

Learn from History

Teacher Toolkit

Thank you for joining our 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 our 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 ways to get involved — along with information that will help you respond to questions from parents, the general public, and the media about these topics.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

You can make a big difference for our profession and our students at a moment when schools are under an unprecedented attack. Here are a few ways to get involved:

1 Ask other educators to join our coalition 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 with other educators and parents 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 scared about efforts to censor teachers, concerned the additional stress being put on educators, or want to ensure that all students see themselves in our history, 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.

IT'S TIME FOR AMERICANS OF GOODWILL TO STAND TOGETHER

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

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 (TNTTP)

Key Points Communicate

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

Efforts to censor teachers, omit history, and ban conversations about race in our classrooms go too far. In some places, people have even tried to remove requirements to teach about slavery, the women’s suffrage movement, and Martin Luther King Jr.

We need to be honest with our students and have age-appropriate conversations about race — even if those conversations are sometimes hard. That’s how you learn, make progress, and bring people together. As educators, we strive to affirm the value of every student in our classroom, but we can’t do that if we are banned from teaching the truth.

With all the rampant misinformation being spread about what is being taught in schools, I am worried. Educators shouldn’t be fined, sued, or threatened for teaching the truth, and we need to make sure that doesn’t happen in our community. We’ve all seen what can happen when misinformation and fear get out of control.

This is happening at the worst possible time. The last year has been difficult on teachers and our students, 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

Do you teach critical race theory? No. We provide students with a thorough, accurate, and fact-based account of American history, in ways that are age appropriate, and teach our students that racism is wrong.

What would you say if a parent is upset and thinks that something you are teaching is critical race theory? We don’t teach critical race theory, but I hear your concerns and appreciate you sharing them with me. Discussions about race and U.S. history are important and can help us heal divisions, but they can also sometimes be difficult. It’s very important to me that every student in my class feels valued.

Do you oppose efforts to ban critical race theory or the teaching of “divisive concepts”? I’m opposed to censoring teachers and efforts that prevent fact-based history instruction or ban 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. Our schools want feedback and we’re always 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 concerned are you about this push to censor teachers? I’m very concerned. Our students need accurate and fact-based

history to learn from the past, and we have a responsibility to teach kids that racism is wrong. These attempts to censor teachers, omit history, and ban conversations about race go way too far.

How does this affect your students? Our students want the truth, and we need to be able to be honest with them without facing fines, or being sued or threatened. We have a responsibility to teach kids that racism is wrong — not brush past difficult parts of our history. The last thing that we should do is deprive an entire generation of children from learning lessons that are needed to heal divisions and create a better future.

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 students and have age-appropriate conversations about race. That’s how you learn, make progress, and bring people together. Our job as educators is to affirm the value of every student in our classroom, but we can’t do that if we are banned from teaching the truth.

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. As teachers, 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 get involved by texting “TRUTH” to 67076.

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 the coalition.

Below is a sample text that you can customize:

Hi xxxxx. Hope you are well! I just joined the Learn from History coalition to support teachers and 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 colleagues.

Encourage them to join the effort by texting "TRUTH" to 67076.

3 Volunteer for a shift to text other teachers and 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

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)
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Our Turn
School Board Partners
Stand for Children
Teach+Plus
Teach for America
The New Teacher Project (TNTTP)

Learn from History

Email Your Fellow Teachers

Subject:

Help me stand up for our profession and demand an accurate and comprehensive education for students // With your help, we can ensure students develop into the knowledgeable and successful citizens of tomorrow.

Hi FIRSTNAME,

Teachers are facing an unprecedented attack across the country with misinformation fueling efforts to censor educators, omit important history lessons, and ban conversations about race in our classrooms.

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 in the face of these attacks.

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.

As educators, this is our chance to respond to the dangerous and inaccurate claims about public education that are going unanswered and protect our right to teach the truth. I hope you'll join me!

Write a Letter to the Editor

After September 8, go to [LearnFromHistory.org](https://www.learnfromhistory.org) 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.

As a teacher, I strive to affirm the value of every student in my classroom, but I can't do that if I'm banned from teaching the truth. Schools need to be sensitive to the needs of all our students, but these efforts to censor teachers and ban conversations about race scare me, and they should scare you too.

Now more than ever, we need to teach accurate and fact-based history to our students so they can avoid repeating mistakes from the past, and we need to figure out how to better deal with misinformation that you highlighted in your Aug. 10 story, "Critical race theory becomes hot button issue locally, statewide."

Most people in our community want age-appropriate discussions of race in our schools — not vaguely worded bans that prevent teachers from doing their jobs and omit important history lessons. With all the misinformation out there about what we are teaching in our schools, it's going to be up to all of us to remain vigilant and protect the right of our kids to receive an accurate and thorough history education.

The debate about race in our schools has gotten out of control. Efforts to censor teachers, ban discussions about race, and remove requirements to teach about slavery and the writings of Martin Luther King, Jr. are extreme. Some lawmakers have tried to fine educators for talking about race in the classroom, and teachers are now under attack 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."

I've been a teacher for 16 years, and I've never seen anything like it. Educators are growing increasingly scared, worried for our profession and concerned for our students.

We have a responsibility to teach kids that racism is wrong — not brush past the more difficult parts of our history. The good news is that most parents want us to be honest with our students, provide fact-based history, and engage in age-appropriate discussions about race so that we can make progress, heal divisions, and prepare children for success.

It's time for elected officials to start listening to that vast majority instead of the misinformation being peddled by people who want to tear us apart.

After a difficult year, the last thing students and teachers need is more challenges as we return to the classroom. As you pointed out in your Aug. 3 story, "We're losing more teachers than we're bringing in," we're already facing a teacher shortage. Now, we're having to deal with rampant misinformation and a push to censor teachers, omit history lessons, and ban conversations about race too.

I love my profession, but it has become more difficult to keep good teachers, and the censorship, attacks, and death threats that educators have started receiving are only making things worse. If we aren't careful, we are going to push more teachers right out the door.

Educators shouldn't be fined, sued, or threatened for teaching the truth, and we need to be vigilant and make sure that doesn't occur in our community. We've all seen what can happen when misinformation and anger gets out of control, and we need to make protecting teachers and students our priority right now.

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 need to be honest with my students, and I have a responsibility to teach kids that racism is wrong. Join me in standing against efforts to censor teachers, omit history, and ban conversations about race in our schools. Text “TRUTH” to 67076 and help spread the word.
3. Now, more than ever, we need to stand up for accurate and thorough history in our classrooms so that students can learn from the past and understand that racism is wrong. Please join me in supporting the Learn From History coalition. Take a moment to text “TRUTH” to 67076 and help spread the word.

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 people trying to deny students 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 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.