



TEACHERS WELCOME DEPROFESSIONALIZATION



Nancy Morrison, a social studies teacher at Atwood Middle School in Miami, Florida, was experiencing burnout this past fall, entering her ninth year of teaching. On top of the pandemic, she was feeling crushed under the weight of responding to students' educational needs and overall well-being.

But help was on the way.

Morrison's relief came in an unlikely form: the national push to deprofessionalize teaching. Scripted curriculum, forbidden knowledge, banned books, outlawed discussions, and hovering oversight have combined to transform the job of teaching. In doing so, this deprofessionalization has thoughtfully relieved teachers of the awful responsibility of having to make decisions that might impact students' education.

Morrison said the first sign of hope came back in June of last year, when the state Board of Education banned what they called "critical race theory" from all public school classrooms. "The Board's rules told us that we had to teach that racism is merely the product of prejudice—we couldn't teach that racism has roots in American society or its legal system."

After that, Florida's legislature passed the "Stop Woke Act", which adds that teachers should be trumpeting "principles of individual freedom." The Act gives students the option of [suing schools for violating their civil rights](#) if those students feel that a class is teaching that "virtues" like "neutrality, objectivity, and racial colorblindness are racist or sexist, or were created by members of a particular race, color, sex, or national origin to oppress members of another race, color, sex, or national origin."

Meanwhile, Florida also passed [HB 1557](#), titled, "Parental Rights in Education" but com-

monly known as the “Don’t Say Gay” bill, which gives parents the right to sue school districts if they think that a teacher is encouraging a classroom discussion about sexual orientation or gender identity that’s not age-appropriate. “This is a clear warning to teachers in my position,” Morrison told us, “that we risk losing our jobs if we talk about LGBTQ issues or people.”

For Morrison, the state’s overall message was also clear: Students should no longer be learning or talking about race and gender issues in school. “I teach Civics, Government, and U.S. History,” she explained:

Obviously, we can’t examine American history or civil rights without discussing the experiences and viewpoints of historically marginalized people. Yet if we do have those discussions, then a parent or student will inevitably claim that someone said something that puts us on the wrong side of these laws.

“Since I can’t safely teach what I was hired to teach, Florida’s policies have freed us to go outside and toss around the Frisbee,” she said with a relieved smile.

“Oddly,” she added, “these are the same legislators who a few years ago wanted us to carry guns to class. Now they’re scared to trust us with some words.”

In Indiana, fifth grade teacher Karen Maus has been enthusiastically keeping an eye on a [similar bill](#) that adds a requirement that teachers post all their lesson plans online, so that parents can review them. “This is terrific!” exclaimed Maus.

I decided to pursue teaching because I wanted to be in a controlled, deprofessionalized context where every move is criticized and I could be fired at any moment because I’ve inadvertently offended some repressed parent with nothing better to do than whine about a mention of the mating ritual of blue-footed boobies.

Maus explained that she feels blessed by the deprofessionalization:

Soon, all the responsibility and blame will fall on the parents, where it belongs. I’m liking that Frisbee idea. I’ll just keep posting lesson plans involving tossing around the Frisbee. If any parents want to object, let them write up their own damn lesson.

NEPC Resources on Classroom Teaching and Learning

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