



Far-Right Ed Policy: What Does the Research Say?



Far-right policies for K12 education are front and center these days, as states and the current presidential administration embrace policies that limit efforts to teach students about topics related to gender, race, and sexual orientation and attempt to roll back protections that had been established for marginalized students.

In a new [essay](#) published in the peer-reviewed journal *Educational Researcher*, NEPC Fellow [Huriya Jabbar](#) of the University of Southern California and [Danfeng Soto-Vigil Koon](#) of the University of San Francisco take stock of what we know about this movement by cataloging peer-reviewed research on this topic.

Based on 80 identified studies, they trace the roots of current far-right education policies to prior movements such as efforts to ban textbooks during World War II, the “red scare” of the 1950s, white backlash to the civil rights movement of the 1960s, and, more recently, school choice and standards and accountability movements that have created crisis

narratives around school failure. At times, neoliberal advocates have joined suit—as they have with the current iteration of the reading wars that focuses on “science of reading” initiatives.

Building on the work of educational philosopher and NEPC Fellow [Michael Apple](#), Jabbar and Koon link current far-right movements to broader societal trends. Identified elements include critiques of secular/empirical expertise, rising rates of activism among Christian mothers, and the use of the internet to build movements. An overarching message is that public education is eschewing parents in furtherance of indoctrinating students in “woke” politics. Relatedly, and ignoring empirical research that suggests otherwise, these far-right movements present white conservatives as an oppressed majority.

“[F]ar-right conservatism has been reconstituted as sexy, transgressive, and the source of true critical thought, positioning science, anti-racism, and feminism as elitist and dogmatic,” Jabbar and Koon write.

They note that this approach has had multiple consequences, including “direct impacts on policy and practice, psychological impacts, and indirect impacts through a chilling effect as educators narrow curriculum and self-censor speech.” For instance, research has found that far-right policies that censor teaching around topics such as gender, sexual orientation, and race can fuel mistrust between parents and educators, create confusion among teachers, narrow curricula, and further disenfranchise marginalized students. More broadly, such policies undermine trust in public institutions.

Jabbar and Koon conclude their essay with a call for more research, including robust quantitative and qualitative studies, theory building, examinations of who funds and supports far-right coalitions, and longitudinal analyses that connecting current efforts to prior movements.

“There is a simultaneous need for urgency and for deep, careful scholarship,” they write. “The far-right backlash is not temporary. Global and domestic economic and demographic shifts create fertile soil for far-right extremism.”

To learn more about this scholarship and its implications, see the November 2025 NEPC policy memo, which Jabbar and Koon co-authored

with others, *[What We Need to Know Now to Respond to Right-Wing Attacks on Public Schools: A Research Agenda](#)*.

NEPC Resources on Politics, Policy, and School Practices

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