

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PROTECTING THE FAIR (Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, Respectful) EDUCATION ACT

The FAIR Education Act requires California schools to integrate age-appropriate, factual information about social movements, current events and the contributions of people with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people into existing history and social studies lessons that already include contributions of both men and women, people of color, diverse ethnic communities and other historically underrepresented groups. It was signed into law on July 14, 2011.

On November 17, anti-equality advocates filed papers to place an initiative on the November 2012 ballot that would strip all references to LGBT people from the FAIR Education Act. This initiative attempt follows an unsuccessful effort earlier this year to place a referendum on the FAIR Education Act on the ballot in 2012. The group has 150 days from the date the petition is approved for circulation to collect 504,760 valid signatures. However, the initiative must qualify at least 131 days before the November general election even if 150 days haven't passed.

Who decides what students will learn?

Lessons required under the FAIR Education Act must be age-appropriate and will be developed at the local level, where school districts will decide what's appropriate for each classroom based on parent and teacher input.

What kinds of things might students learn about under the FAIR Education Act?

Coursework may vary, but local school districts, parents and teachers might consider including in high school history courses lessons such as:

- In the course of learning about other civil rights movements of the 50s and 60s, a discussion of the Stonewall riots in New York in 1969 that helped spark the modern-day lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) civil rights movement for equality. Or students might learn about the recent repeal of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, which banned openly gay people from serving in the military, just as they learn about the racial integration of the military or the fight for women to be able to serve.
- The relationship between the women's movement and civil rights movement of the 60s to the birth of the movement to secure equal opportunities and equal rights for people with disabilities, including the landmark American Rehabilitation Act in the 70s and the Americans With Disabilities Act in the 1990s.

When does the FAIR Education Act go into effect?

The FAIR Education Act goes into effect on January 1, 2012, but that doesn't mean all schools in California will immediately become inclusive. We need to make sure the law is implemented and get fair, accurate, inclusive, and respectful instructional materials into our classrooms. We need supporters to get involved, work with students, parents, educators, and administrators to explain the importance of this law, and direct people to resources for making their schools more inclusive.

How does the FAIR Education Act positively impact kids?

Discrimination doesn't belong in the classroom. The FAIR Education Act prevents schools from adopting learning materials with a discriminatory bias or negative stereotypes based solely on race, ethnicity, religion, disability and sexual orientation that can alienate students and foster an environment where bullying thrives. Preventing discrimination and teaching about historical movements and the contributions of people from all backgrounds, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, disability or sexual orientation fosters an atmosphere of dignity and respect that makes schools safer for all students.

What should parents know about the FAIR Education Act?

The FAIR Education Act requires a factual, inclusive, age-appropriate teaching of history. It empowers parents to provide input about social studies lessons at the local level and gives clarity about what students will or will not learn in the classroom. Lessons about morality or the intimate details of historical figures' lives are not part of the law and are left entirely for parents to discuss at home.

How will the FAIR Education Act impact California's Budget?

The FAIR Education Act adds no additional costs to the state. Periodically, the State Board of Education updates its education standards and textbooks. The next update is set for 2015 and any changes related to the FAIR Education Act will be made as a part of that regularly scheduled update.

Does FAIR require teachers to use specific language about sexual orientation or gender identity?

The FAIR Education Act does not require teachers to say any specific words related to sexual orientation or gender identity in the classroom. The FAIR Education Act requires a factual, inclusive, age-appropriate teaching of history and social studies.

How can I help protect the FAIR Education Act?

A broad coalition of organizations including advocates for people with disabilities, LGBT organizations, labor unions, faith communities, racial justice groups and many other groups that believe in equality for all have joined forces to educate the public about the FAIR Education Act, to block the measure from the ballot if we can and prepare to win at the ballot if we are forced to wage a campaign.

Educate friends, family and coworkers. Our opponents are using lies based on prejudice to misrepresent the FAIR Education Act and scare parents. Use this fact sheet to help educate the public and ask people you know to Decline to Sign the opponents' initiative petitions and sign our petition for equality instead.

Volunteer. Our campaign is gaining momentum. Call Joseph at 323.965.8901 #3 or visit www.FAIREducationAction.com