

# FLORIDA'S BLUEPRINT FOR K-12 EDUCATION

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**“IT’S AN UNIVERSAL  
LAW—INTOLERANCE IS  
THE FIRST SIGN OF AN  
INADEQUATE EDUCATION.  
AN ILL-EDUCATED PERSON  
BEHAVES WITH ARROGANT  
IMPATIENCE, WHEREAS TRULY  
PROFOUND EDUCATION  
BREEDS HUMILITY.”**

*– Alexander Solzhenitsyn*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Florida's K-12 public education system is among the best in the country, and it has become better over the past four years. Elsewhere in the country, the education system emphasizes concepts of diversity and equity while compromising on excellence and even competence.

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**IN FLORIDA, THOSE GOVERNING THE EDUCATION SYSTEM HAVE ATTEMPTED TO RID SCHOOLS OF RADICAL IDEOLOGIES THAT COMPROMISE EDUCATIONAL RIGOR. INSTEAD, THEY SEEK AN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM PROMOTING COMPETENCE AND A REASONABLE PATRIOTISM WHILE ALLOWING SPACE FOR CONTINUED IMPROVEMENTS.**

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These radical teachings are examples of Critical Social Justice (CSJ) ideology, an ideological bent that divides the world into oppressors and oppressed on matters of sex, gender, race, disability and other factors. CSJ comes in many forms. When applied to race, it is often called Critical Race Theory. When applied to gender, Gender Theory. Americans are beginning to realize how public education systems are organized around concepts of CSJ. As we detail in Sections 1 and 3, federal programs push racial grievance policies, comprehensive sex education, and gender identity programming on school districts. A huge industry has arisen to lobby and pressure local school districts to adopt CSJ programming. Interest groups dedicated to CSJ provide training to school

boards and teachers, and they seek to provide curricula that affirm the central tenets of CSJ. Professional groups like the Florida Education Association and the Florida Library Association sow CSJ into their training and mission. School districts contract with equity consultants to find ways to narrow educational gaps by deemphasizing excellence and emphasizing racial grievances. The drift of the education establishment is toward more CSJ and less excellence.

As we detail in Section 2, Florida has sought to stop the seemingly inexorable drift in many ways. Florida has universal Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) so parents can more easily afford different private, public, and charter schools for their children. A strong parental bill of rights has been passed to ensure transparency in public schools, and parents are armed with a strong cause of action when school districts violate their rights. Florida has written its own education standards in language arts, math, and civics. Florida allows teachers to be certified in several different ways, so that fewer teachers must attend traditional teacher's colleges. Florida's teacher unions have been weakened through a paycheck protection law. Other laws seek to limit the spread of CSJ policies and curricula.

Despite the progress Florida has made in combatting the baleful influence of CSJ ideology, the forces promoting CSJ in the public schools are relentless. CSJ advocates have burrowed deep into local school districts. Many local school districts are replete with radical CSJ programs like restorative justice and transformative social and emotional learning. Problems persist at the local level.



- About 42 percent of Florida school districts have an employee dedicated to advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in school policy, curriculum development, or employee training.
- 56 percent of Florida's sixty-seven school districts enforce restorative justice policies or practices.
- Thirty-seven of Florida's sixty-seven school districts have Gender-Sexuality Alliance clubs.

More salutary laws could help Florida resist the CSJ drifts that are more evident at the local level. Sometimes this might mean state regulations to prohibit equity audits or restorative justice programs. Just as Florida has abolished DEI offices at universities, it could abolish them in K-12 schools. Vigilant school boards would be more likely to arise with different election laws. A top-down review of what is happening in Florida's schools of education would also help policymakers grasp how such schools direct future teachers toward divisive CSJ concepts.

**SECTION I:  
WOKE VEHICLES  
FOR CSJ IN FLORIDA  
EDUCATION**



## HOW CRITICAL SOCIAL JUSTICE SHAPES EDUCATION

**Florida's K-12 schools have changed drastically over the past fifty years, just as they have across the nation.** Teachers and administrators have adopted ideologies hostile to the American experience and to traditional family values. These new ideologies come under a variety of names, but all of them are dedicated to promoting left-wing political activism and to rejecting the principles of American society. We call this new ideological bent Critical Social Justice (CSJ).

The term **CSJ** describes the academic work stemming from critical theory.<sup>1</sup> While critical race theory is the most famous example of CSJ, critical theorists also analyze subjects like homosexuality through the lens of queer theory or gender theory, and subjects like obesity in fat studies. CSJ is a much broader term than critical race theory. All CSJ approaches identify a problem and propose a solution. The supposed problem is that American society is made up of an intersection of oppressive structures. According to CSJ ideologues, America is racist, sexist, misogynist, intolerant, ableist, cisgendered, and homophobic. The privileged have built structures like the education system to keep the disadvantaged groups weak, unequal, and scattered.

CSJ adherents believe a transformed K-12 education can solve this problem.<sup>2</sup> Instead of imparting truth to children or emphasizing skills or literacy, K-12 schools will teach oppressors to dismantle the oppressive structures and then to identify with the plight of the supposedly oppressed. Schools will cultivate feelings of

shame among the supposed oppressors for their whiteness or their "toxic masculinity" so they become allies in dismantling the old structures. On the whole, the new education encourages conflict and change-oriented (or revolutionary) values at the expense of assimilation into the old American society.<sup>3</sup> Activists promise a future in which the formerly oppressed are liberated from these oppressive structures. Then all people will supposedly enjoy success, regardless of their race, sexual orientation, or gender.

There are eight main vehicles for integrating CSJ into K-12 systems. These vehicles first seek to be critical of or to disrupt American culture and the family and then to create a new culture dedicated to what they call social justice or liberation. Some vehicles try to shape the mindsets, beliefs, and behaviors of children. Some change disciplinary standards to celebrate what the supposedly old oppressive culture had condemned. Some teach students to protest for leftist political causes. Others foster racial discrimination or the sexualization of children.

Advocates for CSJ sow confusion by using seemingly innocent terms like culturally responsive teaching, antiracism, implicit bias, and equity. Old words no longer mean what they used to mean, so citizens are easily duped into thinking that the education system is the same as it has always been. These eight vehicles are policies and programs presented as remedies to the supposed problem of oppressive social structures in K-12 schools.



**Culturally responsive teaching** caters to stereotypes associated with identity groups.<sup>4</sup> This teaching method denigrates those perpetuating the supposedly dominant culture and coerces students into modifying their behavior to suit supposedly marginalized cultures. Two key practices include rejecting color-blindness and replacing instruction about facts with narrative stories.

**Social-emotional learning (SEL)** cultivates certain attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and behaviors in children.<sup>5</sup> It is important to distinguish between standard and transformative SEL. The core objective in standard SEL programs is to fill the void created by secularism in public schools. Standard SEL replaces the Judeo-Christian understanding about morality and objective truth with a celebration of the self and group norms, helping students feel better about themselves. Transformative SEL programs seek to displace and stigmatize the old, supposedly oppressive cultural, moral, and religious institutions central to a child's health and well-being, such as the nuclear family, meritocracy, and the church.<sup>6</sup> In their place, it encourages children to embrace ideas such as gender fluidity, antiwhite racism, toxic masculinity, white privilege, and the fundamentally unjust nature of American society. Education systems typically sell standard SEL but deliver transformative SEL.

**Action civics** displaces traditional, knowledge-based civics education with training students for activism and protest.<sup>7</sup> The old civics teaches students about the character of American democracy or the history and traditions of our people. The new civics, by contrast, aims to raise up a generation that believes good citizenship means fundamentally transforming America through radical activism. To achieve this, civics must be redefined as

progressive political activism.

**Equity** is equality of group outcomes. In order to achieve equity, students must be treated differently based on their race, culture, and socioeconomic background. Resources and access to opportunities must be redistributed in schools based on racial favoritism, and equal outcomes must be achieved despite loss of genuine academic advancement or learning attainment for individuals.

**Restorative justice** makes school discipline into a race issue.<sup>8</sup> Disparities among races in school discipline—with blacks being disciplined more frequently than whites—are taken as evidence of systemic racism. Schools must then change disciplinary standards to ban out-of-school suspensions (OSS) for low-level conduct offenses (use of profanity, failure to follow classroom rules) or reduce OSS length for more serious infractions (violence, drug abuse). For example, in an effort to show that fewer black students are suspended, a district will not suspend black students for fighting, theft, drugs, or alcohol abuse.

**Whole child** or “student-centered” views of education see schools as a mechanism to socially engineer emotionally literate citizens by introducing activities that encourage children to reveal their emotional vulnerabilities to state employees.<sup>9</sup> The traditional view of education is “teacher centric,” where expert teachers impart knowledge to students and expect them to prove proficiency. Schools are expected to teach “the best that is thought and written” and to promote character formation and basic critical thinking to preserve Western civilization.<sup>10</sup> School districts that adopt a “whole child” or “student-centered” approach in their guiding frameworks implement SEL (see above) and trauma-informed programs (see below) rather than teaching basic academic



disciplines such as English, math, or history.

