School Board



After a right-wing sweep “flipped” the Sarasota County School Board to a conservative majority in 2022, the board [voted to fire Superintendent Brennan Aspen abruptly](#) despite hours of public comment. In 2023, after openly gay board member Tom Edwards was [subjected to homophobic remarks](#) from two school board meetings’ audiences falsely claimed he was grooming children, none of the board members intervened or commented, and Edwards [walked out of the second meeting](#). The Sarasota County School Board [released a math evaluation plan](#) in 2023 with a focus on removing racially-reflective curriculum, any notion of social justice, and “culturally responsive teaching.” The board allegedly was [considering abolishing the Department of Innovation and Equity](#), which sought to “increase the recruitment of diverse staff.”

In 2022, the extremist 1776 Project PAC [endorsed three candidates](#) for the Sarasota County School Board, which created the current conservative majority on the board. Board Chair Bridget Ziegler co-founded [hate group Moms for Liberty](#) and [helped form the framework](#) of the state’s anti-LGBTQ+ “Don’t Say Gay” bill. Ziegler also [dismissed a Black Lives Matter cartoon](#) created by the school district’s BrainPop platform as “indoctrin[ation].”

In December 2023, the Sarasota County School Board voted 4-1 to pass a resolution calling on Ziegler to resign in the wake of a [sex scandal](#) involving Ziegler and her husband, which she declined to do. In January 2024, the Board continued to push for Ziegler’s resignation, but Ziegler refused to step down despite accurate claims that she is “a hypocrite” due to her purported focus on “family values” and banning “classroom instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity.”

06

FLORIDA

Collier County School Board



Since 2021, The Collier County School Board has taken several actions aligned with racially-exclusionary, anti-LGBTQ+, and book banning movements. In 2021, the Board adopted an official policy [banning critical race theory in classrooms](#), despite it not being taught in Florida schools. In April 2022, the Board rejected [new math textbooks](#) because the books included language around acceptance and tolerance. In [August 2022](#), the school district added actual warning labels “to more than 100 books, many of which touch on issues related to race or the LGBTQ community.” In October 2023, Collier County Public Schools [implemented a policy to ban over 300 books](#) from its school libraries.

In 2022, the extremist school board slate won a “[clean sweep](#)” and the new members pledged to advance additional racially-exclusionary and anti-LGBTQ+ policies. Newly elected Board Member Jerry

Rutherford, known locally for [protesting drag shows](#) and a local LGBTQ+ Pride festival, [publicly stated in 2022](#) that “he’d like to see fewer ‘rights’ for LGBTQ students.” Rutherford, who won with the endorsement of extremist [Florida Citizen’s Alliance](#), also advocated for corporal punishment in schools, including for disabled students, who he claimed were “[out of control.](#)” In 2023, Rutherford also [denounced “ideologies”](#) in school, including “the woke and gay agenda.” Fellow member Tim Moshier won with [hate group Moms for Liberty’s endorsement](#) and member Kelly Richter, who [campaigns against](#) social justice, transgender access bathrooms, discussing the impact of global warming, racial inclusivity, and other issues she derided as “socialist dogma,” won with a [Florida Citizens Alliance endorsement](#).

07

VIRGINIA

Roanoke County School Board



The Roanoke County School Board [implemented a restrictive book review policy](#) over the [opposition of the district's head librarian](#) requiring books already approved for purchase by trained school librarians to be additionally reviewed by a team of materials review librarians. After the new materials review team approves any new books, parents will be given a two-week period to review and challenge books before they are shelved. Opponents of the policy, which the board passed unanimously, voiced concerns that the policy was duplicative, would create an undue burden on library staff, and would make it possible for books to be banned based on a challenge from a single individual.

