



The SPLC's
TEACHING TOLERANCE

What Parents, Teachers, and
Administrators Need to Know

FAMILY RESEARCH COUNCIL
Washington, D.C.

The SPLC's **TEACHING TOLERANCE**

What Parents, Teachers, and
Administrators Need to Know

Navigating our educational system is one of the biggest challenges facing families all across America. We worry about where our children go to school and the quality of education they will receive. We wonder if they will be able to find a job or attend college upon graduation. Will our children be safe and respected at school? Will our values be reinforced, or at least tolerated, or will they be undermined? These worries are compounded by the sense that America's children are being educated away from values held dear by previous generations: an appreciation for hard work, self-control, civic duty, and love of country and neighbor.

Parents are wise to be on guard and active in their children's school, in contact with their teachers and administrators, and dedicated monitors of curricula and textbooks. Today more than ever, parents need to be intentional partners in children's education, whether public, private, or homeschool.

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Family Research Council has produced this resource for parents to help identify and monitor a particular threat to our values and religious freedom: divisive identity politics in the form of radical "social justice education." The most flagrant purveyor of partisan ideas aimed at our nation's school children is the highly partisan and left-wing Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC).



The SPLC brands Christian beliefs about sexuality as “hate.”

“Teaching Tolerance” is a special project run by the SPLC and is designed to infiltrate schools through radically progressive education resources. The SPLC’s stated goal of Teaching Tolerance (TT) is to “eradicate intolerance.”¹ We know that for the SPLC, the target is not “the intolerant” *per se* but those who do not share their liberal worldview. According to an executive at the SPLC, “[w]e are focused, whether people like it or not, on the radical right.”² A former Senior Fellow at the SPLC describes the purpose of the Center as not just a “hate monitoring” organization, but in reality, “[o]ur aim in life is to destroy these groups, completely destroy them.”³

It’s no surprise that Christian values about marriage and family are in the crosshairs of Teaching Tolerance materials and resources. This brochure outlines the content within the Teaching Tolerance project and empowers parents to protect their children against indoctrination if these “resources” are discovered in your local school.

With the SPLC’s vast financial holdings and a seemingly limitless budget, Teaching Tolerance produces hundreds of teacher resources online and in print. The SPLC delivered over 900,000 copies of their *Teaching Tolerance* magazine in 2017 alone.⁴ The group’s magazine has been in circulation since 1991. That’s long enough for an entire generation of children who were influenced by the SPLC agenda to become teachers themselves. We will highlight the content of Teaching Tolerance later in the brochure, but to put this all into context, we must first review the hateful history of the Southern Poverty Law Center itself.

THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER:

Left-wing Scare Tactics Spawn a Mega Fundraising Bully

Founded in 1971, the Southern Poverty Law Center has been criticized continually for its questionable financial practices and fundraising scare tactics,⁵ including its outsized \$470 million endowment. More recently the fundraising behemoth has come under fire for maintaining a longstanding hostile work environment for minorities and women.⁶ Lionized as a master fundraiser unbothered by scruples, SPLC co-founder Morris Dees was fired in March of 2019.⁷ Dees had been accused of racism by employees over the years, and had a reputation for harassing female employees regardless of race.⁸

His disregard for religion is summed up in this quote: “I learned everything I know about hustling from the Baptist Church. Spending Sundays sitting on those hard benches listening to the preacher pitch salvation – why, it was like getting a Ph.D. in selling.”⁹ This insulting characterization of religious practice is both sad and telling, and permeates the ethos of the SPLC’s Teaching Tolerance program.



*Vice President Pence is specifically targeted by
the SPLC for his Christian views.*

The SPLC has been called a “notoriously partisan attack group” by Philanthropy Roundtable.¹⁰

Morris Dees' Democrat Party ties date back to stints raising money for liberal presidential candidates George McGovern, Jimmy Carter, Ted

THE SPLC IS WELL KNOWN FOR THREATENING AND BULLYING SCHOOL SYSTEMS, TEACHERS, AND EVEN PARENTS WITH EXPENSIVE LEGAL ACTIONS AND COMPLAINTS FILED WITH FEDERAL AND STATE LEVEL CIVIL RIGHTS OFFICES.

