

Learn from History

Toolkit for Parents

Thank you for joining this important effort to stand up for teachers and ensure that students can learn accurate, thorough, and fact-based history in our schools.

More than ever, students need to learn from history to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past, succeed in diverse workplaces, and help create a better society for all of us. Our schools have a unique responsibility to ensure that students understand U.S. history, reject racism, and respect the equal value of every person.

We cannot afford to ignore the rampant spread of misinformation about what is being taught in classrooms or put additional stress on our teachers after a very difficult year. Nor can we allow educators to be attacked, censored, or pressured into brushing past difficult parts of our history or omitting them entirely. Instead of fining teachers for telling the truth, banning conversations about race, or removing requirements to teach about key moments in history, we need to trust teachers to teach and give them the support and resources necessary to do their jobs.

In this toolkit, you'll find information that will help you respond to questions about these topics. You'll also find multiple ways you can get involved.

You can make a big difference for our students and our teachers at a moment when schools are under an unprecedented attack. Here are a few ways you can help:

- 1 Ask other parents to join our effort** by texting "TRUTH" to 67076. Additional information is included in this toolkit to help you make those asks.
- 2 Participate in events in your community.** Join others in your community to send a message about the need for accurate and thorough history in our schools. After September 8, go to LearnFromHistory.org.
- 3 Share your story.** Whether you are worried about your child being denied an accurate history education, concerned about the additional stress being put on teachers, or are just frustrated by all the misinformation out there, we want to hear from you. After September 8, go to LearnFromHistory.org.
- 4 Write a letter to the editor.** Help to inform your community by writing a letter to the editor of your local paper. Guidance for submitting a letter to the editor is included in this document.

Background

AMERICANS AGREE WITH LEARN FROM HISTORY'S CORE BELIEFS

Extensive recent survey research confirms a broad bipartisan majority of Americans:

- Want students to learn a thorough, accurate, and fact-based account of American history.
- Trust teachers to thoughtfully teach the hard parts of history.
- Believe racism is widespread and harmful to society and that schools have a responsibility to teach students that racism is wrong.
- Want to reduce political division and rancor.

A NATIONAL PUSH FOR HARMFUL RESTRICTIONS IS GROWING

At the state and school board level, harmful and chaos-creating efforts to censor teachers, ban lessons about racism, and force schools to brush past the more painful parts of our history are spreading:

- A Texas bill seeks to remove requirements to teach about slavery, the Ku Klux Klan, Native American history, and the writings of Martin Luther King Jr., Susan B. Anthony, and Frederick Douglass.
- In Louisiana and Ohio, vaguely worded bills sought to censor teachers from discussing “divisive concepts,” which could include any aspect of U.S. history related to race.
- A copycat Tennessee law threatens schools that teach so-called “divisive concepts” with a loss of state funding.
- A Pennsylvania bill would authorize any resident and financially incentivize attorneys to sue schools and teachers for teaching about “divisive concepts.”
- In Montana, the Attorney General urged parents to sue schools they believe are teaching antiracism.

These sweeping and unclear restrictions have left teachers fearful and concerned for their students and their careers. If this continues, not only will students be deprived of crucial knowledge, but an already severe teacher shortage could get even worse.

IT'S TIME FOR AMERICANS OF GOODWILL TO STAND TOGETHER

Learn from History has the support of a wide range of education organizations, including:

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| The School Superintendents Association (AASA) | Educators for Excellence | News Literacy Project |
| American Assoc. for State & Local History (AASLH) | Generation Citizen | Not in Our Town |
| American Federation of Teachers (AFT) | inquirED | Org. of American Historians (OAH) |
| American Historical Association (AHA) | Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) | Our Turn |
| Alliance for Excellent Education | Leading Educators | School Board Partners |
| Center for Antiracist Education (CARE) | Nat'l Assoc. of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) | Stand for Children |
| Democracy Prep Public Schools | Nat'l Assoc. for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) | Teach+Plus |
| Diversify Our Narrative | Nat'l Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) | Teach for America |
| The Education Trust | Nat'l School Boards Association (NSBA) | The New Teacher Project (TNTP) |

Key Points to Communicate

More than ever, our kids need to learn accurate and fact-based history so they can avoid repeating mistakes from the past. Schools have a responsibility to teach kids that racism is wrong — not brush past difficult parts of our history.

It really upsets me that people are trying to deprive my child of an accurate history education. We can't expect our kids to learn and heal divisions in this country if we shield them from the truth and omit important parts of our history. I want my child to learn about the contributions and values of all people regardless of race.

Efforts to censor teachers, omit history, and ban conversations about race have gone way too far. In some places, people have tried to remove requirements to teach about slavery, the women's suffrage movement, and Martin Luther King Jr. Others want to fine, sue, and threaten teachers all because of misinformation being spread about what is being taught in our schools. It's gotten completely out of control. Some teachers have even received death threats.