The district has had a string of contentious public meetings in the past couple years, mostly surrounding policies regarding LGBTQ+ issues. In April 2022, the district [removed questions about sexual behaviors from an age-appropriate risk assessment survey](#) after "some board members raised concerns" about appropriateness. Board member Brent Hudson reportedly was concerned there would be questions about transgender identification on the surveys. At a [board meeting in March 2023](#), a transgender student and her mother described her experience of bullying and depression, and "not one board member acknowledged" their comments and "they barely met her eyes." The board faced criticism during a [May 2023 board meeting](#) for alleged suppression of LGBTQ+ symbols and

stories within schools, after a parent spread word on Facebook that teachers were told they could not display rainbows in their classroom or on their clothing. School system spokesman Chuck Lionberger admitted "[17% of the school's full-time staff](#)" [resigned](#) after the meeting. During a heated meeting in June 2023, a parent falsely accused educators of being sexual predators, prompting [Chair Brent Hudson to shout "Parents' rights,"](#) a phrase that has been a "rallying cry" of [hate group](#) Moms for Liberty, among other political extremists. Despite such behavior, the board [re-elected Hudson as Chair in January 2024](#). In July 2023, the [board passed policies](#) negatively affecting transgender students, requiring parental permission for name and pronoun use and determining sports participation by sex at birth; the public debate over the policies led to two arrests. In September 2023, the U.S. Department of Justice [offered to intervene and "mediate community tension"](#) in the meetings, but the board objected to the language of "community tension" and rejected the offer. By late 2023, the police presence at Roanoke County School Board meetings [had increased dramatically](#), costing additional taxpayer dollars. Notably, Board Chair Brent Hudson was "a major with the local sheriff's office."

In her personal capacity, board member Cheryl Facciani [retweeted a post](#) falsely calling the Black Lives Matter movement "Marxist" and argued the movement sought to "dismantle the family," despite no evidence to back up her claim.

08

PENNSYLVANIA

Hempfield School Board



In 2022, the Hempfield School District put employees on leave following an after-school drag show organized by a high school Gay Sexuality Alliance Club. Later the same year, the district was the [first to implement "Policy 123,"](#) a ban on trans students competing in athletics aligning with their gender identity. This policy, drafted with the help of the far right-wing [Independence Law Center](#), garnered backlash for being discriminatory. The school board president misleadingly described Policy 123 as a "[fairness in women's athletics](#)" policy rather than accurately as an anti-transgender policy. As a result of the policy, a [principal in the district was demoted](#) for supporting trans

participation in athletics. In another instance, the district [temporarily closed middle school locker rooms](#) after a transgender boy requested to change in the boys' locker room.

The school district made it [easier to implement book bans](#), a move supported by the local chapter of [hate group](#) Moms For Liberty. The district [approved a policy](#) which requires [parents receive annual notifications](#) on how to review and challenge lesson materials they find objectionable.

09

TEXAS

Frisco Independent School Board



In June 2023, it was reported that the Frisco Independent School District (FISD) had instituted the [highest number of book bans in Texas](#), totaling [315 titles](#). State Rep. Jared Patterson himself [formally challenged 28 books](#), resulting in the removal of at least five titles from FISD shelves, and [claimed without evidence that Frisco ISD was not doing enough](#) to “keep sexual books away from students.”

Board Trustee Marvin Lowe expressed discomfort with transgender students using restrooms aligning with their gender identity and made derogatory remarks about transgender individuals [at an educational conference](#), where he reportedly had to be escorted out of the room. A transgender student in the school district said that Lowe’s comments made him feel “dehumanized, violated and unsafe.” FISD was subject to [seven complaints](#) to the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights (OCR) in 2022, [including](#)

[complaints filed by the ACLU](#) after the district passed a policy which required students to use bathrooms that matched their sex assigned at birth. Lowe, who was “[vocal about tightening the district’s policy](#) on bathroom rules for transgender students and critical race theory,” stated that he supported this bathroom policy so that students would be “[protected from seeing a student born of the opposite sex using their restroom.](#)”

Lowe, along with fellow board member Stephanie Elad, [gained endorsements from the extremist 1776 Project](#). At least one FISD school board candidate in 2023, Evelyn Lorie-Ann Beauman-Brooks of District 14, [ran on a platform](#) of transphobia, anti-vaccine and pro-educational censorship rhetoric.

