

Exposing Hate: The Truth about Attacks on Our Kids, Schools, and Diversity

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When it comes to sex education, the Regressive Minority staunchly supports ineffective and harmful Sexual Risk Avoidance (SRA) programs—which are rebranded Abstinence Only Until Marriage (AOUM) programs—and works to inhibit the adoption of CSE. This movement operates under an ideology of homophobia, transphobia, misogyny, patriarchal ideals, and white supremacy that has proliferated into broader attacks against public education. Under the guise of concerns such as “parental rights” and “school transparency,” the Regressive Minority has carried out targeted attacks against CSE, critical race theory (CRT), inclusive LGBTQ programs, access to a diverse selection of books, and even the use of face masks during a global pandemic. Major organizations fueling these attacks include familiar conservative groups like The Family Policy Alliance, The Heritage Foundation, and The Alliance Defending Freedom, and major donors include the DeVos Family Foundation, Koch Family Foundation, and National Christian Foundation.

Despite decades of research demonstrating the positive outcomes associated with comprehensive sex education (CSE), there is a small international movement that is well-funded, fear-mongering, and vocal in its opposition to not only advancing this widely supported instruction, but is also starting to attack other school-based programs to affirm the increasing diversity of today’s youth. SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change has partnered with Ipas: Partners for Reproductive Justice, Human Rights Campaign Foundation, URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity, Advocates for Youth, the Equality Federation, and American Atheists to reveal the ways in which the anti-CSE movement has morphed with other far-right groups to organize against inclusive programs in public schools, and explore how advocates can best work against these efforts. We refer to the organizations, donors, and individuals that comprise this movement as the Regressive Minority.

Advocates can counteract the Regressive Minority through both organizational and individual action. Some helpful approaches at the organizational level include understanding the Regressive Minority and their common tactics, engaging in proactive and value-based messaging rather than reactionary myth-busting, organizing through coalitions, and advocating for legislative changes. There is already overwhelming public support for CSE, so when the true mainstream majority champions sex education that is effective and affirming of each student's lived experiences, humanity can prevail. More broadly, advocates can protect a public education system that values diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The Regressive Minority has increasingly mobilized in global and U.S. spaces to maintain the heteronormative white family as the cornerstone of far-right and fascist movements spaces. Opposing the promotion, development, and implementation of CSE programs and other educational programs that affirm population diversity makes these attacks an international concern. Opposition groups show up at school board meetings and collaborate through well-funded misinformation campaigns. These actions are carried out with a rhetoric that incites moral panic, distorts the goals of inclusive educational programs, and discourages critical thinking in their audience.

