

PENTAGON'S SECRET PUSH TO INSTITUTIONALIZE DEI IN ITS K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Top Line

The Department of Defense Education Activity, which educates the children of military personnel, made headlines in recent years for [practices](#) like hiding “gender transitions” from parents, forcing children into “difficult conversations” about race, class, gender, and sexuality, and the antics of a [self-described](#) “woke” Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion chief who [hawked her own books](#) to her colleagues.

Last spring DoDEA announced the agency would dissolve its DEI department, and DEI chief Kelisa Wing would be reassigned. While the move seemed to be in response to legitimate criticism of the agency’s ideological excesses, [documents](#) received via Freedom of Information Act request suggest that DEI-ethos will still be a core part of the agency’s mission: DEI specialists would be “integrated” into “four key divisions” in the agency, and a DEI Steering Committee would be formed.

Auditors at OpenTheBooks.com have attempted to shed more light on the nature of this “DEI Steering Committee” over the past year, and while new information has been revealed, FOIA-slow walking and heavy-handed redactions have left many questions unanswered. At the same time, millions of dollars are still being spent on purveyors of left-wing content touted by radical DoDEA staffers.

DoDEA has deeply betrayed the trust of the American people, and more importantly, the military parents that want their children to share in their love and service to their country, not be forced into oppressor vs. oppressed lesson plans and introduced to gender ideology. The culture of secrecy OpenTheBooks.com has revealed needs to end before any trust is restored.

Transparency Troubles

DoDEA’s DEI Steering Committee was formed last March after a fiery [congressional hearing](#) looking into Kelisa Wing’s racially stigmatizing tweets and the broader culture of left-wing extremism at the sub-agency.

DoDEA CEO Thomas Brady stated in an [internal email](#) that the committee would include himself, the DoDEA Chief Operating Officer, the DoDEA Chief Academic Officer, and twelve others.

Another FOIA request [revealed](#) the general job titles and departments of the other members of the committee. While OpenTheBooks.com auditors inquired for the specific names of the Steering Committee members, we were told the names were not available for disclosure and to check back later.

Auditors sent another FOIA request for electronic calendar invitations to DEI Steering Committee events for the DoDEA Chief Academic Officer and Chief Operating Officer. [Responsive documents](#) were so redacted that they were functionally unusable: all non-executive names on the calendar invitations were redacted, along with all meeting descriptions. Dates for the meetings were revealed, however, so auditors can confirm the meetings are on-going.

Another calendar FOIA for DoDEA DEI specialist Michelle Woodfork [revealed](#) more committee meetings and more redactions, including a 14-page slide deck with only the title slide and a slide defining DEI revealed for public scrutiny.

https://www.openthebooks.com/assets/1/6/1.23_DoDEA_Steering_Committee_Calendar_s_2_and_Slides.pdf [\[embed pdf\]](#)

Woodfork was identified as a likely DEI Steering Committee member because of her job title, and also because of a presentation she gave the DoDEA's 2021 Equity and Access Summit. Woodfork's presentation centered on her then-role as a principal at a DoDEA school, where she led "equity audits" on school materials and practices.

Vision ~~continued

"My name is _____, and I have been impacted by systemic discrimination in society, and am committed to the lifelong journey of dismantling my own bias(es). I strive to thrive in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion every day!"

We believe that race and culture exert a powerful influence on policies, practices and interactions in every aspect of DoDEA.

10th Step of The 12 Step Program:
"Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it."

