

## Hot Topics Talking Points

### OVERVIEW

The below document is a **non-exhaustive list** of common concerns, questions, and hot topics you might encounter in the current education debate - and responsive answers using our messaging guidance that can be used in real-time.

*This messaging is **instructive** rather than **prescriptive** and will be regularly updated as additional polling and research becomes available.*

### Ongoing List of Hot Topics

- Book Bans
- Parent Bill of Rights/Parent Involvement
- Indoctrination/Marxism/Leftist Political Agendas
- Curriculum Transparency
- Divisive Topics (related to race, gender, sex, etc.)

### PIVOT LANGUAGE AND TACTICS

As we continue to navigate fraught and intense discussions, **it's important that we step away from hot-button language and humanize the debate.** This language will help allies transition away from the opposition's framing so that we can get the conversation back on our terms.

When confronted with opposition talking points or concerns:

- DO** address concerns earnestly, and inoculate against the worst misconceptions
- DON'T** debate the meaning of jargon, or dismiss concerns outright.

Sample pivot and inoculation statements:

- I hear what you're saying. I think we can both agree that we want our kids to feel valued and accepted. That's why...
- I hear your concern, and I want to be clear that isn't what is happening in our classrooms. What we both care about is...
- Parent involvement is great and I am so glad you are involved in your kids' education. In fact, parents and teachers should work together to...

### HOT TOPIC Q&A

**Question:** Don't parents know best?/Isn't it my right to decide what's in my child's school?/Shouldn't I be able to decide what my child learns? I don't co-parent with the government!

**Answer(s)**

- Parent involvement is great -- It's crucial that parents and teachers work together to ensure a quality education for every child.
- The hot-button political language has distracted us from what parents really want their children to learn in schools. Parents and teachers agree: our children deserve quality, honest education that sets them up for success.
- Rather than restricting the free flow of ideas and banning books in classrooms - we should work together to expand what is possible for our kids.
- An honest and inclusive education benefits every student, not just by making them feel valued and accepted, but also by helping them build critical skills — like communicating across differences and understanding how others feel — that will prepare them for future success.

**Question:** Isn't it ridiculous that all these radical topics like critical race theory are being forced into the classroom lately? These liberals are indoctrinating our children!

**Answer(s)**

- There is a lot of misinformation out there about what is being taught to our kids- so I want to clarify what I (or our organization) really care(s) about.
- What is critical is that we create classrooms where all children can feel accepted and valued, and where our kids learn skills that set them and our nation up to succeed.
- By learning the true history of our nation — the good and the bad — our children can see how far we've come while also learning about how to build a better future for us all.
- An honest and inclusive education benefits every student, not just by making them feel valued and accepted, but also by helping them build critical skills — like communicating across differences and understanding how others feel — that will prepare them for future success.

**Alternate**

- This is American history and understanding these topics is critical to learning about our country's progress.
- It's important to highlight historical figures and events, even uncomfortable moments, so that children can learn from them and build the confidence to create a better future.
- On the contrary, when we ban books and when we ban conversations about racism and inequality, we censor free thought and discussion - and harm our kids' education. That's un-American.
- Instead, we should work together to give our kids what they need and deserve: a truthful learning environment that affirms all kids, so that they can learn freely and develop the important life skills they need to build toward a brighter future for all of us.

**Question:** I want curriculum transparency in my child's school. Why are educators hiding course materials from parents? They are keeping us in the dark!

**Answer(s)**

- Parents should absolutely know what's going on in their children's schools! It's crucial that parents and teachers work together to ensure a quality education for every child.
- Transparency is great - what's not great is using transparency as a way to ban books and restrict the free flow of ideas and conversations in our children's classrooms.
- Instead of restricting ideas, we should work together to expand what is possible for our kids - and give every kid, no matter their race or gender, what they need and deserve to be successful and develop the important life skills they need to build toward a brighter future for all of us - and that includes a truthful learning environment that reflects and affirms all kids.

**Question:** Doesn't teaching about racism teach division rather than unity?

**Answer(s)**

- By learning about race and racism - we can see the progress our country has made and understand the work we still have to do to build a better future for us all.
- Restricting these conversations and banning books about tough topics only limits our children's opportunities to learn about different people, cultures, and communities and their contributions to America's history and success.
- To create a better future and a more equal society — a more unified society — we need to give our kids the skills to recognize and overcome racism, interact with people who are different from them, and lead a diverse country and world.

**Question:** Doesn't teaching divisive topics (related to racism, sexism, etc.) in our schools teach children that they are the victims, rather than empowering them to be anything they want to be?

