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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...

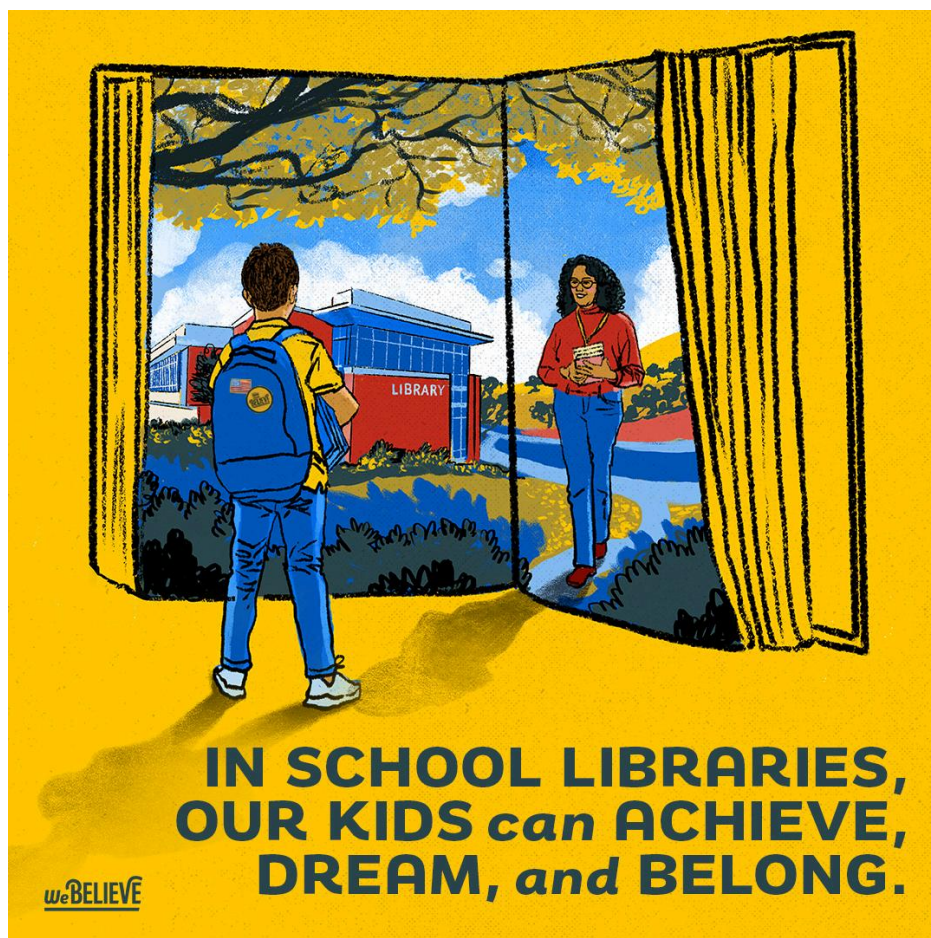
- Freedom to Learn National Day of Action
- The Texas Legislature Advances Censorship from Pre-K to Higher Education
- Teaching about Race & Culture



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



Recognizing Freedom to Learn National Day of Action



Today, organizations across the country are hosting events to support the Freedom to Learn. At IDRA, we believe that all students should have the freedom to learn and to receive an education that prepares them for the future.

Faced with book bans and curriculum censorship, we must work together to ensure that all students are free to learn about our history, our diverse stories, and each other—and they certainly deserve to read award-winning books!

Any laws that attempt to whitewash history and hide children from our country's hard truths not only hurt students of color from seeing themselves in their curriculum, but hurt all students from understanding the diverse perspectives, and people around them.

In Texas, Georgia and across the country, advocates are hosting advocacy days fighting against harmful censorship legislation and to promote culturally sustaining schools.

Learn more about [the Freedom to Learn events happening across the country](#).



The Texas Legislature Advances Censorship from Pre-K to Higher Education

by *Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D.*

The Texas Legislature is taking further steps to censor discussions and materials related to race and gender.

HB 900 or the "Book Banning Act" – A couple weeks ago, the Texas House passed HB 900 which heavily restricts school library books related to LGBTQ+ themes, relationships or any sexual content. The bill would result in books that reflect a range of characters being banned from schools. It also would censor potentially important and informative books for teens and youth coming of age, navigating relationships, or understanding sensitive topics such as domestic violence. This jeopardizes students' access to information that supports their safety and affirms their identities and experiences.



The Texas Senate passed three censorship-related bills extending from pre-kindergarten through higher education.

SB 8 – The big private school voucher bill includes sweeping bans on discussing gender and sexuality throughout all pre-K through 12th grades. This goes even further than Florida's "Don't Say Gay" law by applying a ban to all "instruction, guidance, activities, or programs" in schools. In effect, this eliminates sexual health instruction, English and social studies topics that address women and LGBTQ+ identified figures, and celebrations or events acknowledging gender, sexuality and relationships, including Pride Weeks and perhaps even Valentine's Day events and Prom celebrations. Read [IDRA's testimony against this censorship voucher bill](#), and [testimony from the Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition \(TLEEC\) against SB 8](#).

