



Empowering Parents

A How-to Guide for Protecting Your Child's Innocence
and Your Family's Values in Public Schools

truetolerance.org
a project of focus on the family

You Are Not Alone

You may be teaching your children or grandchildren a biblically based point of view at home. But when they go to school, they could encounter something drastically different than—or even opposed to—what they’re learning from you and their spiritual leaders at church. You might wonder if other parents feel the same—they don’t speak up much—and you feel alone and isolated. Those feelings are not unusual.

But the good news is you are not alone. And you’re definitely not powerless. That’s why we’ve created this how-to guide—to put some of the best resources and tips in your hands. We hope it empowers you and gives you the confidence you need to safeguard your children and protect your God-given parental rights.

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Find even more resources at TrueTolerance.org



What Parents Should Know

Many parents are discovering their students’ lessons are in opposition to their values. Candi Cushman offers insight and resources to help families.

Click here, scan the code or visit bit.ly/17AL81z to watch the video.



We want to hear from you!

Share your stories and additional tips at parentvoices@focusonthefamily.com. If you have an immediate need or concern, please contact our Focus on the Family Help Center at 800-A-FAMILY (232-6459). We have caring, Christian counselors ready to assist.

Parent Checklist

There are a lot of news headlines these days about sexually explicit instruction or the promotion of concepts like same-sex relationships being taught to children at school—even as young as kindergarten—without their parents’ knowledge or against their parents’ will. So how do you discover what’s happening in your local schools? Here’s a checklist to help you get started.

□ *Your School District’s Website*

It may seem intimidating to think about researching what a school district teaches, but an easy place to start is the website. Many school district websites have something similar to a “Curriculum and Instruction” category, often listed under a “Departments” heading. While browsing the curriculum section, look for certain words or titles which have a greater likelihood of having sexual topics—or other issues you’re concerned about—incorporated into the instruction. It’s also a good idea to click on the “School Board” section of your school district’s website and actually examine the board agenda and minutes. You can do a search for key words there as well.

□ *Keyword Indicators*

Here are some words that can help alert you to programs that may deal with controversial relationship, marriage and sexuality issues—as well as sensitive topics like teen suicide, drug use and risky behaviors:

- family diversity
- social justice
- anti-bullying
- tolerance
- sexual orientation
- comprehensive sex education
- safe schools
- gender identity
- health education

While not all instruction categorized as “health,” “tolerance” or “anti-bullying” is necessarily questionable, it’s important to be aware that controversial topics are often couched within programs using these titles without parents being notified. So it’s a good idea to start asking questions when these words crop up on your school’s website. You can also do a search for other topics that concern you as a parent, such as how a school handles evolution instruction or lessons about “pregnancy prevention” that could include the promotion of abortion.



One Mom’s Story

A school presentation to address bullying sounded innocent enough, but when Tammy looked closer, she found a hidden agenda that had her and other parents concerned.

Click here, scan the code or visit bit.ly/1uil2lu to read her story.



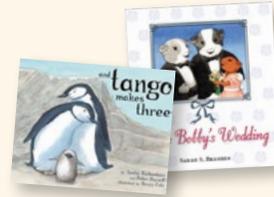
❑ Online School Library Catalog

Nowadays, most schools have an online library catalog, allowing you to conduct keyword searches. The school library is an important indicator of what's happening in the rest of the school because, technically, the library is supposed to reflect and support the broader school curriculum. Teachers often draw from the library to supplement lesson plans. So if you see an unusual number of sexually explicit books or other content conflicting with your family's values, it's important to start asking questions about if and how these materials are used in classrooms or for student assignments.



Capturing Children's Minds with Books

Can we really afford to teach the next generation that mom-dad families don't matter? [Click here, scan the code or visit bit.ly/LX2vZN to learn more.](#)



Book Reviews for Parents of Tweens & Teens

Learn the content, themes and worldview of books to help you decide if they are appropriate for your children. [Click here, scan the code or visit bit.ly/22sZg8.](#)



□ Lesson Plans/Classroom Materials

As a parent, you have the right to ask to see lesson plans and materials being used in your child's classroom. You'll also want to ask whether videos or other materials are being used to supplement the regular curriculum. Although they may not be listed as an official part of the curriculum, sometimes, unbeknownst to parents, videos promoting controversial topics or displaying graphic images can find their way into the classrooms.



Know Your Rights

Click here, scan the code or visit bit.ly/14vxcQt to learn your rights.