Kennedy, and Gary Hart. The partisan nature of the SPLC has gone from obvious to odious since the 2016 presidential campaign and election.¹¹ Though not appropriate for use in taxpayer-funded public schools, the SPLC's established presence and outsized budget for slick mailings of free resources make it hard for educators to resist, not to mention the threats of legal action that are the SPLC's weapon of choice.¹² The SPLC is well known for threatening and bullying school systems, teachers, and even parents with expensive legal actions and complaints filed with federal and state level Civil Rights Offices.¹³

The Southern Poverty Law Center is a highly partisan and ideological organization that cannot be trusted to inform the minds of our nation's most precious resource, our children. We will now explore exactly what Teaching Tolerance is, who makes it happen, and how it works.

TEACHING TOLERANCE: Divisive Identity Politics Aimed at Children

Since its debut in 1991, the Southern Poverty Law Center's Teaching Tolerance program has grown from a semiannual magazine into a full-fledged teacher training and support program centered around "social justice" activism. With offices



in Alabama and Washington, D.C., Teaching Tolerance (TT) has developed remarkably in its reach and breadth of content while remaining narrowly focused in its ideological perspective. Under the protective leadership of Teaching Tolerance Director Maureen Costello,¹⁴ the program has expanded from simply publishing a magazine to include dramatically increased offerings for professional development, lesson planning, films and film kits, podcasts, and other practical tools for teachers and school administrators.¹⁵



*Director
Maureen Costello*

According to Ms. Costello, in the early years, the goal of Teaching Tolerance was “to prevent and reduce the formation of prejudice and form a more open-minded generation.”¹⁶ As time has passed the Teaching Tolerance mission has evolved.

She explains, “In the last 10 years we’ve looked at prejudice reduction, intergroup relations, and promoting equitable experiences in our nation’s schools. We are looking at [educational] ‘practice’ ... teaching a lesson or doing school discipline affects all students ... In the last year, we have begun to kind of reimagine our mission once again. And we are now thinking in terms of the fact that what we really have to do is educate for a diverse democracy.”¹⁷

Later in the interview, Ms. Costello reveals her true objective: “The diverse democracy thing involves not only getting along with people, but also **[students] having a sense of agency and**

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A WORLDVIEW IN LINE WITH THE SPLC’S
LIBERAL AGENDA.**

having a sense that ‘I can do something.’ So we want to support teachers as they support the development of those skills and dispositions in students”¹⁸ (emphasis added). It’s no surprise that a left-wing organization like the SPLC would promote “social justice” activism and call it “educational.” The “skills” and “dispositions” Teaching Tolerance seeks to develop in children have less to do with the acquisition of knowledge and much more to do with shaping a worldview in line with the SPLC’s liberal agenda, inculcating voting habits informed by identity politics, and advancing a “social justice” mission to protest and disrupt political structures. Giving children a “sense of agency” is indeed a radical notion that directly conflicts with parental rights and the best interests of children.

The most obvious and dangerous consequence of this kind of attitude in our nation’s schools is sexually charged LGBTQ activism—especially transgenderism. Christian parents (and any other parents) who believe a child cannot change from one sex to another will find themselves at odds with school administrators and counselors in most school districts across the country. Many school systems have policies which require schools to “protect the privacy of the student” even and especially when parents are perceived to have concerns about gender reassignment or sexual identity.¹⁹ Teaching Tolerance has many resources devoted to just this sort of “corrective education” for students and parents alike.

Teaching Tolerance started as a twice-yearly magazine. But it didn’t stop there. With a staff of 20, the SPLC’s Teaching Tolerance division floods public school classrooms with:

- Lesson plan tool kits
- Social media resources
- Professional Development Webcasts and seminars
- Best Practice Guides on race, LGBTQ, digital citizenship
- Films and podcasts for professional or classroom use
- Supplemental materials aligned with Common Core Standards
- Excellence in Education Awards
- Grants for teachers and administrators for social justice activism

Teaching Tolerance does not stop at trying to reach children in grades K-12 through the teachers who use TT classroom resources on a variety of topics. To make sure the SPLC reaches as many children as possible, Teaching Tolerance began infiltrating teacher training schools in universities across the country.²⁰ For example, *Teaching Tolerance in Higher Education: Case Studies of Teacher Preparation Programs* highlights interviews with leaders in 13 institutions of higher learning across the country who train the next generation of teachers to use the SPLC in their classrooms.²¹