**Trauma-informed** practices invite the state to assess the private psychological condition of children and to intrude further into a child's life.<sup>11</sup> This therapeutic education model is rooted in the concept of "safetyism," which makes emotional safety a virtue and creates a feedback loop wherein "kids become more fragile and less resilient, which signals to adults that they need more protection, which then makes them even more fragile and less resilient."<sup>12</sup>

**Queer theory** asserts that all sexualities must be actively promoted and all taboos overcome.<sup>13</sup> It rejects traditional views about heterosexuality, sexual self-control, monogamy, marriage, and the natural family, and then endorses experimentation with homosexuality, bisexuality, transgenderism, transsexuality, polyamory, and in some cases even pedophilia.<sup>14</sup> Queer theory manifests itself in districts changing their policies regarding gender identity, parental notification, transgender students' use of bathrooms or locker rooms, and transforming the school

libraries. Comprehensive sex education is no longer about health outcomes or pregnancy prevention. Instead, it centers on gender identity and sexual orientation at even the earliest ages.<sup>15</sup>

Each of these practices is objectionable on its own terms. Scholars have indeed developed significant secondary problems related to their implementation and their validity as enterprises. Restorative justice undermines school discipline, which in turn compromises teachers' ability to teach.<sup>16</sup> Combined with a focus on equity, trauma-informed practices lead to overdiagnosing trauma and stigmatizing entire groups of children.<sup>17</sup> We could go on, and many others have.

Nevertheless, the principal problem with these vehicles for CSJ is their connection with a false and pernicious vision of American society. CSJ in whatever form—even if it were not associated with these significant secondary problems—is bad for America and therefore for Florida. CSJ ideology cannot organize a just society or deliver a workable education.

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## WHY CSJ IN K-12 EDUCATION IS BAD FOR FLORIDA

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**CSJ undermines key American notions like color-blindness, meritocracy, and republican self-government.** Critical theorists think that oppressive structures linger underneath our seemingly liberal framework. They therefore promote color-conscious and sex-conscious policies to students. Those from oppressor groups who achieve great things are stigmatized for having done them through unearned privilege. This view of things cannot encourage students' ambition and drive. It does, however, encourage the transfer of government authority from representative institutions to government bureaucracies. Representative institutions are, after all, reflections of the people themselves and the people are oppressors. Only antiracist experts, for instance, can be trusted to examine the curriculum or to institute teacher training so the public does not overly taint the results.

CSJ engenders social turmoil and antipathy. Most CSJ ideologies teach that the oppressive structures and hostile attitudes of one group for another are sown into the nature of human life. If these structures and attitudes cannot be overcome, there is no way out of the treadmill of oppression: it is only a question of who is on top. The liberal concepts of color-blindness and merit have, in reality, tamed tribal tendencies in human nature, but CSJ ideologues dismiss these ideas out of hand.

CSJ undermines attachment to our nation. Teaching that America is inherently racist or systemically racist is a big lie. No good results can proceed from such a lie.

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**AMERICA IS A LAND OF HOPE AND A LAND OF PROMISE. UNDERMINING ATTACHMENT TO THE COUNTRY, BASED ON LIES OR HALF-TRUTHS, WILL UNDERMINE THE COUNTRY.**

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CSJ undermines America's competitive advantage in education. The traditional view of education sees a school's mission as imparting objective, academic knowledge and skills to students. The CSJ view of education uses schools to teach children how knowledge is subjectively built on power and privilege. Traditional education values individual merit while CSJ stigmatizes achievement and rejects individuality in favor of group identities. Traditional education seeks to cultivate students' minds for their own sake while the CSJ view of education trains students to become activists for their chosen political causes. No wonder test scores are cratering across the country.

CSJ undermines traditional family life. Traditional education views character formation as only a supporting role complementing the work of families, religion, culture, and other institutions and relationships in American life. CSJ education intrudes into family life by limiting the power of parents and by teaching children to avoid starting a family. Traditional education respects parental rights to decide where and how their child should learn, but school districts taken over by CSJ believe parents have no right to dictate what



schools teach their children. The ideology strips away the delineation between private and public life in schools. Proponents know that a stable American society based on family life, parental rights, and child protections will not produce radicals.

CSJ is a recipe for further extensions of state power. Under a school system taken over by CSJ education, the state alone determines what children learn to be good, true, or beautiful. Practices such as white shaming or the sexualization of kids are intentional pieces of a broader plan. Childhood innocence and family stability are roadblocks to revolution. But sexualizing children will lead to the creation of a gender fluid society that normalizes sexual deviancy. The line between childhood and adulthood will be erased. "Equity" is more easily achieved. The racial shaming of children will lead to a culture of victimization and group rights

antithetical to freedom of speech and equal treatment under the law. Thus can "diversity" and "inclusion" be accomplished. This sexual and racial exploitation cultivates anger, resentment, and hatred in children. The next generation will grow up to be radical adults resentful of their parents' norms and religious values, and ripe for the political change CSJ proponents seek.

Public officials must reinstate the inalienable authority of parents in family life to direct their children's education and care if we are to stave off these disasters. A traditional education model of objective truth and human dignity must be regained. Parents must stand up against an ideology that has gained so much power in schools. Citizens and public officials must understand how far CSJ ideology has encroached on Florida schools and who is to blame. Section 3 treats this pressing question.

**SECTION II:  
FLORIDA'S K-12  
MODELS:  
STANDARDS,  
CHOICE AND  
STOPPING WOKE**

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I BELIEVE IN  
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## THE FLORIDA K-12 EDUCATION MODEL

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By many measures, Florida's education laws rank among the nation's best. Florida's higher education system is ranked as the nation's best, according to the U.S. News & World Report. Its K-12 system ranks fourteenth.<sup>18</sup> The Heritage Foundation ranks Florida first in education freedom, respect for parent's rights, and ROI for taxpayers, while the American Legislative Exchange Council ranks Florida second behind only Arizona for educational freedom and quality, being especially remarkable for its school choice laws and its academic standards.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, Florida has some of America's most patriotic, sensible education laws at the state level. It not only encourages parental responsibility for the education of children; it also has rigorous, reasonably patriotic civics and English standards, as well as high math standards. It encourages a wide range of avenues for teacher certification, while also regulating the schools of education to emphasize competence and subject matter mastery. At the level of the state, education reformers could do no better than to emulate Florida in most respects.

### EDUCATION FREEDOM: FROM ESAS TO CHARTER SCHOOLS

**School Choice.** Florida passed a bill establishing education savings accounts (ESAs) for all K-12 students in 2023. This policy was decades in the making. Florida has long been a pioneer in ensuring that families can choose the educational environment that aligns with their values and works best for their children. In 1999, Governor Jeb Bush spearheaded the

Opportunity Scholarship Program, which allowed students from failing schools to enroll at high-performing public or participating private schools. In 2001, Florida's Tax Credit Scholarship Program allowed tax credits of up to \$4,800 for scholarships that could be used by students in foster care or on free or reduced-price lunch. Initially, such scholarships were available only to students who would start attending public schools with the money; in 2014, the scholarships were extended to students who never attended college. In 2014, that scholarship provision was extended to middle-income families as well. State-funded ESAs began modestly in May 2014, but they expanded each year through a mechanism that increased the number of eligible students when not all ESAs were used. In 2014, 1,800 students could use ESAs on a first come, first served basis. That number increased dramatically every year because of this mechanism. Eventually, universal access to ESAs became the logical outgrowth of Florida's efforts. In 2023, about 13 percent of Florida's K-12 students attended private schools, according to the Private School Review.<sup>20</sup> The states' universal ESA program known as the Family Empowerment Scholarship Program offers all Florida parents of school-aged children the ability to customize their student's education according to their unique needs. Eligible expenses under the program include tuition and fees at any private or religious schools, curricula, private tutoring services, standardized tests, trade school, postsecondary education, and transportation

costs, among other services.<sup>21</sup> The program provides maximum freedom to private and home schools and does not impose any accreditation or other burdensome regulations on private K-12 educational institutions.

**Homeschooling.** Florida generally respects the autonomy of homeschool families with recent changes in the law.<sup>22</sup> Families can now choose to homeschool either under the umbrella of the local school district or in a private school's umbrella program. Under the state's program, parents must file a notice of intent to homeschool with the county superintendent. State law requires the superintendent to accept the notice and to register the home education program. The school district cannot require additional personal information outside a student's legal name, date of birth, and address. Parents must keep a portfolio of their students' work each year. Students must be evaluated annually by "a valid measurement tool that is mutually agreed upon." Under the private school umbrella program, families do not have to comply with reporting requirements to the state. Alternatively, a parent may hire a private tutor with a valid Florida certificate to teach their child. About 5 percent of Florida's students are homeschooled, according to the National Home Education Research Institute.<sup>23</sup> Florida could improve its homeschool laws by removing these umbrella programs and allowing families to homeschool freely without the state's supervision in the manner of Texas or Idaho.

**Charter Schools.** Overall, Florida law offers charter schools operational autonomy in exchange for being held accountable for strong academic outcomes.<sup>24</sup> The state's light-touch regulatory approach to charter schools allows for more innovation and diversity in the charter sector by providing multiple authorizers to support charter schools and by allowing

charters real operational autonomy. It does not impose any caps on the number of charter schools allowed to operate in the state, and it allows for the creation of virtual charter schools as well. The state has made strides in recent years to provide more funding to charter schools, although more work remains to be done since charter schools still receive a smaller share of state funds. Nearly 13 percent of Florida's K-12 students attend charter schools as of 2022, according to the Florida Consortium of Public Charter Schools.<sup>25</sup> Potential areas for improvement include exempting charter schools from the state's teacher certification requirements, automatic collective bargaining with teachers unions exemptions, and allowing charter schools the same access to all state and federal funding as public district schools.

