

Parental Transparency Protocol (PTP)

When evaluating potential schools and teachers, here are questions to ask and procedures to follow. For more information, read [Undoctrinate: The Problems with Classroom Orthodoxy and the Importance of Teaching Our Kids How to Think, Not What to Think.](#)

Good Faith Statement

Parents have ultimate legal authority over the education of their children. The law is quite clear on this. Schools and teachers have an obligation to uphold the existing and long-established Professional and Ethical Codes that govern K12 education and schools and teachers have a moral and ethical responsibility to engage in full disclosure and truth-in-advertising in the conduct of their professional (teaching) affairs. Parents have a legal right and parental duty to insist on this. These codes call for neutrality and impartiality when dealing with matters of contention in the classroom.

Teachers or schools with hidden agendas or ideological commitments beyond providing high-quality education have a moral and ethical duty to operate in good faith and disclose them, so that parents can make fully-informed decisions about how best to educate their children. Schools that fail to do so breach their fiduciary responsibilities.

Teachers and schools are responsible for “maintaining the highest professional standards of accuracy, honesty, and appropriate disclosure of information when representing the school or district within the community and in public communications.” (Model Code of Ethics for Educators, National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification.) There is a general understanding that teachers act *in loco parentis* (in place of the parents) and thus may not undermine the parents in interactions with their children who are legally entrusted to their professional care.

States have rules that govern the conduct of educational institutions. In Pennsylvania, for example, there is a code of professional practice and conduct to which teachers must adhere: “In Pennsylvania, school attendance is compulsory and thus parents are mandated to entrust their children to our education system. As a result of this mandate, ‘trust’ has evolved into the operative foundation of the relationship of students with their teachers. It is from this foundation that the duty of teachers to act as a fiduciary in their students' best interest and to create and maintain a safe environment for their students derives.” (source: pa.gov – promoting ethical practices.) Once trust is broken, it is almost impossible to repair.

Therefore, parents have a perfect right and due diligence duty to ask the following sorts of questions when searching for a school or dealing with dubious teaching practices:

Transparency Questions:

Are there any unstated ideological premises or biases at this school? (Has this school embraced commitments to any aims other than excellent teaching, such as to a particular political ideology or social aim?) If so, what are they?

This same question could be asked of individual teachers.

How do teachers and administrators handle students with opposing viewpoints?

Are the readings assigned in classrooms balanced in terms of viewpoint or ideology? For instance, if you assign something by Marx or on communism, do you balance it with a commensurate reading on capitalism?

What sort of representation do you have on your faculty of teachers from different sides of the political spectrum? (Does the school know what the balance/imbalance is?)

What is your philosophy on free speech in this school? Have you adopted any statements on free speech at this school?

Do you attempt to instill particular values, beliefs, attitudes, or dispositions in this school? If so, what are they, and what professional credentials do the teachers possess that qualify them to be instructing on these particular values, beliefs, attitudes, or dispositions? (fyi: There are *no* professional teaching credentials in values, beliefs, attitudes, or dispositions—not even school counselors, who deal with emotions but are expected to remain value-neutral. Teachers may enforce school rules and teach general manners and shared community values, but must not enter into this realm of “private conscience.” The only exception would be a teacher at a private religious school, such as a nun at a Catholic school, teaching official church doctrine.) Also, a short “training” program [often offered by an outside consulting firm to a school district] is not a “credential.”

Do you ever have teachers teaching “out of area” (outside the area of their certification/expertise)? Under what circumstances?

Do your classroom curricula and daily lesson plans align with established, published learning standards? May I see those?

Will I receive syllabi of the planned coursework and assigned readings?

Does any outside curricular material that you use align with established learning standards?

Do you ever incorporate curricular materials from outside organizations with partisan aims? Which ones? Why?

Why is your school choosing to implement a program/curriculum that comes from this source? What do you know about this source?

What other curricula did you consider before choosing this one?

Do you consider this curriculum to be neutral, balanced, and/or unbiased? (If no, what bias does it have?)

Are there any problems you can anticipate from implementing this curriculum?

Is there space in this curriculum for a variety of viewpoints and potential dissent? How would such diversion be handled?

Where does this lesson fit in the curriculum? With which established standards and learning objectives does it align?

What research exists to demonstrate that this curriculum is effective?

What safeguards/discussion mechanisms are in place if problems with this curriculum, or its implementation, arise?

Do you ever conduct surveys on children? If you do, do you notify parents beforehand? Do students have a choice of whether or not to participate?

All this is required by the Ethical Guidelines that govern academic research.

Do you ever monitor your classrooms or collect anonymous data on whether certain groups of students feel “silenced” in your classrooms?

Do you ever survey students on their attitudes or dispositions without parental consent?

Do your teachers adhere to ethical teaching practices and follow existing codes of professional ethics? If so, which one(s) and may I see it/them? If not, why not? What constrains their behavior, otherwise?

How do you hold teachers accountable when they violate ethical teaching practices?

How do you supervise teachers to ensure they do not insert political material into their instructional activities?