

# RESOURCES AGAINST COMMON FALSE NARRATIVES AND MISINFORMATION

Forest Hills Public Schools, its Board of Education, administration, and board candidates are on the receiving end of agenda-fueled attacks. Many of the attacks are rooted in unfounded online rumors or originate with hyper-partisan think tanks who have a vested interest in advancing an agenda.

Enough is enough. Support FHPS created this resource to help explain why the district (and others) are under attack and what you REALLY need to know about the revolving door of claims against Forest Hills Public Schools and public education.

In most cases, the topics raised by attackers follow a national narrative that ties back to the effort to paint public or “government” schools as “failing” to rally greater community support for active private school voucher petitions that pull billions of dollars of Michigan’s public-school funding from our kids.

In fact, Michigan and specifically Forest Hills are “ground zero” for a monumental court case that soon decides whether families can use public funds or pre-tax dollars for private, religious institutions that are known to discriminate against applicants (See Hile v. Michigan). Public education supporters hope to keep public funding reserved for the 90% of

school-aged students who rely on Michigan’s public schools, which welcome all kids.

Between this court case and the HEAVILY funded petition effort to pass vouchers, it’s no surprise that this “noise” against our schools will likely continue through the hearing of this case in spring 2022, the run of the voucher petition signature collection this summer, and the November 2022 mid-term elections.

Providing clarity and correcting misinformation are important parts of what we do at Support FHPS. We exist to help protect the integrity of our district.

Find below articles that provide helpful context and a potential response to misinformation you hear or see, whether online or at district business meetings.

Imagine how much more productive our administrators could be if the community re-focused on truly relevant, local issues that we can discuss and collaborate through together.

Yours in Public Education,  
Support FHPS  
March 2022

## Indoctrination

**Claim:** Broadly, schools are “indoctrinating” kids

**Fact: False.** Public schools are not centers for political organization. They serve 90% of school-aged children from all backgrounds. School Boards are non-partisan and elected officials run without any partisan affiliation.

- [Why School Board Elections Should Stay Nonpartisan](#) (Governing.com)

**Claim:** There’s a new documentary called “Whose Children Are They?” that says schools are indoctrinating kids. It must be true.

**Fact:** A hyper-partisan activist group called Parents United launched a documentary in March 2022 that weaves in harmful narratives about every topic contained within this sheet. Conveniently timed to mid-term election season and key court cases, the documentary group says, “it’s time to drag this documentary into the light” and unsurprisingly, they’re helping to promote private school vouchers. Its trailer quotes the headmaster of a private school – who is a former politician. (Newsmax)

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## Critical Race Theory (CRT)

**Claim:** Forest Hills Public Schools and all public schools have begun to indoctrinate students with a divisive curriculum that only came to light through virtual schooling.

**Fact:** Society’s “perfect storm” of virtual schooling and civil unrest inspired a pro-voucher advocate to pounce on the opportunity to launch a misinformation campaign against public schools. The goal? Create partisan divide and anger that propels parents to pull their kids from public schools to make a stronger case for active voucher petitions and critical court cases behind them. Pro-voucher groups even published tool kits and tip sheets with talking points on how to launch attack groups and create disruption at the “grassroots” level.

- [How a Conservative Activist Invented the Conflict Over Critical Race Theory](#) (The New Yorker)
- [The School Privatization Brigade’s Latest Scheme: Vouchers to Escape “Critical Race Theory”](#) (Americans United)
- [The Aristocrats Funding the Critical Race Theory Backlash](#) (The Daily Beast)

It’s also worth noting that The Heritage Foundation has played a large role in encouraging local attack groups. Back in 2002 after another voucher program failed to pass in Michigan, they pivoted to a “stealth,” “grassroots group” strategy at the school level.

In years’ past, Forest Hills Public Schools has been implored to remedy incidents of persistent racism. Despite this, they have not implemented any mandatory curriculum or lessons or changed the way history is taught.

- [“Blackface” incident sparks community debate for Forest Hills schools](#) (MLive)
- [Open letter to Forest Hills Public Schools from equity leaders, parents and alumni](#) (The Rapidian)

Do educators sometimes address real-time, breaking news and incidents in response to student questions or concerns, such as offering a worksheet on what it might feel like to hurl an insult at another student (instead of a suspension)? Here’s one non-FHPS educator’s take.

- [Concerned Parents and Lawmakers: Here’s what you’ll really see in my classroom](#) (EdSurge)

## Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

**Claim:** Even though data shows students are suffering greater levels of anxiety and depression than ever before, mental health programming is a gateway to more divisive topics and creates a “victim mentality”

**Fact:** Anti public-school entities are leveraging this talking point to encourage families to leave public school. In fact, one of FHPS’ attack groups specifically encouraged parents take the incredibly harmful stance to not let their kids be served by counselors. What we know is that students are facing the greatest mental health crisis of a generation and that the “life skills” extended through social emotional learning are the proven strongest indicator of future success, including finishing college.

