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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.

In this edition...

- Students Testify Against Classroom Censorship in Georgia
- Your Story Matters – Share How Classroom Censorship Laws are Impacting Your Community
- Using Primary Resources as Points of Truth
- Advocacy Tools

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



## Students Testify Against Classroom Censorship in Georgia

*By Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D., & Irene Gómez, Ed.M.*

Students in Georgia testified last week against House Bill 1084, a classroom censorship bill that will hinder schools from creating environments where all students feel accepted and valued.

**“Many students in Georgia were taught a white-washed version of history... We need to make sure teachers are better equipped to teach on things like race.”**

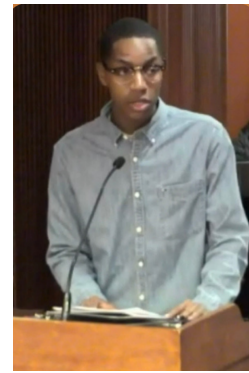
– James Wilson, Georgia Youth Justice Coalition

**“This great state is rooted in some very dark history that is important for us to learn.”**

– Jordan Madden, Georgia Youth Justice Coalition

**"Hiding their history is discarding what history truly is... the purpose of history is to learn from it and what to do in the future to prevent it."**

– Joshua Anthony, Georgia Youth Justice Coalition



Hear more in IDRA's video gallery that showcases students testifying against classroom censorship.

See videos of students testifying



## Your Story Matters – Share How Classroom Censorship Laws are Impacting Your Community

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

We invite you to help us collect stories from parents, students, educators and community members who want to **report on the negative impacts of the classroom censorship bills on learning and engagement.**

**Easy Form: How is classroom censorship affecting you?**

We encourage you to share this form widely with your networks in the hopes that we can better track and support outreach to individuals impacted by these harmful laws going forward.

Why? We know that it has been an increasingly difficult year for educators and school districts with the compounding crisis of COVID-19, staffing shortages, and student and staff mental health unmet needs. Instead of solutions to support children and teachers, state leaders are intent on adding to the chaos by chasing book bans and school censorship legislation.

For example, we have all heard about school leaders cautioning or requiring educators to speak “neutrally” about indisputably horrific instances in our human history, such as the Holocaust or systematic acts of violence against the Black community instigated by white supremacist organizations. We have also heard of attempts at the state level to limit schools’ ability to publish statements in support of Black, Brown, and LGBTQ+ students, in addition to limiting the availability of courses and curricular materials related to civics, race and ethnic studies.

Such actions are unacceptable and potentially unlawful, and IDRA is committed to gathering accounts of incidents of this nature in order to inform our policy, advocacy and community engagement, as well as to assist, where possible, with connecting impacted students, families and educators to resources to combat the harmful impacts of these actions.

We reaffirm that every voice and every story matters, and we want to make sure we are hearing from you about how we can support educators, parents and school communities in response to

efforts to censor your perspective.

Reporting a story will help IDRA's work in many ways, but we will never publish information that would lead to the identification of anyone unless we were in direct contact with the reporting individual(s) and have permission. We look forward to hearing from you!



## Using Primary Resources as Points of Truth

*By Michelle Martínez Vega*

The practice of using primary sources for teaching history has been part of classroom censorship debates. Primary resources have long since been regarded as points of truth in academic research and classroom learning. Studied carefully for legitimacy and unbiased in their delivery, these sources are neither for nor against an issue. Rather, primary resources simply present factual information for the consumer to develop their own understanding or opinion about the information.

Primary sources are the raw materials of history. Original documents and objects contain immediate, first-hand accounts of an event or time in history. They are different from secondary sources that retell, analyze or interpret events, usually at a distance of time or place. Helping students critically analyze primary sources can prompt curiosity and improve critical thinking and analysis skills.

In the current political climate, teachers today may feel intimidated to speak on a controversial subject. Integrating primary source documents gives the opportunity to bring light to truth rather than responding to the rhetoric of pundits who offer contentious opinions about the past in today's 24-second news cycle. Such commentators often claim to seek truth but refuse to cite actual sources. They ignore historical events or withhold details to suit hidden agendas.

Yet students today have more information at their fingertips than previous generations had access to during their entire academic careers. The Internet provides access to a wealth of information, and it can be daunting for students to go out into the world of academic research without having a solid foundation of information literacy.

What is information literacy? According to the [American Library Association](#), "Information literacy is a set of abilities requiring individuals to 'recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information.'"

Given this definition, how well are students equipped to discern what information they find online as credible and factual? Ultimately, can students tell the difference between real and fake online resources? With the prevalence of misinformation and fake news in online media, how can teachers teach the truth?

These are questions many educators grapple with as they plan lessons. One solution is to provide students with a set of guiding questions that they may use as reference when evaluating resources that they find online. Another option is to provide students with a list of primary resources they can use to begin their research.

With these tools, educators can feel confident that students are learning and forming their own opinions about their world and the historical events that have shaped it. For example, The National Archives provide [document analysis worksheets](#) to help students at every grade level learn to use primary sources using the following steps:

1. Meet the document.
2. Observe its parts.
3. Try to make sense of it.

#### 4. Use it as historical evidence

The following are some examples of where to find primary document sources.

[The Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture](#) – has many free lesson plans.

[Learning History Through Objects: The Founding Documents](#) – a lesson plan that ties the history of enslaved African peoples to U.S. foundational documents to ask an overarching question: How have founding documents supported, protected, or attempted to (or not) reconcile with the concept of liberty and the institution of slavery?

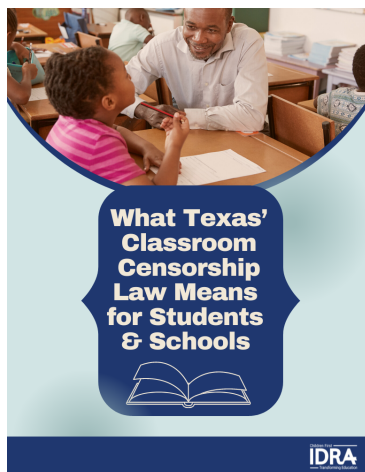
[Library of Congress Digital Collections](#) – has a number of documents on the experiences of enslaved peoples. (Trigger warning: Some of these original documents may contain phrases and words that may cause discomfort to students of color.)

- [American Memory](#)
- [Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936 to 1938](#)
- [Voices Remembering Slavery: Freed People Tell Their Stories](#)
- [Audio Recordings: Slave Narratives](#)

See Questions to Evaluate Online Content



## Advocacy Tools



### Guide to Texas Classroom Censorship Bill

IDRA's detailed guide of the Texas law (Senate Bill 3) contains analysis and our interpretation for how components of the law affect teachers and school personnel and what this means for continuing to teach the truth in schools. Educators should still consult with their district administration for local policies and procedures related to instruction, curriculum and school activities.

See Texas SB 3 School Guide

## Lessons Learned from our Classroom Censorship Advocacy

We actively opposed classroom censorship policies, including leading a large coalition in Texas, participating in national strategy meetings, and working with partners to oppose bills filed in Georgia. As our fellow advocacy organizations continue to fight against classroom censorship in

their states and communities, our hope is that the lessons we learned and tools we used in our advocacy can help support others' inclusive, community-centered work.




## See Advocacy Guide (PDF)



## Building Supportive Schools from the Ground Up

IDRA's report highlights how school districts can use federal funds to invest in strategies that ensure culturally-sustaining schools for all students. The strategies were identified during IDRA's community sessions with young people, families, advocates and other education experts.

## See Report PDF



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.

Reach Out To Us

