



# PARENT EMPOWERMENT TOOLKIT

★ FreedomWorks

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

TABLE OF CONTENTS	4
WELCOME	5
ABOUT BEST	6
GOALS & STRATEGIES: THE 4 C'S	6
HOW TO TACKLE SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS	9
HOW TO ORGANIZE A SUCCESSFUL RALLY	11
10 BASIC STEPS FOR HOLDING A PRESS CONFERENCE	15
HOW TO DRAFT A PRESS RELEASE OR PRESS STATEMENT	20
HOW TO START A "LETTERS TO THE EDITOR" CAMPAIGN	24
HOW TO FILE A FOIA REQUEST	26
HOW TO FILE A FERPA COMPLAINT	28
HOW TO FILE AN ETHICS COMPLAINT AGAINST A LICENSED EDUCATOR	30
CRITICAL RACE THEORY GLOSSARY	33

# WELCOME

---

Dear **BEST** Friend,

You spoke, and we listened!

I am pleased to share with you the **BEST Parent Empowerment Toolkit**. These valuable tools will give you practical action steps to hold your school officials accountable for the decisions they make for our children. Yes, parents, these are our children! These educators have silenced our voices long enough. Just because we send our children to a public government school doesn't mean we give these individuals the authority to act as co-parents with us.

The COVID lockdowns have provided a wakeup call to us all by exposing Critical Race Theory, the lack of parental rights in education, and the importance of school board elections. The goal of this toolkit is to help you navigate through these changing times. Whether you are a parent, grandparent, teacher, school board candidate, or a concerned community member, these resources will empower you with the tools you need to be successful in your local community.

BEST is committed to creating a long-term impact. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us for additional resources or guidance.

Best,

**Laura Zorc**

Director of Education Reform



**LAURA ZORC**  
**DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION REFORM**

🌐 [LZorc@FreedomWorks.org](mailto:LZorc@FreedomWorks.org)  
📞 O: 202.783.3870 | C: 202.455.9845

Laura has years of experience and expertise in the subject of education reform. Laura's focus shifted to education when her children began public school in Florida. Laura served in multiple positions on the parent-teacher board of her children's schools, was elected twice as president of her county's parent-teacher association, and co-founded Florida Parents Against Common Core (FPACC), one of the largest parent-led advocacy groups in the state. Additionally, she served on former Florida Governor Rick Scott's Education Committee as the parent representative before being elected to the Indian River County School Board.

# ABOUT BEST

---

Building Education for Students Together is a parent-led education reform movement created by FreedomWorks. BEST is extending FreedomWorks' 6 million plus activist network by building partnerships with parents. Our aim is to reform the education system as we know it. Reform of institutions cannot be done through legislation alone, though. Permanent bureaucracies require permanent grassroots watchdogs that serve as the foot soldiers in the fight. BEST aims to be that permanent grassroots watchdog.

In order to reform the education system, we will first need a grassroots coalition of parents who share our values, whom we can train to be advocates for institutional change. By targeting key states and demographics, we will be able to empower a force to combat the long-standing institution. Second, we must provide a team of policy professionals as support for parents. These experts will be able to coordinate efforts with legislators and use their expertise to maximize effectiveness.

Over the next year FreedomWorks will invest time and resources in implementing strategies to reach BEST's short-term and long-term goals in identified key states. Building Education for Students Together's mission is to ignite a national parent-led movement by building, educating, and mobilizing the largest network of parent activists in the country to advocate for their children's education through the election of school board members and the passage of policies that align with our vision of education freedom drives the foundation of our work.

A summation of BEST's goals to accomplish our mission include: opening our schools, expanding educational freedom, replacing anti-American curricula, building parent coalitions, and electing school board members who will not pander to teacher unions and special interest groups.

## GOALS & STRATEGIES: THE 4 C'S

---

### 1. COALITIONS

Parents are the only force large enough to impact our education system in the long-term. BEST will build and empower state specific parent-led coalitions to realize this reform. These coalitions will engage in local and state policy issues to enhance parents' rights and create opportunities for their children.

**GOAL:** Build state specific parent-led coalitions focused on education freedom.

**STRATEGY:** These coalitions will engage in local and state policy issues to enhance parent's rights and create opportunities for their children.



## 2. CHOICE

Competition breeds excellence, but teacher unions are determined to protect the government education system's status quo. It is essential to give parents a choice when it comes to determining the best learning environment for their child. This choice is achieved by ensuring that funding follows the students, whether they attend private school, homeschool, charter school, or public school. BEST will continue to work state by state to introduce education savings accounts, tax credit scholarships, and voucher programs. Over the years, we've seen parents and students around the country forced into underperforming school districts with no room for alternatives. Each student brings unique capabilities and learning styles into the classroom, and the current one-size-fits-all approach leaves them underserved. We must protect and promote school choice to provide students with greater opportunities.

**GOAL: Expand education freedom for all students.**

**STRATEGY: Unite parents together locally and statewide to be strong advocates for legislation and policies by utilizing our network of legislators and policy experts to coordinate efforts.**

## 3. CURRICULUM AND CRITICAL RACE THEORY

With a decline in students' reading on grade level and increased high school dropout rates, it is more important than ever to get back to teaching the basics and spend less time socially engineering children with vicious, destructive propaganda. Common Core standards have paved the way for biased, anti-American, subjective curricula, as we've seen with the 1619 Project and Critical Race Theory. We must counter the anti-America narrative by regaining local control of the curricula through parent involvement, legislative action, transparent textbook and content adoption, and the election of high-quality school board members, district by district.

**GOAL: Eliminate and replace anti-American content and Common Core State Standard with non-opinionated, factual, high-quality standards.**

**STRATEGY: Support parent groups working to pass local and state policies that will eradicate and replace radical curricula.**

## 4. CANDIDATES

Parents have been ignored long enough. To transform local school systems across the country, we must identify and elect like-minded board members. It is the shared responsibility of us all to elect individuals who have our children's best interests at heart. BEST is actively engaged in recruiting, training, and educating the community about local school board candidates who understand that parents are the final authority in their children's education.