- [Parents protesting ‘critical race theory’ identify another target: Mental health programs](#) (MSNBC)
- [Beyond CRT: Protesting parents now targeting mental health and suicide prevention programs](#) (The Hill)
- [Social Emotional Learning Should Not Be the Next Target in America’s Culture Wars](#) (EdSurge)
- [Teenagers are struggling and it’s not just lockdown](#) (The New York Times)
- [The SEL skills that matter most for academic success: curiosity and persistence](#) (Ed Week)

## “Inappropriate” Books

**Claim:** Public schools are housing and peddling pornography in their libraries.

**Fact:** Once again, this is a topic being abused by pro-voucher and other partisan agenda groups. Forest Hills adopts a “no surprises” policy where parents are notified ahead of time of the books that will be offered through curriculum and lesson plans. In fact, fair book review is a topic BOTH Support FHPS and its attack groups asked FHPS to implement and the new policy was announced in March 2022. How about that? We have a lot in common. Parents always have a say about what their children read and can submit notices about banned books for their household.

- [Book Ban Efforts Spread Across the U.S. Challenges aren't new, but the tactics and politicization are](#) (The New York Times)
- [High schools could lose AP classes if they ban 'required topics' from being taught](#) (TODAY)
- [Moms for Libraries is propaganda](#) (Book Riot)
- [Missouri district rescinds decision to ban Toni Morrison Book](#) (NBC)

Each month, board meeting speakers across the country pledge to read excerpts from books they would collectively like to “cancel.” Districts are aware and implementing more policies to defend content and reject bans.

## “Furries” and Bathrooms

**Claim:** Forest Hills Public Schools and other districts encourage “furries” and allow litter boxes in the bathrooms.

**Fact:** This is a Facebook rumor – confirmed false – that inspired panic but serves as yet another talking point for attackers perpetuating the voucher agenda and who are trying to smear public schools as “failing.”

- [Furry Panic Is the Latest Dumb Attack on Public Schools](#) (The Daily Beast)
- [Fear of “furries” in school grips parents fooled by absurd Facebook rumors](#) (Raw Story)
- [Midland superintendent disappointed people believed rumors of litter boxes for students](#) (Detroit News)

## Budgets and Transparency

**Claim:** Our school district is not clear about matters like curriculum, budget transparency and how decisions are made.

**Fact:** Unlike private schools and BECAUSE they are public schools, districts like FHPS go above and beyond mandated guidelines for transparently reporting.

- [Forest Hills Public Schools Transparency Reports](#) (budget, salary, compensation, budget, expenditures and bargaining agreements)
- [Open Meetings Act, meeting schedules and minutes](#)
- [FHPS Curriculum and Course Guides](#)
- [K-6 Curriculum Guides](#)

For content beyond this, inquire with your child's principal, teacher or the respective contact at FHPS' administration building.

# COMMON FALSE NARRATIVES AND MISINFORMATION (CONTINUED)



## Parental Control in Education

**Claim:** Public schools have suddenly eliminated parental control over their children’s education (often pointing to the pandemic as the catalyst).

**Fact:** Parents have had and always will maintain control and choice when it comes to their child’s education. FHPS practices a “no surprises” policy when it comes to curriculum and books. Some areas of control and choice – from the MANY available – include:

- The ability to review curriculum, which is posted online. When it comes to “family life or sex ed” education, parents are sent a reminder with an opt-out form for any topics they do not want their child to engage with. Even as students begin school, a waiver form for all topics is provided with kindergarten registration.
- The ability to opt students out of books that use particular words, phrases or subject matter.
- School choice – when it comes to attending other schools within the Kent Intermediary School District that offer programs, curriculum or athletics that better meet a parent’s needs
- There have never been mandated Covid-19 vaccines. Many families asked to obtain exemptions from masks, which were granted. Parents always remain the decision-maker when it comes to medical decisions.
- The ability to volunteer, including inside the schools, or volunteering as a paraprofessional or recess monitor
- Choosing clubs and organizations
- [Opinion: Parental control is a smoke screen for hyper partisan activists](#) (CNN)

## In Conclusion

It’s important to remember that while these common issues circulate in and out of focus across the country, they all are working toward the end goal of helping to privatize education – whether all waging these arguments are on board with that agenda or not. This topic is not new to Michigan, nor our country. But it has become louder and more divisive than ever. Sadly, these tactics were intended to sew division to stir up anger and hopefully achieve wins in this arena.

The fact is, [public schools and private schools can – and should – co-exist](#). But, that argument does not need to involve distracting our children. We ask for the community to restore decorum and let our kids get back to their studies, unthreatened and uninterrupted.

Support FHPS is committed to updating this document as new articles and developments arise. Please contact us at [info@supportfhps.org](mailto:info@supportfhps.org) with questions or visit us online at [www.SupportFHPS.org](http://www.SupportFHPS.org).