

A photograph of a classroom interior. In the foreground, a dark wooden desk is visible, with a yellow pencil lying horizontally on its surface. Resting on the desk is a black and white checkered notebook. Behind the desk, several dark green, padded classroom chairs are arranged in rows, facing towards the back of the room. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the classroom environment.

# Curriculum Censorship Policy Brief

What's  
Happening and  
Why It Matters

Written by Rhianna Scyster, MPP

In collaboration with



# About 904WARD

904WARD began in 2015 with a small group of friends who came together to talk openly, challenge each other, support each other, and take action together to build a more inclusive Jacksonville.

We are a diverse group made up of people committed to creating a community of inclusion for all. We take pride in mobilizing thousands of volunteers every year to create racial healing and equity.

An inclusive community begins with understanding each other better.



**Mission:** 904WARD creates racial healing and equity through deep conversations and learning, trusting relationships, and collective action.

**Vision:** An end to racism in Jacksonville and beyond so all people thrive.

# Curriculum Censorship in Florida

## Executive Summary

In recent years, Florida has enacted a series of education laws aimed at strengthening parental rights, clarifying instructional boundaries, and increasing oversight of curriculum and instructional materials in public schools. These measures include the Parental Rights in Education Act, the Individual Freedom Act (commonly referred to as the Stop WOKE Act), and additional statutes addressing curriculum review, instructional transparency, and parental input.

State leaders have described these reforms as efforts to ensure age-appropriate instruction, protect families' role in education, and prevent classroom content from becoming politically or ideologically driven. At the same time, educators, parents, and community members have sought guidance on how these laws are applied in practice and how they affect instructional planning, material selection, and classroom discussion.

Implementation of these laws has resulted in increased review of instructional materials, updated book challenge procedures, and new compliance requirements for districts and teachers. Some educators have reported uncertainty regarding how to address complex historical and social topics while remaining aligned with statutory requirements. Duval County Public Schools (DCPS), serves students from a wide range of backgrounds and communities, including neighborhoods with distinct historical experiences. As a result, curriculum decisions often generate strong interest from parents and community stakeholders. This policy brief reviews Florida's recent education legislation examines how these laws are being implemented in Duval County, and outlines considerations related to transparency, stakeholder engagement, and instructional clarity. The goal is to provide context for ongoing community discussions about curriculum standards, instructional practices, and student access to educational materials within the framework established by state law.



## Florida Curriculum & Instruction Censorship Laws – Comparative Table

| Bill / Policy  | Year    | Target           | Core Restrictions  | Enforcement / Consequences  |
|--|---------|------------------|--|---|
| HB 1557 – Parental Rights in Education (“Don’t Say Gay”) | 2022/23 | K-12             | Limits classroom instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity and requires schools to notify parents about certain student-related matters. | Investigations; lawsuits; certification risks.                        |
| HB 1069 – Instruction Limits & Book Challenges           | 2023    | K-12             | Expands bans on gender identity topics; strict sexual-education rules; easier process for book challenges.   | Mandatory book removals; discipline for non-compliance.               |
| HB 7 – Individual Freedom Act (“Stop WOKE Act”)          | 2022    | K-12 & Higher Ed | Bans instruction portraying systemic racism/oppression as inherent; limits Diversity Equity and Inclusion programming.                               | Lawsuits; Department Of Education investigations; funding penalties.. |
| HB 1285 – Parental Rights & Oversight Expansion          | 2024    | K-12             | Strengthens parental challenges; expands oversight of content & services.  | State intervention; compliance mandates.                              |
| HB 1291 – Higher Ed Curriculum Restrictions              | 2024    | Higher Ed        | Bans Diversity Equity and Inclusion programs; restricts identity-related coursework.   | Funding loss; compliance audits.                                      |
| SB 266 – Higher Ed Governance Restrictions               | 2023    | Higher Ed        | Restricts majors/minors tied to race/gender; bans Diversity Equity and Inclusion funding; changes tenure.  | Funding restrictions; administrative actions.                         |

## **Considerations for Students, Educators, and Communities**

Florida's education reforms have prompted discussion about how best to balance parental authority, instructional clarity, and educational outcomes. Stakeholders across the political spectrum have raised questions about implementation, consistency, and long-term impact.

## **Instructional Practice and Content**

The new laws establish parameters around instruction on topics such as race, gender identity, and systemic inequality. Educators have raised questions about how to teach required history and civics standards, particularly in courses such as U.S. History and Government, while remaining compliant with state law.

Some stakeholders emphasize the importance of instruction that highlights individual responsibility, opportunity, and civic principles, while others stress the value of contextual historical analysis. These discussions underscore the need for clear guidance so educators can meet state standards without uncertainty or inconsistent enforcement.