## TRANSPARENCY AND PARENTAL RIGHTS

The state has sought to protect the rights of parents to direct the upbringing, education, and care of their children in several ways. Florida prohibits the teaching of certain divisive tenets of critical race theory and gender identity in public schools for all grades K-12. It requires public schools to practice transparency by requiring schools to disclose certain information to parents. For example, state law requires schools to give parents access to all records and materials used in the classroom that relate to their child's education.<sup>26</sup> This includes textbooks, instructional materials, and assessments. The law also allows parents to opt their children out of any surveys or assessments that are not related to their children's academic progress. The law requires schools to provide notice to parents before any nonacademic surveys or assessments are given to their children. Schools must also obtain written consent from parents before their child



participates in any nonacademic surveys or assessments. Schools are required to provide parents with a list of all instructional materials used in the classroom. Schools must also notify parents of any new or revised instructional materials that will be used in the classroom. The Florida Department of Education (FDOE) has directed all school districts in the state to review their transgender student policies and to make any necessary changes in order to ensure compliance with state law.<sup>27</sup> The FDOE also investigated school district racial equity policies, including a policy at the Indian River County School District that claimed to attack “the institutional racism that results in predictably lower academic achievements for students of color than for their white peers.” The Florida State Board of Education directed the district to update its policy to comply with state law, which prohibits schools from promoting race essentialism or scapegoating.<sup>28</sup>

## TEACHER CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Public school teachers in Florida are required to obtain state certification before leading a classroom. However, the state offers many different pathways for teacher certification. In order to be certified, all candidates are required to have obtained a bachelor's degree and complete a state-approved teacher education program. Candidates are not required to have an education-specific degree.<sup>29</sup> Candidates must also complete content examinations for the subject and grade level being taught. Next, candidates must pass the Florida Teacher Certification Examinations, a three-part series of tests required to receive professional certification.<sup>30</sup> Florida offers an out of state teacher licensure reciprocity program. Educators certified out of state may receive a temporary certificate and begin to teach in Florida schools while

earning the required state qualifications.<sup>31</sup> The state recently extended temporary teaching certificates from three to five years. These more flexible certification options have resulted in at least 42 percent of teachers in Florida not having to go through a college of education to teach in a public school.<sup>32</sup>

## ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Governor DeSantis eliminated and replaced the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). In place of the CCSS, the FDOE developed new math and English language arts (ELA) standards. These academically rigorous standards known as Florida Benchmarks for Excellent Student Thinking (B.E.S.T.) are considered a model for the rest of the nation.<sup>33</sup> Florida established the Civic Literacy Excellence Initiative (CLEI), which implemented civics curriculum and revised civics and government standards in all K-12 schools. CLEI also offers an incentive for education to complete training and earn the Florida Civics Seal of Excellence. The curriculum and training program emphasize American liberty, individualism, republican self-government, the country's founding ideals, and religious freedom while discouraging progressive education trends such as service learning and activism.<sup>34</sup> Florida has adopted new state standards in the following areas:

- Florida Benchmarks for Excellent Student Thinking (B.E.S.T.), English Language Arts<sup>35</sup> and Mathematics<sup>36</sup>
- Florida Social Studies Next Generation Sunshine State Standards<sup>37</sup>
- Patriotic Programs<sup>38</sup>
- Standards for Comprehensive Health Education<sup>39</sup>

- Florida Instructional Materials Adoption<sup>40</sup>

In addition, Florida has also adopted sensible comprehensive health education standards that require the teaching of abstinence as the expected standard outside of marriage.<sup>41</sup>

Despite these advancements, Florida's standards for psychology under the Social Studies Next Generation Sunshine State Standards still need reform. The standards emphasize race and gender in relation to power and privilege. They include instruction in gender identity and sexual orientation.<sup>42</sup>

The FDOE has established a process for reviewing mathematics and civics curricula. The FDOE has done a thorough accounting of textbooks used in public schools, recently rejecting 41 percent of math textbooks and 35 percent of social studies instructional materials for their inclusion of social emotional learning or critical race theory.<sup>43</sup> After the FDOE's initial review, only 81 percent of submitted social studies materials were rejected. Publishers worked with the department to change the material to align with Florida law, resulting in sixty-six of the 101 submitted materials receiving final approval.<sup>44</sup>

## SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Florida law requires school library employees to complete training sessions on content that would be harmful to minors.<sup>45</sup> The law helps ensure that books brought into school libraries are free of pornographic material and appropriate for the age-groups the library serves. It requires school boards to adopt procedures that provide for the regular removal or discontinuation of books based on their alignment to state standards. Further, school districts are required to make meetings regarding instructional materials open to the public and provide access to all materials at

least twenty days prior to the school board taking official action on the materials. The FDOE is required to publish a list of materials that have been removed or discontinued by school boards as a result of an objection and to disseminate the list to school districts for their consideration.

## ACADEMIC ACCOUNTABILITY

Florida became the first state in the nation in 2022 to transition fully to progress monitoring for school accountability in place of the high-stakes testing. Progress monitoring is a practice that helps teachers use student performance data to continually evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching and to make more informed instructional decisions. Instead of the end-of-year high stakes Florida Standards Achievement tests for English Language, Arts, and Mathematics, for instance, students have three short check-ins. Progress monitoring allows instruction to be tailored to each student's individual needs and for students' academic struggles to be addressed quickly and efficiently without increasing time in the classroom. In 2023, Florida authorized the Classical Learning Test (CLT) for students as a means to earn Bright Futures Scholarships and qualify for graduation.

## TEACHERS UNIONS

Florida is a right to work state and has enacted paycheck protection for union employees, requiring written consent for union dues or fees to be deducted from paychecks. The state also prohibits state employees from striking, and it requires a union to represent at least 60 percent of employees, rather than the 50 percent that most states require. Florida allows state investigations into unions suspected of fraud, waste, or abuse and requires annual audits and financial disclosures for unions. However, the state still has a mandatory



bargaining law, which requires school boards to negotiate with teachers unions.<sup>46</sup> This forced negotiation may complicate the already bureaucratic management of public schools and may encourage school boards to acquiesce to political demands rather than meet students' and families' needs.

## STATE EDUCATION SPENDING

Some say that Florida's government is stingy when it comes to funding education, claiming that public schools are underfunded and school choice programs are siphoning more funds from public schools.<sup>47</sup> But the DeSantis administration has increased spending on the public education system each year, targeting a significant portion of this spending on teacher salaries. Overall, Florida spends about 23 percent of its budget on the public school system. According to the Florida Department of Education financial reports, the state spent approximately \$21 billion on the public school system for the 2023–24 school year. This is an approximately 8.4 percent increase in funding since the previous school year.<sup>48</sup> The department estimates that around \$2 billion, or around 9 percent, of total public education funding will be spent on the Family Empowerment Scholarship program, which provides universal school choice to families.<sup>49</sup> Florida is among the five states that spend the least per pupil according to the US Census Bureau, which estimates that Florida spent \$10,401 per student in 2021.<sup>50</sup> However, according to the Department of Education financial summaries, the Florida legislature appropriated about \$8,243 per student through the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP).<sup>51</sup> However, this figure is still misleading since it does not include other categories of

spending, such as school construction, voter-approved general obligation bonds, preschool programs, debt service, capital outlay, and others, used for the operation of public schools that are reported separately from the FEFP funds.<sup>52</sup> When these costs are included, the "true cost" of educating a K–12 public school student is much higher. The State Department of Education reported in fiscal year 2021–22 that the total expenditure per unweighted full-time equivalent, a number that includes general fund appropriations, special revenue funds, debt service funds, and capital project funds, is \$13,316.<sup>53</sup> Since spending per student has increased every year, the average cost per student is likely to be closer to at least \$14,000 for the fiscal year 2023. In 2021, Florida allocated \$500 million for teacher salary increases. Spending on teacher salaries has continued to increase every year, culminating in a \$1 billion allocation to increase teacher pay in the 2023–24 school year. Overall, Florida has spent more than \$3 billion on teacher salary increases and bonuses over the last five years.<sup>54</sup> Overall, Florida has increased the levels of spending on public education and raised teacher salaries while still increasing school choice.

## SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS

Term limits for school board members have been reduced from twelve to eight years, the same term limits to which the governor, cabinet, and the entire legislature are subject. Additionally, the legislature passed a resolution that will go directly on the general election ballot to return school board elections to transparent, partisan elections. District school board members have been elected in nonpartisan elections in Florida since 2000.

**SECTION III:  
WHO PUSHES WOKE  
CSJ EDUCATION  
AND HOW?**





## HOW RADICAL CSJ PRACTICES PERSIST IN FLORIDA EDUCATION

Florida's state laws are among the best in the nation. Recent episodes at the local level nevertheless show that Florida schools are hardly free of CSJ ideologies and practices. CSJ is pushed from the national level (as we shall see). Many teacher preparation programs sow CSJ into their normal functioning. Local officials have considerable power to implement their own vision in practice and many choose CSJ practices. State-level policies can deal with some of these problems; however, the determined efforts of personnel opposed to these policies can make such policies less than fully effective or moot. Personnel is policy, too.

Recent concerning episodes show that Florida's recent reforms have not yet taken firm root.