The SPLC's incursion into higher education provides a window into their ideological advocacy. In one example, SPLC materials are used by Danielle Centano, who runs Claremont Graduate University's (part of the Claremont College consortium) teacher induction program, near Los Angeles, California. Centano offers: "We don't just prepare teachers. We prepare socially just teachers. That means our mission is aligned with Teaching Tolerance's mission. I find that Teaching Tolerance is a place that I know is going to

help provide timely and current social justice resources to our students [who are teachers].”²²

Not content with reaching teachers in established careers, Teaching Tolerance goes straight to the source: education departments at major teaching universities in strategic states. These efforts have real world consequences. For example, parents and grandparents in Idaho regularly contact FRC with concerns about the leftist curriculum offerings at public schools in their state—courses and materials very out of step with their traditional community values.

According to Teaching Tolerance’s Higher Education report, Boise State University’s teacher training program has been targeted to use SPLC resources to recruit the next generation of teachers in Idaho. From the report:

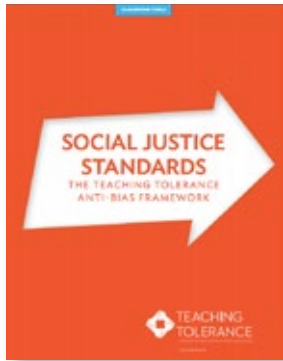
The school boasts a large teacher education program, and it places graduates into the increasingly diverse Boise-area schools. Sonia Galaviz is a longtime advocate for TT materials; she has also **served on the [TT’s] advisory board** [emphasis added]. In 2016, Galaviz structured an entire class around TT materials ... to teach unit design and other basic principles while also guiding her students into the more advanced arenas of multiculturalism and diversity. ... Courses like hers demonstrate the ways that TT materials can fit into pre-service classrooms that bridge content areas, bringing Teaching Tolerance to audiences who might not otherwise encounter it.²³

Indeed.

IN ONE RECENT TEACHING TOLERANCE ASSIGNMENT, CHILDREN WERE MADE TO PHYSICALLY STAND IN FRONT OF POSTERS SIGNIFYING THEIR SEXUAL OR GENDER IDENTITY.

Wake County, North Carolina

A more recent example of how Teaching Tolerance materials embarrass and abuse children in classrooms occurred near Raleigh, North Carolina. Wake County students at Heritage High School complained to parents about a “Diversity Inventory” that was part of an English Class assignment. Parents



Social Justice Standards by Teaching Tolerance

objected, alerting the school system that their children had been traumatized by, among other aspects of the assignment, having to physically stand in front of posters signifying their sexual or gender identity. NC Values Coalition has done fantastic work standing with parents who are concerned about the lesson and uncovering the ideology behind it.²⁴ The lesson has been pulled, but administrators failed to condemn its use or source.²⁵

The so-called “Social Justice Standards” from Teaching Tolerance were not devised or written by any educational authority at the state or federal level. No school board committee even at a local level drafted this document, debated it, and voted on the contents, deeming it appropriate for school use. These highly political “anti-bias framework” standards were crafted by Southern Poverty Law Center executives to further their liberal partisan agenda. The SPLC mails them directly to school administrators and actively encourages their use by offering teacher training and other staff support to ensure widespread adoption. This leaves parents and taxpayers in the dark.

Waco, Texas

In the summer of 2019, several failing schools in Waco, Texas, offered a literacy program for students. The schools had been placed under special oversight of an organization called “Transformation Waco.”²⁶ The summer literacy program was offered in June and July. It was free for students but paid for by the school system. The Freedom Schools²⁷ program is a project of the left of center Children’s Defense Fund and was offered in partnership with Baylor University’s Education Department. The Freedom Schools program uses Teaching Tolerance curricular supports and is promoted on the TT website.²⁸

IN WACO, TEXAS, A CONTROVERSIAL PRESENTATION ON SEXUAL AND GENDER IDENTITY TOOK PLACE WITHOUT PARENTAL NOTIFICATION OR CONSENT.

