



Preparing for Pushback:

Sustaining equity work in schools



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Humanity and Justice Acknowledgement

In support of the LGBTQ+ community, we affirm and recognize the full humanity of trans and nonbinary youth. With coordinated attacks of hate and harassment directed at a young Vermonter in Randolph, each of us must recommit to co-creating inclusive spaces where LGBTQ+ youth can not merely survive, but thrive.

In Vermont, LGBTQ+ youth are 3x as likely to skip school as their heterosexual peers for not feeling safe, and 4.5x as likely as their heterosexual peers to have attempted suicide ([Vermont Youth Behavior Survey](#)).

[The Trevor Project](#) has found that LGBTQ+ youth who view their school as LGBTQ+-affirming report lower rates of attempting suicide.

Join us in dedicating your time and resources to support LGBTQ+ youth and to do what you can within your spheres of influence to ensure your community is an inclusive and joyful place for all students, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.



Raising of the Progress Pride flag at U-32 Middle & High School. June 1, 2022. Image credit: [Barre-Montpelier Times Argus](#)

For more information, read [It Takes Us All](#) from Outright, Vermont. Share widely.

Constructivist Listening Triads:

- ▷ Three rounds of questions
- ▷ In your triad, decide who is speaker 1, speaker 2, and speaker 3
- ▷ For each question you have 30 seconds of think time, and then each person has 1 minute to answer
- ▷ While others are speaking, listen but do not interrupt or ask questions.
- ▷ If they don't use their full time, sit in silence until the minute is up.

Question 1

- ▶ Speaker 1 begins, followed by speaker 2, and then speaker 3

What is the equity work you are hoping to sustain?

Question 2

- ▶ Speaker 2 begins, followed by speaker 3, and then speaker 1

What is your primary concern or fear?

Question 3

- ▶ Speaker 3 begins, followed by speaker 1, and then speaker 2

What are your hopes?



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Link to our slides:

<https://bit.ly/PreparingforPushback>



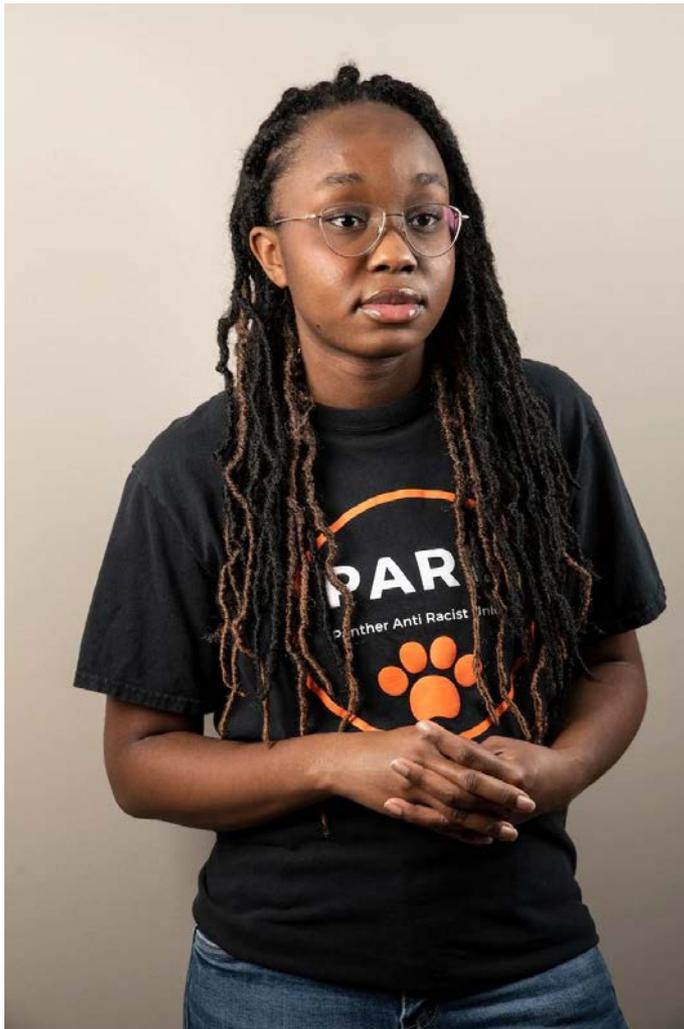


GREAT
SCHOOLS
PARTNERSHIP

We believe **educational equity means** ensuring just outcomes for each student, raising marginalized voices, and challenging the imbalance of power and privilege.