- Gay public school teacher pledges to defy DeSantis administration, teach students about sexual orientation and gender identity.<sup>55</sup>
- Florida teacher makes students participate in a series of Tik Toks mocking the Department of Education for removing pornographic books from schools.<sup>56</sup>
- Broward County Public Schools offers the pornographic book *Flamer* to students.
- Parents object to Hillsborough County Public Schools sex education curriculum teaching kids about gender transitions.<sup>57</sup>
- Boone High School hosts "Donuts & Drag with Mama Rose" event hosted by the schools Queer and Ally Alliance club; DeSantis shuts it down.<sup>58</sup>

- Broward County Public Schools encourages students to participate in GLSEN's "National Day of Silence" in support of LGBTQ activism.<sup>59</sup>
- University Of Florida trains teachers on how-tos of spotting white privilege.<sup>60</sup>
- Alachua County Public Schools implements "racial equity" into all subjects of curriculum; provides "gender support plan" for transgender students that can exclude parents.<sup>61</sup>
- Broward County Public Schools sex ed curriculum teaches kids about gender transition and uses terms like "people who have a uterus" and "people with testicles and a penis."<sup>62</sup>

Such episodes may result from CSJ policies, teaching practices, student activities, and administration in school districts. We have conducted a first-of-its-kind public review of each of Florida's school districts, focusing on the available measures of CSJ commitment—namely, whether districts have Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) offices, committees, or strategic plans, or have adopted restorative justice policies, district-wide plans for integrating transformative SEL, trauma-informed practices and cultural responsiveness into teaching, the presence of gender-sexuality alliance (GSA) student clubs, and transgender or LGBT support guides. As the data demonstrates, districts without DEI offices, committees, and plans are less likely to have adopted the eight vehicles for CSJ. The springboard of these CSJ policies and practices are DEI offices. As

DEI administrations grow, school districts are systematically transformed into the radical institutions that activists seek.

Through the evaluation of public records, reports, surveys, policies, and curricula available on school district websites we collected data on every school district in Florida.<sup>63</sup> Detailed charts showing all our data can be found on page 18 and Appendix C. Overall, we found that:

- At least 56 percent of Florida's sixty-seven school districts have adopted restorative justice policies or practices.
- About 42 percent of Florida's school districts have an employee dedicated to advancing DEI in school policy, curriculum development, or employee training. Together, these positions cost taxpayers over \$3 million annually in salaries alone.
- At least 58.6 percent of Florida secondary schools have a GSA club. This rate is 92 percent in Orange County, 82.5 percent in Hillsborough County, and 76.5 percent in Broward County.
- About 59 percent of school districts have adopted one or more transformative SEL curricula.
- At least eighteen school districts promote or train educators in culturally responsive teaching.
- Only five school districts have adopted a LGBT support guide or promote gender-affirming practices.

To put these statistics in sharp relief, consider fifteen school districts included in Table 1 on page 18. Those districts in red have a heavy presence of CSJ policies and practices. Those in yellow have some CSJ policies and practices, while those in green have fewer CSJ practices. Districts in red are among the more heavily populated Florida districts, so their influence is much wider than the districts in green.



**Table 1: A sample of fifteen school districts**

DISTRICT <sup>64</sup>	RESTORATIVE JUSTICE	SEL	TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES	GSA CLUBS	DEI ADMINISTRATION	CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING	LGBT SUPPORT GUIDE
Miami-Dade	Y	Y	Y	Y	3/3	Y	Y
Broward	Y	Y	Y	Y	3/3	Y	Y
Alachua	Y	Y	Y	Y	2/3	Y	Y
Brevard	Y	Y	Y	Y	2/3	Y	Y
Palm Beach	Y	Y	Y	Y	3/3	Y	Y
St. Johns	Y	Y	Y	Y	2/3	Y	N
Indian River	Y	Y	Y	N	2/3	N	N
Seminole	Y	Y	Y	Y	2/3	N	N
Sarasota	Y	Y	N	Y	2/3	N	N
St. Lucie	Y	Y	Y	Y	1/3	N	N
Osceola	N	N	N	Y	1/3	N	N
Orange	Y	Y	Y	Y	0/3	N	N
Bradford	N	Y	Y	N	0/3	N	N
Columbia	N	N	N	N	0/3	N	N
Washington	N	N	N	N	0/3	N	N

Many Florida school districts have CSJ sown into their daily practices and functions. When significant DEI administration is present in a school district, that district is more likely to have GSA clubs or to use culturally responsive teaching opr to practice restorative justice discipline. When there is no DEI administration (as in Orange, Bradford, Columbia, and Washington school districts), they are less likely to have such radical practices. Perhaps Florida's recently passed policies will induce districts with significant CSJ policies and DEI offices to pursue them to change over the course of the next few years. It is also possible that vigilant school boards can end such policies through strategic hiring and policy changes.

## AGENTS PROMOTING WOKENESS IN FLORIDA K-12

Many of the most concerning episodes in Florida, catalogued above, concern the sexualization of children. This manifest tendency is partly the result of national policies that encourage schools to teach inappropriate sexual topics to ever-younger cohorts of children. National laws and regulations encourage many Florida school districts to pursue the sexualization of children. Florida accepts national money for pregnancy prevention programs, AIDS prevention, and SEL programs.<sup>65</sup>

By law, Florida schools do not have to provide sex education. State law requires that sexuality instruction in public schools teach abstinence from sexual activity outside of marriage as the standard for all school age students.<sup>66</sup> However, Florida law also gives local school boards authority to decide *how* kids will learn about abstinence in sexuality education, a loophole that interest groups and local school districts exploit with the aid of the federal government.<sup>67</sup> Some districts, such as Putnam County, mandate comprehensive sex education, while others, such as St. John's County mandate abstinence-only instruction. According to the Centers for Disease Control, 53.4 percent of Florida secondary schools provided students with LGBT curricula or supplementary materials, and 59.2 percent of sex education teachers gave students LGBT resources. The rate is 89.7 percent in Duval County and 76.7 percent in Broward County. Another 55.3 percent of sex education teachers encouraged the use of gender

neutral pronouns, the rate for that practice being as high as 82.9 percent in Duval County and 73.1 percent in Broward County. At least 71.3 percent of sex education teachers taught students about gender identity, with the rate for that being 100 percent in Duval County and 86.3 percent in Broward County. About 62 percent of secondary schools direct students to LGBT-affirming medical providers not on school property, that rate being as high as 80 percent in Duval County.<sup>68</sup>

Furthermore, school districts have informally partnered with LGBT interest groups that provide (1) curricula teaching young children about gender transitions and how to have sex and that (2) train teachers. School districts claim to follow the direction of the FDOE and state law on their websites, while finding loopholes or ways around these laws in practice.

### 1. INTEREST GROUPS

Interest groups develop curricula, organize clubs, identify allies on staff, and provide teacher training throughout the state. The number of left-wing sexual and racial interest groups operating in Florida is dizzying. Many receive government funds to defy or subvert Florida's education laws and regulations. Others do it through private means. In myriad ways, interest groups promote the sexualization of children and white-shaming, in part because the public institutions have been less enthusiastic about such goals in recent years.



What follows is a partial list of interest groups pushing the sexualization of children and white-shaming in Florida; this, in turn, is followed by an account of what the interest group generally aims to accomplish. Given Florida's recent laws concerning gender identity and divisive concepts, many of these interest groups appear to be part of a conspiracy to violate Florida's laws.

### **Planned Parenthood of South East and North Florida (PPSENFL)**

#### **Equality Florida**

#### **Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)**

#### **Committee for Children**

#### **Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL)**

**Planned Parenthood of South East and North Florida (PPSENFL)** delivers the Teen Outreach Program and Reducing the Risk to students in Duval, Alachua, Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade Counties in before-and-after-school, in-school, and community-based settings. These curricula claim to teach abstinence while actually instructing students in gender identity, transgender ideology, oral, anal, and vaginal sex with condoms, masturbation, and the use of abortion pills such as Plan B.<sup>69</sup>

**Equality Florida** aims to change the trajectory of Florida's schools toward transgenderism and LGBTQ activism. The group hopes "Florida's 67 school districts will adopt comprehensive, nationally recognized best practices for meeting the needs of LGBTQ+ students."<sup>70</sup> By its estimates in 2021, at least one-third of school districts implemented a LGBTQ+ Critical Support Guide in 95 percent of Florida's middle- and large-sized districts.<sup>71</sup>

Equality Florida has established the Safe and Health Schools Project, which provides resources and tools to schools to create Gender Sexuality Alliance (GSA) clubs. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, at least 58.6 percent of Florida secondary schools have a GSA club. This rate is 92 percent in Orange County, 82.5 percent in Hillsborough County, and 76.5 percent in Broward County. Interest groups support GSAs in more schools every year. These clubs provide students with LGBTQ resources that include chest binders (specially designed breast compression garments) for young girls who seek gender reassignment surgery and contact information for gender transition clinics.<sup>72</sup> Such resources can no longer be given to students without parental knowledge or consent under the DeSantis Parent Bill of Rights. Precisely how Florida's new gender identity law will affect training and other efforts remains to be seen. It seems unlikely that Equality Florida will fundamentally change its behavior, since it continues to conspire against Florida's laws and values.

**Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)** often partners with school districts to provide academic support. AVID's mission is "to close the achievement gap by preparing all students for college readiness and success in a global society." However, AVID integrates antiracism into its understanding of closing the education gap. AVID has been working with Florida schools for twenty-three years. AVID is active in at least fifty-four districts, 424 secondary schools, and 175 elementary schools, and it has trained over fifteen thousand educators administrators and counselors, according to its own count.<sup>73</sup>

AVID cites many examples of critical race theory embedded in its curriculum and teacher training. For example, AVID provides

a Privilege Walk activity for teacher training and classroom instruction. In such Privilege Walks, educators and students deconstruct their racial and sexual identities and rank themselves according to their power and privilege. Another lesson on “Colorblindness: The New Racism?” teaches that the “failure to see and acknowledge racial differences makes it difficult to recognize the unconscious biases everyone has,” and that “white people have the hardest time opening their eyes.” The lesson further prompts students to become “awake” to the understanding that racism is present everywhere and perpetuated by white people. AVID uses transformative SEL, claiming “we can’t afford whitewashed social-emotional learning.”<sup>74</sup>

**Committee for Children and Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning’s (CASEL).** About 59 percent of school districts have adopted one or more transformative SEL curricula that are usually paired with other therapeutic education models such as whole child practices or trauma-informed education. Most teachers are professionalized into the SEL view of sexuality. Transformative SEL programs nowadays seek to displace and stigmatize the old, supposedly oppressive, cultural and moral religious practices central to a child’s health and well-being such as the nuclear family, monogamous love, sexual self-restraint, and preparation for parenthood. In their place, those embracing transformative SEL want children to embrace gender fluidity, toxic masculinity, and the idea that there are no significant differences between boys and girls.