10

FLORIDA

Palm Beach County School Board



In May of 2021, the Palm Beach County School Board [removed its “Commitment to Dismantling Structures Rooted in White Advantage”](#) from their equity statement after backlash from extremists.

In an action in 2023, Palm Beach County School Board [banned more than a dozen books](#) that discussed race or included LGBTQ+ content, and also [voted to pass](#) a measure banning students from discussing their sexual orientation or gender identity in school.



11

FLORIDA

Escambia County School Board



More than half of the [1,100 recorded book complaints](#) levied in Florida since July 2022 have come from Escambia County. The Escambia County School Board has [restricted over 100 books](#) since 2022 due to broadly defined “sexual content”, and has banned at least ten titles because of LGBTQ+ related material, [including the popular children’s book *And Tango Makes Three*](#), due to its depiction of a same-sex penguin couple. Other banned books [included](#) *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, *All Boys Aren’t Blue*, and *When Aiden Became a Brother*, which were reportedly challenged by [teacher Vicki Baggett](#), who falsely claimed the books would lead to “indoctrination” and were being pushed by the “LGBTQ agenda.” In June of 2023, the Escambia County School Board [adopted a new rule](#) on an emergency basis requiring the restriction of reading material that “depicts or describes sexual content” in classroom libraries.

Escambia County has overruled the district’s own media specialists regarding access to books. District 1 Representative Kevin Adams asked the superintendent to “quarantine or remove from circulation” challenged books, which The New York Times described as “[short-circuiting](#)” the review process. This behavior [led to a lawsuit](#) filed by

PEN America and Penguin Random House. In January 2024, a federal judge [rejected a motion to dismiss](#) the case. However, in the same month, the Escambia County School District [pulled dictionaries and encyclopedias](#) from schools to be reviewed for “inappropriate” content, along with over 1,600 other books slated for potential bans.

The Escambia County School Board’s anti-LGBTQ+ policies extend beyond banning books, as the Board amended the Elementary and [Secondary School](#) Student Codes of Conduct to impose bathroom restrictions based on “sex.” This new amendment would punish transgender students who use a bathroom aligned with their gender identity.

Board members [Kevin Adams](#) and [Paul Fetsko](#) both campaigned on platforms that would lead to curriculum censorship. Adams stated that he was making “combatting the woke agenda from infiltrating our schools” a top priority.

12

GEORGIA

Cherokee County School Board



In May 2021, the Cherokee County School Board took on an extremist race-based agenda by [unanimously voting](#) to ban “Critical Race Theory,” despite the academic concept not being taught in classrooms, and the New York Times’ 1619 Project, which focused on the consequences of slavery in America. One month later, a newly-hired Cherokee County diversity administrator [withdrew her acceptance of the role](#) after community members on social media claimed she was “hired to implement Critical Race Theory.” Before the 2022 Cherokee County School Board election, the extremist 1776 Project PAC [circu-](#)

[lated mailers](#) supporting pro-censorship candidates. In the same year, parents lobbied the Cherokee County School Board to ban [more than 200 titles](#) from school libraries. As of 2023, the county had an [active local chapter](#) of [hate group](#) Moms for Liberty.

Longtime Cherokee County School Board Member Rick Steiner made [transphobic comments](#), calling a trans wrestler a “piece of filth.” Steiner remained on the Cherokee County School Board.

13

GEORGIA

Cobb County School Board



In June of 2021, the Cobb County School Board [voted to approve a resolution](#) refusing to implement racially inclusive and historically accurate curricula. The resolution was brought forward by [then-Chair Randy Scamihorn](#). In 2022, Board Chair David Chastain [doubled down a ban on transgender participation](#) in athletics, comparing the exclusion to three-strikes laws, saying, “that is going to be one of the risks, or let’s call it one of the costs, of choosing to be transgender. [...] We make certain choices that may exclude us from opportunities in the future. For example, you commit three felonies, there are certain employers that...aren’t going to hire you because of a felony.” In August 2023, the Cobb County School Board [voted to fire a teacher](#) who read a book on “gender fluidity” to her 5th-grade class.

