



PARENT PLAYBOOK

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE
FOR MAINSTREAM MOMS
WHO'VE HAD ENOUGH BS

2023
SERIOUSLY.

THE PARENT PLAYBOOK

Are you hearing rumblings about book banning or false claims about schools teaching critical race theory (CRT) at your school board meetings? Are people you've never seen before showing up to complain about social and emotional learning, mental health programs, or trans kids in sports? Or maybe this is happening a few towns over? You might think... this can't be for real. Well guess again - this extremist rhetoric is spreading. And if it hasn't hit your school district yet, it will soon.

Watching school board meetings turn into three-ring circus acts has us all feeling a little topsy-turvy. The good news is that you don't have to sit on the sidelines and watch it happen. You can take action, stand up for your values, and protect your kids' education.

At Red Wine and Blue, we've created this guide for all the parents out there who want to do more. We want you to feel fully equipped to fight back against extremism, and confident that you can make school board meetings boring again!



LET'S GET REAL



Before we begin, let's get real about what is actually happening in our communities.

Right-wing politicians, conservative Washington, DC think tanks, and the Fox News-led conservative media are exploiting genuine parent exhaustion and frustration.

Rather than addressing our families' real needs – like child care, paid family leave, and learning loss – they seek to distract and divide us with classroom culture wars. It's a coordinated political strategy to undermine public education.

When these culture war attacks arise in your community, do not make the mistake of some DC politicians. Do not duck. You need to name them to tame them – call them out directly, connect with the real feelings behind them, and stand up for your values.

Now let's get you prepared to do just that.



ASSEMBLE YOUR SQUAD

The first step is to gather your people. Reach out to those friends and neighbors who might feel the same way that you do. And then ask them reach out to their networks and so on - you will be surprised by how quickly a group will form!

Make sure you have a place to communicate - somewhere people can get to know each other, share ideas, and plan. This could be a Facebook group, a Slack channel, a group text, or whatever works best for you.

Need some encouragement as you start this journey? [Check out the stories of other parent groups that have sprung up all across the country.](#) These parent groups organized for the first time, pushed back against right-wing extremism, and WON!



RESEARCH!

While you're getting your team together, it's important that you understand how the other side is thinking and feeling, too. We love a good echo chamber (for the sake of our own sanity), but preaching to the choir won't change anything.

Empathy is our superpower. Let's face it, all parents are juggling a lot and we're exhausted, but we all care deeply about our children's education. Connect with those shared values. Parents are not the enemy. It's the politicians and outside groups trying to capitalize on our exhaustion and impose a political agenda on our kids' education that we need to take on.

To do that, you need to understand the issues and the arguments that the right wing is using to stoke chaos. Here are some ways to get the opposition info you need:

- **Monitor local school board agendas and meetings.** If this stuff hasn't cropped up in your community yet, attend or watch recordings of school boards in your surrounding areas (they are often streamed on the district's YouTube and Facebook page) to get an idea of the tactics and arguments being used.
- **Meet with elected officials and/or other organizations in your community.** It's important to know the landscape and who the folks are that already have a seat at the table. Ask a friendly school board member to join you for coffee. Scout around and connect with other parent groups.
- **Keep an eye on conservative news.** Extremist arguments often begin on right-wing media channels. Get a jump on the next culture war issue before it's presented at your local school board by going straight to the source.
- **Do some online research.** We saw national right-wing groups with local chapters insert themselves in school board races all over the country in 2021. Ask around, do a search on Facebook, put some feelers out at your PTA/O meeting - get the gist of who you're up against locally.
- **Don't unfriend your conservative Facebook friends.** We know this can be a major pain in the you-know-what, but it's helpful to know what people in your community are thinking and saying about the soundbites they're hearing from the far right.



DELEGATE, DELEGATE, DELEGATE



Once you've found your people, it's time to put them to work. As hard as it might be for Type A personalities (not that we'd know anything about that!), you cannot (and should not) run this entire show. People will be more invested when they have an assigned role. Delegating the multitude of tasks helps take the pressure off any one person and gives new members of your group an opportunity to showcase their skills.

Here are the most common roles and responsibilities that a successful group will need:

- Data collection and management
- Online research
- Social media - content creators and moderators
- Public/media relations
- Graphic design
- Public speakers
- Event organizers/planners

Don't be afraid to ask people for help directly. Most will be flattered that you value their talents and will be willing to get involved. Giving encouragement and celebrating their successes is the key to continued engagement!