**GOAL: Elect school board members who put kids and families first.**

**STRATEGY: Invest time and resources in screening, supporting, and training candidates to win elections and give parent networks tools to support identified candidates.**

# EVENT ORGANIZING

HOW TO TACKLE SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS | HOW TO ORGANIZE A SUCCESSFUL RALLY

# HOW TO TACKLE SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

As a parent leader, you can help other parents get involved by removing the obstacles of the unknowns. When asking individuals to attend board meetings, be very specific in your request with details. For many individuals, the first time attending a school board meeting can be intimidating with all the formality and procedures. Getting a parent to attend his or her first school board meeting is the most challenging part, but once parents attend one, they are likely to attend more and eventually overcome the fear of speaking at a meeting.

That is why it is important to try to remove any barriers that might hold someone back from taking the first step of getting involved. Never assume that parents know the time and date of your school board meetings, the address of where the school board meetings are held, and/or the procedures of signing up to speak.

Remove the guessing by briefly prepping individuals on what to expect upon arriving. For example, information on things like parking tips and best doors to enter through is helpful information. If you think of it more as a carefully organized event you're inviting them to, that can be helpful.

The good news is that there are no fixed rules, norms, or limitations on how to prepare your parents and community members. Across the country, organic groups of parents are organizing. It is ok to be an "unofficial" group of concerned parents working together to help each other through these processes. All parents have a variance in strengths, and it is essential to find a place for everyone to get involved, even if it's asking them to attend a meeting in support of other parents. Some love public speaking; most do not. Some are great researchers and writers; some are not. When organizing and growing your local efforts with parents, remember that getting involved on a district level is new for the majority of parents.

However, to simplify for individuals who want to speak, prepare sample talking points and openers to guide them through this unknown territory.

Here are sample talking points with data prepared by a local parent attending a Fort Worth, Texas school board meeting.

**Topic: Holding Superintendent Accountable for Focusing on Social Emotional/Equity Learning Instead of Poor Academic Performance in the District.**

## SAMPLE OPENERS:

*Thank you, trustees, for serving on this board and for your service to our students. I am here tonight to ask you to continue to serve our students by really focusing on student outcomes and what has happened to our district.*

*Good Evening Board Members, I am a FWISD parent and want to see our school district focus on academics; our kids and families deserve better. When I send my children to school it's because I want them to learn how to read, write, and to explore math and science. I do not send my kids to school to learn about politics, opinion, or social issues.*

Use easy-to-follow research with data points, links, and facts without it being too overwhelming with information.

Here are a few examples below from the same district used in the example above.

- › Student Academic Decline: (all data found at [www.texas.tea.gov/reports-and-data](http://www.texas.tea.gov/reports-and-data)).
- › In 2015, FWISD scored similarly to or above Dallas & Houston in 22 out of 23 tested measures and last in only 1. By 2019, FWISD scored behind Dallas & Houston in 22 out of 23 tested measures.
- › In 2019... 1,188 districts were rated by TEA.
- › 980 (82% of) districts earned higher overall ratings than FWISD (C/79).
- › 1,061 (89% of) districts earned higher Student Achievement ratings than FWISD (C/73).
- › 30% of FWISD schools are failing compared to 8% of Dallas.
- › Over half of Dallas and Houston schools have A or B rating.
- › Less than 1/3 of FWISD schools are A or B rated.
- › We are the only large urban district with a “C” rating. Austin, Houston, Dallas, Arlington, and San Antonio all have a “B” rating.
- › FWISD enrollment was on a steady increase prior to 2016.
- › 2016-2019 Pre-Covid Enrollment was down 5% (Dallas down only 3% during the same time period).
- › 2016-2020 Enrollment is down 12% (Dallas ISD declined only 8% during the same time period).
- › Loss of enrollment is a loss of attendance revenue. The district is quoted as saying students are funded at approximately \$9160 per student. The loss pre-Covid is more than 4,000 students or the equivalent of \$36 million.
- › During this past Covid year, we have had an additional loss of 6000 students.

# HOW TO ORGANIZE A SUCCESSFUL RALLY

## WHAT TO BRING:

- › High Energy
- › Sign Up Sheet (QR codes, Google Forms, Spreadsheets)
- › Contact Information
- › Business Cards & Palm Cards
- › Swag
- › Signage

## STEP 1: SOLIDIFY DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION

### Date

- › Check for interference:
  - › Other related events
  - › Holidays
  - › Weekend or Week Day time restraints
  - › Your schedule and your speakers' schedules

### Time

- › Weekend vs. Week Day
  - › Afternoon/evenings work best for those who are working

### Location

- › Venue options
  - › Public
    - Do you need a permit? Check with local ordinances.
    - Do you need a police presence?
  - › Private
    - You either need connections to a location (friend, supporter) or to pay for a space.
- › Venue Planning
  - › Determine attendance number
  - › Will you be serving refreshments/meals?
  - › Location set-up
    - Speaker Location
    - Attendee Viewing
    - Seating Arrangements

### Back-Up Options

- › Is this outside? If so, you need to have a back-up for weather
- › Is there an emergency alternate venue? Cowardly/hostile officials might revoke permits or use "health emergencies" to shut you down

## STEP 2: PLAN YOUR ITINERARY

### Rally Agenda

- › Speakers
  - ›› Plan speaker schedule with time limits
  - ›› Make sure speaker topics promote the theme of the event
  - ›› Will there be time for Q&A?
- › Back-up Plan
  - ›› Plan for the unexpected
    - Speaker cancellations

### Supplies Needed

- › Audio/Visual equipment
  - ›› Do you need to bring your own or does the venue provide?
- › Signs, posters, palm cards, etc. need to be ordered and picked up

## STEP 3: PROMOTE YOUR EVENT

### Create an EventBrite

- › This will allow you to track attendance and generate contacts
- › Use this in place of an “RSVP” or “Ticket”
- › It is very important to send this link out when promoting your event
- › This is important because you then have their contact information to follow up

### Your Network

- › Do you currently have lists that you can reach out to?
  - ›› Organizations/clubs you associate with
  - ›› Your email lists
  - ›› Facebook groups

### Community Help

- › Ask friendly organizations/clubs to spread to their networks for you!
  - ›› Adding them as a “partner” or “sponsor” to the event details to make it more official can be helpful
    - Keeps them accountable

### Making it Public

- › Create and distribute a press release (see: “How to Build a Press Release”)



## STEP 4: EXECUTING THE DAY-OF

**Get there early!**

**Complete your “What to Bring” List**

**Mix-and-mingle with the crowd**

- › How did they hear about the event?
- › Did they register?