**Answer(s)**

- Learning about our nation's history helps children understand the progress that our country has made and helps them understand the work that we still need to do.
- These conversations can actually be empowering — they equip our children with the knowledge and experience they need to successfully navigate the world around them and make it a better place.
- Children are smart and curious, and they are always looking to understand the world around them. Right now, children are growing up in a world where they have unlimited access to the world at their fingertips.
- We want our children to be better prepared to have these conversations than we were. It is critical that children feel safe to have these discussions in school so that they are able to lead and thrive in a diverse world.
- School is a place where our children should feel safe to learn and grow together, which sometimes includes having difficult conversations.

**Question:** Why are school board members and educators actively trying to bar parents from participating in their child's education?

**Answer(s)**

- School board members, educators and school leaders all agree that parents play an important role in our children's education - it's critical that parents are involved.
- Parents and schools should work together to ensure that every child gets a quality education — one that recognizes their unique needs and provides them the resources they need to reach their full potential, no matter their race or background.
- Students learn best in safe environments, and it's up to educators and parents — together — to foster spaces where children can thrive.

**Question:** Why should my child have to learn about issues they don't experience?

**Answer(s)**

- Learning about issues children don't experience themselves helps them develop curiosity and empathy. An inclusive education helps children better understand the world and understand how others feel, particularly those of different backgrounds, race, or ethnicity.
- Our children should learn about different groups of people and communities and their contributions to America's success and progress.
- Honest conversations about our country help our children learn how far we have come as a nation and prepare them to build a better future for us all.

**Question:** Aren't children too young to talk about issues like race and racism?

**Answer(s)**

- Racism, unfortunately, affects children of all ages. It's important for school to be a safe space for kids, no matter their race and gender, to discuss tough topics that may be affecting them.
- Children are smart and curious, and they are always looking to understand the world around them. Right now, children are growing up in a world where they have unlimited access to the world at their fingertips.
- We want our children to be better prepared to have these conversations than we were. It is critical that children feel safe to have these discussions in school so that they are able to lead and thrive in a diverse world.

**Question:** Why should my child be taught to become an activist or push a specific agenda? I want to protect my child from political indoctrination.

**Answer(s)**

- There is a lot of misinformation out there about what is being taught to our kids- so I want to clarify what I (or our organization) really care(s) about.
- What is critical is that we create classrooms where all children can feel accepted and valued, and where our kids learn skills that set them and our nation up to succeed.
- When we ban books and when we restrict ideas, we aren't protecting our kids, we are censoring free thought and discussion - and harming our kids' education.
- Instead of restricting ideas, we should work together to expand what is possible for our kids - and give every kid, no matter their race or gender, what they need and deserve to be successful and develop the important life skills they need to build toward a brighter future for all of us.

**Question:** Why should children be reading vulgar and explicit materials in school? We need to ban these inappropriate books!

**Answer(s)**

- Wanting to make sure material is age appropriate is a really valid concern -- Children are naturally curious and empathetic, so I always say, it's less about "what topics are age appropriate" - and more about "what is the age appropriate way to talk about this topic?"
- Some of the books currently being banned are about great American heroes like Martin Luther King Jr and Ruby Bridges --- or are by Pulitzer Prize winning authors like Toni Morrison.
- When we ban books and when we restrict ideas, we aren't protecting our kids, we are censoring free thought and discussion - and harming our kids' education.
- Books widen our children's minds, help them learn about themselves and others, inspire creativity, and help them navigate life's toughest moments. They help children feel valued and accepted and form healthy identities. They also help students learn about how others feel, especially those whose race, ethnicity, or background is different from their own.
- Our children want to read and explore and be challenged. That's why so many students are standing up against these book bans, forming book clubs, and fighting to keep these books on their library shelves.

**Question:** Shouldn't school be about teaching knowledge and facts rather than values and attitudes? Isn't it a parent's right to teach their child values at home?

**Answer(s)**

- Parents and educators want every child to reach their full potential. We all want our children to receive an honest, quality education that paints an accurate picture of American history, helps our children become more curious, thoughtful, and understanding, makes them feel valued and accepted, and prepares them to be good citizens and leaders.
- Learning is about so much more than reading from a textbook, and our children succeed when they have the opportunity to strengthen life skills like curiosity, understanding, and communicating across differences.
- Schools are a place where children learn how to interact with others outside of their family and those that may look different from them. The relationships they build here are crucial towards building a more perfect nation.