

Transparency Through Censorship:

School Book Bans and Teacher Censorship in the “positively dystopian” State of Florida

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Florida’s HB 1467: Transparency in Curriculum Act



As a former high school English teacher, my scholarship focuses on ways of engaging students in reading literature. I posit that it is essential that students confront ideas that challenge the status quo and the ideologies in which they have been enculturated.

The following analysis is rooted in the theories of hegemony, neo-Marxism, and critical literacy.

I come to my work as a curriculum theorist with the notion that “all education is political” (Freire, 1970)

I propose that the normalizing of specific ideologies and the censoring of other ideas serves to maintain the status quo (Gramsci, 1971).

I believe that in students, policymakers have an impressionable and captive audience (new and future consumers)

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Florida is engaged in hegemony via a slew of laws that were passed in 2022 under the guises of “protecting” children from indoctrination and from pornography in our public schools.

Individually and combined, this legislation is hegemonic in the extreme; it ensures that an impressionable and captive audience gets certain “official” information (Apple, 1999), while being kept from other, equally valid information. The framing of the law—and the myriad other censorious laws related to education—positions issues around “parental rights,” it positions DeSantis (and his ideologies) as protective, and it positions his opponents as being engaged in “indoctrination” or “grooming.”

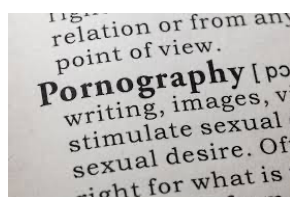


The Law

All texts available to students in a school, regardless of whether they are a part of the official curriculum, must be vetted by licensed media specialists (who don’t exist in some districts) or by other approved individuals. Those charged with vetting titles must be trained and use a rubric created in part by members of *Moms for Liberty*.

Titles must be “deselected” if they contain any pornographic material (undefined), if the arbiters feel that they are “inappropriate,” if they haven’t been checked out recently, or if they:

- appeal to a prurient, shameful, or morbid interest;
- be patently offensive to prevailing standards in the adult community with respect to what is suitable for minors;
- is without serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value for minors.
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As a result of HB 1467, specific titles have been challenged and “deselected” from myriad schools. A single-spaced list of these books (by district) comes to 277 pages.¹ Some titles are widely deselected while some are unique to specific districts. The contents of these deselected titles generally fall into specific categories:

Race and Racial Injustice: Books addressing systemic racism, racial history (e.g., slavery, civil rights), or featuring authors of color (e.g., *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison).

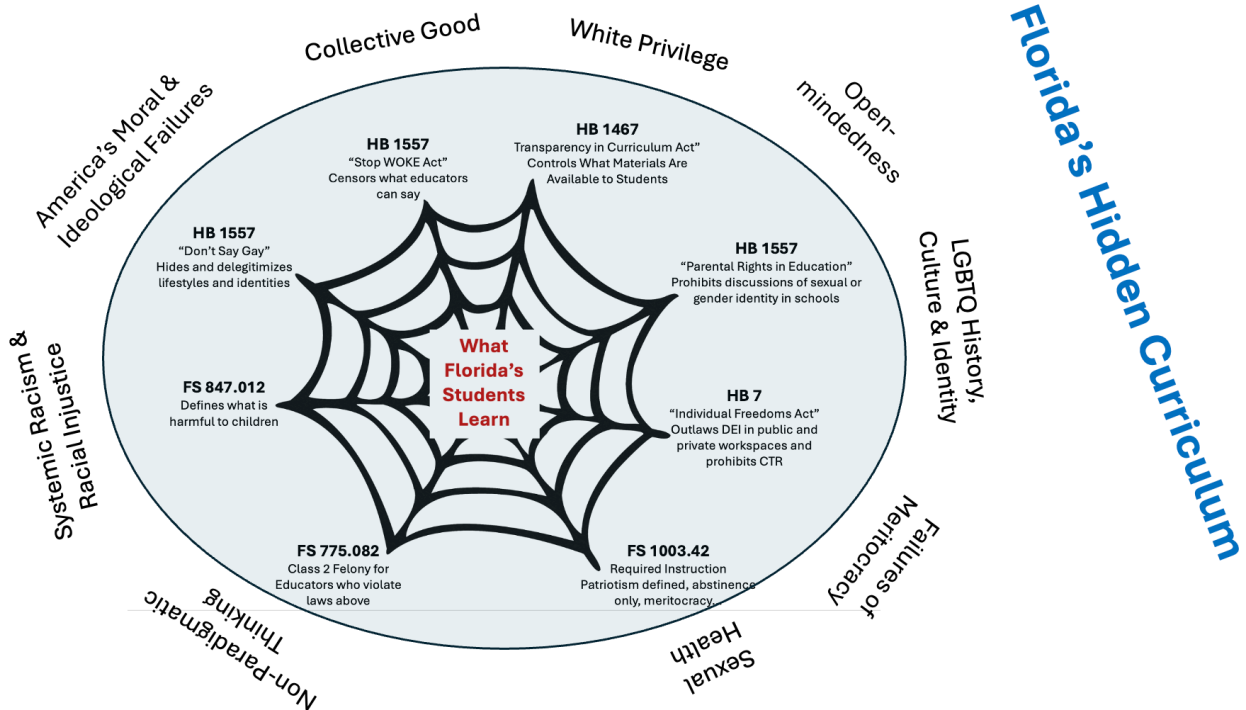
LGBTQ+ Themes: Books with LGBTQ+ characters or discussions of gender identity and sexual orientation (e.g., *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe).

Sexual Content: Works containing sexual education, consent, or anatomy discussions (e.g., *It’s Perfectly Normal* by Robie Harris).

Violence or Trauma: Books that explore violence, abuse, or school shootings (e.g., *Nineteen Minutes* by Jodi Picoult).

Political or Social Controversies: Titles seen as politically charged or controversial in terms of ideology or policy (e.g., *Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You* by Jason Reynolds).

Greater Contexts = Greater Censorship



¹ Use the QR code to access this and other information.

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Ambiguity Creates Fear and Serves the Interests of Censorship (and provides denial of culpability for censors)

Florida educators self censor, remove books amidst confusion over new laws

‘The point is intimidation’: Florida teachers besieged by draconian laws

Teachers say they’re feeling more disrespected, unappreciated and under attack than ever before by new laws championed by Governor Ron DeSantis

EDUCATION

Florida Public School teachers wary of a new school year with new restrictions

Florida teachers weigh in on the tight restrictions imposed by the governor as the new school year begins

NEWS / THE EDUCATION GRADEBOOK

Florida teachers self-censor school books to deal with new state law

A roundup of Florida education news from around the state



Education Higher education Local Education The Answer Sheet Jay Matthews

Teacher fired after DeSantis says bookshelf video was ‘fake narrative’

By Timothy Bellia and Hannah Natanson
February 16, 2023 at 1:58 p.m. EST

Ron DeSantis
46th Governor of Florida

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Governor Ron DeSantis Delivers State of the State Address
Governor Ron DeSantis Announces Nearly 11,000 Foreigners Repatriated After Attempting to Enter Florida Illegally During Biden's Border Crisis

Governor Ron DeSantis Debunks Book Ban Hoax
On March 8, 2023, in News Releases, by Staff

EXPOSING THE Book Ban HOAX

Click here for a video presentation. To download, click here.

EXPLICIT CONTENT NOT SUITABLE FOR CHILDREN

Press release from Office of
Governor Ron DeSantis

News

New Florida Law Requires Teachers To Deliver Approved Curriculum From Electrified Cages



Recent *The Onion* satire of Florida's surge of censorious laws