Board member Scamihorn also supported the Georgia High School Association’s [Transgender Athlete Ban](#). Board member Chastain also reiterated that he had “[personal qualms](#)” with transgender athletes. In December 2023, a whistleblower tip sparked an investigation which [found that Cobb County School District employees Julian Coca, Eric Rauch, and Jon Floresta](#) had ties to the anti-LGBTQ+ group American Vision, an Southern Poverty Law Center-designated hate group run by [Gary DeMar](#) and based in Cobb County. The group [espoused a theocratic vision of American government](#) based on “Old Testament Law.”

14

TEXAS

Katy Independent School Board



Katy Independent School District [ranked fourth in Texas for the most number of books banned](#) - and even [considered removal](#) of children’s biographies of Michelle Obama and Black Olympian Wilma Rudolph. In September 2023, the Katy ISD [banned 14 books for reasons it refused to make public](#), including titles by classic children’s authors Dr. Seuss, Eric Carle, and Judy Bloom.

The district [prohibited transgender students](#) from accessing bathrooms and locker rooms that aligned with their gender identity and [mandated pronouns used for all people on campus](#) to match their sex assigned at birth, with a member of the board falsely claiming the policies were “[protecting children](#).” Meanwhile, the district [blocked student access to websites on LGBTQ+ issues](#), including of the

LGBTQ suicide prevention nonprofit The Trevor Project. In December 2023, a student activist group [filed a formal Title IX complaint against the Katy ISD](#), arguing that the district’s recently enacted policies on gender were discriminatory.

The board — at least [three of whom are endorsed](#) by Texans for Educational Freedom, which claims children are subjected to “[radical indoctrination](#)” — voted 4-3 to force teachers to “out” transgender students to their parents. Additionally, Katy ISD school board member Mary Ellen Cuzela follows the radical anti-transgender group [Gays Against Groomers](#) on Twitter.

15

PENNSYLVANIA

Mars Area School Board



In 2021, the Mars Area School Board [unanimously](#) implemented a ban on teaching racially inclusive curricula and introduced a “patriotism” amendment to the district’s mission statement. This amendment, in part, sought to prevent the teaching of concepts that might cause “guilt or anguish based on race, sex, or religion,” and asserted the district’s commitment to avoiding “indoctrination” in a specific social or political ideology or theory, suggesting that factual teaching of different concepts and theories has no educational purpose and is by definition indoctrination.

In 2023, the school district, along with two other districts, [filed a lawsuit](#) to challenge education guidelines incorporating ‘Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Education (CRSE).’ These guidelines [encouraged teachers to engage in challenging conversations](#) regarding conscious and unconscious biases, microaggressions, and societal power structures.

16

WASHINGTON

Kennewick District 17 School Board



Kennewick board member Micah Valentine argued against [comprehensive sex education](#), calling such education “[dangerous](#)” and saying it would turn children into “[sexual predators](#).” In November 2023, “[parental rights](#)” activists [Brittany Gledhill and Josh Miller joined the board](#), promising to bring “a more conservative approach to school issues.” During his campaign, Josh Miller [argued that the pride flag was too divisive for schools](#).

The Board also passed a policy in August 2022 unanimously which emphasized that students should not be “indoctrinated into the belief that the U.S. is fundamentally or systemically racist.” [Valentine](#) and fellow board member Gabe Galbraith supported racially-exclusionary policies, with Galbraith arguing the racially-inclusive curriculum was “[hateful and divisive](#).” Earlier that year, the Kennewick District 17 School Board began reviewing books in their libraries following “[community complaints](#)” regarding several books.

Furthermore, Valentine advocated for the influence of Christianity in public education, suggesting that children need “[a testimony in Christ](#)” to succeed and commenting that God “[put women in charge](#)” of children.

17

WISCONSIN

Arrowhead Union School Board



The Arrowhead Union School Board passed a policy in October 2022 [requiring parental consent](#) for students to change the names or pronouns they use at school, potentially outing youth to their families and endangering them in homes not accepting of LGBTQ+ identities. During a board meeting in [March 2023](#), community members called for the repeal of policies related to pronoun usage, nondiscrimination, bullying, and mistreatment of transgender students.