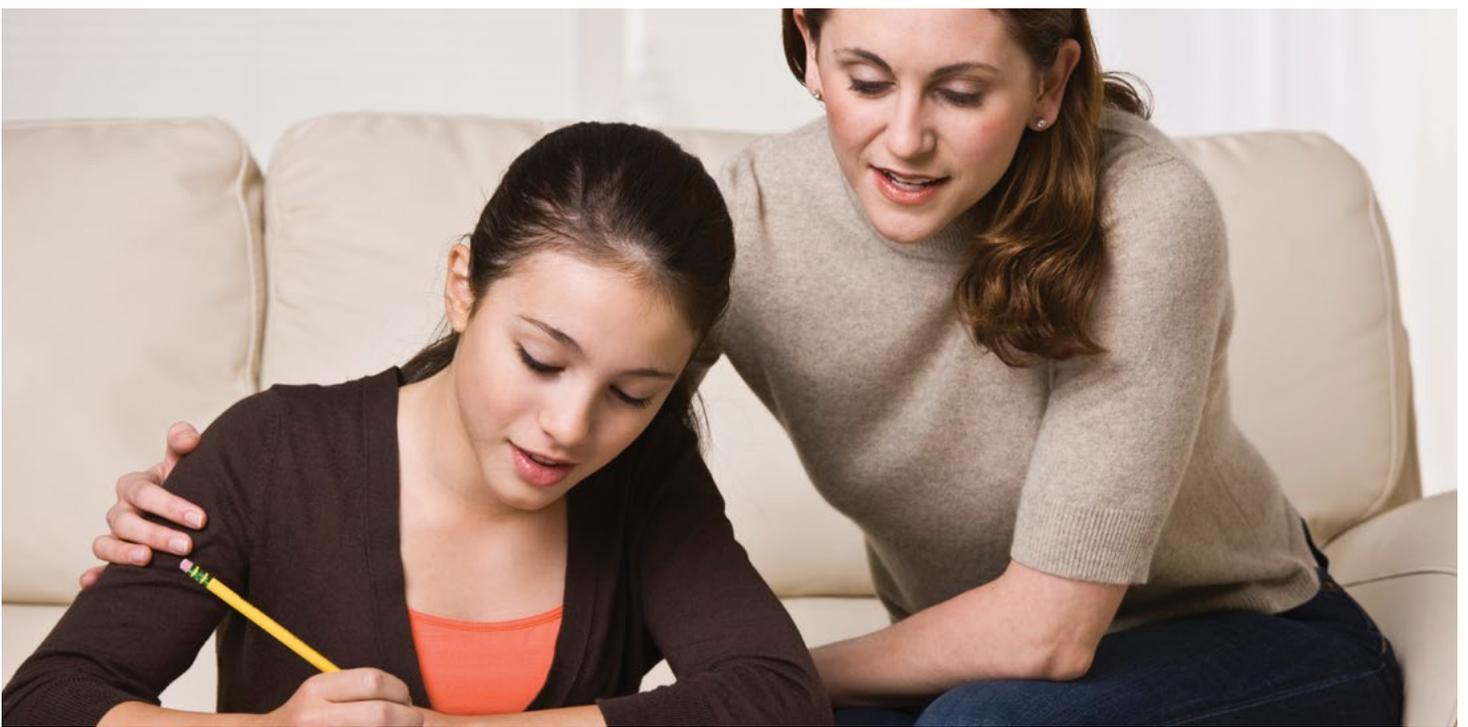
□ School Policies

Take a few minutes to review your child's school handbook and online policies. Does the school require parental permission before giving instruction on sexuality and other sensitive topics? Or is the school only required to send a "notification" letter home? What are the policies for opting your child out of controversial subjects?



Get More Tips on Researching Your School's Sex Ed Policies

Click here, scan the code or visit bit.ly/UHnxEj.



Tips for Responding

Now that you've reviewed the checklist, you might wonder, "How do I react if I see something—a book or a topic in a lesson plan, for instance—that concerns me?" Here are five tips for expressing your concerns in a respectful and fact-based way.

1. Follow the proper procedures and chain of command.

You'll want to avoid burning your bridges and offending educators unnecessarily by jumping immediately over their heads to higher-level supervisors. You also don't want to give a school board or review committee a reason to dismiss your concerns simply because you didn't follow proper procedures at the start. Oftentimes, parents will bring concerns directly to the school board or superintendent only to be asked, "Did you start with the teacher? If not, come back when you have." So make sure you check out the procedures outlined in school handbooks or on the website. Start first with the teacher or the educator in charge of the particular program you are concerned about. Then, if necessary, request meetings with the principal and others as needed.