Community activists, alerted by concerned parents, soon discovered that a controversial presentation on sexual and gender identity had taken place without parental notification or consent. In addition, the graphic film *Valentine Road: The Murder of Lawrence King* was shown to 11-13 year olds. (The film depicts sexualized content, extreme bullying, and a student murdering another student.) Freedom School students would also participate in a “social justice action” to reduce gun violence which included children marching in an outdoor protest.²⁹

Many of the students in the program were English Language Learners whose parents probably placed them in the program to boost reading ability because their children were attending a school not meeting state standards. Would those parents have agreed with the sexual and social

justice agenda included in an alleged “literacy program”? We will never know because the parents were not asked. Parent complaints after the fact did result in Baylor removing a staff member associated with the program, but the damage was already done.³⁰

SPLC’s Access to Schools

Teaching Tolerance and the Southern Poverty Law Center enjoy direct access to schools that flows from a longstanding working relationship with the National Education Association (NEA). The NEA has endorsed and even collaborated on developing the SPLC’s teacher indoctrination programs.³¹ NEA cites Teaching Tolerance executives as experts.³² The NEA has embraced the SPLC and empowered them to prioritize activism over academics in our public schools. The NEA even presented its 2016 NEA President’s Award for Human and Civil Rights to (now fired) SPLC co-founder Morris Dees.³³ The powerful teacher’s union, which has an iron grip on the nation’s schools, flexes its muscle to foist Teaching Tolerance on unsuspecting teachers and innocent students.

In her book *Standing Up to Goliath*, former teacher and education advocate Rebecca Friedrich explains:

NEA’s 2017 New Business Item (NBI) 30 states: “In partnership with the Southern Poverty Law Center, NAACP, ACLU, GLSEN [Gay Lesbian Straight Education Alliance], National Center for Trans-Equality, Human Rights Campaign, and any other legal and human rights groups of related concerns, NEA will track incidents of discrimination, racism, homophobia, and transphobia, as well as anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and all other forms of religious discrimination, and

bigotry in our public schools. The data will be shared with districts to educate and eradicate hate through the development of programs that include, but are not limited to, training on unconscious bias, culturally responsive instruction, and the anti-defamation league.” ... The unions, as usual, are complicating matters because their real motives are not to combat the bullying of all students; instead, their motivations are to push their social and political agenda onto every single child, parent, and educator in every single school across America. ...³⁴

Friedrich also notes that education unions “initiate, condone, and promote bullying when the victims are teachers, parents, students, or Christians who dare to question the union agenda.”³⁵

SEXUALIZED CONTENT FOR CHILDREN:

A Teaching Tolerance Speciality

Parents are constantly battling to protect children from sexualized images and content aimed at them. Whether it's television, movies, video games, social media, or music lyrics and videos, sexual themes and images abound. Most parents would prefer school focus on learning reading,

**RATHER THAN OFFERING A REFUGE
FROM OUR CULTURE'S SEXUALIZATION
OF CHILDREN, TEACHING TOLERANCE
WORKS TO NORMALIZE IT.**

writing, history, math, science, music, and the arts. Rather than offering a refuge from our culture's sexualization of children, Teaching Tolerance works to normalize it.³⁶



Teaching Tolerance has many classroom resources on sexuality and gender. Sexual advocacy is a high priority for TT—most often without parental notification. Time and again in the TT materials, teachers and administrators are reminded NOT to share information with parents that would “out” a student’s sexuality or gender to their parents. SPLC executives have advised the use of Welcoming Schools,³⁷ a project of the Human Rights Campaign. This LGBTQ program³⁸ specializes on focusing on the very young



Teaching Tolerance Resources on Sexuality and Gender

student, grades K-6.³⁹ If your local library or school library has an LGBTQ display of books for children, chances are a list from the Welcoming Schools website or the American Library Association⁴⁰ was used as a guide.