The board [prohibited the teaching of critical race theory](#)—which was already not being taught in classrooms—through a policy passed in March 2022.

In July 2023, the board [implemented a ban](#) on displaying signs deemed “divisive,” including pride flags. The school board proceeded to eliminate LGBTQ+-inclusive “safe space” stickers, despite [opposition from over 300 students](#) who signed a petition against the ban, opting to draft a new policy.

In 2023, a Wisconsin chapter of [hate group](#) Moms for Liberty [endorsed Arrowhead Union School Board candidates Chris Farris and Amy Hemmer](#). Both went on to win their elections and [serve as Board Vice-President and Clerk](#), respectively. In January 2024, Board Clerk Amy Hemmer [authored an op-ed](#) in which she minimized the severity of the January 6th insurrection in the U.S. Capitol, arguing that the “real attack on democracy” was hatched by President Obama and continued by the Biden administration.



18

FLORIDA

Duval County Public School Board



Soon after [hate group](#) Moms For Liberty claimed to have “[flipped](#)” the Duval County School Board in 2022 to their preferred candidates, the school board [pulled 176 books](#) off the shelves for consideration of a book ban. Then, in 2023, the school board launched a [review of all 1.6 million titles](#) in the district’s libraries. The school board reportedly [fired a substitute teacher](#) in 2023 after Gov. Ron DeSantis called the teacher’s tweet about the removal of books at his school a “fake narrative.” In 2023, the school district [acknowledged](#) having reviewed books for “sexual orientation and gender identity” and racism, including books about Major League Baseball Hall of Fame inductees Roberto Clemente and Hank Aaron, which reports showed were [removed](#). In January 2024, several local organizations [banded together to rally](#) in support of returning banned books to libraries.

In April 2023, the Duval County School Board passed a trans-exclusionary policy, banning transgender students from using restrooms

or locker rooms that correspond with their gender identity. The [policy states](#) that: “Restrooms and lockers must be separated by sex assigned at birth in Duval County Public Schools - a reversal of the district’s previous guidance.” In August 2023, the District went further, [banning Advanced Placement \(AP\) Psychology courses](#) from its high schools because of their content regarding “gender identity and sexual orientation.”

After the school board flip in 2022, [hate group](#) Moms for Liberty has continued to advocate within the county, [advising Governor DeSantis](#) on crafting a “list of school board seats to flip in 2024 including two in Duval County.” The Duval County School Board is directly influenced by hate group Moms for Liberty, as school [board member April Carney](#) held “concurrent roles in the groups Moms for Liberty and Florida Conservative Coalition of School Board Members.”

19

ARIZONA

Dysart USD 89 School Board



Following the 2022 election of Dawn Densmore and Jennifer Drake, school board members linked with the extremist group [Purple for Parents](#), Arizona's Dysart USD 89 School Board firmly established its alignment with the racially-exclusionary and anti-LGBTQ+ school board movements. In April 2023, the District chose to [expand its partnership](#) with Arizona Christian University (ACU) in spite of public controversy over the school's inclusion of anti-LGBTQ+ principles in their student handbook. ACU's [handbook](#) include gender but did not include sexual orientation in its non-discrimination policy and included a definition of marriage as "between one man and one woman."

In the same month, the district [banned teachers](#) from attending conference sessions "on critical race theory or social and emotional learning." The policy required teachers to sign an acknowledgment and instructed supervisors to review conference agendas.

In November 2023, the Dysart School Governing Board [voted 3-2](#) to [eliminate all social worker positions](#) after the 2023-2024 school year, with Chrystal Chaffin, Dawn Densmore, and Jennifer Drake voting in support. In December 2023, the Board [unanimously elected](#) Dawn Densmore as President and Christine Pritchard as Clerk. Also in December 2023, the Dysart board [received support](#) from Arizona Woke Schools, an extremist organization claiming to "expose leftist indoctrination & woke ideas."