This is happening at the worst possible time. The last year has been difficult on our kids and our teachers, and we already have a teacher shortage in this country. The last thing we should be doing is driving teachers away and increasing class sizes.

QUESTIONS YOU MAY BE ASKED

Are you concerned about your child learning about critical race theory in school? No. Unfortunately, there's a lot of misinformation out there about what is being taught in our schools. I am concerned about efforts to censor teachers, omit history, and ban conversations about race, though. It really upsets me that people are trying to deprive my child of an accurate history education.

Do you oppose efforts to ban critical race theory or the teaching of "divisive concepts"? I'm opposed to censoring teachers, preventing fact-based history instruction, and banning lessons that help students learn that racism is wrong. Unfortunately, that's what most of these efforts do. They go way too far.

How should we address parental concerns about what students are learning? Curriculum decisions should go through the normal, non-political process with input from local educators and parents. Parents need to be able to give feedback and schools should always be looking for ways to improve, but censoring teachers, omitting history, and banning discussions on race is the wrong direction.

Why, suddenly, are people so up in arms? There's a lot of misinformation being spread online about what is being taught in schools, which in almost every case bears no relationship to what is actually being taught, how teachers are teaching, and what students themselves want to learn.

How will this affect your child? I want my child to receive a thorough and fact-based education. I want them to learn

about slavery, women fighting for the right to vote and the civil rights movement in this country. I want them to hear different perspectives from other students and learn that every person has equal value. That won't happen if we start banning history and censoring teachers from telling the truth.

Do you worry that teaching about race will actually lead to more division? No. Ignoring the truth is what leads to division. We need to be honest with our kids and have age-appropriate conversations about race. That's how you learn, make progress, and bring people together.

Do you worry about the distress that discussing race will have on children? Conversations about race and history can sometimes be difficult, but they are an essential part of our children's education. Kids need accurate and thorough history lessons if they are to learn from the past and avoid repeating the same mistakes. We have a responsibility to teach our kids that racism is wrong, and do so in an age-appropriate way that affirms the value of all students. That's how you make progress and bring people together.

I strongly support schools providing a thorough and accurate history education and teaching that racism is wrong and am deeply disturbed by what is happening. Is there anything I can do? Yes! You can use your voice and encourage your family and friends you know to speak up as well. Text "TRUTH" to 67076 to stand up for our ability to teach accurate and thorough history in our schools.

Volunteer and Ask Colleagues and Parents to Send a Text

Getting more people involved will be critical to our success. Here are three quick ways you can get others involved to protect accurate and fact-based history lessons in our classrooms.

- 1 Text 5 people you know and ask them to join this effort.**
Below is a sample text that you can customize:

Hi xxxxx. Hope you are well! I just joined the Learn from History coalition to protect fact-based history in our classrooms. With efforts growing to censor teachers and ban conversations about race, I could use your help. Text "TRUTH" to 67076 to stay informed.

- 2 Print the flyer on the next page of this toolkit and share it with your friends and family.**
Encourage them to join this effort by texting "TRUTH" to 67076.

- 3 Volunteer for a shift to text other parents in your community.**
You can sign up for an online training session and then complete your shift at a time that is convenient for you — all without ever exposing your last name or contact information. Our texting system is easy to use (even if it is your first time doing this type of outreach).
[Go to www.Mobilize.us/LearnFromHistory](http://www.Mobilize.us/LearnFromHistory)

STOP

CENSORING TEACHERS AND BANNING HISTORY



Coordinated efforts around the country are seeking to ban conversations about race in our schools with some states proposing teacher fines and even removing requirements to teach about slavery, women's suffrage, and Martin Luther King Jr.

Now, more than ever, we need to make sure our kids get accurate, thorough, and fact-based history so they can learn from past mistakes, recognize that racism is wrong, and build a better future.

Get Involved

Join the Learn from History effort. Text "TRUTH" to 67076 or sign up at LearnFromHistory.org.

Learn from History is Supported By:

The School Superintendents Association (AASA)
American Assoc. for State & Local History (AASLH)
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
American Historical Association (AHA)
Alliance for Excellent Education
Center for Antiracist Education (CARE)
Democracy Prep Public Schools
Diversify Our Narrative
The Education Trust

Educators for Excellence
Generation Citizen
inquirED
Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP)
Leading Educators
Nat'l Assoc. of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)
Nat'l Assoc. for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE)
Nat'l Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)
Nat'l School Boards Association (NSBA)

News Literacy Project
Not in Our Town
Org. of American Historians (OAH)
Our Turn
School Board Partners
Stand for Children
Teach+Plus
Teach for America
The New Teacher Project (TNTTP)

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Email Your Family and Friends

Subject:

We need accurate and comprehensive history to be taught in schools!

Hi FIRSTNAME,

I want my kids to learn the truth in school about American history -- the good and the tough stuff -- because I want them to know that racism harms all of us.

