



Battleground schools fighting over sex, evolution, Bible

Interactive map gives parents, teachers new resource to pinpoint conflicts

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It was the Associated Student Body at Kentridge High School in Kent, Wash., that ruled the Truth Bible Club would not be recognized officially because of “its potentially offensive name and the fact that students would have to make a pledge to Jesus Christ to have full voting membership.”

And there was a fight at Erie Community School in Illinois over teaching material that told students, “Some families have two moms or two dads.”

And in Catoosa County, Ga., it was the Lakeview-Fort Oglethorpe school that banned cheerleaders from displaying signs with Christian scripture during football games, something that had been going on without incident for years.

Eventually, following a community protest, the school set aside an area outside the field for students to show signs with religious messages.

There have been hundreds of similar conflicts in schools around the country, on subjects including curriculum, freedom of expression, gender, human origins, moral values, race, reading materials, religion and sexuality.

And now the Cato Institute has created an interactive tool for parents, teachers and others to track exactly what’s going on.

“Americans are diverse – ethnically, religiously, ideologically – but all must pay for public schools,” the institute explains. “The intention behind this arrangement is largely good: to bring people together and foster social harmony. But rather than build bonds, public schooling often forces people into conflict. Be they over budgets, math curricula, school start times, or myriad other matters, everyone is probably familiar with divisive public school battles.”

The map displays where those conflicts have erupted, and gives a brief description of what happened.

“It is hoped that this site will begin an open and honest discussion about the social effects of public schools,” Cato says. “It will also, hopefully, become a tool for people in communities embroiled in values-based controversies to find others who have suffered similar bouts.”

The map includes situations drawn from various sources from 2005 to the present.

“Because major media reports are the source for its content, the map likely provides a minimal sense of how widespread such battles are.”

The Cato Institute is a public policy research organization dedicated to “the principles of individual liberty, limited government, free markets and peace.”