Preparation + Knowledge =
Confidence

and allies/co-conspirators help us sustain the toll of
pushback on our own health and wellbeing



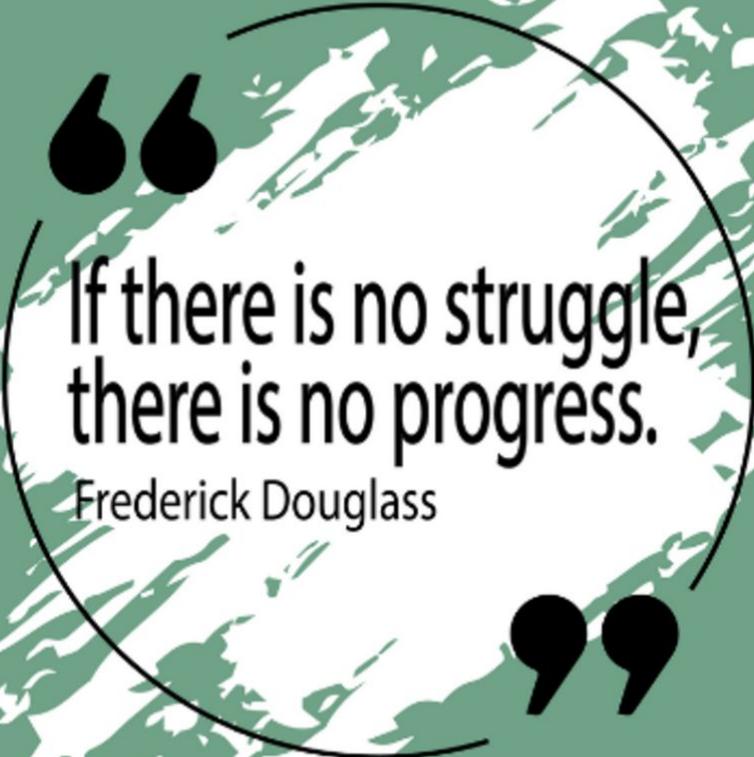
“Part of the reason why I fell in love with reading so much is because teachers offered books that showed characters like me in them. So two of my favorite authors are Jason Reynolds and Angie Thomas. And they write books like “The Hate U Give” and “Long Way Down,” “On the Come Up.” It meant so much to me as a middle-schooler to see characters like me and especially written in ways that don’t focus around trauma. I feel like a lot of times when people create literature about African Americans, it’s a lot of trauma, a lot of history, and it doesn’t really capture the beauty of our culture. And those authors, they talk about the realities that many African Americans face and the history – can’t deny that – but they also focus on our strengths, our culture, things that are important to us, ways that African Americans talk or certain things within our community that make sense to us. And being able to see that in books, I was like, I love this. But when I saw them on the list, it hurt.”

- Renee Ellis

Ottesen, K. K. (2022, October 17). [When the National Culture Wars Come to Your School](#). *Washington Post*. Retrieved October 23, 2022



Expect pushback



If there is no struggle,
there is no progress.

Frederick Douglass

Pushback is part of the process

- ▷ There are organized efforts at work
- ▷ We need to have conversations in order to understand and interrogate our biases (and perhaps policies)
- ▷ Pushback may come from within
 - Be mindful of gatekeeping, soft censorship, labeling, content warnings, and other attempts to restrict access
 - Ensure that students AND adults learn to think critically and with criticality



Get clear and get connected

Develop talking points using **your own words** and avoiding jargon so you can communicate **clearly, concisely, and transparently**

A decorative horizontal arrow graphic pointing to the right, composed of three segments: light blue, dark blue, and red.

Center your students and their voices, especially those at the margins

Keep it local and focused on your students, your school/district, and your school/district values

Align your message with policies and standards

What has your back? *(to name a few)*

Local:

- ▷ Equity Policy
- ▷ Material Selection and Evaluation Policy
- ▷ Reconsideration of Materials procedures
- ▷ Continuous Improvement Plan
- ▷ Mission Statement

Vermont:

- ▷ [Education Quality Standards \(recommended\)](#)
- ▷ [VSLA](#)
- ▷ [VPA](#)
- ▷ [VT AOE: Educational Equity](#)
- ▷ [VSBA: Educational Equity](#)

National:

- ▷ [AMLE: This We Believe](#)
- ▷ [ALA: The Freedom to Read](#)
- ▷ [ACLU: Know your rights](#)
- ▷ [NCTE: Intellectual Freedom Center](#)
- ▷ [AASL: National Standards](#)
- ▷ [Learning for Justice](#)

Connect with your allies and co-conspirators

-  Reach out to local organizations and institutions that share your value of equity
-  Check in with your school/district legal team to get clear on your rights and your students' rights
-  Identify policies that have your back



If confronted or attacked

Lean on your interpersonal skills

1. Listen - many people deescalate if they feel heard
2. Stay open, calm, and respectful - avoid getting defensive
3. Try to find common ground
4. If it escalates- be concise, be factual, avoid getting emotionally engaged, and bring the conversation to a close

If attacked or confronted



Document all attacks and consider investigating



Report offensive posts on social media, block comments, and consider making accounts private



Connect with your community and your allies



Stay on message and communicate clearly



SUPPORT THE YOUNG PEOPLE (directly or indirectly) TARGETED



When it is over

Focus on healing, reconciliation, and learning

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Be sure there are restorative approaches to address needs, repair relationships, and heal for the well-being of individuals and your community.