That's why I recently joined Learn from History, a new, non-partisan coalition of educators, parents, and students across America who are standing up for all of us at a moment when misinformation is fueling efforts to censor teachers, omit history, and ban conversations about race in our schools.

Would you help me protect accurate, thorough, and fact-based history in our classrooms? You can learn more and sign up by texting "TRUTH" to 67076.

I firmly believe it's up to all of us to respond to the dangerous and inaccurate claims about public education that are going unanswered and protect our kids' right to the truth. I hope you'll join me!

Write a Letter to the Editor

Go to LearnFromHistory.org after it launches on September 8 to submit a letter to the editor to your local newspaper or look up submission information through the newspaper's website. When drafting a letter to the editor, follow these steps:

- 1 Refer to a recent story on the subject that was published by the newspaper whenever possible.
- 2 Keep it short (under 200 words).
- 3 Make it personal (explain why this affects you or your community).
- 4 Incorporate information from the "Points to Communicate" section of this toolkit.

Sample Letters to the Editor

The below are examples only. You should personalize your letter and ensure that it is accurate.

The debate about race in our schools has gotten completely out of control, and I'm concerned for my children, their classmates, and their teachers. Rampant misinformation about what is being taught in our classrooms has turned into full blown efforts to censor teachers, omit history and ban conversations about race.

As you pointed out in your Aug. 6 story, "Death Threats and Fights Over Critical Race Theory Have Driven at Least Six Educators to Resign," teachers are under attack. Bills have been filed that attempted to remove requirements to teach about slavery and the writings of Martin Luther King Jr, and there are now people who want to fine teachers if they even bring up race in the classroom.

It's time for people of goodwill to stand up and say enough. Our schools have a responsibility to teach kids that racism is wrong, and we have an obligation to teach accurate and fact-based history so that our children can learn from the mistakes in our past.

I'm a mother of two children in the Madison School District, and I'm really upset about the push to censor teachers and omit important history in our classrooms that you highlighted in your Aug. 10 story, "Teachers, students fear critical race theory resolution could hamper needed discussions." Why should my child be denied an accurate and fact-based education just because misinformation is rampant about what is being taught in our schools? Don't we have a responsibility to teach our kids that racism is wrong?

We desperately need to stop pandering to the most extreme and divisive factions of our society. Bills have been filed in states like Arizona and Texas that would fine teachers for telling the truth and remove requirements to teach about slavery and the writings of Martin Luther King Jr. What's next? Burning books because we don't like what's in them?

I want my kids to know all of our history — both the proud and the painful parts — and I want them to learn from it. It's the only way we're going to make progress and heal divisions in this country.

Learn from History

Share Information About Learn From History on Social Media

After September 8, share Facebook and other social media posts from Learn from History with your followers to reach more people, and encourage others to join us.

Learn from History Social Media Accounts:



@LearnfromHist



@LearnfromHist

Sample Social Posts:

Learn from History, a broad-based bipartisan coalition of parents, students, and educators across America, was formed to stop dangerous and inaccurate claims about public school education - and the harmful state laws and policies that followed. This coalition speaks for a majority of everyday Americans.

Please share the messages below on your social platforms to spread the word about the coalition.



Facebook

1. Learn from History is a coalition of parents, educators, and other concerned Americans who are working together to ensure that all children can learn accurate, thorough, and fact-based history in our schools. Join me in protecting teachers and our classrooms. Text “TRUTH” to 67076.
2. I want my kids to learn the truth at school and I believe we have a responsibility to teach our children that racism is wrong. If you agree, please join me in supporting the Learn From History coalition. Get involved by texting “TRUTH” to 67076 and help spread the word.
3. First, they wanted us to believe in “alternative facts.” Now, the extremists want to censor teachers, omit history lessons, and ban conversations about race in our schools. Join me in saying NO. Text “TRUTH” to 67076 and help spread the word about the Learn From History effort that’s standing up for all of us.

Learn from History



Twitter

1. #LearnFromHistory, a nonpartisan coalition of parents, students, and educators representing the majority of Americans, wasn't to stop efforts to censor teachers, omit history, and ban conversations about race in our classrooms. Keep informed @LearnFromHist
2. I'm tired of extremists trying to deny my child a fact-based education. Kids need to #LearnFromHistory. Say no to efforts to censor teachers and ban conversations about race in schools. Text "TRUTH" to 67076 to get involved and help spread the word.
3. Students deserve an accurate and fact-based account of history now more than ever. Parents, students, educators, and all concerned citizens are invited to follow the @LearnFromHist coalition. Become a supporter, volunteer, or sign up for updates by texting "TRUTH" to 67076.
4. We need to #LearnFromHistory and teach our kids that racism is wrong. Help us put a stop to extremist efforts to censor teachers, omit history and ban conversations about race. Get involved at LearnFromHistory.org or text "TRUTH" to 67076.