MESSAGE MATTERS

You've gathered your people, delegated roles and responsibilities, scouted the opposition – now it's time to get your message out there. Here are a few best practices to follow:

- Have a messaging strategy! What is the overarching message you want your community and your elected officials to hear? What are the shared values that members of your community will relate to and embrace? These are the themes that you want to use in all your communications. We like these:
 - As parents, we all want an honest and accurate education for our children – that means learning real history (not fairy tales) and respecting people across our differences.
 - This is not the 1950s. We want our kids to be prepared for the 21st-century.
 - All kids deserve to feel safe to learn and thrive at school.
- Once you develop your overall theme, write down all the different angles and ways that you can get this message across. **Here are some we recommend:**
 - Own patriotism: In America, we celebrate free speech and independent thinking – these are the ideals of our nation. Trying to limit or remove those freedoms is not patriotic. It's censorship.
 - Call out the other side's motivation: Right-wing politicians and outside groups trying to impose a political agenda on our kids.
 - Own individual freedom: You can decide what's right for your child, but you don't get to dictate what's right for other families.
 - Always call for unity: This isn't about progressive or conservative, it's about doing what's right for our kids.
 - Share personal stories: How is the issue impacting students and families in the community? These stories are some of the most important and powerful messaging you can use.



- Remember that opposition research you did? You identified the right-wing talking points – now it's time to develop a direct response for each one so they can be immediately countered during a meeting. (Reach out if you need help – we've heard them all.)
- Having message discipline protects you from being baited into pointless debates and petty arguments. It gives you a solid foundation upon which to start conversations with members of your community and learn what they are thinking about the issue.

Once you've honed your messaging strategy, begin putting it out into the universe. You cannot let the right wing be the only voice in the room. The majority of parents are with you and support commonsense in their school districts.

GET YOUR MESSAGE OUT

Direct Contact Campaign

Communicate directly with board members: Do you have a policy or positions you want them to support? Want to make your thoughts known?

Have your group email, call or write letters/postcards. Whatever is most effective in your community.

Pro-tip: Take the guess work out of it! Provide group members with the emails, phone numbers or addresses for school board members. Create a basic template along with a set of suggested talking points. Making it easy for your members to craft the communication means more will do it!

But remember – you don't want everyone sending the same form letter. Board members will ignore those – encourage everyone to speak authentically for themselves.



Social Media Campaigns

Want to have your message heard in this day and age? Well, then you know that having a social media game is a must. And good news – it is a great way to get volunteers involved. Designate someone (or a team) from your group to lead this effort. You need to share, share and share some more. Group photos, videos of inspiring school board speeches, personal stories – find creative ways to grab attention and inform your community.

Facebook/Instagram:

- Get as many members within your group to share your posts. At Red Wine and Blue we call this our “Hype Squad.” Call it what you wish, but having a team ready to amplify your voice will make sure that your message reaches across multiple networks and out to a broad audience. And remember – people lurk! Your Facebook posts may not get a lot of likes or comments, but they are being seen. Don’t be surprised when someone randomly mentions your post at a neighborhood party. They are paying attention even if they aren’t actively engaging.
- Additionally, you can create videos or utilize Facebook Live to engage your audience. We’ve found that allowing people to see and hear you build connections on a more personal level. Have members film themselves going into the grocery store or wrangling kids at drop-off. Have a fireside chat while folding a heaping pile of laundry. (Pro Tip: Remove all delicates beforehand – people don’t need to know you that well!)

Threads/Twitter (or are we really calling it X?!):

- Think of these platforms as a communications hub that reach an entirely different audience than Facebook. While Facebook is a great place to talk to your friends, Twitter/Threads are a way to communicate with the media, politicians, and businesses and stay up-to-date with partners.
- Brainstorm a list of stakeholders in your community – school board members, city council members, business owners, influential community members and engage with them on important issues.
- These platforms are not real life, but it can sometimes feel like it to people in power. Make sure your voice is heard in their feed.

