

# Protecting the Freedom to Read

The Takeover of Education in  
Texas And How to Fight Back



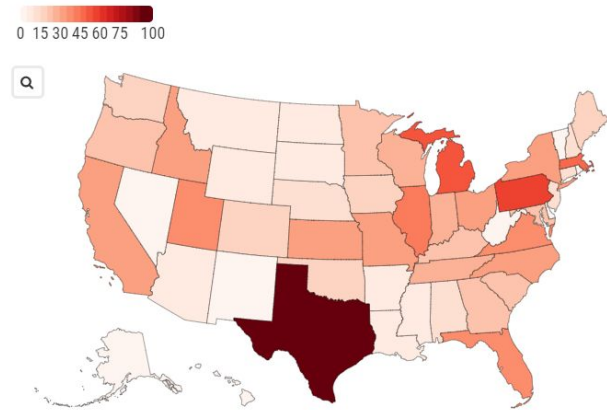


# Book Bans Across the Nation

- In the first half of the 2022-2023 school year alone, there were **1,477 book challenges** against **874 unique titles** across the country.
- Challenged books often include themes of abuse, health and wellbeing, grief and death, race/racism, and LGBTQ+ stories.
- Bans have been codified in several states in 2022-23
  - **Texas:** Book sellers must rate books
  - **Florida:** Prohibiting instruction regarding sexual orientation in K-3rd grade and creating a system to monitor instructional materials.
  - **Utah:** Prohibiting sensitive or pornographic instructional materials in schools.
  - Similar laws have been passed in **Georgia, Tennessee, and Missouri.**

## Attempts to Restrict Access to Books in 2022

An attempt may include challenges to multiple titles



Data compiled by: [American Library Association – Office for Intellectual Freedom](#)



# The Bluest Eye



A novel by  
**Toni Morrison**  
WINNER OF THE NOBEL PRIZE



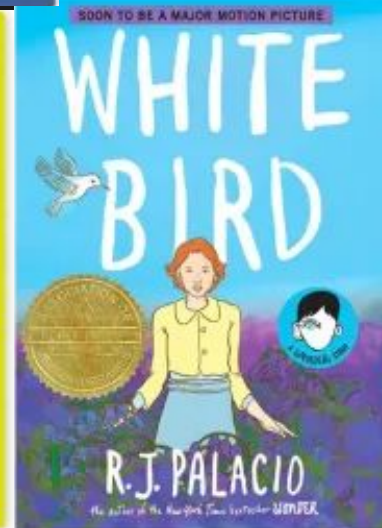
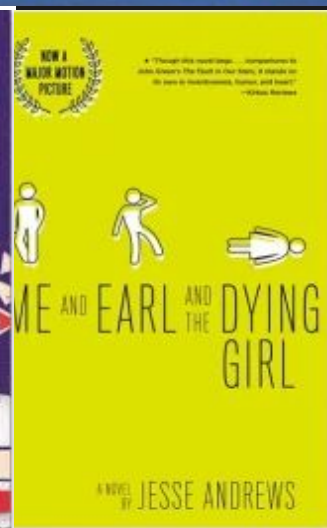
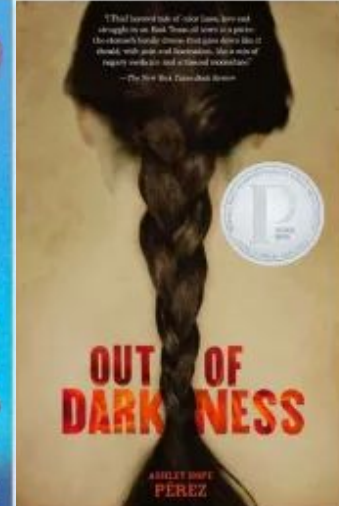
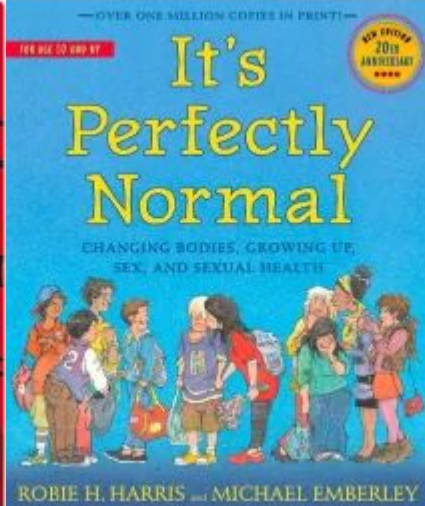
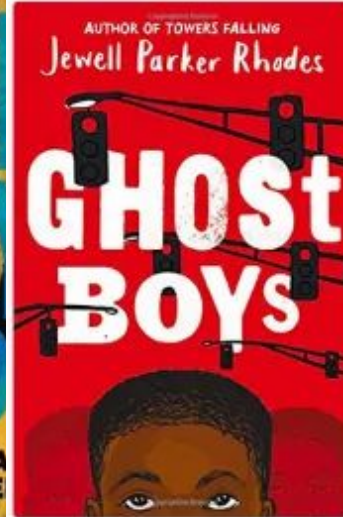
**GO WITH THE FLOW**  
Lily Williams & Karen Schneemann



