

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

ARIZONA



#TEACHTRUTH

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Know Your Rights



WHAT EDUCATORS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ARIZONA'S ATTEMPT TO RESTRICT WHAT STUDENTS ARE TAUGHT ABOUT OUR COUNTRY'S HISTORY

Lawmakers and policy makers across our country, in yet another attempt to divide Americans along partisan and racial lines, are pushing legislation that seeks to stifle discussions on racism, sexism and inequity in public school classrooms. Despite the rhetoric around them, these new laws do not prohibit teaching the full sweep of U.S. history, including teaching about nearly 250 years of slavery, the Civil War, the Reconstruction period, or the violent white supremacy that brought Reconstruction to an end and has persisted in one or another form ever since. Nor should these laws and policies undermine efforts to ensure that all students, including historically marginalized students, feel seen in the classroom and benefit from culturally-inclusive curricula and pedagogical tools that teach the truth about our country.

In Arizona, those efforts resulted in the legislature attempting to include new prohibitions on instruction in the June 2021 budget bill. A statewide coalition, including the Arizona Education Association with the support of NEA, challenged the validity of that legislative action and, on September 27, 2021, won a trial court ruling voiding three sections of the bill that were of the greatest concern, including the new prohibitions on instruction. The Arizona Supreme Court upheld that ruling on November 2, 2021. Therefore, the restrictions on instruction in Arizona are inoperative and of no legal effect.¹

Below are some additional resources and information about best practices where inclusive curriculum practices are being challenged.

These dangerous attempts to stoke fears and rewrite history not only diminish the injustices experienced by generations of Americans, they prevent educators from challenging our students to achieve a more equitable future. - **BECKY PRINGLE, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION**

¹The legislation contained numerous provisions, including a ban on masking requirements in public schools. All of these provisions were placed on hold by the court's order. See Brahm Resnick, 12 News, "[Arizona judge declares law banning mask mandates is unconstitutional](#)," (Sept. 27, 2021). The Arizona Supreme Court upheld the lower court ruling, permanently blocking this provisions from taking effect. See Briana Whitney, azfamily.com, "[Arizona Supreme Court upholds ruling blocking school mask bans](#)," (Nov. 2, 2021).



Know Your Rights

Q&A

Can I still teach the truth about U.S. history and current American society?

- o Yes. As noted above, the law in Arizona has been invalidated and, in any event, Arizona's [History and Social Science Standards](#) remain intact and include education on slavery, race, and gender in its sections on history, geography, economics, and civics. For example:
 - Elementary and middle school students are expected to evaluate different perspectives on historical events including slavery, Jim Crow laws, segregation, secession, Indian boarding schools, immigration, and women's rights, among other topics.
 - High school students are expected to examine territorial expansion's impact on Native Americans, immigration, slavery, cultural and religious

reforms, Civil War and Reconstruction, Jim Crow and segregation, Federal Indian Policy, suffrage, and contemporary domestic politics, among other topics.

What curricula or pedagogical approaches are clearly prohibited?

- o As always, you should never teach that any sex or race is inherently superior or inferior.

What if my students ask about current events that raise issues of systemic racism?

- o As an educator you know how to handle difficult questions in professional and age-appropriate ways. You should continue to rely on your professional judgment in answering tough questions and encouraging critical thinking among your students, including when those questions arise organically.

- o If you are planning discussions about current events that raise issues of race, ethnicity, or sex, be sure that your curriculum is age-appropriate and squarely in line with state standards and past practices. Also, consider notifying your colleagues and administrators, and seeking their support, if you believe that a particular instructional approach is likely to generate controversy in your classroom or the community.
- o You do not, however, need to avoid discussions or readings that may be deeply provocative and upsetting. Confronting the horrors of slavery and the continuing legacy of racism in our country is upsetting, but the state standards and best pedagogical practice require instruction on the entire sweep of our country's history, including the parts that are painful.



Know Your Rights

What if there is a racial incident in the school?

- o Arizona is obligated under state and federal law to enforce anti-bullying and nondiscrimination laws and policies in schools. Consult with your school or district policy regarding such incidents, consider consulting with your union representative, and respond in an age-appropriate way that accords with the relevant laws and policies.

How can I continue to foster an inclusive environment at my school? / Can I display Black Lives Matter flags, etc. in my classroom?

- o We know that inclusive curriculum and pedagogical approaches work. They engage students and improve student retention and achievement. Talk to your principal about the importance of making sure that all students feel seen and supported in your school and classroom and ways that the school can make sure this

happens. If you plan on posting a symbol of inclusion such as a BLM or a DREAMers poster, and have not seen others posting similar items in their classrooms, make sure to tell your principal in advance so that you can address any concerns they may have up front. If your principal or another school administrator prohibits you from posting such inclusive posters, consult your union representative about how best to proceed.

How can I support my students / oppose these invalidated laws outside of school?

- o Always remember that you have the greatest protection when you are speaking up off work time and to your community or the general public – for example, by speaking at a school board meeting, attending a rally, writing a letter to the editor, or posting on Facebook or other social media. You can join students at these off school events, but you should not use your authority as their teacher to urge students to participate.

How can I get more involved in opposing these laws?

- o [Sign the NEA EdJustice Honesty in Education pledge](#) to show your support for teaching the truth and stay up to date on the education justice movement.

Where can I go for more information on this issue?

- o [NEA's Honesty in Education resource page](#) and [NEA's Know Your Rights page](#)
- o [African American Policy Forum #TruthBeTold Campaign](#)
- o [Partnership for the Future of Learning's messaging guide: Truth in Our Classrooms Bridges Divides](#)
- o [The Leadership Conference's Toolkit for Local Advocates: Teaching Diverse and Inclusive Curricula Materials and Defending Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#)

THIS RESOURCE WAS COLLABORATIVELY DEVELOPED BY THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION AND AFRICAN AMERICAN POLICY FORUM, WITH ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS FROM AAPF'S #TRUTHBETOLD LITIGATION STRATEGY & LEGAL SUPPORT WORKING GROUP, INCLUDING LATCRIT, INC. AND THE NATIONAL YOUTH LAW CENTER.



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