**Follow your agenda**

- › Be aware of time; you will need a dedicated time keeper and you must tell speakers ahead of time how long they will speak

**Take lots of photos, videos, interviews, etc**

- › If you can't show that a rally happened, the rally did not happen

**Talking with the press**

- › Thank them for coming
- › You are not obligated to give a statement
- › If you do decide to answer their questions, make sure they are short and to the point
- › Do not have anyone you feel uncomfortable with talk to the media

## STEP 5: FOLLOWING UP

**Thank Yous**

- › Email blast a “Thank You” to all contacts received from the event
- › Include ways to stay involved with your network
- › Thank any partners for helping you with the event

**Follow-Up Press Release**

- › Include good quality pictures from the event
- › Include future efforts



# PRESS & MEDIA

10 BASIC STEPS FOR HOLDING A PRESS CONFERENCE | HOW TO DRAFT  
A PRESS RELEASE OR PRESS STATEMENT

# 10 BASIC STEPS FOR HOLDING A PRESS CONFERENCE

If you are planning a “call to action” event, such as a rally or a march, or if you plan to speak at a school board meeting, take it a step further by holding a press conference before the event to ensure your efforts are reaching the community.

Press conferences are imperative to your cause. If your goal is to sway a school board’s votes or push the board and district to take your concerns seriously, adding the public pressure through the press is one of many ways groups can put the spotlight on those who make the key decisions. Most districts and board members do not like negative attention, especially if it is close to election season.

To have a successful press conference, you must first prepare and send out a press release. In the next section, we will walk you through the steps of preparing a press release, to whom to send it, and when to send it. One inaccurate impression is that you can issue a press release only if you are a formal group. That is not necessarily always the case. A group of concerned parents, or even one single parent, can send a press release and call a press conference.

## 10 PRESS CONFERENCE BASICS:

1. **Send out a press release to invite** the media. Post the press release on social media and look up the email addresses of any local reporters who have been covering relevant issues. Blast out an email to them using the BCC function.
2. **Determine who the point of contact will be** for the conference and make sure that this person is prepared to answer questions from the media.
3. When calling for a press conference, **make sure that you have a minimum of 15 to 20 parents to join you.** The more, the better.
4. Before you start the conference, **make sure your attendees know to surround you during the press conference with signs.** There is strength in numbers, and you want the video clips and photos the media uses to show it.
5. Prepare to have **at least three speakers** during the conference.
6. Keep the conference short, to approximately between **three and five minutes per speaker.**
7. **Know your speakers** and avoid having random attendees speak during the conference. It takes only one person who is off the message to discredit the focus and intent of your efforts.

8. **Begin the conference on time with the point person** and wrap up with the point person.
9. Wrap up: After the designated speakers conclude, your point person will need to **wrap up the conference with instructions for the attendees**. For instance:
  - If it is a march, give directions to the place to which you are heading.
  - If it is a rally, make sure the attendees and audience are given the next steps. Call the board members. Speak at this board meeting, or at the next board meeting, etc.
  - If you are organizing parents to speak at a board meeting, send out talking points ahead of time to solidify your concerns and remind parents to stay on point.

Next, after giving the attendees and audience the next steps, open up the floor for **two or three media questions**. Specifically, say, “We have time for a few questions.”

Remember to have the other speakers stand with you and bounce the questions back and forth among all speakers present. This will help keep the messaging flow on point because it’s natural to get nervous with a camera and mic in your face.

10. Never feel that you have to answer all the questions the media ask you. If it is off topic or going down a rabbit hole, just say, “We are here to talk about xyz” or say, “No comment.”

## SAMPLE 1

### Contact:

Missie Carra  
817-770-0000  
TexasPRIE@gmail.com

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, June 21, 2021

### **Fort Worth Parents and Students to Host March in Opposition to Fort Worth Independent School District’s Focus on Ideology Over Academics**

**FORT WORTH, TX --** In response to the Fort Worth Independent School District’s (FWISD) lack of focus on improving academic achievement for students, local parents and members of the community will host a march on Tuesday, June 22, in opposition to the district’s focus on teaching political ideologies over academics. This Tuesday night, the school board has an opportunity to reverse the downward trend in academic success by holding Superintendent Kent Scribner accountable for putting

political ideologies ahead of providing students with the tools to succeed.

Since the implementation of Courageous Conversations, a training and curriculum model which focuses on equity in the classroom, district academic scores have plummeted. District parents intend to ask the school board to elect a new school board president to reverse the alarming decline in students' academic achievement.

**Missie Carra, FWISD parent, commented:** "The FWISD has created an academic crisis, with a quarter of our campuses earning "Ds" and "Fs," and only 32 percent of our 3rd grade students reading at grade level. The FWISD School Board has a sworn obligation to hold Superintendent Scribner accountable for his ill-advised direction."

"On Tuesday night the school board will elect a new president and set expectations for Superintendent Scribner. As parents we only want the best for our kids, but with Scribner's focus on Critical Race Theory, FWISD students are left struggling. We cannot allow district leadership to continue to prioritize ideology over academics and student success."