The Second Step program, which is used by at least nineteen Florida school districts,<sup>75</sup> is a transformative SEL program promoted by the nonprofit Committee for Children. Second Step encourages students to question their sexual orientation and gender, to be activists,

often for issues such as transgenderism and homosexuality, and to use the website [loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org) for sex advice. The website includes resources such as “5 tips for your first time [having sex],” and “dating in the closet.” It provides information about places to get an abortion and promotes overcoming sexual taboos such as polyamory. No one knows for sure how many school districts embrace these approaches. Second Step is also an antiracist program whose teachings are “fundamental for achieving social justice.” The eighth grade Second Step curriculum seeks to reprogram white children to believe they are privileged, to be activists for Black Lives Matter, and view parents as roadblocks to their goals. School districts such as Broward, Union, Indian River and Volusia use Second Step.

At least thirty-six school districts use Sanford Harmony SEL, which parents have claimed includes alarming teachings about gender.<sup>76</sup> Sanford Harmony aligns with the Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning’s (CASEL) assertion that “SEL can help address various forms of inequity and empower young people and adults to co-create thriving schools and contribute to safe, healthy, and just communities.”<sup>77</sup>

## 2. PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION GROUPS

Nearly all the education professions require some sort of certification. Librarians must study library sciences, and they have library associations. Educators must often be certified and are able to join the Florida Education Association. School board members have professional organizations, as do superintendent groups and principals. At each choke point, the Left insinuates itself and its assumptions into professionalization. To be a professional librarian or teacher or principal is,



to some extent, to be saturated in today's CSJ ideology. Professionalism creates a profound difficulty: professional competence is needed to run educational organizations, but their ideology leads them to subvert the state's moral order.

**Florida Library Association (FLA).** Despite the DeSantis administration's work to reform school libraries, the library system is still run by groups working against the administration's interests. Chief among these groups is the Florida Library Association (FLA), which is committed to incorporating Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access (DEIA) into all areas of the organization.<sup>78</sup> They have a DEIA committee dedicated to this goal.<sup>79</sup> The FLA has objected to the DeSantis administration's efforts to remove pornographic books from school and public libraries. They have trained librarians across the state in how to handle display challenges, how to craft policy to address potential issues, and how to field objections to programming decisions.<sup>80</sup>

**Florida Education Association (FEA),** the state's largest teachers unions, trains thousands of teachers and staff members every year. The FEA offers trainings, such as "Courageous Conversations," which focus on the effects of race on student achievement and on advancing equity in schools and cultural diversity training, such as the "Teachers of Color Series."<sup>81</sup> The group opposed the DeSantis law to prohibit the teaching of gender identity and sexual orientation to K-3 students.<sup>82</sup>

**Florida School Boards Association,** the state's largest association of school officials, has partnered with the local interest group Equality Florida to promote transgender student policies in schools. The leadership of the FSBA established the Equality Florida School Board Association Committee and the Equity Committee.<sup>83</sup>

### 3. EQUITY CONSULTANTS

**Equity consultants** help solve a supposed problem for school districts and state departments of education. The government mandates testing. Gaps between blacks and white emerge from the testing. States and school districts must help narrow and eliminate these gaps. Equity consultants can help make it appear that districts are doing something about this apparent problem. At a minimum, under the supervision of such consultants, training is given to teachers and administrators in gender ideology, cultural responsiveness, and implicit bias. A more involved equity consultant will conduct small group debriefs to determine whether a group has an antiracist and "inclusive" mindset.

Consultants make recommendations to districts for adopting equity practices or restorative justice policies. For example, the Hillsborough County Public Schools paid Pacific Educational Group, Inc. about \$1.4 million "to develop the district's capacity to engage in systemic equity transformation and eliminate racial and other educational disparities."<sup>84</sup> The contract included "meetings, training, coaching, and support with district leadership focused on the topics of diversity and equity." According to the superintendent, all district and school leaders received a two-day "Beyond Diversity Training," and a district team was trained to continue the "conversations" and DEI training.

Equity consultants usually work with school district DEI officers and departments, helping them develop DEI strategic plans to transform the school districts. About 42 percent of school districts have DEI officers, usually dedicated to a DEI department. We offer nine examples among these districts that have conducted equity audits. This modest sample offers an idea of how equity consultants affect a school district (appendix A).

Seven main equity consultants operate within Florida's education system. These are Newsela Inc., Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), Pacific Educational Group, Inc., FourPoint LLC Education Partners, Leadership Academy, New York University Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools and the Center for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning.

#### 4. SCHOOLS CLUBS AND PROGRAMS

Some school districts have established Human Relations Councils (HRCs). According to Broward County Public Schools, HRCs are “mechanisms for the training of students and staff in diversity sensitivity [and] cultural competence.”<sup>85</sup> These clubs are created to train students in the promotion of multiculturalism and DEI in schools. Miami-Dade County Schools offer the “No Place for Hate” program in partnership with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). The school program website includes an ADL document that features a “Pyramid of Hate.” The ADL document explains that “while every biased attitude or act does not lead to genocide, each genocide has been built on the acceptance of attitudes and actions described at the lower levels of the Pyramid.” The pyramid intends to show that actions such as using “non-inclusive language” and committing “microaggressions” will possibly lead to “the act or intent to deliberately and systematically annihilate an entire people.”

**Teaching resources.** The Miami-Dade school district's website has a page labeled “Employee Resources.” Resources for teachers listed there include the following: “Teaching About Racism, Violence, Inequality, and the Criminal

Justice System,” “Using Photographs to Teach Social Justice,” and “15 Classroom Resources for Discussing Racism, Policing, and Protest.”

#### 5. SCHOOL DISTRICT GOVERNANCE AND POLICIES

While interest groups, professional groups, and other informal agencies greatly affect the quality of education, local school boards are decisively important. Local school boards and a superintendent run local school districts. Boards and superintendents are theoretically responsive to parental concerns through elections. However, in recent years, school boards have often been captured by politically interested individuals that have contravened the interests of parents. School boards are responsible for performing many important functions, such as reviewing a school district's annual budget, selecting a superintendent to oversee the daily operations of the district, and approving curricula for use in local schools. The superintendent functions as the district's chief executive and is responsible for implementing the board's policies and overseeing the district's daily operations. Many school boards and superintendents have been implementing policies, programs, and training that advance CSJ. To get a flavor for the importance of school boards, we have conducted an in-depth study of different school districts in Florida. We use five school districts to illustrate this problem: Miami-Dade, Broward, Alachua, Hillsborough, and Bradford.

A school board's district-wide transformation often begins with the hiring of an outside consulting group to conduct an equity audit. Hillsborough County Public Schools paid about \$1.5 million to Pacific Educational Group, Inc. (PEG) from 2016 to 2019 to develop the district's capacity in order to engage in “systemic equity transformation and eliminate racial and other education disparities.”<sup>86</sup> The contract included meetings, training,



and coaching focused on DEI. All district and school leaders received extensive two-day DEI training. A team was established to continue the “equity” work once PEG’s contract ended. Similarly, Miami-Dade, Orange County, Palm Beach, Sarasota, Lee, Broward, District 65, and St. Lucie have all hired equity consultants to evaluate their district practices and policies (appendix A). Equity consultants generally identify achievement gaps between white students and minorities and conclude that the curricula, school practices, and policies must be reimagined to achieve equity, or equality of result.

School boards often respond to recommendations in an equity audit by developing a new strategic plan to guide the school district toward its progressive future. For instance, Miami-Dade developed the “Infinite Possibilities 2021+2026 Strategic Plan,” which places DEI at the center of the district’s theory of action. The plan established several benchmarks for success, including training 75 percent of employees who participate in DEI professional development to “perceive themselves as change agents” and to promote culturally responsible practices and equity. Next, Miami-Dade established a DEI committee to help execute these plans. Miami-Dade’s Diversity, Equity, and Excellence Advisory Committee reviews issues and makes recommendations to the school board and superintendent with the goal of eliminating disparities and progressing “toward racial parity and diversity.”<sup>87</sup> The committee’s annual report recommends, among other things, that the district recruit and place additional black administrators and instruction staff in schools, expand implementation of Restorative Justice Practices, and increase efforts and commitment to social-emotional learning and whole child practices.

School districts then establish DEI offices and hire chief diversity officers to oversee

district-wide DEI initiatives. About 42 percent of Florida school districts have an employee dedicated to advancing DEI in school policy, curriculum development, or employee training. Together, these positions cost taxpayers over \$3 million annually in salaries alone. The highest-earning DEI officer among the school districts is Anntwanique Edwards, the Chief of Equity, Inclusion and Community Engagement in Alachua public schools who earns a salary of \$155,000 annually. Overall, thirteen of the thirty-four DEI officers across all school districts are paid six-figure salaries (appendix B). For example, Miami-Dade School District has a well-established Office of Educational Equity, Access, and Diversity with three dedicated employees, including an “Assistant Superintendent of Equity and Diversity” who earns a six-figure salary.<sup>88</sup> The office directs teachers to use resources such as the Trevor Project, Gender Spectrum, Facing History and Ourselves—which pushes the narrative that white people are privileged and America is systematically racist—and Courageous Conversations, which seeks to transform organizations for the sake of supposedly establishing racial equity.<sup>89</sup>

DEI offices translate strategic plans into policies, curriculum, and training. For example, Alachua County Public Schools Office of Educational Equity and Outreach was established in 2017 specifically to develop an equity plan. From its inception, the office has focused on providing culturally responsive training to teachers and administrators and advanced equity practices.<sup>90</sup> The district-wide plan focused on achieving racial equity by hiring more minorities, adopting SEL and PBIS systems, restorative justice policies, and culturally responsive curriculum and equity-focused staff training.<sup>91</sup> The district turned to interest groups, including the Intercultural Development Research Association and the Equity Assistance Center South (IDRA), for

input when developing the plan.