## **Student Experience and Educational**

### **Access**

Research suggests that student engagement and academic success are influenced by curriculum relevance and clarity. Some parents and educators have expressed concern that ambiguity around instructional boundaries could affect how topics are addressed or omitted, particularly in upper-grade coursework.

There are differing views on what constitutes appropriate representation in public education, especially across grade levels. These debates reflect broader questions about educational purpose, parental expectations, and local decision-making within statewide frameworks.



## **Civic Education and Constitutional Literacy**

Public schools play a key role in preparing students for informed civic participation. Policymakers and educators continue to debate how best to teach American history, constitutional principles, and civic responsibility while maintaining neutrality and avoiding ideological instruction.

Current discussions focus on ensuring students develop strong foundational knowledge of democratic institutions, historical context, and critical thinking skills, consistent with state standards and community values.

## **Conclusion**

Florida's recent education legislation reflects a policy emphasis on parental involvement, instructional transparency, and clearly defined boundaries for classroom content related to race, gender, and identity. While these laws establish statewide standards, their implementation has generated discussion among educators, parents, and community members regarding classroom practice and curriculum access.

Duval County's demographic characteristics of diversity and historical context make curriculum policy a significant local issue. The district continues to work within state requirements while responding to community input and maintaining educational quality. Ongoing considerations include how curriculum decisions affect student learning, educator discretion, and preparation for civic participation. Balancing state mandates, parental expectations, and educational objectives remain a central challenge. Continued dialogue among policymakers, school board members, educators, parents, students, and community stakeholders will shape how these policies are interpreted and applied at the local level.

## **Recent Legislative Update**

*As of December 1, 2025*

The Duval County School Board approved changes to district rules governing the review of challenged instructional materials. The updated policy modifies the composition of review committees, requiring each board member to appoint a representative who is the parent of a student enrolled in a traditional public school with access to the challenged material. The district will also appoint two non-voting staff members.

Supporters describe the change as strengthening parental involvement and accountability in curriculum review, while others continue to evaluate how the process affects transparency and consistency.

Source: ([Jax Today, 2025](#)).

## Further Reading

### ***Curriculum Censorship Policies under Governor DeSantis***

#### **SB 184 (2024) "Impeding, Threatening, or Harassing First Responders"**

Creates a new criminal provision prohibiting a person who, after receiving a verbal warning, approaches or remains within a specified distance of a first responder (including police) with intent to harass, threaten, or interfere. Violations are misdemeanors and the law establishes a 25-foot "no-approach" rule after a warning.

**Effective:** Jan 1, 2025

**Impact:** Criminalizes certain approaches/behaviors near officers during their duties and gives officers a statutory tool to disperse/charge interfering bystanders. Supporters call it protection for responders on-scene.

Source: <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2024/184/BillText/er/PDF>

<https://www.flgov.com/eog/news/press/2024/governor-desantis-signs-legislation-protect-floridas-law-enforcement-officers>

#### **HB 601 (2024) Civilian Oversight / Law Enforcement & Correctional Officers**

Authorizes sheriffs and police chiefs to establish civilian oversight boards but places structural and appointment controls on those boards (for example, boards composed of members appointed by the sheriff/chief, boards must include a retired law-enforcement officer, limited jurisdiction to review policies/procedures rather than individual officer investigations). The law also prohibits local governments from adopting certain ordinances that would impose alternative complaint/investigation requirements. It also revises sheriffs' base salaries.

**Effective:** 2024 session (signed by Governor DeSantis).

Impact: Expands an option for local oversight while limiting independent/local-initiated oversight models — centers control of oversight appointments with police executives.

**Sources:** <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2024/601/ByCategory>

<https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2024/601/Analyses/h0601z1.CRJ.PDF>

<https://legiscan.com/FL/bill/H0601/2024>

#### **HB 1047 Increased penalties for harming police K-9s / horses and related protections**

Raises criminal penalties for intentionally injuring or killing law enforcement animals (for example, from misdemeanor to felony for certain acts) and increases penalties for interfering with police animals while they perform duties. It also amends statutes related to resisting officers in some contexts.

**Effective:** 2023 (signed into law).

Impact: Stronger statutory protections for law enforcement animals and tougher criminal exposure for offenders. Often framed as targeted public-safety enhancements.

**Sources:** <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2023/1047/Analyses/h1047z1.CRJ.PDF>

<https://www.flgov.com/eog/news/press/2023/governor-ron-desantis-signs-legislation-increase-criminal-penalties-crimes>