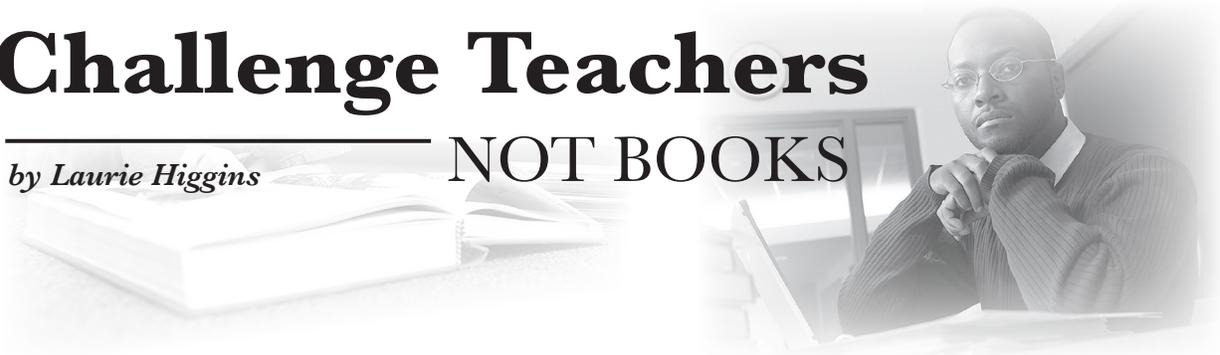


Challenge Teachers

by Laurie Higgins

NOT BOOKS



Although taxpayers must address the issue of objectionable curricular material directly, which will involve challenging the specious “book banning/censorship” arguments employed by school boards and administrations, there is something parents can do in the meantime to minimize their children’s exposure not just to inappropriate texts but to ideologically biased classroom proselytizing. Parents can object to teachers rather than texts. Here are some suggestions for parents who are fed up with the subtle and not so subtle messages that activist teachers of a liberal bent work into their classroom teaching through their classroom comments, curricular materials (including textbooks, speakers, films, plays, novels, short stories, and essays), and even their desks and classroom displays:

1 Parents can go to their middle school and/or high school websites and find out which teachers sponsor gay and straight alliances and liberal political activist groups (e.g. AWARE).

2 Parents can also ask what texts will be taught or used (e.g. The Chocolate War, Fat Kid Rules the World, Angels in America, The Laramie Project, or The People’s History of the United States) by a particular teacher. Parents should ask for the reading list for the entire year. Teachers who have a reasonable degree of respect for the values and beliefs of all parents will not have highly controversial texts on either required or recommended reading lists.

3 If parents have children who have already gone through the school or have already completed a year or more, they should ask those children and/or their friends or friends’ parents which teachers are known for bringing their politics into the classroom or who displays a “Safe Space” sticker, the inverted pink triangle, the rainbow flag, or the lower case Greek letter “lambda” on their desk, classroom door, or wall. Students usually know who the liberal, activist teachers are. Liberal teachers develop reputations, often as the “cool” teachers.

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4 Then parents should call or email the appropriate department chair and/or their child's counselor, and politely insist on a schedule change, explaining that they will not permit their child to be in the classroom or under the tutelage of any teacher who has made their liberal politics known in school.

Parents should no longer accept the unacceptable choices of either tolerating polemical, biased, and vulgar texts, or opting their child out of reading them, which results in an isolated, diminished academic experience for their child.

Parents are entitled to have their children placed in apolitical, ideologically neutral academic contexts. Insisting that their children be placed in classes taught by apolitical teachers who truly respect diverse voices, including conservative voices, will prevent parents from getting caught in the specious and somewhat difficult “book banning/ censorship” discussion. Parents are not challenging texts; they are challenging teachers. Furthermore, administrations and department chairs, faced with these scheduling problems, may eventually decide to reign in their ideologues. ■