More Tips for Approaching School Officials

Click here, scan the code or visit bit.ly/10j5dUH.



2. Don't just complain, offer solutions.

Be confident and firm in your right as a parent or legal guardian to protect your children and supervise their education. At the same time, it's crucial to present your case in a respectful and fact-based manner. The truth is, actions do speak louder than words. If your style or tone is abrasive, the truth you are trying to communicate will not be heard or remembered for the right reasons. So be prepared as much as possible with positive solutions, like the **model school policies** provided on TrueTolerance.org or suggestions for what the school can do to remedy the problem—such as including parents on book and curriculum review committees or ways to strengthen parents' rights to opt their children out of lessons on controversial topics.



Make Your Voice Heard

This "Tell-a-School" action center helps you email model policies and other information directly to your school officials.

Click here, scan the code or visit bit.ly/1cjtgoO.

3. Meet resistance with facts.

A good teacher will be sympathetic to reasonably expressed parental concerns. But some educators may try to dismiss them as overreactive or “just one complaint.” Counter that kind of resistance with indisputable facts and hard-copy examples rather than using emotionally charged words. For instance, when meeting with a school official, come prepared with examples of sexually explicit classroom materials or offensive reading assignments that conflict with your family’s values. It’s hard to dispute visual, factual examples as mere parental overreactions. If possible, bring another concerned parent with you.



Examples of Concerning Classroom Materials

Click here, scan the code or visit bit.ly/1uinm1Y.

4. Use statistics to make your case.

For instance, if you are trying to explain why mandatory K-12 lessons about homosexuality are not the best way to conduct a schoolwide bullying prevention program, you can present the facts: Statistics clearly demonstrate that bullying is widespread among children for many different reasons. Thus, children are best served by a policy that provides strong and equal protection to every student and reflects the widespread nature of the problem.



Get the Facts on Bullying Issues

Click here, scan the code or visit bit.ly/NaM69j.



5. Talk to other parents.

If your concerns are repeatedly ignored, it may be time to involve others in your community. Start by talking to other concerned parents and inviting them to speak at a school board meeting with you. Consider wearing the same color T-shirts or buttons at the meeting to make the parents' presence visible. Here are some other helpful tips:

- Use email alerts and social networking outlets like Twitter® and Facebook® to quickly get the word out to other like-minded parents.
- Form a diverse parent group. It's wise to include parents representing different denominations, religious affiliations and ethnicities who are united in their desire to protect parental rights and children's innocence.
- Create teams of people to write letters-to-the-editor and call local talk-radio shows during drive-time hours. The goal is to alert the community about parents' concerns.
- If you know you're going to have a good turnout at the school board meeting, you may want to notify local media. Designate parents in advance to serve as media spokespeople. Meet beforehand to agree on a few main points your group wants to communicate.

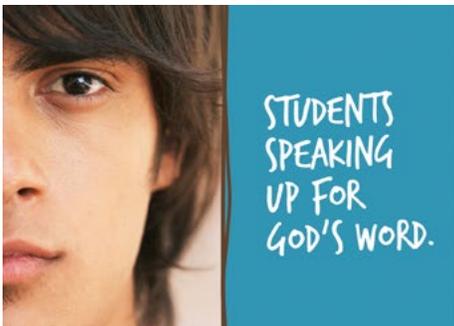


Key Facts About Your Parental Rights

Click here, scan the code or visit bit.ly/1abUMIb.

Stay Encouraged!

Most importantly, remember that you—as a parent and a taxpaying, community citizen—have a constitutional right, as well as a God-given responsibility, to protect your children. (Check out Proverbs 22:6 and Malachi 2:15.) So let the facts on Focus on the Family's website—TrueTolerance.org—inspire you with the confidence you need to stay involved in your children's education.



DON'T MISS THIS FOCUS ON THE FAMILY RESOURCE FOR STUDENTS!

Day of Dialogue provides online activities, videos and teen-friendly articles that equip high school and college students to have confidence in expressing their Biblical viewpoint in a Christ-centered manner. [Visit DayofDialogue.com](http://VisitDayofDialogue.com)

COMING SOON! BRING YOUR BIBLE TO SCHOOL DAY—OCT.16

Stay informed on this new Day of Dialogue event by [joining us on Facebook.](#)