Districts often adopt school discipline policies such as restorative justice, other racial equity policies, or gender inclusion policies that allow students to use the bathroom or locker room corresponding to their gender identity rather than their biological sex and to hide their gender transitions from their parents. According to a 2014 estimate, only four school districts had adopted restorative justice practices; now, however, at least thirty-nine school districts have adopted them. This number has therefore grown immensely.

Miami-Dade School District adopted “Guidelines for Promoting Safe and Inclusive Schools,” which allow school employees to hide a student’s gender transition from parents, require staff to use the students’ names and pronouns that correspond with their gender identity, regardless of an employee’s personal or deeply held religious beliefs, and allow students to use the locker room or bathroom corresponding to their gender identity rather than their biological sex.<sup>92</sup> These practices are now illegal. The School District of Palm Beach County adopted an “LGBTQ Critical Support Guide” that is over one hundred pages long.<sup>93</sup> It required teachers to use the pronouns corresponding to a student’s gender identity—again, regardless of the teachers’ deeply held personal or religious beliefs; it pressured teachers to put LGBT symbols in their classrooms or create GSA clubs; and it required district-wide adoption of LGBT-inclusive curriculum.

The FDOE has required school districts to revise their gender inclusion policies to comply with the state parental rights laws. Several new laws change these policies in significant ways, including prohibiting the teaching of gender identity in all grades K–12, requiring parental notification and consent for any change to the students services or monitoring related to the

students’ mental, emotional, or physical well-being, and allowing parents to bring a cause of action against any school district that violates state law in this regard.<sup>94</sup> The Florida Safety in Private Spaces Act also mandates that schools require students to use the bathroom, locker room, or other single-sex facility corresponding to their biological sex.<sup>95</sup>

### **STATE LAW DOES NOT REMEDY ALL THE PROBLEMS POSED BY GENDER INCLUSION POLICIES.**

It does not prevent districts from requiring teachers to use the pronouns corresponding to a student’s gender identity, regardless of the teachers’ deeply held personal or religious beliefs, from directing students to harmful transgender-affirming groups such as the Trevor Project, or from pressuring teachers to put LGBT symbols in their classrooms or to create GSA clubs.

Overall, most school districts have eschewed their gender support guidelines altogether in light of the new laws. However, many districts still maintain LGBT resource pages. The Miami-Dade school district directs students to use a “Gender Transition Guide” written by the Yes Institute<sup>96</sup> and resources from GLSEN, Safe Schools South Florida, and other LGBT groups.<sup>97</sup>

In addition, most districts either still teach some variety of comprehensive sexuality education that follows National Sexuality Education Standards (NSES) or have adopted NSES formally. For example, the Broward County Public Schools sex education curriculum, known as Family Life and Sexual Health (FLASH), begins with intimate safety conversations with kindergarteners about sexual abuse but evolves into teaching fourth

graders about sexual orientation, wet dreams, and masturbation. Eighth graders are directed to Planned Parenthood clinics and taught about abortion. By ninth grade, students are trained in gender identity, gender expression, queerness, and gender transition procedures.<sup>98</sup> The FLASH curriculum follows NSES; indeed, Broward County Public Schools has previously posted NSES on its website.<sup>99</sup> It is unclear how districts could teach such a radical curriculum in compliance with state law. Sex education is even delivered to students through school clubs and libraries. Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) clubs are popular in many middle and high schools. GSAs are present in 82.5 percent of Hillsborough County public schools, and in 76.5 percent of Broward County public schools.

In contrast to all of these examples, a school district such as Bradford does not have any references to DEI in its plans or policies. Its curriculum follows state law. The district's website repeatedly refers to Florida DOE rules regarding parental rights and transparency. The district does not appear to have a gender support guide or GSA clubs at any grade level; nor does it refer students to LGBT resources,

at least not publicly. Florida school districts either follow state law and eschew corrupt education practices or they operate in any gray area they can find to continue to advance the DEI agenda they pursued before DeSantis took office.

To form and then to present a clear idea about how Florida's school districts are handling state recommendations, we studied each district in great depth (table 2 in appendix O). Each district has a different sex education curriculum, SEL approach, combination of clubs, teacher training, and so on. We focus on a variety of available measures of CSJ commitment—namely, whether districts have DEI offices or committees, whether they have completed an equity audit or placed DEI in their strategic plan, and whether they have DEI statements. Such DEI commitments show that a district is putting resources, people, and talent behind the cause of CSJ. Committees usually are concerned to infuse the curriculum and personnel with CSJ policies. Statements show a commitment at the administrative level, just as an equity audit or placing CSJ into the strategic plan does.



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## CONCLUSION: HOW PUBLIC EDUCATION NORMS FOSTER CSJ

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It is best to think of public education and education generally as a system. The personnel are trained in certain doctrines of professional competence. Education leaders in higher education are steeped in ideological doctrines. They prepare the teachers. Professional organizations for school boards and superintendents also discuss the best practices in school administration, practices that inevitably include CSJ concepts. Textbook writers construct arguments from CSJ premises. Florida has done more than any other state to regulate and limit this CSJ system. It has changed teacher certification laws and regulated schools of education. It limits the power of teacher unions. It has sought more democratic accountability from school boards. It selects curricula carefully. It has a strong parental bill of rights law encouraging transparency. It has limited some access to federal grants. It promotes school choice, so parents select schools that are more consistent with their values. At every step of the way, it has established financial incentives to make it in the interests of school districts and teachers to support new state standards and to reject some old practices. Perhaps some more laws and regulations might help to regulate the system, but it is remarkable how well Florida promotes excellence in

education while limiting the anti-American, antimeritocratic ideals of CSJ.

Sometimes pro-CSJ interest groups use American freedoms to insinuate themselves into the public system, as, for example, when they promote GSAs and offer other services in public schools. Sometimes teachers and administrators have political agendas that are well-hidden from democratic accountability. Sometimes school boards or superintendents are convinced that they have to do things like conduct equity consultations owing to federal regulations or mandates. Whatever the reason, regulating a system to go one way when there is a great deal of pressure within the system to go the other way is no easy task. Eventually, elements from within the system must themselves change for there to be truly successful reform. Changing state standards is a salutary step in this direction, as long as teacher preparation, school district policies, textbooks, and other elements from within the system are oriented toward these new standards. Promoting school choice is also salutary as an opt-out for parents who reject what is going on in their own school districts. Further adjustments might help Florida continue in the direction it has set for itself.

**SECTION IV:  
POLICY  
RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR CONTINUED  
IMPROVEMENTS**



## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Public education is always political. It need not be political in the narrow sense of helping one party with the next election, but it is political in the deepest sense of teaching students what is good, advantageous and just. Education institutions shape minds and character, of teachers and of students. Schools are conveying a sense of what is important and what is not important, what is honorable and what is dishonorable. If schools allow lax discipline under restorative justice programs, the next generation will have lax discipline. If schools platform gender theory, that view of sexuality will be more likely to shape the next generation. If schools convey the idea that America is a land of hope, that idea will be more likely to be accepted. If they teach that America is a land of systemic oppression, its citizens will be more likely to believe that. Education shapes character and opinions--it can do nothing else.

The experience of the last decade has suggested that the public school monopoly allows a small, politically organized group to determine what ideas are taught in schools.<sup>100</sup> Those enamored of CSJ ideology have conquered most of the choke points within the system, as we have shown. They control teacher colleges and teacher certification. They control textbook making and curriculum development. They control teacher training. They control professional organizations. School boards have done little to stop this ideological monopoly and often unwittingly, school boards have helped it along.

Florida is unique among American states for trying to break up this monopoly. It has adopted intelligent, universal school choice programs. It

has sought to create work-arounds at various choke points. It has pushed back against the ideological monopoly at the level of textbooks. It has outlawed certain excesses of the gender and race hustlers in school districts. It has articulated thoughtful standards to bend the whole system away from CSJ practices and toward professional, competent, reasonably patriotic standards. No state has done more to push choice away toward the corrupting influence of CSJ practices and toward a better way.

Florida should seek to consolidate its previous gains and then extend them in the same direction. Defending the gains of the past few years will require an administrative elite to implement them. This will take no little intentional action. What is more, there are other laws and regulations that could help build a new system. Here are some options the legislature could pursue:

- **Abolish DEI offices in the K-12 system.**

Evidence shows that DEI offices are one of the principal sources of DEI takeover at the local level. Just as Florida has abolished such offices in its higher education system, it should seek to abolish them in K-12.

- **Conduct a top-down review of Florida's schools of education, with the aim of discovering how infused with CSJ ideology they are.**

The study should focus on course requirements, course syllabi, accreditation standards for schools of education, curriculum vitae of faculty, and other relevant data. Schools thoroughly infused with CSJ should either be bypassed through changing teacher



certification priorities or regulated so as to match Florida's emphasis on new meritocratic standards. Judgments about the direction of reform should be based on a realistic assessment of whether such schools can actually be reformed.