20

NORTH CAROLINA

Brunswick County School Board



In 2014, the board initially [voted to remove "The Color Purple"](#)—which depicts the life of a Black woman—claiming its content was explicit, at the request of Brunswick County Commissioner Pat Sykes, who called the book "filthy" and "immoral." The board later reinstated the book, saying that members had been confused by the original proceedings. Then in September 2021, the school district amended its policy to [explicitly ban critical race theory](#) (which was not being taught in the district's classrooms) as an unapproved "social theory," aiming to prevent "opinion or conjecture" in education—a policy which could lead to confusion and the avoidance of any discussion about race in the classroom. In the 2022 election, Steve Gainey, [who ran on racial-exclusionary platform, secured a seat](#) on the Brunswick County School Board, vowing to oppose what he deemed liberal educational trends. In 2023, Gainey [argued that the district did not have enough "nonprofessional educators."](#) At the same time, Gainey [called for a review on the district's sexual education curriculum](#), arguing that it did not sufficiently emphasize abstinence and that its "tone" was too crass, callous, and graphic. In January 2024, former Board of

Education candidate Lavar Marlow [expressed that he agreed with the Board's "examination of curricular and library material,"](#) falsely claiming that "some curricula are almost pornographic in nature." Similarly, the Brunswick County Board of Education [required that students receive parental consent](#) before being permitted to access medically accurate information about contraceptives or abortion.

Recently, the Brunswick Board of Education approved [a letter of support](#) for the "North Carolina Parents' Bill of Rights," a bill which faced criticism for its policies regarding names and pronouns, and its promotion of educational censorship. Additionally, in September 2023, the board enacted a policy [requiring school staff to notify parents when a student changes their name or pronoun](#), potentially endangering students in homes unsupportive of their LGBTQ+ identity. The [modified suite of policies](#) also prohibited "instruction on gender identity, sexual activity or sexuality" for kindergarteners through the fourth grade.

21

TEXAS

North East Independent School Board



In 2022, the North East Independent School Board (NEISD) topped a Houston Chronicle list for [banning or reviewing the most books, with 119 books banned out of 431 reviewed](#). The school district revealed that the School Health Advisory Committee, responsible for reviewing sex education materials, [employed a filtering tool associated with anti-LGBTQ+ hate group](#) Family Watch International.

School Board Members Diane Sciba Villarreal and Marsha Landry [received endorsements from the extremist Parents United for Freedom](#), an organization claiming to [“defend and protect parental rights”](#)

while “reclaiming” schools for the right. Member Steve Hilliard [also had ties to Parents United for Freedom](#). In 2023, following the death of a board member, several sitting board members supported [Jacqueline Klein](#), who had ties to [hate group](#) Moms for Liberty.

The husband of Crystal Keen, a member of the NEISD school health advisory council, [“served time for participating in the Jan. 6, 2021 assault on the U.S. Capitol.”](#) Keen’s appointment to the advisory council was approved by the NEISD board in August 2023.

22

MICHIGAN

Brandywine Community School Board



In March of 2023, the Brandywine School Board voted to suspend the addition of any book they considered explicit from entering middle school and high school libraries in the county. In June 2023, the board then voted to create a so-called [“explicit material book review committee”](#) in order to evaluate existing library books. The board proceeded to [ban 30 books](#) from school library shelves. During a school board meeting debating the book bans, the board [played a ten minute video](#), “The Porn Pandemic,” produced by [Family Watch International](#), an anti-LGBTQ+ fundamentalist Christian lobbying group that opposes sex education, LGBTQ+ rights, and birth control. In September 2023, the Brandywine Community School Board [adopted a policy to require parental consent](#) for middle and high school students to access certain books, which would additionally require parents to review excerpts from “all books in question” before being able to grant their children access. In late 2023, the Brandywine Community School Board [opted to lift its restrictions on “violent” books](#) but left intact its restrictions on “sexually explicit” texts.