**At 4:00 P.M. CT, Tuesday, June 22, 2021,** parents, teachers, members of the community, and most importantly, students themselves will be participating in a march. The group will meet at **Fort Worth Police and Firefighters Memorial located at 2201 West 7th Street, Fort Worth, TX 76101.**

The intent of the march is to demand the school board hold Superintendent Scribner accountable for the mismanagement of valuable tax dollars, and urge him to stop investing in divisive, politically charged ideologies like Courageous Conversations and Critical Race Theory that teach young people to hate their country.

###

### Coverage of March:



## SAMPLE 2

### PRESS RELEASE

**Contact:**

Amy Carney  
714.342.0000  
amy@amycarney.com

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Monday, May 24, 2021

**Scottsdale Parents Statement in Response to the Scottsdale Unified School Board's decision to reconvene the board meeting virtually.**

**SCOTTSDALE, AZ --** In response to the Scottsdale Unified School District board's decision to reconvene the Tuesday, May 19, 2021 meeting virtually, Amy Carney, Scottsdale Unified School District mother of 6, commented, "The board won't be there, but we the parents will be! These are our kids and our schools. The governing members were elected to represent our children's best interest but have disappointed the parents time and time again."

"We have had enough and demand full transparency from our school administrators and governing board. Hiding behind a video screen in order to avoid facing frustrated parents because of their incompetent decision making is reason enough that every one of these board members should resign immediately."

On Wednesday afternoon parents across the region met to launch a parent-led movement to reclaim our schools back one district at a time. Parents are fed up with being ignored and having their concerns silenced by an unresponsive district and governing board.

Scottsdale parents want transparency, masks and vaccines optional, and a school system that focuses education on excellence in academics instead of wasting precious classroom time on Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and a politically charged curriculum that aligns with Critical Race Theory (CRT).

**Despite the board's decision to hold a virtual meeting, parents are not going away. Parents will be holding a press conference at 5:30 pm today in front of the Coronado High School at 7501 East Virginia Avenue, Scottsdale, AZ 85257.**

Every person is impacted by the decision of the public schools. We encourage the community to attend the press conference to show support for Scottsdale Unified School District children and families.

If parents cannot attend the press conference, we ask that they



call or email the board members to let them know we won't allow them to hide any longer because they owe it to their constituents to be accountable for their actions.

#### Scottsdale Unified School District Board

**Jann-Michael Greenburg**

Phone: 480-484-6238

Email: [jmgreenburg@susd.org](mailto:jmgreenburg@susd.org)

**Julie Cieniawski**

Phone: 480-484-6238

Email: [jcieniawski@susd.org](mailto:jcieniawski@susd.org)

**Zach Lindsay**

Phone: 480-484-6238

Email: [zlindsay@susd.org](mailto:zlindsay@susd.org)

**Patty Beckman**

Phone: 480-484-6238

Email: [pbeckman@susd.org](mailto:pbeckman@susd.org)

**Dr. Libby Hart-Wells**

Phone: 480-484-6238

Email: [lhartwells@susd.org](mailto:lhartwells@susd.org)

###

**Coverage of Press Conference:**

**Parents gather before  
Scottsdale USD board during  
rescheduled meeting**



**Scottsdale Unified to hold  
virtual board meeting**



**SCHOOL PARENTS HOLD MASS RALLY in  
Scottsdale, Arizona - Announce Coalition to  
Recruit, Train and Mobilize Parent Activists -  
While School Board Hides (VIDEO)**



# HOW TO DRAFT A PRESS RELEASE OR PRESS STATEMENT

Use the media to your advantage. One of the quickest ways to capture the attention of the media for an event or an issue is to create a press release and/or statement in response depending on the call to action that you are trying to highlight. For example, if you are hosting a rally or plan on having a large number of parents and communities speak at a school board meeting, you will want to announce this information ahead of time. There are several ways that this can work to your advantage.

You need to understand your local media's print and online cycle. It is not uncommon for many smaller hometown papers to print only once a week. When planning your event and press release, be mindful of their news cycle.

Ideally, you want the media to report on your call to action ahead of the event and to be prepared to report on the event's outcome. The more that you can expand your efforts outside of your circle and reach into the community, the better positioned you become to make an influence on the school board. Despite the tough facade that they put on publicly, the superintendent and school board members do not like negative media, especially around the time of a superintendent's contract evaluation period and/or an upcoming school board election.

## DRAFTING A PRESS RELEASE

A press release should be formal and direct. It should only include just enough information to spark the interest of the reporter. It is best to keep the press release to a one-page document.. Incorporate quotes in the press release with your call to action, which should include the time and location of the event. Include links to the school board agenda or to data that can validate your message. Most importantly, when sending a press release, the point of contact will need to be accessible for questions and on-the-record interviews with the media.

- › Use a consistent formal template
- › The font should be Verdana, AP style
- › Use direct, formal language
- › Include contact information
- › Include call to action details
- › Include quotable quotes
- › Include links

## TEMPLATE

**Contact:**

[Name]

[Phone number]

[Email address]

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

[Day of week, date, year]

**[Title]**

**[LOCATION]** -- [Intro]

**[Name, title], commented:**

“[quote]”

###

*[Mission statement, website with hyperlink, etc.]*

## SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

**Contact:**

Peter Vicenzi

202-783-3870

[pvicenzi@freedomworks.org](mailto:pvicenzi@freedomworks.org)

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Monday, March 1, 2021

**FreedomWorks Statement In Response to Continued Anti-  
Science Public School Board Hypocrisy**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** -- In response to reports from across the country that public school board officials continue to utilize private schools for their children while public schools remain closed, Laura Zorc, FreedomWorks’ Director of Education Reform, commented:

“Once again, the fact that public school officials across the country are adamant about keeping students from participating in in-person learning, while at the same time sending their own children to attend private school underscores the rampant hypocrisy endemic to the public school system.”