- **Parent Rights Legislation: Opt in.** Require parents to opt in their children for sex education instruction in public schools.

- **Charter Schools.** Strengthen charter schools by allowing them to establish independent teacher certification programs and to opt out of state certification requirements. Charter schools should also be given an automatic exemption from collective bargaining with teachers unions. Additional work is needed to ensure charter schools have equal access to all state and federal funding as public district schools.

- **Homeschooling.** Eliminate the state's umbrella programs and allow families to homeschool their children freely without government supervision—as, for example, in Texas or Idaho.

- **Reform or end teacher certification.** Traditional teacher certification has meant training in CSJ. Depending on the results of the study about teacher colleges, the state should consider further regulating the teacher colleges or ending teacher certification altogether. Regulation would allow the state DOE to dictate what teachers should learn, while ending certification would remove a barrier to entry into the teaching profession.<sup>101</sup>

- **Revise state social studies standards and require all school district to teach the Hillsdale 1776 curriculum.** Florida's standards for psychology under the Social Studies Next Generation Sunshine State Standards still need reform. The state should remove the standards' emphasis on race and gender in relation to power and privilege, as well as gender identity and sexual orientation.

- **Prohibit Transformative Social Emotional Learning programs in all K-12 schools.**

- **Adopt strict sex education standards** requiring the exclusive teaching of abstinence only until marriage instruction.

- **End Restorative Justice practices, establish traditional discipline standards.**

- **Limit vendors.** Prevent school districts from contracting with providers for teacher professional development that promote the sexualization of children or racially essentialist doctrines and practices that violate the Civil Rights Act.

- **School Board elections.** Require public school board elections to be held on cycle with gubernatorial elections.

Public education is always political, and numerous local school districts have proved that they cannot be trusted with it. Policymakers could demand education institutions return to the hard work of imparting academic knowledge and truth to students and—more importantly—restore the rights of parents to direct their children's education.

## **APPENDIX A: EQUITY CONSULTANTS**

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Many Florida school districts have hired equity consultants to guide school administration. With the increased demand for such services, many consultants have arisen across the region and indeed across the country. They suggest that a pretty standard set of policy ideas be implemented at the local level. None of this is mandated. But the failure to adopt such an approach leads to dishonor, at least in the eyes of the education establishment, so districts across Florida—large and small—have hired equity consultants. Equity consultants lead the way in radicalizing schools, and they do so at the behest of the education establishment in the state. In this appendix, we describe the equity consulting jobs done by seven different outfits. Some information was gathered through freedom of information act (FOIA) requests; additional information was gathered from publicly available internet sources.

At a minimum, under such consultants, training is given to teachers and administrators on whiteness, gender ideology, cultural responsiveness, and implicit bias. A more involved equity consultant will conduct small group debriefs to determine whether a group has an antiracist and “inclusive” mindset. Here are just a few examples:

**Equity consultants working in Florida schools**

SCHOOL DISTRICT	AMOUNT	EQUITY CONSULTANT
Orange County Public Schools <sup>102</sup>	\$1,907,185.00	Newsela Inc.
Orange County Public Schools		Leadership Academy
The School District of Palm Beach County <sup>103</sup>	\$705,000.00	Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
The School District Of Palm Beach County		FourPoint Education Partners LLC
The School District Of Palm Beach County		Leadership Academy
The School District Of Palm Beach County		New York University Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools
Sarasota County Schools	\$115,000.00	The Center for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning
Hillsborough County Public Schools	\$184,340.00	Pacific Educational Group, Inc.
Hillsborough County Public Schools		FourPoint Education Partners LLC
Hillsborough County Public Schools	\$34,840, 2017–20 \$24,500, 2020 \$125,000, 2017	Leadership Academy
Miami-Dade Public Schools		Leadership Academy
Broward County Public Schools	\$1,476,292	Pacific Educational Group Inc.
Broward County Public Schools		FourPoint Education Partners LLC
Broward County Public Schools		New York University Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools
Lee County		FourPoint Education Partners LLC
District 65	\$38,018	Pacific Educational Group Inc.
District 65		New York University Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development, Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools
St. Lucie Public Schools		Leadership Academy



## APPENDIX B: DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION OFFICER SALARIES

About 42 percent of Florida school districts have an employee dedicated to advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in school policy, curriculum development, or employee training. Together, these positions cost taxpayers over \$3 million annually in salaries alone. The highest earning DEI officer among the school districts is Anntwanique Edwards, Chief of Equity, Inclusion and Community Engagement in Alachua public schools, who earns a salary of \$155,000 annually. Overall, thirteen of the thirty-four DEI officers across all school districts are paid six-figure salaries.

### Diversity, Equity and Inclusion officer salaries

	SCHOOL DISTRICT	NAME	OFFICER TITLE	SALARY <sup>104</sup>
1	Alachua	Anntwanique Edwards	Chief of Equity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement	\$155,000
2	Alachua	Dakeyan "Dre" Graham	Director of Educational Equity	N/A
3	Baker	Robin Mobley	Associate Superintendent & Equity Coordinator	\$66,000
4	Brevard	Danielle McKinnon	Director of Equity & Diversity	\$92,000
5	Broward	Jodi Washington	Director of Equity, Diversity, & School Climate	\$120,000
6	Duval	Tameika A. Grant	Executive Director of Office of Equity and Inclusion	\$73,000
7	Gilchrist	Darby Allen	Equity Officer	\$59,000
8	Hamilton	Ida Daniels	School Board Equity Coordinator	\$71,000
9	Hamilton	Patrick Howell	Equity Coordinator	\$21,000
10	Hillsborough	Monica Verra-Tirado	Chief of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	\$150,000
11	Hillsborough	Bobbie Jean Hargrove	Supplier Diversity Officer	\$59,000
12	Holmes	Carmen Bush	Equity Coordinator	\$74,000
13	Indian River	Kyra Schafte	Director of Academic Compliance & Equity	\$86,000
14	Lafayette		District Equity Coordinator	N/A
15	Lee	Clara Diaz	Equity Coordinator	N/A
16	Leon	Deana McAllister	Assistant Superintendent and Equity Compliance Officer	\$105,000

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17	Manatee	Richard Bailey	Chief of HR and Equity Coordinator	\$143,000
18	Marion	Dawana Gary	Director of Equity and Compliance	\$112,000
19	Martin	Maurice Bonner	District Equity Officer/Director of Personnel	\$95,000
20	Miami-Dade	Jennifer D. Andreu	Assistant Superintendent, Equity and Diversity	\$122,000
21	Nassau	Tia L. Brown	Director of Professional Development/Equity Contact	\$83,000
22	Okaloosa	Steve Chatman	Equity Specialist	\$67,000
23	Osceola	Dr. Lastenia Peñaloza	Executive Director of Multicultural Curriculum, Instruction, and Compliance	\$87,000
24	Palm Beach	Keith Oswald	Chief of Equity and Wellness	\$160,000
25	Pinellas	Dena Collins	Director of HR/Equal Opportunity Office (Priorities and duties include advancing "diversity" and "equity")	\$114,000
26	Polk	ConSheryl Adams	Office of Equity and Diversity Management Analyst	\$22,000
27	Sarasota	Dr. Harriet Moore	Director of Innovation and Equity	\$124,000
28	Seminole	Ryan Dufraink	Equity Coordinator and HR Compliance Officer	\$84,000
29	St. Johns	Cynthia Williams	Senior Director of Innovation and Equity	\$133,000
30	St. Johns	Cathy Hutchins	Equity Coordinator	\$131,000
31	St. Lucie	Adrian Ocampo	Equity Coordinator & Executive Director of Assessment and Accountability	\$126,000
32	Suwannee	Ronald Gray	Equity Coordinator	\$86,000
33	Volusia	Anne Marie Wrenn	Equity & Compliance Officer	\$85,000
34	Walton	Joshua Harrison	Equity Officer	\$108,000
<b>Total</b>				<b>\$3,013,000</b>

## APPENDIX C: AN OVERVIEW OF FLORIDA SCHOOL DISTRICTS CSJ COMMITMENT

**Table 2 An overview of Florida school districts CSJ commitment**

SCHOOL DISTRICT	RESTORATIVE JUSTICE <sup>105</sup>	SEL <sup>106</sup>	TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES <sup>107</sup>	GSA <sup>108</sup>	DEI ADMINISTRATION <sup>109</sup>	CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING <sup>110</sup>	LGBT SUPPORT GUIDE <sup>111</sup>	EQUITY AUDIT <sup>112</sup>
1 Alachua	Y	Y	Y	Y	2/3	Y	Y	Y
2 Baker	Y	Y	Y	N	1/3	N	N	N
3 Bay	Y	Y	Y	Y	0	N	N	N
4 Bradford	N	Y	Y	N	0	N	N	N
5 Brevard	Y	Y	Y	Y	2/3	Y	Y	Y
6 Broward	Y	Y	Y	Y	3/3	Y	Y	Y
7 Calhoun	N	Y	N	N	0	N	N	N
8 Charlotte	Y	Y	N	Y	0	N	N	N
9 Citrus	Y	Y	Y	N	0	N	N	N
10 Clay	Y	Y	N	Y	0	N	N	N
11 Collier	Y	Y	Y	Y	0	Y	N	N
12 Columbia	N	N	N	N	0	N	N	N
13 DeSoto	N	Y	N	N	0	N	N	N
14 Dixie	Y	Y	N	N	0	N	N	N
15 Duval	Y	Y	Y	Y	2/3	Y	N	N
16 Escambia	Y	Y	N	Y	0	N	N	N
17 Flagler	Y	Y	Y	Y	0	N	N	N
18 Franklin	Y	Y	Y	N	0	N	N	N
19 Gadsden	Y	N	N	N	0	N	N	N
20 Gilchrist	N	Y	N	N	1/3	N	N	N
21 Glades	Y	Y	Y	N	0	N	N	N
22 Gulf	Y	Y	Y	N	0	N	N	N
23 Hamilton	N	Y	N	N	1/3	N	N	N
24 Hardee	N	Y	N	N	0	N	N	N
25 Hendry	Y	N	N	Y	0	Y	N	N
26 Hernando	Y	Y	N	Y	0	N	N	N
27 Highlands	N	Y	N	Y	0	N	N	N
28 Hillsborough	Y	Y	Y	Y	2/3	Y	N	Y
29 Holmes	N	Y	N	N	1/3	N	N	N
30 Indian River	Y	Y	Y	N	2/3	N	N	N
31 Jackson	N	N	N	N	0	N	N	N
32 Jefferson	N	Y	N	N	0	N	N	N



