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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.

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



## Georgia School Leaders Provide Counter Measures to Classroom Censorship Efforts

*By Terrence Wilson, J.D.*

School censorship laws and policies [swept throughout the U.S. South](#) during the last year, particularly in state legislatures and state school boards. However, there are still many local education leaders who have spoken out or passed their own measures affirming the importance of giving students the tools they need to understand issues of race and discrimination in this country. Below are three examples.

### Atlanta Public Schools (Georgia)

In response to a Georgia State Board of Education [resolution](#) that seeks to limit the understanding and discussion of issues of racism and prejudice, the Atlanta Public School Board chair and superintendent released a [joint statement](#) highlighting its measures aimed at ensuring race is understood in the district's schools. These include a district equity policy, a resolution on

racial equity, and the establishment of a Center for Equity & Social Justice. School officials stated: “If we are to truly educate our children in a manner that enables them to become engaged citizens, laboring to create a more perfect union, then we must provide them with an honest understanding of our history.”

### **Marietta City Schools (Georgia) Board**

The Marietta City School Board’s affirmation of the need for diversity, equity and inclusion in education pre-dates the Georgia State School Board’s resolution. In July 2020, as part of the response to nationwide demands for recognition of the importance of Black lives, the school board passed a [Resolution Affirming Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#). The resolution acknowledges the lived experience of the district’s students and staff of color and asserts its commitment to continuous improvement to ensure their success.

### **Birmingham City Schools (Alabama) School Board**

The Birmingham School Board responded to its state school board’s [classroom censorship resolution](#) with its own [resolution](#) to condemn racism and to advance equity. The resolution calls for the creation of a racial equity plan, culturally responsive resources and development for educators, and an active effort to identify discriminatory policies and practices.

These are just a few examples from the South that show that school and district leaders can counter the pervasive narrative around school censorship by affirming the worth of their students and staff of color and by committing to culturally responsive educational policies and practices.



## **Get Involved in Changes to the Texas Social Studies Standards**

*By Dr. Chloe Latham-Sikes*

The Texas Education Agency needs [input and interested reviewers](#) to make changes to the K-12 social studies learning standards, also known as the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). The Texas Legislature passed changes to the social studies TEKS and instruction earlier this year through HB 3979 (in the 2021 regular session) and then SB 3 (in the legislature’s second special session).

Lawmakers pushed these bills through with minimal opportunities for community input. Educators, parents and other community members can influence how these changes affect Texas classrooms by sharing input and becoming workgroup reviewers.

### **Complete a Survey to Share Your Input**

TEA is collecting information from educators and other interested individuals on how the social studies learning standards should be changed. One way you can provide input is to complete TEA’s [survey](#) about the Texas social studies learning standards. Survey questions include ranking the importance of teaching certain main subject areas, such as world history, geography and U.S. History, assessing how sufficiently key social studies concepts are included in current standards, and providing input on how to make social studies TEKS comprehensive and grade-appropriate.

### **Apply to Become a Workgroup Reviewer**

TEA also needs workgroups of interested and committed people to develop recommendations to the social studies TEKS. Workgroups operate on a rolling basis and will provide key recommendations for the State Board of Education to review before adopting changes to the social studies TEKS. If you are interested, you will need to fill out an [online application](#), which reportedly takes 30 to 45 minutes to complete.



# The Importance of Teaching All Truths (Part 1)

*By Hector Bojorquez*

There has never been a time in U.S. education when standards, objectives and curricula were not embroiled in some controversy. The first American reader “The New England Primer” published in 1690, had a sole purpose to teach everyone to read the Bible. Some 50 years later, Benjamin Franklin formed the American Philosophical Society to further education, science and the secular ideas of the Enlightenment. This society influenced many of the founding fathers and mothers, including Thomas Jefferson. Simply, controversies around these contradictory purposes in U.S. education have been with us since the beginning.

Thomas Jefferson embodies those and other controversies to this day. He has become one of the most polarizing personalities in U.S. history because of his nonconsensual exploitation of enslaved woman, Sally Hemmings, and the very fact that he owned slaves. These are absolutely important facts that should be taught about Thomas Jefferson. We should also teach that he held racist personal views and that while he thought that slavery was an abomination to democracy, he offered few solutions that could be seen as anything but a repudiation of his own principles.

These are all important facts that our students must know in tandem with his highest aspirations. Our students should know his personal paradoxes along with his contributions to democracy.

The following facts should also be taught as they are not opinions and are important to current debates:

- Thomas Jefferson was a firm believer in the strictest separation church and state.
- Thomas Jefferson believed in the moral teachings of Christianity on equal footing with all other religions.
- Thomas Jefferson did not believe in what he considered to be supernatural teachings of any religion.
- Thomas Jefferson wished to influence Christian education away from ideas he saw as irrational by rewriting the Bible without miracles.

These are historical facts that can be found throughout online resources.

[The Jefferson Montecello](#) – Livestreams and Podcasts

[Why Thomas Jefferson Rewrote the Bible Without Jesus' Miracles and Resurrection](#), History.com

[Thomas Jefferson and Religious Freedom](#), The Jefferson Montecello

[Establishment Clause \(Separation of Church and State\)](#), The First Amendment Encyclopedia

[Religion and the Founding of the American Republic](#), Library of Congress

[Separation of Church and State](#), National History Education Clearinghouse

My next entry on this subject in an upcoming issue of Knowledge is Power will feature a lesson plan using these materials.



## Educator Survey about Classroom Censorship

# Tell us how classroom censorship policies and proposals are affecting your school!

Fill out our educator survey



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.

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