



THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION
WASHINGTON, DC 20202

March 28, 2025

Dear Educators:

By natural right and moral authority, parents are the primary protectors of their children. Yet many states and school districts have enacted policies that presume children need protection from their parents. Often, such policies evade or misapply the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), turning the concept of privacy on its head to facilitate ideological indoctrination in a school environment without parental interference or even involvement. Going forward, the Department of Education will insist that schools apply FERPA correctly to uphold, not thwart, parents' rights.

COVID-19 opened parents' eyes to the pervasive indoctrination taking place in many classrooms. Families across the country saw gender ideology and critical race theory taught on-screen at their own kitchen tables. When parents understandably demanded answers and transparency, the Biden Administration treated them like criminals, directing the FBI to surveil school board meetings (one of the few places where parents can call for change in their schools) to intimidate parents. Under President Trump's leadership, my Department will no longer passively accept school officials' hostility to parental involvement. The Department stands with parents in exercising their rights to the full extent of the law.

Congress passed FERPA in 1974 to protect children's privacy in a manner that ensures parents can access their children's school records to gain information and insight necessary to act as proper guardians of their children's well-being. FERPA, as well as the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA), were intended to shelter families from invasion of their privacy – not to insulate schools from transparency and accountability to parents. Parents should not have to navigate a complex process to exercise their rights under FERPA or PPRA. Schools should not treat parents as enemies just for wanting to know about the mental and physical health and safety of their own children. Over the last four years, instead of vigorously enforcing these laws, the Biden Administration neglected the flood of complaints it received. The FERPA and PPRA complaint process is currently so overburdened with reports that parents who care deeply about their children's health and educational futures have had no recourse but to sit and wait. There was no obvious attempt by the Biden Administration to address this substantial backlog, which sent a loud and clear message that parental rights were not a priority. Meanwhile, states have taken advantage of this dereliction of government responsibility and installed policies that specifically instruct teachers and administrators to conceal student's critical information in student records from their parents.

The Trump Administration understands that the immense responsibility of raising children belongs to parents, not to the government. That's why I am announcing a revitalized effort to make FERPA and PPRA the source of proactive, effective checks on schools that try to keep parents in the dark. The Department will prioritize clearing the backlog of FERPA complaints so that parents can be confident that the Department is positioned to act on complaints in a timely manner.

Two weeks ago, I had the privilege of sitting down with a courageous group of detransitioners. They told me about their torturous and truly unfortunate experiences which led them down paths that, in many cases, will require lifelong medical care. A common thread among the stories I heard were the dogged efforts that schools took to promote and enable the transitioning of minor children, regardless of their mental state or their vulnerabilities. I repeatedly heard about the lengths schools would go to in order to hide this information from parents.

As any mother would be, I have been appalled to learn how schools are routinely hiding information about the mental and physical health of their students from parents. The practice of encouraging children down a path with irreversible repercussions – and hiding it from parents – must end. Attempts by school officials to separate children from their parents, convince children to feel unsafe at home, or burden children with the weight of keeping secrets from their loved ones is a direct affront to the family unit. When such conduct violates the law the Department will take swift action.

Attached is a letter from the Department's Student Privacy Policy Office (SPPO). This letter reminds educational institutions receiving federal financial assistance that they are obligated to abide by FERPA and PPRA if they expect federal funding to continue. This letter clarifies issues under FERPA that many states and school districts have intentionally muddied. I intend for SPPO's letter to convey my commitment to vigorously enforce important provisions in FERPA and PPRA for the protection of students and parents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Linda E. McMahon", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Linda E. McMahon

Attachment