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33	Lafayette	N	Y	N	N	1/3	N	N	N
34	Lake	Y	Y	Y	Y	0	N	N	N
35	Lee	Y	Y	Y	Y	2/3	N	N	Y
36	Leon	Y	Y	Y	Y	1/3	N	N	N
37	Levy	Y	Y	N	N	0	N	N	N
38	Liberty	N	Y	Y	N	0	N	N	N
39	Madison	Y	Y	Y	N	0	N	N	N
40	Manatee	Y	Y	Y	Y	1/3	N	N	N
41	Marion	N	Y	Y	Y	1/3	Y	N	N
42	Martin	Y	Y	Y	Y	1/3	Y	N	N
43	Miami-Dade	Y	Y	Y	Y	3/3	Y	Y	Y
44	Monroe	Y	N	N	Y	0	N	N	N
45	Nassau	N	Y	N	Y	1/3	N	N	N
46	Okaloosa	N	N	N	Y	1/3	N	N	N
47	Okeechobee	N	Y	N	Y	0	Y	N	N
48	Orange	Y	Y	Y	Y	0	Y	N	Y
49	Osceola	Y	Y	Y	Y	1/3	N	N	N
50	Palm Beach	Y	Y	Y	Y	3/3	Y	Y	Y
51	Pasco	Y	Y	Y	Y	0	N	N	N
52	Pinellas	Y	Y	N	Y	1/3	N	N	N
53	Polk	N	Y	Y	Y	1/3	N	N	N
54	Putnam	Y	Y	Y	N	0	N	N	N
55	Santa Rosa	N	Y	N	Y	0	N	N	N
56	Sarasota	Y	Y	Y	Y	2/3	Y	N	N
57	Seminole	Y	Y	Y	Y	2/3	Y	N	N
58	St. Johns	Y	Y	Y	Y	2/3	Y	N	N
59	St. Lucie	Y	Y	Y	Y	1/3	Y	N	N
60	Sumter	Y	Y	Y	N	0	N	N	N
61	Suwannee	Y	Y	Y	N	1/3	N	N	N
62	Taylor	Y	Y	N	N	0	N	N	N
63	Union	Y	Y	N	N	0	N	N	N
64	Volusia	Y	Y	Y	N	1/3	Y	N	N
65	Wakulla	Y	Y	Y	Y	0	N	N	N
66	Walton	N	Y	N	N	1/3	N	N	N
67	Washington	N	N	N	N	0	N	N	N
	<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Pondiscio, *The Unexamined Rise of Therapeutic Education: How Social-Emotional Learning Extends K–12 Education's Reach into Students' Lives and Expands Teachers' Roles* (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute, 2021), <https://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/The-Unexamined-Rise-of-Therapeutic-Education.pdf?x91208>.

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<sup>100</sup> The economist Mancur Olson first laid out this problem when he discussed the costs of political engagement for large groups of people to free ride on the engagement of other small interest groups. See Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965). The groups who benefit from regulation of public schools are incumbent and politically powerful groups like teachers unions and school boards. These groups are easily able to organize and defeat reforms.

<sup>101</sup> Teacher certification laws create a rigid and deficient process for selecting and employing teachers. Although they are intended to ensure that competent teachers lead our classrooms, in reality, they frequently keep

highly qualified people out of the profession. By requiring a retired professional or mid-career switcher to attend an expensive and full-time intensive college or state alternative certification program, a whole pipeline of potential candidates is cut off or discouraged from entering the teaching profession. Research has consistently demonstrated that teacher certification does not promote successful student learning. See Jay . Greene, *Education Myths: What Special-Interest Groups Want You to Believe About Our Schools—And Why it isn't So* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006). Instead, data shows that on average private and charter schools that hire noncertified teachers produce superior student learning outcomes compared to traditional public schools employing state certified teachers. Overall, teacher certification requirements submerge prospective teachers in the educationist bureaucracy and cut them off from much of what constitutes genuine education in any discipline. In this way, the education bureaucracy mentality is the force that often actually controls public education.

<sup>102</sup> On July 30, 2019, Orange County Public Schools signed a \$700,000 agreement with Newsela Inc., vendor no. 140045, for a Newsela online subscription with a contract period from September 14, 2019, through September 13, 2020, with three additional one-year renewable options. The unit and funding source was listed as “Curriculum, Instruction, & Digital Learning and General Funds.” See email from Gian C. Otero to Heather Witcher, March 21, 2021, “RE: Contract Renewal Request,” <https://defendinged.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Newsela-Inc.-Orange-County-Public-Schools-2019-2020-2021-Extension-Request-Signed-EDX1907186-Newsela-Renewal-Request-Letter.pdf>. On September 9, 2021, the school district’s website said that the contract’s current expiration date was September 13, 2022. The contract was in the Division of Teaching and Learning and the Department of Curriculum and Instruction. See Parents Defending Education, “Consultant Report Card 2021,” The Woke Industrial Complex in K–12 Schools, accessed July 11, 2023, <https://defendinged.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/PDE-Consultant-Report-Card-2021.pdf>.

<sup>103</sup> On October 19, 2017, the school district of Palm Beach County signed a consultant agreement to pay CASEL \$150,000 for services from October 19, 2017, through September 30, 2018, at a cost of \$15,000 per month for ten months.

As part of the “Scope of Services,” in Attachment A, CASEL agreed to “provide support, training, and guidance in developing and executing a plan for systemic implementation of social and emotional learning (SEL).”

As of mid-October 2021, the school district of Palm Beach County promotes “social and emotional learning” on its website with a list of “CASEL Core Competencies.” CASEL also listed the school district on its website, identifying districts participating in its Collaborating Districts Initiative.

CASEL is involved with the school district through a partnership with the Wallace Foundation. On September 12, 2018, the school district of Palm Beach County signed a consulting agreement with CASEL to pay the contractor \$150,000 for the same services as the year before. Its CASEL staff consultant was listed as Sharon Raven. The source of the funds was listed as the “PSELI Wallace Foundation Grant.” The contract period was from September 13, 2018, through August 31, 2019.

On September 26, 2019, the school district of Palm Beach County signed a consulting agreement with CASEL to pay the contractor \$150,000 for the same services as the two years before. Its CASEL staff consultant was listed again as Sharon Raven. The source of the funds was also listed again as the “PSELI Wallace Foundation Grant.” The contract period was from September 26, 2019, through August 31, 2020.

On September 17, 2020, the school district of Palm Beach County signed a consulting agreement with CASEL to pay the contractor \$120,000 for the same services as during the previous years. Its CASEL staff



consultant was listed yet again as Sharon Raven. The source of the funds was also listed again as the “PSEL Wallace Foundation Grant.” The contract period was from September 29, 2020, through August 31, 2020. See <https://defendinged.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/PDE-Consultant-Report-Card-2021.pdf>.

<sup>104</sup> All data in this chart was obtained from GovSalaries at <https://govsalaries.com/>. Every effort was made to include the most updated salary as publicly available information allowed.

<sup>105</sup> Data for this section was taken from publicly available information on school district websites and the five question survey districts submitted to <https://www.floridasel.org>. Districts were marked Y if one or more schools in the districts reported implementing Restorative Justice in any grades K–12.

<sup>106</sup> Data for this section was taken from school district websites and the Florida SEL Landscape Map found at <https://www.floridasel.org/>. Districts were marked Y if one or more schools in the districts reported implementing SEL in any grades K–12. The majority of school districts in Florida implement SEL in at least all K–6 schools.

<sup>107</sup> Data for this section was taken from publicly available information on school district websites and the five question survey districts submitted to <https://www.floridasel.org/>. Districts were marked Y if one or more schools in the districts reported training staff or teachers in trauma-informed practices or implementing trauma-informed practices in any grades from kindergarten to twelfth grade.

<sup>108</sup> All data for this section was taken from publicly available information on school district websites. Districts were marked Y if one or more schools in the districts reported offering a GSA club in any grades K–12.

<sup>109</sup> All data for this section was taken from publicly available information on school district websites. The criteria for DEI administration includes (1) the inclusion of DEI in a district-wide strategic plan, (2) a DEI statement, (3) one or more DEI officers employed by the district.

<sup>110</sup> All data for this section as taken from publicly available information on school district websites.

<sup>111</sup> All data for this section as taken from publicly available information on school district websites.

<sup>112</sup> All data for this section was taken from publicly available information on school district websites and from the Parents Defending Education “Consultant Report Card” summarized in appendix A. See <https://defendinged.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/PDE-Consultant-Report-Card-2021.pdf>.

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