# MORE HAPPY THAN NO

"A HONORABLE, UNFORGETTABLE BOOK TO READ"  
NATIONAL BOOK AWARD FINALIST  
JOHN D'ERAMO, HONORARY CHAIRMAN OF JUDICIAL

**ADA SILVER**



# HB 900: The Next Stage of Book Banning

- This year, TX passed House Bill 900, which has been called “model legislation” by book banners to escalate bans.
- HB 900 will:
  - Force third-party vendors from Amazon to local bookstores to rate books based on vague standards like “educationally unsuitable” and “sexually relevant”;
  - Give the Texas Education Agency overarching power to ultimately ban books based on their own determination and with no public accountability;
  - Require schools to review their entire collection for “sexually relevant” materials; and
  - Create a surveillance system where parents have to consent before students can check out any books rated as “sexually relevant.”
- The bill has already been used as an excuse in Katy ISD to pause all new library purchases.



# Common Language of Book Banning



- **Parental Rights Language:** Used both in Florida and Texas law. Often used to frame laws in terms of empowering parents to be involved in their schools.
- **Explicit or Obscene Material:** Argument for bills revolves around keeping students from explicit or pornographic material. In reality, the scenes in literature referred to as sexually explicit are not considered in the context of the book as a whole.
- **“According to state law”:** This is was originally used in order to evoke Texas’ obscenity laws. It is now also being used to invoke HB 900. It’s wrong in both cases.





# Have You Heard a Book Ban?

- Do any of these terms sound familiar? Can you think of any other words or phrases being used in a similar way? If so, write down a few and where you heard them being used.





## Before the anti-CRT activists, there were White Citizens' Councils

Banning such teaching isn't colorblind; it would erase Black people from history and maintain White cultural dominance.

Education

### **White Parents Rallied to Chase a Black Educator Out of Town. Then, They Followed Her to the Next One.**

by Nicole Carr

June 16, 2022, 5 a.m. EDT

**VCS** News

**A Far-Right Moms Group  
Is Terrorizing Schools in  
the Name of Protecting  
Kids**

Why do you think these parents are so opposed to books that discuss race, gender, and other real world topics?

# Who's doing the banning?



- To put it bluntly, this is a movement led by white christian nationalists. Some are even self proclaimed.
- When they say Parental Rights, they are saying that their rights override everyone else's.
- When they speak about protecting children, they're speaking about a very specific group of children.





# Common Tactics: Infiltrate and Takeover



**The main strategy is initiating a take over of school boards.**

This is usually done by taking advantage of the low voter turnout in most local elections and running candidates that are pro censorship and book banning. This is paired with misinformation and fear mongering. (This has happened in Keller, Mansfield, Grapevine-Colleyville, etc.)

- Look for the appearance of new organizations or PACs, a large increase in campaigning, and a dramatic increase in funding.
  - Patriot Mobile, Mom's for Liberty, etc.