Teaching Tolerance’s *Best Practices for Serving LGBTQ Students* is a school climate guide that has been mailed to approximately 14,000 school districts in the country. The TT LGBTQ best practice guide includes information on how to have a “gender inclusive” school dress code. According to Teaching Tolerance “experts,” words like “respectable,” “revealing,” “provocative,” and “distracting” target identities instead of clothing; therefore, it is not a best practice.⁴¹ The advice provided by TT includes comprehensive and inclusive sexuality education listing National Sexuality Education Standards (another very official sounding but anti-family set of opinions about what children should know about sexual activity) as a resource;⁴² explains how teachers and administrators can be allies of youth who identify as LGTBQ;⁴³ suggests integrating “Queer Voices” into the curriculum;⁴⁴ provides DO’s and DON’T’s for managing a student who “comes out” to a teacher at school;⁴⁵ and offers advice for managing objections from family members or anti-LGBTQ legal organizations.⁴⁶ Teaching Tolerance’s hostility toward religion and faith is exposed in its frequent reminders that a person’s religion is not an excuse to bully people who identify as LGBTQ—thereby casting Christians as *de facto bullies*.

Teaching Tolerance’s movie *Bullied: A Student, A School, and a Case that Made History* was released in 2010. There are multiple resources for its use on the TT website including a 24-page viewing guide with a “school climate survey” and questionnaires for students and faculty. According to the SPLC’s 2017 Annual Report, Teaching Tolerance delivered 7,545 *Bullied* film kits to schools that year alone.⁴⁷

In just under a decade, schools have gone from screening a movie like *Bullied* in class in order to promote LGBTQ inclusion to now enforcing state mandates requiring LGBTQ content in

many subjects across the curriculum. California and New Jersey schools will implement an LG-BTQ history requirement in 2019. This new and controversial content is being met with parent protests.⁴⁸

What kind of LGBTQ content will parents find in curricula? Teaching Tolerance offers many suggestions. The Queer America Podcast, available on iTunes and at the Teaching Tolerance website, offers 13 episodes worth of classroom material. The first episode of “Queer America” offers very general advice for incorporating LGBTQ content in elementary school, middle school, and high school curricula. Later episodes address specific identities within the LGBTQ label and advise how teachers can incorporate this material into lessons, whether or not their school districts allow or approve such content. Sadly, TT’s incorporation of LGBTQ material conflicts with both common sense and Christian heritage.

Daniel Hurewitz is a guest on the first episode of the Queer America podcast and is a history professor at Hunter College in New York. He teaches history courses, including master’s level students getting teacher certifications. After spending a few minutes assuring the audience that queer history is not hard to teach if you just have the right attitude, he gets down to what he calls, “The nitty gritty: Where are the places you can start incorporating LGBTQ content into your history classes?” The first place he suggests is with teaching the Gold Rush, “which in my experience comes up in fourth grade and probably shows up in your curriculum in a variety of places. We almost assume about the Gold Rush, is the kind of loneliness of all those men in this, what we might call ‘bachelor society.’ How hard it must have been for them to be out there, away from all the women of American society and culture.” He then suggests finding historical etchings, paintings, and drawings from the 1800s

that show men in the mines having a “great time together.” Hurewitz goes on to describe a great American painting by Charles Christian Nahl called *Sunday Morning in the Mines*. He describes the painting as a triptych, with various vignettes splashed about the painting which seem to celebrate men “happy to be in a community only with other men. ... They were happily having intimate lives just with other men.”⁴⁹

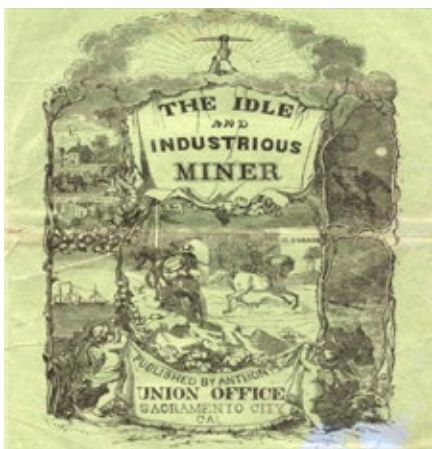
The interpretation offered in this podcast episode is problematic. Life in the mines was a major theme for Charles Nahl, known as the first significant artist of California. In fact, the bear on the California state flag is an image from his work. Nahl was born in Germany, studied art in the Kassel School, and immigrated with his family to the U.S., moving to California for the gold rush.



