

Below are sample talking points developed by the ACLU and partners that aim to highlight the importance of protecting free speech in the classroom:

Censorship and the First Amendment

Topline Message:

- All students have a right to read and learn free from censorship.

Supporting messages:

- All students have a First Amendment right to read and learn about the history and viewpoints of all communities — including their own identity — inside and outside of the classroom.
- Classroom censorship efforts work to effectively erase the history and lived experiences of women, people of color, and LGBTQ people and censor discussions around race, gender, and sexuality that impact people's daily lives.
- The First Amendment protects the right to share ideas, including educators' and students' right to receive and exchange information and knowledge.
 - All young people deserve to be able to see themselves and the issues that impact them reflected in their classrooms and in the books they're reading.
- All students benefit from having access to inclusive teaching where students can freely learn and talk about the history, viewpoints, and ideas of all communities in this country.
- Every student has the right to receive an equitable education and have an open and honest dialogue about America's history.

Protecting Educators

Topline message:

- It's critical to protect educators' and students' rights to talk and learn about issues like race and gender in schools.

Supporting messages:

- The ability to discuss and debate ideas, even those that some may find uncomfortable, is a crucial part of our democracy
- Principles of academic freedom protect the ability to make teaching choices without government interference on partisan and discriminatory bases.
- Instead of encouraging learning, this policy effectively silences educators and students from talking about issues of profound national importance.
- The fear of retaliation can create a chilling effect, leading teachers to self-censor and barring students from exposure to broader perspectives that equip them to navigate an increasingly diverse world.

Transparency in Education/Parental Rights:

Topline message:

- Families have the right to opt their child out of select teachings, but no family has the right to control what other children are allowed to learn, including content about race and racism, sexuality and gender expression.

Secondary messages:

- The ACLU has long supported transparency in education. But policies like this are not about transparency. They're an attempt to overburden educators and undermine efforts at inclusive education.
- Families can and should understand what their children are being taught in school. But allowing any family to object to an entire curriculum unfairly burdens educators and undermines inclusive education efforts.
- These types of policies are about prohibiting educators and students from not only expressing, but even discussing, viewpoints around critical issues like racism and sexism that are disfavored by certain decisionmakers.
- Parental involvement is critical for student success in school. But these policies are vague and undermine inclusive education efforts in our country.

School Board Responsibilities:

- Local school boards — in nearly all jurisdictions composed of directly elected members — have the most significant control of any level of government on the day-to-day operations of schools.
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- In most localities, school boards have broad authority to:
 - Set policy and oversee budgets;
 - Oversee the day-to-day operations of the schools within the district;
 - Make personnel decisions;
 - Set curricula within state guidelines; and
 - Oversee training and professional development for staff.