SHOW UP . . . AND SPEAK UP

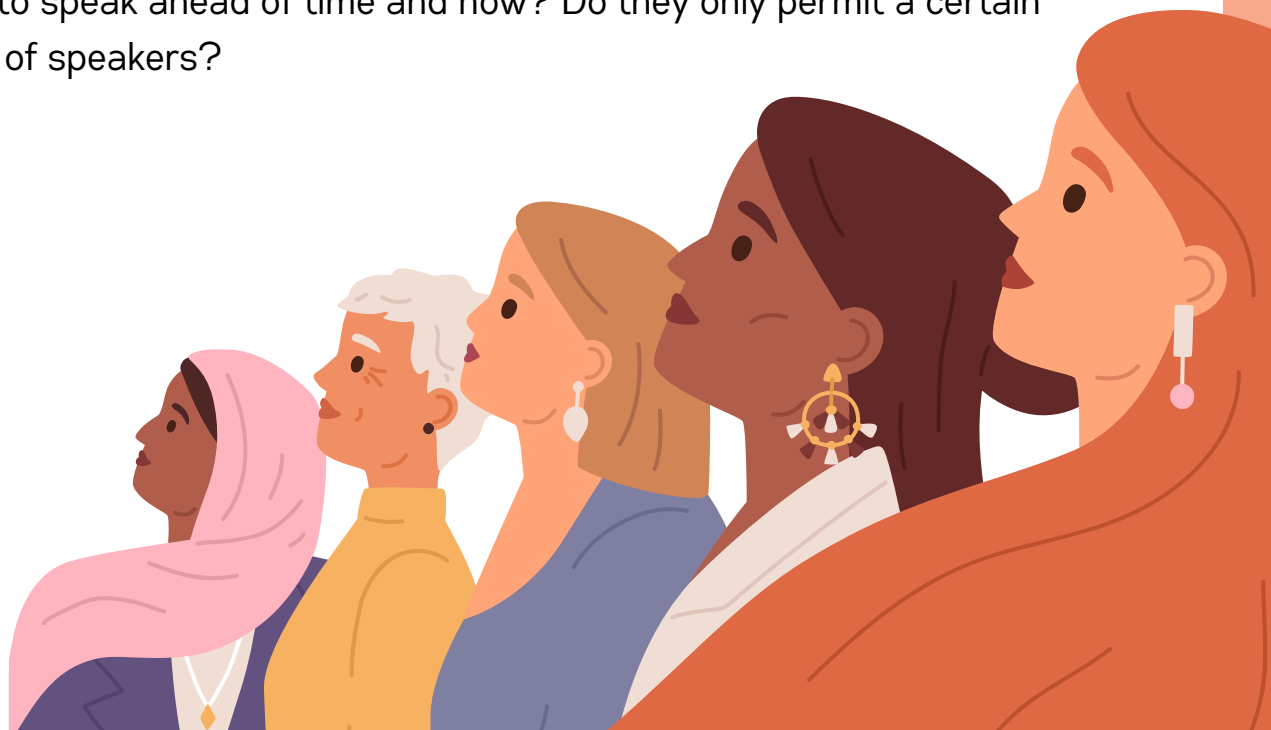


You have built momentum, you have your squad in place . . . now it's go time! Right-wing speakers yelling loudly at the podium make a lot of noise - but they do not represent the majority of parents. You can be the calm and reasoned contrast.

Most parents are turned off by what they hear is going down at these meetings. You can be the positive alternative. While they yell and shout, your group sits quietly together and cheerfully applauds for your speakers. When the other side leaves abruptly as soon as the public comment period is over, your team respectfully stays until the board has finished their business. There is no booing or name-calling from your side. You are sharing impactful stories with well-researched arguments. What reasonable parent would not want to be on your side?

So what do you need to do to be the most effective, most prepared, and most impactful group in the room? Planning and organization is key.

- **Gather Your Crew:** Don't just send out a meeting date and time and wait to see who shows up - coordination is essential. Create a Facebook event or even better use a tool like Sign-Up Genius. It will create a link you can share everywhere and bonus - it records attendees' email addresses so you can follow-up! Provide updates and confirm attendance - encourage your crew to show in the largest numbers possible. You can even assign a volunteer coordinator for this task.
- **Make Your Presence Known:** Demonstrate unity by showing up with some sort of common identifier. Groups can create t-shirts, wear the same color or matching stickers, etc. We also suggest sitting together for added effect - and heads up - this means arriving early to snag those seats!
- **Speak Up:** You need designated speakers who are fired up and ready to go. Brainstorm everything you want the Board to hear and make sure your speakers have them covered. Heartfelt calls for reason and commonsense are great but personal stories make the biggest impact!
- **Get Down To Business:** Familiarize yourself with the rules for your school board meetings. Are there time limits on public comment? Do you need to sign up to speak ahead of time and how? Do they only permit a certain number of speakers?