*Sunday Morning in the Mines*⁵⁰

When one actually looks at the painting being described in the podcast, a very different interpretation becomes clear. The painting is not a triptych. It is, in fact, divided in half by the pine tree. “*Sunday Morning in the Mines* ... has become emblematic of the gold-rush era. An allegory painted in 1872, the scene is based on a letter-sheet illustration that the artist created in the early 1850s. The right side of the painting depicts the Sunday morning activities of virtuous miners,

and the left depicts the irresponsible pursuits of the morally corrupt.”⁵¹ This description is copied from the Crocker Museum website, California Supreme Court Justice EB Crocker having commissioned the painting. Not quite the triptych gay moment the SPLC would have us believe.



*Nahl's 1854 parable "The Idle Miner and the Industrious Miner"*⁵²



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The theme is not at all about men being away from the civilized world and alone with each other, but rather a reflection on “virtue versus vice” or “industry versus idleness.” Nahl illustrated a published parable on this theme in 1854.

The parable recounts the tale of two lifelong friends, one of which is the idle miner who fails

to work and wastes the gold dust shared with him by his hardworking friend on drinking and gambling. He dies sick and away from home. The industrious miner rises early and works hard, invests his gold, continues to work, and is able to return home a hero to his family: “He brings them home a winning smile – a form robust and strong – a soul unspotted by the crimes of those he fell among. He tells his friends, that wish to know the cause of his success, that those who seek the mines must work, AND DRINK AND GAMBLE LESS!”⁵⁴

GUIDANCE ON HOW TO DISCUSS THE 1872 PAINTING *SUNDAY MORNING IN THE MINES* IS JUST ONE EXAMPLE OF HOW TEACHING TOLERANCE’S LGBTQ CURRICULA SUBVERTS THE TEACHING OF ACTUAL HISTORY.

In its Queer America Podcast, the Southern Poverty Law Center has promoted an interpretation of an historic work of art that is very far from its actual spirit and meaning. The SPLC and Teaching Tolerance have taken a theme that any parent would wish their child to learn—the reward of labor and the danger of idleness—and turned it into a lesson which demeans the American work ethic and identity, and marginalizes women. According to the podcast, the painting offers a chance “to put our ideas in a historical context that says, ‘Our ideas weren’t eternal, aren’t traditional, aren’t the way all Americans always thought and felt.’ But in fact, are different from the way they thought and acted 100 years ago.”⁵⁵ The Judeo-Christian values that informed the worldview of the artist and his patron are directly assaulted and replaced with an LGBTQ interpretation of this work. It is in this way that Teaching Tolerance’s LGBTQ curricula subverts the teaching of actual history.

When prominent figures in American history are known to have identified themselves as LGBTQ, including them as such is only accurate and fair. But drawing inferences and conclusions based on a slanted worldview not only serves to diminish the history of this great nation, it marginalizes Christians and people of faith. This example from the first episode is but one of many suggestions for LGBTQ content and themes. Their veracity and relevancy are debatable at the very least, but the inclusions are suggested to teachers nonetheless.

OTHER TEACHING TOLERANCE ISSUES:

Fact vs. Fiction

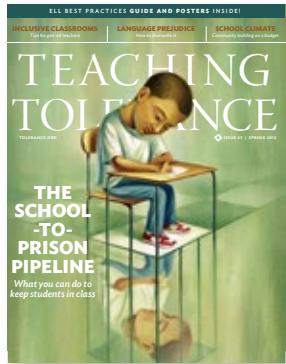
Parents must be aware of the many other issues that Teaching Tolerance and similar organizations seek to exploit for political gain in our nation's schools. A publication of this length cannot debunk each threat Teaching Tolerance presents, but we can offer an overview of topics parents should monitor.

The SPLC is well known for exaggerated claims and fear mongering regarding racial discrimination, LGBTQ bigotry, gun violence, and abuse of authority. This culture of alarmism and disregard for fact permeates Teaching Tolerance.