“Americans’ tax dollars continue to flow into public school systems that are keen to play politics at the behest of left-wing teachers’ unions. Students deserve better. They deserve the option to attend in-person learning-- something which is clearly

safe according to health experts. Apparently, Democratic leaning teacher unions do not believe in ‘the science’ after all.”

###

*The mission of FreedomWorks is to build, educate, and mobilize the largest network of activists advocating the principles of smaller government, lower taxes, free markets, personal liberty, and the rule of law.*

## DRAFTING A PRESS STATEMENT

There is a subtle difference between a press release and statement of response, although these terms are used interchangeably. A press release is generally used for new information such as an announcement or update. A statement of response) is utilized for a reactionary statement.

When sending a press release or statement of response, remember that everything is on record as soon as you press send. Be ready and prepared to respond to media inquiries. Here are a few simple points to remember when working with the media.

### Be Prepared to Push Send

- › Always have someone proofread for clarity and accuracy.
- › Double check the address, dates, and times of location.
- › Always BCC reporters.
- › Monitor for responses.
- › Keep track of press interactions.
- › **Know that it is okay to only answer questions that you feel comfortable answering. It’s ok to say, “I want to give an accurate response, I will need to get back to you on that.”**

### Build Media Email List

- › Cast your net out by sending to both local and state media outlets.
- › Don’t be afraid to send press releases to all the media outlets.
- › Don’t overlook local radio talk show hosts and television stations along with printed media when sending out press releases.
- › Build your list by researching local news outlets. Typically you can find email addresses by scrolling down all the way to the bottom of the home page to ABOUT US. See sample links here: <https://www.azcentral.com/contact/staff/>.
- › Send to the local, education, and news desk reporter and editors.

## SAMPLE PRESS STATEMENT

### Contact:

Sheri Mitchell (404) 641-0000  
Holly Laskol (678) 508-0000

Michael Rudnick (770) 355-0000  
Steve Gasper 626-233-0000

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, March 2, 2021

### **Gwinnett County Parents for Quality Education Statement in Response to the Gwinnett County School Board's Meeting**

**Gwinnett County, GA--** In response to the Gwinnett County School Board's decision to call for a rushed special meeting with a 24-hour very thin notice that lacks transparency and consideration for the community they were elected to serve, Gwinnett County Parents for Quality Education released the following statement:

The agenda is vague, but two items of concern up for consideration are Superintendent J. Alvin Wilbanks' contract and the proposed policy changes to public input. Both items could change the trajectory of the GCPS district and are equally important.

We urge the community to contact the five school board members immediately to ask them to keep Mr. Wilbanks and not to adopt the revisions to the GCPS Public Comment Policy as proposed during the February 18th work session.

The new revisions will stifle the voices of the parents and community members. The new policy will drastically limit the number of individuals who speak to 15. In addition, the policy will limit the number of speakers to one per topic. For example, if 50 parents asked to speak in opposition to school closures, only 1 person could speak; and if 30 people showed up to speak in favor, only 1 person would be allowed to speak.

[https://go.boarddocs.com/ga/gcps/Board.nsf/files/BYGJ8G4BE1C9/\\$file/BCBI.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/ga/gcps/Board.nsf/files/BYGJ8G4BE1C9/$file/BCBI.pdf)

This policy is clearly an attempt by the individual Gwinnett County School Board members to cancel the voices of the parents of the 180,000 students whom the Board members have been elected to serve.

Time is of the essence. Please contact the school board members prior to the 4:30 Wednesday, March 3rd special called meeting and urge them to vote NO on changing the current public comment policy or Mr. Wilbanks contract.

### **GCPS School Board Members by District**

District II— Steven B. Knudsen Phone— (470) 839-5366

District III— Dr. Mary Kay Murphy Phone— (770) 840-9752

District IV— Everton Blair, Jr. Phone— (404) 491-0423

# HOW TO START A “LETTERS TO THE EDITOR” CAMPAIGN

A Letters to the Editor Campaign can be a powerful tool. With school boards imposing time limits and other tough restrictions on community members and parents at school board meetings, we must utilize other resources available to us to make our voices heard. Sending letters to the editor is an important advocacy and campaign strategy because it is a free way to reach a large audience, bring attention to issues or information not addressed in news articles, and capture the attention of elected officials.

Fortunately, writing a letter to the editor is easier than you think.

## TIPS ON WRITING LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

- › Keep it short and address only one subject. Generally, 200 words or less is most effective.
- › Know the maximum word count allowed and do not exceed it. Many newspapers have strict limits on the length of letters and have limited space to publish them.
- › Carefully highlight the key takeaways the reader should remember.

## HOW TO SUBMIT A LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

1. To submit a letter, address it to the letters editor directly via email. Start your email with a note that gives a brief summary of your letter followed by the letter itself in the body of the email. Do not submit your letter as an attachment.
2. Alternatively, some publications require submission through an online form. These forms might ask for your full name, city, daytime telephone number, and email address in addition to the text of the letter itself.

## PUBLICATIONS REQUIREMENTS TO KEEP IN MIND:

- › The letter should address public, local issues and should not sound like a commercial pitch.
- › The letter should be an original written by the submitter.
- › Editors will usually only publish letters from writers inside the paper’s area of circulation. Therefore, it is best to submit to local papers.
- › If your letter is published, editors usually prefer that you wait 30-60 days before submitting another letter for publication.



# PROTECTING PARENTS' RIGHTS

HOW TO FILE A FOIA REQUEST | HOW TO FILE A FERPA COMPLAINT  
HOW TO FILE AN ETHICS COMPLAINT

# HOW TO FILE A FOIA REQUEST

Since 1967, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) has provided the public the right to request access to records from any federal agency. It is often described as the law that keeps citizens in the know about their government. All states also have “sunshine” or “open record” laws that closely mirror FOIA. This means that, with rare exceptions that protect interests such as personal privacy, national security, and law enforcement, you can request correspondence, records, and documents from elected officials and government agencies. When it comes to understanding what your school board is doing with your tax dollars, this is a beneficial resource.

## GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR A FOIA REQUEST

- › The request be made in writing to the appropriate agency
- › The request must reasonably describe the records and scope being sought

## STEPS TO WRITING A FOIA REQUEST

**Research:** Make sure you’ve identified the correct department and person to whom to direct the request. Also, check to make sure the information you’re seeking isn’t already available to the public. Often, a call or visit to the appropriate agency’s website can help you identify the person to whom the request needs to be sent.

Make sure you’re targeting the correct information and understand how the agency has labeled its programs. If you request information on “Critical Race Theory training” you may not get anything back. However, if you request “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training” you’ll receive materials used to teach these staff trainings.

**Describe the Request:** When requesting information, it’s better to ask in smaller increments instead of casting a wide net.

Examples of clear requests:

- › All Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training materials from 2019-2020 school year
- › All email communications between Ms. Jones and Mr. Smith for the months of XYZ of 2021
- › School board training materials for 2021-2022 school year

**Describe the Format:** Generally, you will want to request the relevant materials in a digital format. Although a list of specific formats may not always be provided, you can mention what format you prefer (jpeg, PDF, Word document, etc.).

**Fees:** Depending on the state, there can be fees associated with the request. At the time of the request, ask that the government inform

you of any fees associated before completing the request. If the fee is outrageous, you may be able to request another format to reduce the price.

For requests that are not very large, \$100 is likely more than you should pay.

**Follow up:** States usually require that the agency responds within a certain amount of time. If you have not heard back within 3-5 business days, send another email asking for a status update.

RESOURCES:

➤ **Federal FOIA portal:** <https://www.foia.gov/>

FOIA TEMPLATE

Agency Head

Name of Agency

Address of Agency

City, State, Zip Code

Re: Open records request

To Whom It May Concern:

Pursuant to the [your state’s public records law], I request that a copy of the following documents [or documents containing the following information] be provided to me: [identify the documents or information as specifically as possible].

In the event that there are fees, I would be grateful if you would inform me of the total expected charges in advance of fulfilling my request. I would prefer that this request be filled electronically, in [preferred format] format if available and via e-mail attachment.

I also request a detailed contemporaneous log to be provided for any document withheld or redacted.

The requested documents will be made available to the general public, and this request is not being made for commercial purposes.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this request, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Name

Address

City, State, Zip Code

# HOW TO FILE A FERPA COMPLAINT

## WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF FERPA?

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that affords parents the right to have access to their children's education records, the right to seek to have the records amended, and the right to have some control over the disclosure of personally identifiable information from the education records.

## WHY IS FERPA IMPORTANT?

Parents need to understand their rights and be armed with the resources they need to guard their children from retaliation or harassment. Remember what happened with the Loudoun County, VA school board as an example for FERPA's relevance: School board members and teachers shared personal identifiable student information amongst their online Anti-Racist Facebook group. FERPA is critical policy to know about in situations such as the Loudoun County one, but its a protection that most parents don't even know about.

## WHAT IS CONSIDERED PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION UNDER FERPA?

Personally identifiable information for education records is a FERPA term referring to identifiable information that is maintained in education records and includes direct identifiers, such as a student's name or identification number, or indirect identifiers, such as a student's date of birth, or other information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity either directly or indirectly through linkages with other information.

### PERSONAL INFORMATION COLLECTED FROM STUDENTS:

Personal information collected from students is a term referring to individually identifiable information including a student's or parent's first and last name; a home or other physical address (including street name and the name of the city or town); a telephone number; or a Social Security Number collected from any elementary or secondary school student. Additional information on Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) is available in the PTAC publication Protecting Student Privacy While Using Online Educational Services.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU BELIEVE YOUR RIGHTS HAVE BEEN VIOLATED

If you believe that your rights have been violated under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) or the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA), please review the videos and

instructions below to learn how to file a complaint with the Student Privacy Policy Office (SPPO). While the videos are specific to FERPA complaints, a similar process applies to PPRA complaints. <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/>

## WHO CAN FILE A FERPA COMPLAINT?

A parent has the right to file a written complaint with SPPO regarding an alleged violation of his or her rights under FERPA or PPRA. The rights afforded to parents under FERPA transfer to a student when the student turns 18 years old or begins attending a postsecondary institution at any age. The rights afforded to parents under PPRA transfer to a student when the student turns 18 years old or if the student is an emancipated minor (under state law) at any age.

## FERPA COMPLAINT FORM

Access the complaint form here: <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/faq/what-ferpa>. Once you have completed the form, you may either email it to SPPO at [FERPA.Complaints@ed.gov](mailto:FERPA.Complaints@ed.gov), or mail it to the following address:

**U.S. Department of Education**  
Student Privacy Policy Office  
400 Maryland Ave, SW  
Washington, DC 20202-8520





# HOW TO FILE AN ETHICS COMPLAINT AGAINST A LICENSED EDUCATOR

Parents have a responsibility to hold educators accountable. Sometimes, that might involve filing an ethics complaint against teachers if you feel that they have crossed an ethical line or law. Teachers need to know that they will face consequences if they do not comply with the law, like ignoring the state's law banning Critical Race Theories from being taught in the classroom.

Fortunately, every state has a procedure for the submission of ethics complaints.

## HOW TO BEGIN THE PROCESS

1. Locate your state educators ethics complaint page.
2. Follow the instructions according to your state guidelines.
3. Written complaints must contain the following: the basis of any allegation; all relevant names and dates and a brief description of the actions forming the basis of the complaint; and copies of any available documents or materials that support the allegations (please attach to the complaint form).

## WHAT TO BE AWARE OF WHEN FILING A COMPLAINT

Understand what time frame is required in order to file a complaint. Some states require a complaint to be filed within 30 days of the incident while others allow more time.

Knowing the deadline to file a complaint is important because you do not want to miss the window of opportunity to file an ethics complaint while trying to resolve the issue.