GET CREATIVE !!



Keep your momentum going! Continue to build your group and attract attention to your cause by getting creative with your events and messaging. Thinking outside the box can help you capture people's attention while also impacting your community in a positive way. Here are just a few ideas to get you started:

- Hold a school supply drive, book collection or gift card drive in support of a local charity before a school board meeting.
- Plan a peaceful rally with speakers and positive signs.
- Be the contrast to a loud opposition protest by holding a Read-In. Your side quietly reads banned books while displaying signs in support of accurate education.
- Hold a community forum to educate the public.
- Leave messages using sidewalk chalk outside meetings.
- Attend public events like festivals, concerts and parades and pass out information.
- Build your membership and offer educational opportunities by throwing a house party for friends and neighbors.
- Host public information sessions so people can learn more about your group and the issues:
 - Morning meet-ups in a coffee shop
 - Happy hours at a local restaurant
 - Engage families by hosting at a local park or playground
- Plan a group volunteer activity such as a community cleanup or work at a local food bank.

GET THE PRESS INVOLVED

Tired of seeing only the right-wing speakers (who often don't even have kids in the district) at school board meetings getting covered on the news? Then it is time to proactively engage with the media! Your goal is to be the common sense, mainstream contrast to the antics of the other side. Don't let them be the only voice!

Creating buzz around your movement is easier than you may think! Connecting with the press can be as simple as picking up the phone and giving a local reporter a call (trust us, they're happy to have help finding stories). Additionally, there are several different ways to develop touch points with local media:





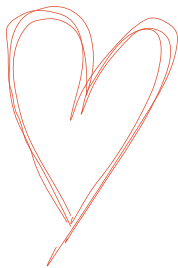
- Research and identify the reporters and state/local news organizations who are covering school board issues. Create a press list.
- Establish a positive relationship with reporters by emailing them about your events, following them on social media, retweeting their stories and keeping them updated.
- Holding an event? Try to get press coverage by sending a media advisory with all the details.
- If the media shows up, expect them to cover both sides of the story. Remember the goal is to have your side represented and heard!
- Write a press release to announce something newsworthy to the public and reach your target audience.
- Write an op-ed or letter to the editor to showcase what your group is doing to positively affect change - and/or what the opposition group is doing to diminish your community.

ADVOCATE FOR NEW LEADERSHIP

Your group is growing and thriving and you made a big impact in your community – but ultimately you need leaders on your school board who share your values and goals, and are willing to stand up to the politically-motivated extremists who are trying to tug us back 50 years (or more).

Don't wait until the candidate filing deadline looms – start identifying candidates for office as soon as possible. And the first place to look? Right within your own group! There are 3 broad steps to this process:

- Recruit: Think through those skills/talents/abilities that would make for a great candidate. Does someone in your group possess the skills and charisma needed? If so, round them up!
- Train: Running for office is no small feat. Be sure to give your candidates access to the training they need to be successful in their run. Some great organizations that help women run for office:



- Vote Run Lead
- She Should Run
- ElectHer
- Run For Something
- Local groups such as LEAD Ohio and LEAD NC



- Support: Once this person has put their name on the ballot – your group needs to be the go-to supporters for that campaign. Donate, get the word out, host events, canvass – encourage your members to step up and get involved in whatever capacity possible. Make sure your candidate has what they need to get across the finish line!

BE THE CHANGE!



If there's one thing we've all learned since the 2016 election (yes, that one), it's the importance of increased involvement. If we want to keep taking back and healing our country, we've got to stay involved. That might look different for everyone - but taking our involvement to the next level, no matter where you are, will be paramount to our continued success.

It is our sincere hope at Red Wine and Blue that you and yours will be part of that. Every day we meet suburban women who are new to organizing. They bring fresh ideas, perspectives, skills sets, organizational talents, and more to the table (Woot! Woot!).

Whether you're starting your own group, supporting a candidate, or clapping back on an issue - being part of the Red Wine and Blue community will enable you to find the support you need. Join our platforms to stay connected - or better yet become part of our national network. Red Wine and Blue can help take your group to the next level! Potential new members can search and find you on our national map -- plus we will give you access to amazing trainings and tools that can help you create actions and events and grow your group! Want to learn more, please email troublenation@redwine.blue

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