

Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty: Issues letter to Cedarburg School District saying state can't force adoption of Critical Race Theory concepts in curriculum

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Local activists attempting to force district into curriculum changes

The News: Attorneys at the Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty (WILL) issued a [letter](#) to the Cedarburg School District making clear that the district is not legally required to adopt Critical Race Theory concepts in their curriculum, nor can the Wisconsin Department of Instruction (DPI) legally mandate the school district to adopt Critical Race Theory concepts in their curriculum. The Cedarburg School District recently investigated a [complaint](#) from a local group alleging that its curriculum violates state and federal law and found no violations. That group has now made an appeal to DPI suggesting Cedarburg's curriculum is not "diverse and representative."

The Quote: WILL Deputy Counsel, Dan Lennington, said, "Cedarburg should not be intimidated into adopting controversial and politicized curriculum as a result of vague and unsubstantiated charges made by a local activist group. And any attempt by the state to force curriculum changes would be inappropriate, unwarranted, and likely illegal."

Background: A local Ozaukee County group, Bridge the Divide, [alleged](#) the Cedarburg School District "is discriminating against its diverse students" by not providing a "diverse and representative" curriculum. It is not clear what Bridge the Divide means by the phrases "appropriately diverse curriculum" and "diverse and representative curriculum." And the allegations, taken in their entirety, are vague and unsupported by specific evidence.

The Cedarburg School District conducted an investigation of their curriculum and issued a [decision](#) in December 2021 that found no violations of state or federal law. The review also found no violations of Board policy prohibiting discrimination. But the District conceded, "[t]here are areas where the District needs to make additional efforts to meet the spirit of the statutes and policies in question."

This is unnecessary and concerning. Cedarburg is free to amend or add to its curriculum, but it need not make any changes as a result of the Bridge the Divide complaint and appeal. Schools should absolutely continue to teach all of American history, including topics ranging from the existence of slavery to the substantial contributions of racial minorities to American culture and success. But districts are not required to teach a highly politicized and contested view of history and race. And, [depending on how it is executed](#), doing so may even be forbidden.

Bridge the Divide recently [appealed](#) their complaint to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). It would be inappropriate and unwarranted for the DPI to find that the Cedarburg School District curriculum fails to comply with state law as it relates to teaching about race and matters of cultural diversity. Similarly, it would be an overreach for the DPI to mandate wholesale changes to the Cedarburg School District curriculum under [Wis. Stat. § 118.13](#).