## EXAMPLE PROCESS:

In Texas, an educator or the parent/legal guardian of a student may file a complaint alleging a Code of Ethics violation. The complaint must be filed in writing with the State Board for Educator Certification no later than 90 calendar days after the date of the last act giving rise to the complaint.

Once filed, the SBEC executive director has 130 calendar days to determine if the complaint meets the criteria to be deemed valid. If it was not filed within the 90-day window or fails to adequately state a Code of Ethics violation, it may be dismissed. If the complaint is deemed valid, the SBEC staff initiates a case proceeding.

The responding educator may represent him/herself or be represented by a private attorney.

At the close of the hearing, the SBEC board will review the record of the contested case hearing and make a decision.. If the board finds that the educator has violated the Code of Ethics, it can sanction the educator's certificate up to and including revocation with no opportunity to reapply for certification.

Source: <https://tcta.org/node/12174>



# TERMS TO KNOW

CRITICAL RACE THEORY GLOSSARY

# CRITICAL RACE THEORY GLOSSARY

**ABOLITIONIST TEACHING:** Teaches that white abolitionism is the optimum level of whiteness to obtain as a white person. See: Whiteness: The 8 Levels of White Identity.

**ACTION CIVICS:** A model of teaching civics that downplays America's founding principles and governmental structure and pushes students to become political activists. Approved projects may include actively lobbying for or against legislation and/or participating in political demonstrations. As a practical matter, all projects are directed toward leftist activism. Synonyms: New Civics or Project-Based Civics.

**ANTI-RACISM:** i) The practice of dismantling a system marked by white supremacy and anti-Black racism through deliberate action. ii) A theory that explains and exposes multiple forms of racism: overt and covert, interpersonal and institutional, historical and present day, and persistent and nascent.

**BIPOC:** Black, indigenous, and people/person of color

**COLORBLIND RACISM:** i) The worldview that suggests that since race should not matter, it does not matter. ii) An ideology that insists that everyone be treated equally without regard to race, accompanied by a denial of the causes and consequences of racism.

**CO-OPTATION:** i) Taking an idea, disassembling it, and then reassembling it with original pieces as well as retrofitted ones; giving the modified idea a different name from the original and then claiming originality. ii) Appropriation; falsely claiming rights to or innovation of something as one's own

**COLORISM:** i) A practice whereby privileges and disadvantages are systematically doled out on the basis of skin color, with a disproportionate amount of advantage provided to lighter-skinned people. Synonym: light-skin privilege

**COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS:** A training curriculum used to "address racial disparities through safe, authentic, and effective cross-racial dialogue." The curriculum operates from a starting point that racial disparities are equal to systemic racism.

**CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING:** A pedagogy that emphasizes including students' cultural references in all curricula. For example, works by William Shakespeare and Jane Austen may be replaced with those of Maya Angelou and Sandra Cisneros. Related to Action Civics and Critical Race Theory.

**CRITICAL RACE THEORY (CRT):** A theory that examines and critiques the appearance of race and racism across dominant cultural modes of expression. Critical race theorists hold that the

law and legal institutions in the United States are inherently racist insofar as they function to create and maintain social, economic, and political inequalities between whites and nonwhites, especially African Americans.

It's important to understand that these ideas that were formed in the 1990s are based on a Marxist background that sought to divide individuals by class. In today's culture, they have replaced class with race. What we're left with is any disparate outcomes among races being termed as systemic racism and/or white oppression. This theory has become an ideology and that ideology has spread across America's schools, businesses, government agencies, human resources protocols, and more.

**DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI):** A series of buzzwords that promote the same tenets as Critical Race Theory. Focus is to teach equating disparities with oppression.

**DIVERSITY TRAINING:** Any program designed to reduce "prejudice and discrimination", and generally teach individuals who are "different from others" how to work together effectively. These trainings presuppose that there is implicit discrimination and prejudice amongst different groups. They also imply that interactions should be different based on their identity groups.

**DEHUMANIZATION:** i) The notion that some people are less than human ii) The routine association of Blacks with demons and animals, such as apes.

**ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA):** Under Common Core, a way to bring social and cultural issues, including "social justice," climate activism, and other biased curriculum, into English class.

**EPISTEMOLOGY OF IGNORANCE:** i) A militant, aggressive willingness to not know ii) A process of knowing designed to produce not knowing about white privilege and white supremacy

**EQUALITY:** Treating students the same regardless of their immutable characteristics. In today's groupthink, there is no room for equality, only racism and anti-racism.

**EQUITY:** Treating students differently depending on their membership in historically "privileged" or "oppressed" racial groups. Students from oppressed groups are to be given special treatment because of their race, with the ultimate goal of ensuring equal outcomes for all groups regardless of merit or effort.

**FALSE EQUIVALENCE:** i) A logical fallacy, whereby two opposing sides of an argument are deemed equivalent when they actually are not. ii) A reliance on feeble similarities in an attempt to make moot the more important observation and effect of the glaring differences.

**IBRAM X. KENDI:** The modern day leader of the antiracism (racist) movement. He teaches that the only remedy to past discrimination

is present discrimination and the only remedy to present discrimination is future discrimination. See Kendi's Book: *How to Be an AntiRacist*.

**ICIVICS:** A left-leaning curriculum that promotes civics education and encourages students to become active citizens. Emphasis is on promoting activism.

**INSTITUTIONAL OPPRESSION:** The systematic mistreatment of people within a social identity group, supported and enforced by the society and its institutions, solely based on the person's membership in the social identity group. Oppression is often conflated with "inequity." When this happens groups blame institutions because outcomes are not identical and insist that they manipulate their practices until outcomes are identical.

**IMPLICIT/EXPLICIT BIAS:** Refers to attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understandings, actions, and decisions in an unconscious way, making them difficult to control. Teachings focus on identifying the root of bias.