SB 13 – This bill imposes restrictions on school libraries' review standards and creates a process for parents to be alerted about any book their student checks out. This is especially damaging for LGBTQ+ students who are not yet "out" or have safety concerns about sharing their identity with their families as they would experience censorship in available materials at school and at home. [Read IDRA testimony against SB 13](#).

All school library and instructional materials already adhere to review standards to ensure content is age-appropriate, educationally valuable and aligned with state learning standards. These bills restrict students' opportunities to learn important topics related to history, society, and themselves.

SB 17 – This bill extends censorship of race and gender to institutions of higher education by eliminating offices for diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). DEI offices encompass racial equity programs that support Black and Latino students' transitions to college, provide enrichment and extracurricular programs, and offer Title IX supports. They also often support the entire college or university to achieve racial and gender diversity goals in hiring, inclusion of students with disabilities and veteran students, and student groups' programming. [Read TLEEC testimony against SB 17](#).

DEI offices also operate community engagement or outreach centers to include local communities in university activities, dialogues and initiatives. Provisions in the draft Texas budget would also eliminate funding for programs, activities and initiatives related to diversity, equity and inclusion in higher education. **SB 16**, passed earlier this year by the Senate, censors intellectual freedom of higher education instructors to present a range of topics related to race, sex, gender, or various social, political or religious ideologies. [Read TLEEC testimony against SB 16](#).

Several other censorship related bills are still in process.

HB 1804 censors how the instructional materials approved by the State Board of Education portray race, gender and major historical events.

Another bill, **HB 1605**, that incentivizes districts to use a state-approved instructional materials list would require compliance with the divisive concepts from **last session's censorship bill, SB 3**. This would impose a more drastic chilling effect on discussions related to race, gender, and accurate historical and current events information. HB 1605 would incentivize the enforcement of classroom censorship in both teaching and discussions as well as available materials. Other proposals further censor civics education by imposing vague regulations on teaching "positive contributions" and contrasting viewpoints of major historical events, including slavery, the civil rights movement, voting rights movement, and present-day topics related to racial justice.

Take Action!

These measures hurt Texas students' learning and engagement at all levels of education. Texas students need a bigger and better education. You can stop school censorship by calling your representatives and senators and telling them Texas students need more, not less.

Read more about [IDRA's testimony and advocacy on these bills](#).

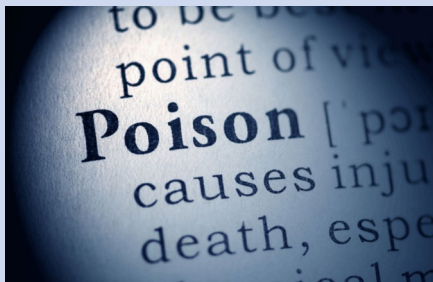
Get Texas Updates

Sign up for our [Texas advocacy alerts](#) to stay up to date on education news. You can also follow us on Twitter [@IDRAedu](#) and follow our education policy fellows [@IDRAEduFellows](#).



Teaching about Race & Culture

IDRA's [school resource hub, We All Belong](#), is designed for educators, families and policy advocates who want to make sure students receive a strong, truthful education in our public schools. It provides lesson plans for all grades, instructional best practices and historical resources to support educators and advocates in promoting culturally-sustaining schools and fighting harmful censorship policies. Below are some highlights!



Leading the Fight with Lead

For this middle school science lesson, students analyze the relationship between lead poisoning in children and the racial makeup of communities. Students develop a public service announcement video to

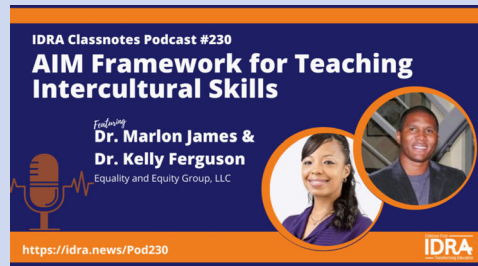


Successes and Failures in Resistance to Slavery

In this lesson, students examine efforts made by African slaves in the New World to resist slavery. Students begin by reviewing the geography of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and identifying colonies held by different European powers around the year 1750. They then view segments of

share important information on lead poisoning with their peers. This original lesson was developed for IDRA by Dr. Marlon James and Dr. Kelly Ferguson of Equality and Equity Group, LLC. [See lesson](#)

the PBS series *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross* to compare several attempts at resistance and revolt. [See lesson](#)



AIM Framework for Teaching Intercultural Skills

America is Me (AIM) is a framework that provides educators with curricular resources to promote students' understanding of equity issues central to the development of U.S. history and contemporary society. In this episode, hear from the developers of the framework, Dr. Marlon James and Dr. Kelly Ferguson of Equality and Equity Group, LLC., on how teachers of all grades and content areas can integrate it into the standards they are focusing on. [Learn more and listen to podcast episode](#)



Tools for Teaching About Race and Culture

In today's climate of classroom censorship, tools for culturally sustaining teaching can be hard to find and implement. In this session, you will get tips for using our latest four-part lesson plan series (see below) that will facilitate thoughtful high school classroom discussions of real-world issues and solutions. This session is led by the developers of the lessons for IDRA, Dr. Marlon C. James and Dr. Kelly N. Ferguson, of Equality and Equity Group, LLC. [Learn more and watch video](#)

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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](#)



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