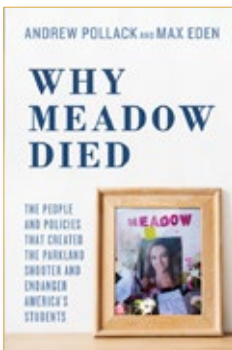


School Discipline

The SPLC and Teaching Tolerance make much of the “School to Prison Pipeline” narrative, as do many other prominent organizations active in schools and our political system.⁵⁶ The idea is that zero tolerance policies in school discipline lead to racial disparities in expulsions of minority “special needs” students. The thinking goes that the higher rate of expulsions in turn cause more minority children to end up on a pathway to jail due to the failure of the school to teach them. But the facts just don’t bear this out, which is why the Department of Education rescinded the guidelines on zero tolerance policies in December 2018.⁵⁷ Roger Clegg, president of the Center for Equal Opportunity, applauded the move. According to Clegg, the policy’s primary victims were students “who want to learn but whose classrooms are disrupted and dangerous because schools are reluctant to discipline students who ought to be.”⁵⁸



*Teaching Tolerance Magazine
Spring 2013 Issue*



In *Why Meadow Died: The People and Policies That Created the Parkland Shooter and Endanger America's Students*, Marjorie Stone-man Douglass High School (MSDHS) parent Andrew Pollack and his co-author Max Eden explain the role Broward County Schools played in the ultimate creation of

the Obama era guidance designed to eliminate racial disparities in school discipline policies.⁵⁹ The book describes how a well-intentioned policy failed to educate minority students while at the same time endangering the entire student body at MSDHS. Every parent with school age children should read this book.⁶⁰

This terrible discipline policy is now spreading across the country, and, much like “gender identity” policy, it is burdening school discipline and classroom management across the nation. Parents need to become engaged and stop the evisceration of school discipline. Contrary to TT and the SPLC, children cannot learn in a setting that is disruptive and dangerous. That is not to say that school discipline cannot be merciful, but the Parkland incident underscores the fact that irrational disciplinary leniency brings on another more serious set of problems.

Slavery, Civil Rights, Immigration, Voting Rights, and more

Indiscriminate claims about racial animosity have been a Southern Poverty Law Center mainstay since its inception.⁶¹ Providing educational



resources on issues related to race is Teaching Tolerance’s stated goal. But the divisive identity politics purveyed in the material does little to

promote healing or dialogue.⁶² We deplore racism and wish to “love our neighbors as ourselves.” The TT materials offer some helpful suggestions and some useful history. But the “victim” narrative that pervades the offerings too often leaves the impression that the problem is too large to solve and there is no hope for a better future.⁶³ This ignores the great strides we have made in America toward racial equality and equality between the sexes. Teaching Tolerance material often serves to demoralize the reader and create a paradigm where change is a goal which will never be reached.



Much consternation was generated by *The New York Times Magazine*'s “1619 Project,” an interactive series of articles and poems examining American history after slavery arrived on North American shores in that year. *The Times* claims that 1619 is the true year of America's founding, not 1776.⁶⁴ *The Wall Street Journal* sounded the alarm: “Most dangerous of all, the Pulitzer Center has packaged the Times project as a curriculum for students of all ages that will be disseminated throughout the country.”⁶⁵ However, the “1619 Project” is just the latest version of offensive ideology and distortive historical revisionism to enter mainstream consciousness. Teaching Tolerance has been saying the same things unchecked to a much larger audience for decades.

Teaching Tolerance’s “Teaching Hard History” and its predecessors have been occupying this educational space for years. Even as the SPLC was imploding due to the firing of co-founder Morris Dees and others for misconduct, *USA Today*⁶⁶ ran a piece on education about slavery in America, touting SPLC statistics. It promoted Teaching Tolerance’s “Teaching Hard History,” citing examples of how poorly public schools teach American history and recounting incidents of racist or just clumsy efforts at teaching about slavery’s history in the U.S., as documented by the SPLC.



Where is the critical review of this program from a highly partisan, highly political education lobby? Like the “1619 Project,” TT’s “Teaching Hard History” offers a framework which boasts a podcast, teacher training webinars, lesson plans, and many interactive resources on its website. They are available for teachers across the country, endorsed by an array of professors and historians.⁶⁷ Yet conservative academics and press outlets like *The Wall Street Journal* seem completely oblivious to its existence. When will conservative legal and historical scholars assess the quality and accuracy of TT’s materials? Given TT’s access to thousands of schools, it is far more worthy of critical review and sustained attention than the “1619 Project.”