Return to your values and continue to cultivate and sustain equitable practices

Make space for clarity and reflection - individually, as a school/district, and with your community



I don't think these lawmakers understand that there are a lot of trans youth that don't make it to adulthood because they are denied the medication that they need. I think they don't understand that being gay or being trans is something that's just a part of you. It's just who you are. They treat it like it's not real. I would ask them to think about what it would be like if their son or daughter were trans or were a part of the LGBTQ community. I would want them to understand what it's like to have somebody directly related to you attacked. I would want them to care about that child, just like they would any other kid.

- Philip Smith

Let's get to work



[Talking Points Toolbox](#)

[Policy Toolbox](#)

[Book Banning Toolbox](#)

[SPEAK UP AT SCHOOL](#)

Talking Points Toolbox

- ▷ [Truth in Our Classrooms Bridges Divides: A Messaging Guide](#)
- ▷ [Messaging Guidance: Honesty in Education](#)
- ▷ [Making the Case for Equitable and Just Public Education](#)
- ▷ [Common Challenges When Teaching About Equity and Social Justice - with Supporting Information for Messaging](#)
- ▷ [Common Challenges When Teaching Identity - With Supporting Information for Messaging](#)

Policy Toolbox: sample policies

- ▷ [GSP: Educational Equity](#)
- ▷ [GSP: Educational Philosophy](#)
- ▷ [GSP: Controversial Issues](#)
- ▷ [GSP: Instructional and Library Materials Selection](#)
- ▷ [NEA: Board Resolution to Support LGBTQ Students and Staff](#)
- ▷ [Lake Oswego: Anti-racist Resolution](#)
- ▷ Additional policy examples [here](#)

Book Banning Toolbox

- ▷ [Selection & Reconsideration Policy Toolkit for School Libraries](#) (ALA)
- ▷ [Defending Intellectual Freedom: LGBTQ+ Materials in School Libraries](#) (ALA)
- ▷ [Selection of Library Materials](#) | VSBA Recommended Policy D22
- ▷ [Advocacy Toolkits](#) | American Association of School Librarians
- ▷ [Fight Censorship Toolkit](#) | ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom
- ▷ [Book Censorship Action Kit](#) | National Coalition Against Censorship
- ▷ [Community Inquiry of Library Content: Response Support](#)
- ▷ [Adding Gender Queer: A Memoir to your Library or Classroom Collection](#) | Comic Book Legal Defense Fund
- ▷ [Unite Against Book Bans | Action Toolkit](#)
- ▷ [Intellectual Freedom Center](#) | [Considerations for School Officials](#) | NCTE
- ▷ [Defend LGBT Stories](#) | NCTE
- ▷ [Responding to Book Challenges | A Handbook for Educators](#) | NCTE
- ▷ [Challenge Support](#) | [Answering Questions about Youth & Library Resources](#)

What is one next step you will take to support ALL students?

Share your name, your school, and your step



*Vermont's school librarians will always stand
up to bias, hate, and exclusion...
all of our students
deserve the freedom to read, live, and thrive.*

[Vermont School Library Association Statement on Intellectual Freedom.](#)

November 8, 2021.

Our sources and resources for further study

Talking Points resources

- [Update Article: Leading for Equity: Our Mission Continues Despite CRT Turmoil](#)
- [Critical Race Theory Tips and Talking Points for School Districts](#)
- [Resisting the Pushback Against the Work for Racial Equity and Justice](#)
- [Expect pushback when leading for equity - The Leadership Academy](#)
- [The politics of education equity: Planning for pushback key to success](#)
- [How to respond if a parent accuses you of teaching SEL or critical race theory](#)
- [Pave the Way for Brave Conversations About K–12 Equity](#)
- [Inclusive Education Benefits All Students | Learning for Justice](#)

Policy resources

- [Strengthening Equity Work in the Face of Opposition](#)
- [COSA ODE Toolkit: Communicating about Racial Equity in a Charged Environment](#)
- [Challenges for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(DEI\) Leaders](#)
- [Humanity and Justice Vision and Coalition | WCUUSD](#)

Book banning & Freedom to Read resources

- [Banned in the USA: The Growing Movement to Censor Books in Schools Report](#) | PEN America
- [A Tip Sheet for Librarians Facing Harassment](#) | PEN America
- [National Coalition Against Censorship](#) | NCAC
- [Activating Core Values in the Library | Strategies for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) (Webinar)
- [Responding to Challenges | A Handbook for Educators](#) | NCAC
- [Access to Library Resources: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights](#) | ALA
- [After Her Book Displays Drew Criticism, Librarian Elissa Malespina Lost Her Job. She's Here to Say, "I'm Not OK with This."](#) [Book Banning: A Brief History.pdf](#)
- [Why Do Vermont School Districts Need Library Material Selection Policies](#)
- [School Librarian of the Year Fights Back Against Online Attacks](#)
- [In Canaan \(VT\), 3 Books with LGBTQ+ themes at center of controversy](#)
- [What Rights do Students Have to Access Books?](#)
- [Attempts to Ban Books are Accelerating and Becoming more Divisive](#)
- [Dealing with Controversy and Negative Media](#) | ALA
- [The Freedom To Read Statement](#)
- [Censorship is the Refuge of the Week](#)
- [The Roots of an Inclusive Worldview](#)
- [The Rainbow Library](#) | GLSEN