[We The Parents](#), an organization backed by the extremist 1776 Project PAC, supported four Brandywine County School Board candidates in 2022, flipping the board to an extremist majority. A [campaign video](#) posted to the We The Parents Facebook page, showed then-candidate for Brandywine School Board, Thomas Payne, describes discussions related to race in the classroom as “garbage,” and saying students are “being told they are the oppressor if they’re a different skin color than the oppressed.”

In January 2024, the Brandywine Community School Board met to [discuss the potential implementation](#) of a potentially historically incomplete curriculum that reportedly came from “a private, Christian university.”

23

VIRGINIA

Hanover County Public Schools



In August 2022, the school board in collaboration with the [hate group](#) Alliance Defending Freedom [approved a policy](#) requiring trans students to go through a complex process in order to access restrooms aligning with their gender identity. The process involves submitting personal and medical information for approval. The board also [disbanded the Community Equity Advisory Board](#), intended to provide recommendations on equitable practices and community engagement. In November 2023, the Hanover School Board [made revisions to its policies on pronoun use and extracurricular activities](#), which requires students to use the pronouns “identified in student records” and restricts access for trans students to fully participate in sex-segregated extracurricular activities.

In July 2022, the NAACP [called for the removal of board member Johnny Redd](#), citing Redd’s opposition to renaming schools that were named after Confederate generals Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson.

In June 2023, the Hanover County Public Schools board approved a contentious new library materials policy that [gave the board sole discretion on banning books](#). This move resulted in the removal of 19 books from Hanover schools, including titles by popular authors John Green and Toni Morrison. In November 2023, [the Board voted to ban 72 books from Hanover county schools](#).

24

FLORIDA

Broward County School Board



The Broward County School Board sought to advance anti-LGBTQ+ and pro-book ban policies in schools even before the election of Brenda Fam, who [received](#) support from Proud Boys and [attended](#) a so-called “Protect the Children” rally in 2022. In October of that same year, Broward County school libraries [removed or restricted eleven books](#) identified by [hate group Moms for Liberty](#) as including generally “sexually explicit” or LGBTQ+ content. Even though a [report released in November 2022 indicates](#) that the district’s Chief Academic Officer may have removed the books without the input of the school board, journalist Judd Legum noted that the district had [not reshelved any of the books](#) as of August 2023. Further, in March 2023, the [Board considered](#) pulling chapters related to LGBTQ+ topics and birth control from sex education textbooks. The policy remained [“under development”](#) as of September 2023.

In January 2022, in [response to a planned student](#) protest over insufficient COVID-19 safety policies, the Broward County School Board issued “a series of warnings to the students and threatened them with retaliation,” leading the students to cancel the protest.

In November 2023, Broward students [staged a walkout](#) after staff were removed “over allegations that a transgender [girl] student was allowed to play in a girls’ volleyball team.” The staff members were reportedly investigated under a state law that “prohibits transgender students from playing on girls’ sports teams.”

25 GEORGIA Forsyth County School Board



In 2023, Forsyth County Schools initially banned eight books, but allowed seven of them to return after consideration. *All Boys Aren't Blue*, a memoir about a gay Black man, remained banned. In May of 2023, the [U.S. Department of Education found](#) that the Forsyth County School Board's book ban "may have created a hostile environment that violated federal laws."

In 2022, [now-Board Member Mike Valdes](#) said he [sought to ban](#) what he inaccurately deemed were books containing "pornography" and books with "racist views against white people" from the county's schools. Valdes, a member of racially exclusionary organization No Left Turn in Education, has also since made a ["pledge to continue to fight against CRT,"](#) a legal theory not taught in Forsyth County classrooms, but used here to mean any discussion of race. Another BOE

member, Wes McCall, [supported Governor Brian Kemp's signing of a law](#) that banned books in Georgia schools. McCall stated in 2022 that he intended to continue working to keep [race-based discussions] out of classrooms.

In September 2023, author Marc Tyler Nobleman was scheduled to speak to kids in Forsyth County about the history of Batman, when he decided to [cancel his appearance](#) after the district insisted he remove a portion of the presentation that discussed the Batman creator's relationship with his gay son. Forsyth County schools spokesperson Jennifer Caracciolo said that the prospect of the presentation "led to questions from students, meaning Nobleman and students might discuss sexuality without parents being warned."

