



**Message Guidance: Defending the Freedom of our LGBTQ+ Students to be Themselves  
NEA Race, Class, Gender Narrative (May)**

**Background**

Over the last ten years, some politicians have increasingly turned to anti-transgender rhetoric and “Don’t Say Gay or Trans” legislation as a powerful complement to the racist dog whistles they use to whip up fear and consolidate power. In 2022, they refined this strategy to create a moral panic over transgender youth, introducing more than 250 anti-LGBTQ+ bills across the country to criminalize medical care for trans youth and bar them from participating in school sports.

Recently, they have paired these attacks with fearmongering about critical race theory, book bans, and punishing educators for doing their jobs, to mobilize their base with a potent mix of racist and transphobic tropes.

To counter their actions, we can lean into our core values and assert the purpose of public education, call out bad actors for fueling divisions, and call for collective action to provide solutions to the real issues facing public schools.

**Practical tips for framing our conversations grounded in RCG**

- **Do** assert and lead with the purpose of public education.
- **Do** close with a positive, affirming, solutions-oriented message about coming together along shared values and working together for a better future.
- **Avoid** explicit partisan finger pointing – use the more general “some politicians” or “some elected officials.”
- **Avoid** ceding ground to the political right with parents. Bring parents into the fold by talking about the value of public education and offer solutions to real problems facing students and public education.

**TOP-LINE MESSAGE GUIDANCE:**

- Across our races, backgrounds, and genders, we all want the same: great public schools for every student. We want students to have the freedom to be themselves and pursue their dreams.
- But today, some politicians are pushing laws that restrict our freedoms, and some are attempting to put students into boxes based on the color of their skin, where they live, or their gender.

- They fuel divisions among parents by pushing laws that erase our history, from Selma to Stonewall, and target and punish educators for doing their jobs. They want to limit what books students can read, and in some cases, exclude transgender kids from healthcare, school, and sports.
- These politicians are exploiting lack of familiarity with transgender students to distract us from their failures to deliver for our families and communities.
- We are not fooled by their cruel and politically motivated tactics and will continue to join parents, students, and educators to make public schools places where we are all free to thrive and support each other for who we are.
- Educators want to provide every student with an accurate and quality education while some politicians want to exclude certain kids, denying their schools funding, and writing people who look like them out of our history books.
- Instead of attempting to divide communities, politicians should focus on making sure all students receive the education they deserve, making schools places where children thrive, and where students of all races and genders have the freedom to learn without fear or intimidation.
- We know that our public schools work best when parents and educators collaborate on what students need and address the real issues facing our public schools.
- We need to work together with educators, parents, and elected officials to address the teacher shortage, fix teacher pay, and provide all students with the support and opportunities they need to succeed.