# What it Looks Like: Keller ISD



Keller ISD, is located near the Dallas-Fort Worth area, and has been all but completely taken over the school board, with there now being only one dissenting voice.

They've been the target of Patriot Mobile, a christian nationalist cell phone company that has been heavily investing in school races. They have also joined Keller's Chamber of Commerce.

Misinformation, like creating organizations that don't exist in order to appeal to voters, fake mailers, and even allowing partisan groups like the Keller Republicans to not only hold the school board candidate town hall, but also restrict access to certain community members.



## KELLER ISD PROGRESSIVES LOCAL ELECTION VOTER GUIDE



**HALEY TAYLOR SCHLITZ**  
KELLER ISD, PLACE 4



**BEV DIXON**  
KELLER ISD, PLACE 5

VOTE FOR CANDIDATES WHO SHARE OUR VALUES  
EQUITY | INCLUSIVITY FOR ALL | SUPPORT STUDENTS

**Hey Keller ISD! Vote for Haley Taylor Schlitz and Bev Dixon. These progressive candidates will fight for our values and stand up for equity.**

**Reply STOP to opt-out.**

# Common Tactics: Silence and Sabotage



**In order to put policies in place, these newly acquired boards will make feedback and participation difficult for those that oppose them.**

This can be done by changing the way school board meetings operate. Forms of this include:

- Making it more difficult for people to speak at meetings by eliminating paper sign up the day of the meeting, moving sign up online, and requiring sign ups be done hours in advance of speaking.
- Structuring meetings in a way that makes it difficult for people to stay the entire time, like moving public comment to the very end of an hours long meeting.





# What it Looks Like: Mansfield ISD



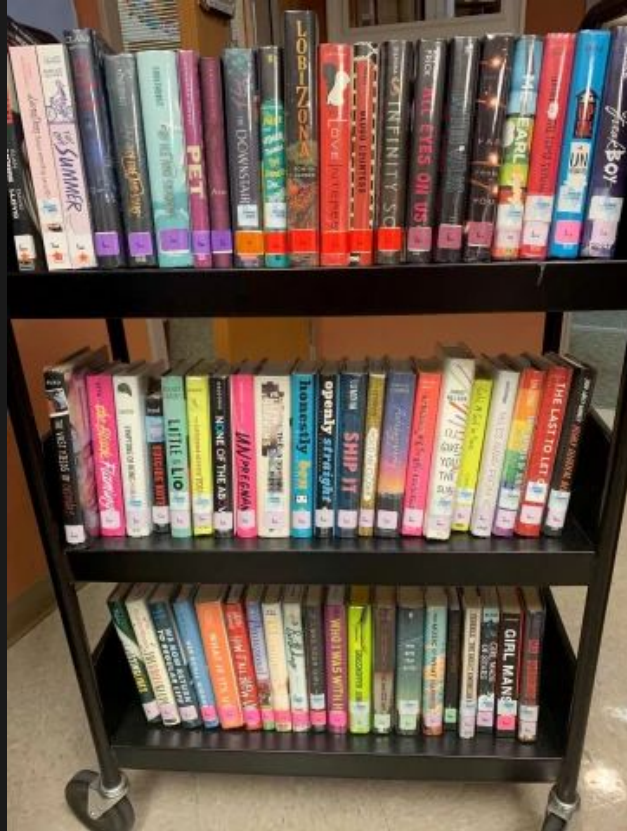
Mansfield ISD, located in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex and encompassing parts of Arlington, has emulated Keller's tactics down to the literal letter, with the verbiage of their policies being almost identical.

They've also initiated a switch to online registration for public comment, but Mansfield stands out in their way of silencing public comment.

They appear to be trying to outlast those in the community that arrive to speak against certain policies, by moving public comment late into the meeting.