## **POC PERSON/PEOPLE OF COLOR**

**SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL):** The opposite of learning academic content (English, history, math, science, etc.). Pseudo-therapy that conditions children to exhibit the "correct" values, attitudes, mindsets, and behaviors. Now openly focused on indoctrinating them with biased political and cultural attitudes. Synonym: Whole Child Education

**UNCONSCIOUS BIAS:** A professional training that emphasizes social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals from outside their own conscious awareness. Everyone holds unconscious beliefs about social & identity groups.

**WHITE FRAGILITY:** An emotional response or reaction including dismissiveness, anger, resentment, defensiveness, and more by white people when introduced to teaching concepts like white privilege or bringing up social injustices against the Black community. There are a variety of common phrases "they" use: i) "I have a Black friend/ family member, so I'm not racist." ii) "Racism ended with slavery." iii) "I am colorblind, so I'm not racist." See Robin DiAngelo's book, *White Fragility*.

**WHITENESS:** Categorized into eight different white political identities:

- **WHITE SUPREMACIST.** Clearly marked white society that preserves, names, and values white superiority.
- **WHITE VOYEURISM.** Wouldn't challenge a white supremacist; desires non-whiteness because it's interesting, pleasurable; seeks to control the consumption and appropriation of non-whiteness; fascination with culture (ex. consuming Black culture without the burden of Blackness).



- › **WHITE PRIVILEGE.** May critique supremacy, but a deep investment in questions of fairness/equality under the normalization of whiteness and white rule; sworn goal of 'diversity.'
- › **WHITE BENEFIT.** Sympathetic to a set of issues but only privately; won't speak/act in solidarity publicly because benefitting through whiteness in public (some POC [People of Color] are in this category as well).
- › **WHITE CONFESSIONAL.** Some exposure of whiteness takes place, but as a way of being accountable to POC after; seek validation from POC.
- › **WHITE CRITICAL.** Take on broad criticisms of whiteness and invest in exposing/marking the white regime; refusal to be complicit with the regime; whiteness speaking back to whiteness.
- › **WHITE TRAITOR.** Actively refuses complicity; names what's going on; intention is to subvert white authority and tell the truth at whatever cost; need them to dismantle institutions.
- › **WHITE ABOLITIONIST.** Changing institutions, dismantling whiteness, and not allowing whiteness to reassert itself.

**WHITE PRIVILEGE:** The phrase was first coined by activist and scholar Peggy McIntosh in 1988 in her paper "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack."<sup>1</sup> She described white privilege in terms of the unspoken advantage that the dominant culture has over people of color. In other words, power, benefits, and other advantages are distributed in unequal ways among the different groups in society. Specifically, with respect to white privilege, the advantage rests with white people.

**1619 PROJECT:** A series of essays, now morphed into K-12 school curricula, produced by *The New York Times* and based on the assertion that the seminal date of United States history isn't 1776 but 1619 – when African slaves arrived in Virginia. Argues that slavery dictated all aspects of American history, including culture, economics, diplomacy, etc., and resulted in systemic racism that cannot be overcome without totalitarian efforts. Debunked by prominent historians of different political persuasions.



## OTHER TERMS TO BE AWARE OF WHEN EXAMINING CURRICULUM:

Some of the below terms represent practices, ideas, or fields that are not on their own negative but are often included, used, or quoted in CRT and similar ideologies.

Anti-bias training	Intersectional studies
Anti-blackness	Land acknowledgment
Anti-meritocracy	Marginalized identities
Obtuse meritocracy	Marginalized/Minoritized/ Under-
Centering or de-centering	represented communities
Collective guilt	Microaggressions
Conscious and unconscious bias	Multiculturalism
Critical ethnic studies	Neo-segregation
Critical pedagogy	(This is also a text)
Critical self-awareness	Normativity
Critical self-reflection	Patriarchy
Cultural appropriation/ misappropriation	Protect Vulnerable Identities
Cultural awareness	Oppressor vs. oppressed
Cultural competence	Protect vulnerable identities
Cultural proficiency	Race Essentialism
Cultural relevance	Racial healing
Cultural responsiveness	Racialized identity
Culturally responsive practices	Racial justice
De-centering whiteness	Racial prejudice
Deconstruct knowledges	Racial sensitivity training
Diversity Focused	Racial supremacy
Diversity Training	Reflective exercises
Dominant discourses	Representation & Inclusion
Educational justice	Restorative justice
Equitable	Restorative practices
Examine “systems”	Social justice
Free radical therapy	Spirit Murdering
Free radical self/collective care	Structural bias
Hegemony	Structural inequity
Identity deconstruction	Structural racism
Inclusivity education	Systemic bias
Institutional bias	Systemic oppression
Internalized racial superiority	Systemic racism
Internalized racism	Systems of power and oppression
Internalized white supremacy	White Social Capital
Interrupting Racism	Woke
Intersectional identities	











FreedomWorks

**Best.**  
BUILDING EDUCATION  
FOR STUDENTS TOGETHER  
www.ParentsKnowBest.com

**Best. Dad**  
www.ParentsKnowBest.com

I AM THE  
**Best. Dad**  
www.ParentsKnowBest.com

I AM THE  
**Best. Mom**  
www.ParentsKnowBest.com

I AM THE  
**Best. Mom**  
www.ParentsKnowBest.com

I AM THE  
**Best. Mom**  
www.ParentsKnowBest.com

**Best.**  
BUILDING EDUCATION  
FOR STUDENTS TOGETHER  
www.ParentsKnowBest.com

**Best.**  
BUILDING EDUCATION  
FOR STUDENTS TOGETHER  
www.ParentsKnowBest.com

I AM THE  
**Best. Mom**  
www.ParentsKnowBest.com

I AM THE  
**Best. Mom**  
www.ParentsKnowBest.com









[WWW.PARENTSKNOWBEST.COM](http://WWW.PARENTSKNOWBEST.COM) >> TEXT "BEST" TO 41490 >> [CONNECT@PARENTSKNOWBEST.COM](mailto:CONNECT@PARENTSKNOWBEST.COM)