

# School Board Monitoring

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## Why school board monitoring?

A small number of politically-motivated, organized extremists are targeting school boards throughout PA and nationwide with a goal of undermining public schools by inflaming and dividing parents and communities. They are working to get school boards to take actions and enact policies that are harmful to students and will make schools less welcoming, less inclusive, and less safe for students.

## What do harmful policies/actions look like?

- Book bans or removal of materials from libraries.
  - Bans often target books that provide insight into racism, gender identity, sexual orientation and other topics that vocal minorities believe should not be discussed in schools.
- Censoring what teachers can teach or say.
- Discriminatory policies that target LGBTQ+ students, such as refusing to use students' preferred pronouns and names, restricting transgender students from participating in sports, prohibiting the acknowledgement of transgender students, and more.
- Removing curriculum and/or defunding of social emotional learning programs that support our students as they strive to learn to be empathetic and become happy and productive adults.
- Mandating the removal of Pride flags and other materials targeted by extremists.

## What are the impacts of harmful policies and actions?

- They stifle normal classroom discussion about political issues that are integral to student learning and can have a chilling effect on issues related to race, gender and sexual orientation.
- They create hostile environments for LGBTQ youth, who face higher rates of bullying and harassment and are at increased risk for depression and self harm.
- They demoralize teachers and staff by creating distrust, restricting what they can teach and discuss, and removing their autonomy over establishing a welcoming and inclusive climate in their classrooms.
- They inflame and divide parents and communities.

## School Board Monitoring Program Objectives

1. To create accountability for school boards that are considering enacting harmful policies or taking harmful actions.
2. To increase awareness in your community of your school board's priorities and decisions.
3. To stop school boards from taking harmful actions.
4. To create a statewide database to track harmful policy proposals so we can more effectively combat this extremism.



# School Board Monitoring (con't)

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## How will our team support you?

- Providing messaging, resources, and support to advocates who are monitors and are working to stop harmful actions by school boards.
- Creating a space for monitors and advocates to support and learn from each other (our Facebook page and monthly meetings).
- Using information from monitors to create a database of school districts that are facing attacks and the methods used to resist these negatives changes to policies, curriculum and school climate.

## What is the work of a school board monitor?

- Review the school district's website, specifically school board agendas, for potential policy and procedural changes that could negatively impact the school climate.
- Keep a close eye on Facebook and Instagram activities, if possible, to be on alert for community groups that will be pursuing initiatives that could have a damaging effect on the students.
- Alert the statewide team via our reporting form in order to flag issues that are happening in the district and update actions taken on policy items.
- Potentially engage the community about these issues in order to protect vulnerable students.

## How will we track what is happening in districts throughout the commonwealth?

- Each monitor will be asked to complete a form that will be sent to the statewide team and used to create a database of policy proposals, resolutions, and other concerning actions school boards take.
- We will ask you to update the statewide team as needed by filling out this form after meetings to maintain clear communications on the status of issues in districts.

## Tips!

- Find friends to join you in the work.
- Attend meetings together and make plans to do something you enjoy before or after the meetings like going out for coffee or drinks.
- Bring your crafts to the meetings. There is typically a lot of down time in meetings as school boards conduct the mundane business or run the district.

## Resources

- [School board monitor form](#)
- [Education Law Center: Advocating for Inclusive Schools and Honest Education](#)
- [Registration link for the PA WInS monthly parent meeting](#) at 7:00 pm on the first Thursday of each month
- [PA WInS \(Pennsylvanians for Welcoming and Inclusive Schools\) private Facebook page](#)

For more information contact Sandra Miller at [sandra@educationvoterspa.org](mailto:sandra@educationvoterspa.org) or Susan Spicka at [sspicka@educationvoterspa.org](mailto:sspicka@educationvoterspa.org)

PA WInS is an informal group of organizations and individuals that are working together to support welcoming and inclusive schools for all of Pennsylvania's students.