# The Frontline: School Libraries



# Policy Proposed in Mansfield ISD cont.



## Steps of Acquisition Procedures:

1. Library materials are recommended and gathered by the Superintendent designee(s).
2. Library materials list submitted to the Superintendent.
3. Library materials list is posted on district website for public review at the regular Board meeting for 1<sup>st</sup> Reading.
4. Feedback may be given by the public during a 10-day period that starts the day of the regular Board meeting for 1<sup>st</sup> Reading.
5. Feedback will be compiled and placed on district website and given to the Board, 72 hours prior to the next regularly scheduled Board meeting.
6. Library material lists materials are submitted at the next regular Board meeting as Consent Item for 2<sup>nd</sup> Review.
7. Items approved by the Board at 2<sup>nd</sup> Review may be purchased.

The District-level library supervisor(s), designated administrator and librarians shall select material based on their own expertise in accordance with EFB(Exhibit).

This is an excerpt from the same policy that covers how books would be acquired. Do you see any flaws in this process?



# Policy Proposed in Mansfield ISD

This is the content guidelines outlined in a policy proposed by the school board in Mansfield ISD. What sticks out to you?

Content Guidelines

Theme	ES	IS	MS	HS*
Profanity	N	M	S	C
Passionate and/or extended kissing	N	N	M	P
Horror	N	M	S	C
Violence	M	S	S	C
Bullying	M+	S+	S+	C
Drug or alcohol use by minors	N or M+	N or M+	S	P+
Tobacco use by minors	N or M+	S	S	P+
Drug or alcohol use by adults	M	S	S	P+
Suicide, self-harm, or mental illness	N or M+	N or M+	S+	P+
Brief description of nonsexual nudity	N	M	S	C
Illustrations or description of nude intimate body parts	N	N or M+	N or M+	S+
Descriptions of sexually explicit conduct or sex acts	N	N	N	N
Sex scenes or sexual activities	N	N	N	M
Discussion or depiction of gender fluidity	N	N	N	N or M+

N = None

M = Minimal (infrequent) — the content rarely appears throughout the volume

S = Some — the content occasionally appears throughout the volume

C = Common — the content appears throughout the volume but is not a main theme of the volume

P = Prevalent — the content is frequent enough to be a main theme of the volume

+The intent of the content and or the positive message is to be taken into context

# The Cost of Book Bans

Texas lawmakers ended this year's regular legislative session without giving public schools any money for employee raises, many districts are facing a budget deficit, yet when it comes to banning books, money seems to be no object.

For example, in Keller ISD: Honors classes on some campuses have been cut or lumped into general honors classes on several campuses. A program for pregnant teens has been cut, Intervention counselors have been cut and reassigned, and early intervention programs, like "TALK", for children with speech delays has also been cut.

District	Cost	Programs
Keller ISD	\$58,267 in lawyer fees related to book bans (June 2022-Jan 2023)  <small>*Source: Public Information Request by Keller ISD parents</small>	\$60,000 is the equivalent of one year's salary for a new school counselor in KISD.  <small>*Source: KISD 2022-2023 Salary Schedule</small>
Spring Branch ISD	\$30,119 for one book review  226 staff hours  <small>*Source: <a href="https://abc13.com/spring-branch-isd-book-ban-school-library-books-student-resources-texas-schoolbook-restrictions/13037457/">https://abc13.com/spring-branch-isd-book-ban-school-library-books-student-resources-texas-schoolbook-restrictions/13037457/</a></small>	\$30,000 is double the per-campus increase to the School Safety Allotment proposed by HB 3.  226 staff hours is equivalent to 30 instructional preparation periods for classroom teachers.  <small>*Source: HB 3 fiscal note and Texas Education Code.</small>
Grapevine-Colleyville ISD	\$25,000 in lawyer fees related to book bans (2022)  <small>*Source: Public Information Request by Grapevine-Colleyville ISD parents</small>	\$25,000 is half of GCISD's budget for facilities acquisition and construction this school year.  <small>*Source: GCISD 2022-2023 Proposed Budget was \$49,733 for Facilities Acquisition/Construction.</small>
Frisco ISD	\$282,050 hiring four new staff members to assist the library review process (2022)  <small>*Source: Frisco ISD Special Board of Trustees Meeting on April 20, 2022.</small>	\$282,050 is nearly equivalent to FISD's entire budget for Social Work Services this school year.  <small>*Source: Frisco ISD 2022-2023 Budget was \$305,831 for Social Work Services.</small>

# Resistance: Ways you can fight back



## VOTE!

Be aware of and involved in your local school board elections.