26 GEORGIA Bartow County School Board



When the five candidates who ran for Bartow County School Board's two open seats in the 2022 election were asked about their stances, all five [indicated opposition to accurate discussions of race, and to education on LGBTQ+ issues](#). In May of 2022, Derek Keeney, a long-time representative on the Bartow County School Board, [said that race-based and LGBTQ+ curricula](#) were "inappropriate" and had "no redeeming value for our children." In 2021, Keeney [attended](#) a 'Save America Freedom Tour Rally,' a radically conservative event in Bartow. The event also drew attendees from the hate group the [National Alliance](#), which was named "the most dominant and dangerous hate group in America" by the Southern Poverty Law Center. In 2021, Keeney also said he [supported putting cameras](#) in public school classrooms to monitor teachers.

Another board member, Terry Lee Eggert, created controversy in the county when he [said in 2020](#) that protesters should be "handled with real ammo." In 2010, Bartow County School Board Member Matt Shultz [made an anti-LGBTQ+ statement](#) indicating he did not want gay people serving in the military. In December 2023, the Bartow County School Board [unanimously elected new Superintendent Clint Terza](#). In 2019, while serving as Principal of South Cobb High School, Terza [accused Brandell Alison](#), the Black mother of a student, of "causing a disruption" when she confronted him about a report finding that the school's conditions were disgusting, including "rats, rat feces, cockroaches and brown running water."

27

FLORIDA

Pasco County School Board



Pasco County School Board member Al Hernandez was [endorsed by hate group Moms for Liberty](#) and won an open board seat in 2022. Pasco Watch, [an extremist organization](#), also [endorsed candidates](#) in 2022.

In 2023, Pasco County Schools [offered online parental controls](#) on what students could check out of the library. In September 2023, the Pasco County School Board [voted to approve the use of a financial textbook](#) by conservative radio personality Dave Ramsey, which contained references to the Bible. In November 2023, the board [reaffirmed their approval](#) of the Ramsey book.

In January 2023, the Pasco County Schools superintendent [imposed bathroom restrictions](#) for transgender students.

28

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Milford School Board



In 2023, the Milford County School Board engaged in discussions regarding bathroom access for transgender students. Board member Nathaniel Wheeler [proposed requiring students](#) to use bathrooms aligned with their sex assigned at birth. Ultimately, the board [retained its policies](#), allowing students to choose bathrooms corresponding to their gender identity, but “compromised” by [removing urinals from men’s bathrooms](#). Wheeler [homeschools his own children](#).

In 2022, amid “uncertainty over what the procedures were” regarding book challenges, Milford High School’s superintendent removed the book ‘Gender Queer’ from school shelves, but it was [eventually reinstated](#).

In 2022, the board passed a measure [enabling parents to request the removal of specific books and instructional material](#) from the educational curriculum.



Conclusion

The conservative politicization of school boards across the country has led to concerning efforts and dangerous policies to restrict access to diverse viewpoints in school libraries, devalue the experiences of students of color, and promote conservative values at the cost of honest education. These efforts, often spearheaded by well-funded national groups like hate group Moms for Liberty, reflect a broader trend of attempting to shape public discourse and education through censorship. However, it's important to note that the majority of voters, including Democrats, Republicans, and independents, oppose such measures, indicating that these attacks do not necessarily reflect the values and priorities of communities.

This underscores the importance of a responsive, reflective democracy, where policies and decisions align with the interests and beliefs of the people they affect. The only way we will

counter these attacks on our children's ability to learn is for local voices across the country to organize, educate their communities about these issues, and advocate for policies that reflect their needs. This involves not only being informed about what's happening locally but also actively participating in civic processes, showing up to meetings, and demanding policies that promote inclusivity and respect for diverse perspectives. By doing so, communities can ensure that their voices are heard and that public education is not co-opted by a right wing political agenda, but provides an education that empowers, inspires, challenges, and prepares our kids for success in the classroom, college, and beyond.