The Education Industrial Complex vs. Parents and Children

“Local control” of public schools is a hallmark of the American educational system. American school systems are designed with community involvement and public accountability held as paramount. Elected school boards *should* ensure the representation of all views in the making of school policies. Our two-party system of government *should* mean that the natural tension and debate between different ideas and educational philosophies resolves into an agreement on goals that benefit all students and the community as a whole. The use of public funding *should* require transparency in how tax dollars are spent for educational purposes. Good governance practices *should* mean parents have easy access to curricula and test scores, while being respected as the primary educators of our children.

That’s how things *should* work, in theory. We know the reality is much different and that one side tends to influence education more than another. But ideally, public school would require and allow for public accountability.

Enter the nonprofit educational industrial complex, dominated by national left-wing and progressive organizations, which seek to influence our education system. Infiltrating educational systems on the local level means access to both minds and money. Education nonprofits want to shape the thinking of the next generation and direct the resources of schools to that end. There are hundreds of such groups—all with a progressive agenda to shape the worldview of the next generation of adults while they are still defenseless children. Groups with enough funding to offer schools “free” resources enjoy the advantage of means and can fly under the radar

of public accountability. But their influence is profound. Groups like the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Education Association, the Human Rights Campaign, and the Southern Poverty Law Center seek to influence or control the material and messaging aimed at America's students today.

It is vital that Christian families and all people of faith pay attention to what is happening at school. Unfortunately, the “climate” or “caring culture” created in schools today by “social justice” promoters amounts to a hostile learning environment for people of faith and for families with traditional values. This hostility is most clearly evident in the increasing sexualization of students and the subject matter taught to them. But the failure to truly partner with parents, poor governance practices in many school systems, and lack of transparency are also essentially an assault on parental rights to know what our children are taught and to direct their upbringing, especially for Christians. Christian parents have the same rights as any other parent in school. We have every right to be in public schools and every right to expect that our views will be respected. We know that with God anything is possible, especially in this wonderful nation in which we are blessed to live.

**AS WE ENGAGE OUR SCHOOLS TO
EFFECT CHANGE, WE MUST PRAY LIKE IT
ALL DEPENDS ON GOD BUT WORK LIKE
IT ALL DEPENDS ON US.**

An old saying comes to mind: pray like it all depends on God but work like it all depends on us. We must all pray for our nation, our leaders, and our most precious gift—our children. As you engage with your school on this or any other issue of concern, we suggest the following tips and resources to aid you in this mission.

TIPS for Success:

- **Stay calm.** When our children are confronted with morally objectionable content, or treated in a demeaning way, parents are rightly angered. Quick action is necessary, but a calm countenance will help command the respect of those you wish to influence.
- **Be brave.** We know parents worry that their children will suffer if a parent objects to something at school. We entrust our children to their care and we know the power schools have. Speak out anyway.
- **If possible, approach officials as a group.** This doesn't have to be a formal organization. Just knowing that more than "a couple of parents" are not happy is a sign to administrators that many more could also object.
- **Be complementary.** When you meet with school officials, be complementary of things worthy of praise before bringing up concerns. There are many good people working in schools who are doing the best they can to serve their students. There are Christian teachers who feel alone in what amounts to a hostile work environment for them.
- **Be willing to collaborate.** In the absence of an alternative viewpoint, teachers and administrators use what is available. Your objection may be the first time a different point of view is expressed or is shared in a way that can be heard. Sharing your views should be a collaboration if possible, rather than a confrontation.
- **Be creative.** Remember that sometimes activist education officials are trained to handle your objections to this material. Come up with creative ways to communicate that your

child and your views deserve the same respect given other students and other views. Each situation is different. Pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance.

- **Talk to your children and affirm their identity as a child of God.** As Christians, we know we exist in a fallen world. In that sense, we will always be a sign of contradiction to the non-Christian culture. We also know that we are put here by God, at this moment, for his purpose and glory. Helping your children navigate their world now will prepare them for the larger world they will face as adults.

RESOURCES:

FAMILY RESEARCH COUNCIL

frc.org/issues/education

Many resources to help Christian families in public school

GATEWAYS TO BETTER EDUCATION

gogateway.org

Resources for Christians in public school

ASCEND

weascend.org

Resources for schools and parents on sexual risk avoidance

HERITAGE FOUNDATION

heritage.org

Resources on education and other topics politicized in schools

PARENT RESOURCE GUIDE ON TRANSGENDERISM IN SCHOOL

GenderResourceGuide.com

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