## ORGANIZE!

Reach out to community members, organizations, and fellow educators.



## SPEAK!

Voice your opposition to harmful policies and rhetoric.





# What Resistance Can Look Like



From read-ins in Mansfield to showing out in the public comment section of the school board meetings in Keller, Texans aren't going quietly into the night, and we at CDF-TX are working on supporting their efforts.

We are working with groups in multiple school districts, in cities and suburbs across the state to support these communities and the emerging organizations that are fighting back.



# What it Looks Like: Mansfield ISD



News first broke out that Mansfield was trying to institute a policy similar to Keller, the very same day they announced a special meeting to introduce the policy.

With little to no time to prepare, upwards of forty people showed up to speak against it, with only two in favor.

Now with a newly elected school board member, read-ins, and collaboration that encompasses other districts, educators, and the faith community, the people of Mansfield have proven that they're going to keep showing up.



\*Interesting tactic: Because the board tried to insist that librarians were in favor of the new policy, some Mansfield residents conducted an unofficial survey and contacted all of the district librarians. Of the forty-four contacted, forty-two were against it, the remaining two didn't respond.

# What it Looks Like: Keller ISD



Keller ISD Families for Public Education is a collective of parents that have not missed a single meeting since the book ban battle began.

When the attacks on books and education grew more intense and sophisticated, so did they, turning to FOIA requests, talking to news outlets, and even starting to form their own nonprofit to entrench their resistance in Keller.

They were able to increase voter turnout by a thousand votes and plan to do even better by the next election.

Keller is a hard place to win in, with the board just passing a policy that opens the door for gender discrimination and the mistreatment of queer youth, but the resistance in Keller is one thing above all else: Resilient.



\*Interesting tactic: When Patriot Mobile joined the Keller Chamber of Commerce, so did Keller ISD Families for Public Education. When they were banned from where some of the boards were holding a town hall, they held their own forum to meet the candidates.



# Teachers: Freedom of Speech

- Free Speech is protected for teachers, even when you identify yourself as a school employee.
- Generally safer to avoid speaking about specific job duties, instead talk about general concerns regarding your topic.
- Students Rights: Students are free to organize and protest, though districts can limit when, where, and how protests occur.

The ACLU logo is displayed in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters on a solid blue rectangular background. The letters are closely spaced, with the 'A' and 'C' being particularly prominent.



BOOK  
BAN  
ACTION  
CENTER

# Protect Students' Freedom to Learn

Action Opportunities for Students, Parents,  
Educators, and Community Members

# Questions?

Don't hesitate to reach out to us if you have any questions or need support at [Children's Defense Fund TX!](#)

## Rachel Myles

she/her/hers

**Organizing Associate, Youth Engagement**

[Book an appointment with me](#)

Children's Defense Fund–Texas  
1910 E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd  
Austin, Texas 78702

c 972. 375. 3211

e [rmyles@childrensdefense.org](mailto:rmyles@childrensdefense.org)

## Maggie Stern

she/her/hers

**Program & Policy Manager, Youth Engagement**

[Book an appointment with me](#)

Children's Defense Fund–Texas  
1910 E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd  
Austin, Texas 78702

c 503.757.0284

e [mstern@childrensdefense.org](mailto:mstern@childrensdefense.org)

## Julio Acosta

(he/el)

**Advocacy Campaigns Organizing Associate**

[Book time with Julio Acosta](#)

Children's Defense Fund–Texas  
1910 E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd  
Austin, Texas 78702

<https://sickofittx.org/>

c (214) 995-9389

e [jacosta@childrensdefense.org](mailto:jacosta@childrensdefense.org)