dodea
EUROPE

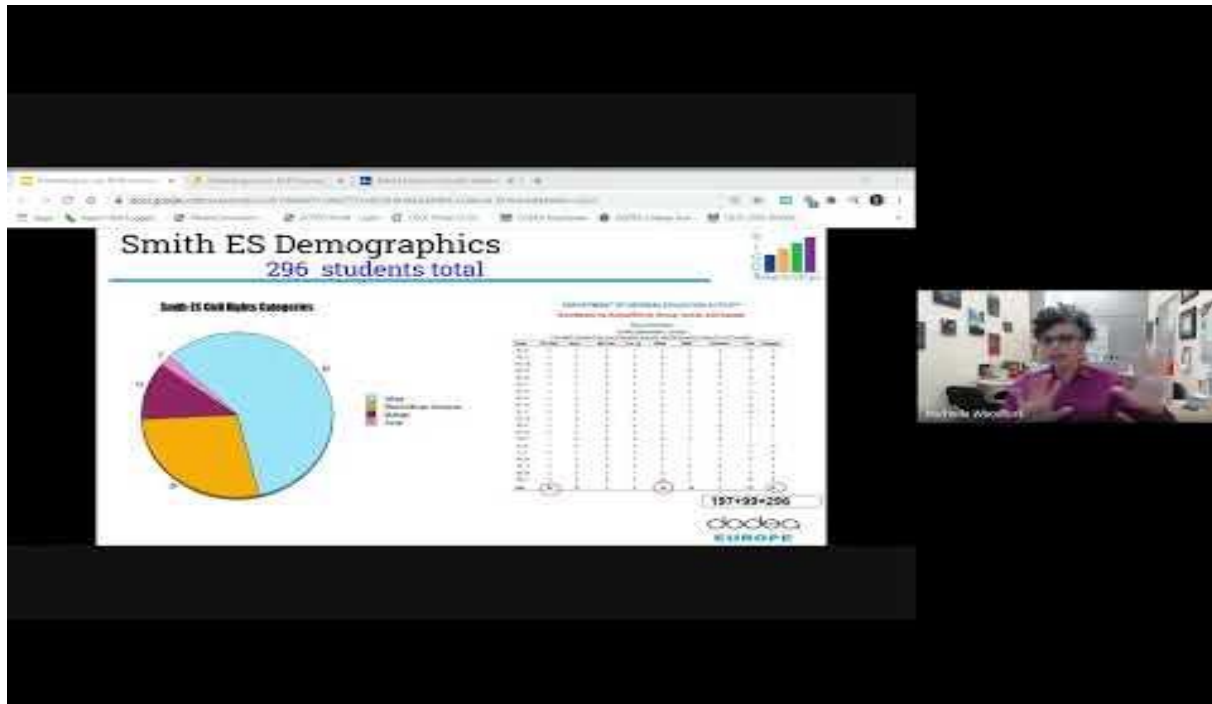
Slide from a Woodfork presentation obtained via whistleblower.

Key Quote:

Michelle Woodfork made her devotion to DoDEA's DEI initiatives abundantly clear in her presentation, saying at one point:

“When headquarters published their initiative for REDI [an earlier name for DEI at DoDEA] I got heart palpitations because it felt so affirming of the work I’ve been doing for so long.”

Watch her entire presentation [here](#).



Redactions

The heavy-handed nature of these redactions is indeed very unusual. OpenTheBooks.com collects tens of thousands of FOIA documents each year and has accessed the contents of emails and calendar invitations from other federal agencies without such obfuscations.

Auditors have appealed the calendar redactions to get more information on 1) who the DEI Steering Committee members are, 2) what they talk about when they meet, and 3) what impact the committee is meant to have on the whole agency.

But unraveling DoDEA’s culture of secrecy can take a long time. Case in point:

In September 2022 the Claremont Institute published a groundbreaking report on left wing extremism in DoDEA classrooms, called “[Grooming Future Revolutionaries](#).” The report was based on the agency’s 2021 Equity and Access Summit, which featured dozens of presentations from staffers like [Kelisa Wing](#) and [Michelle Woodfork](#) about what they were doing to make their schools more “woke.”

Days after “Grooming Future Revolutionaries” was published, all videos were taken down and are no longer accessible. OpenTheBooks.com submitted a FOIA request for the emails of the DoDEA IT

professional in charge of maintaining those videos to confirm they were taken down in response to the report's publication.

Our request was made in January 2023, and in March we were told the agency would not release the responsive document due to privacy concerns. We appealed this decision in April, and finally received the email in September: over nine months had passed since our initial inquiry.

The [email](#), of course, did confirm the videos had been taken down due to Claremont's reporting, although the name of the IT staffer remained redacted, even though his name was specified in our original FOIA ([Aaron Marsters](#)).

From: (b) (6), (b) (3) (B)
To: steve@claremont.org, iv.0541@doea.tn.gov
Subject: Equity and Access Summit Resources
Date: Saturday, September 17, 2022 10:00:00 AM

Steve,

FYSA: With the recent media attention related to DoDEA Equity and Access programs, this website article popped up from Sept 7th, 2022 "Grooming Future Revolutionaries" where content from the Equity and Access Summit was mined used in a negative light.

<https://dc.claremont.org/grooming-future-revolutionaries/>

I've taken down the Equity and Access website and related media for the time being. Let me know if you have any questions or require additional information or action on my behalf.

Respectfully,

(b) (6), (b) (3) (B)
Assistive Technology Specialist
Google for Education Certified Trainer
DoDEA Europe East
(b) (6), (b) (3) (B)

[Book an AT consult, collaboration or training](#)
[Send me a chat message](#)
[Read the latest EU East AT Update](#)
[Visit the EU East AT Lending Library](#)
[Visit the DoDEA AT Website](#)
[Visit the EU East Special Education Website](#)

An appeal on another DoDEA FOIA redaction, sent in March 2023, is still pending.

Tried-and-trusted methods under the Freedom of Information Act are not sufficient for the public and the press to scrutinize the current climate of DoDEA. Policymakers must compel this agency to be more forthcoming.

Spending

Along with the new, secretive institutionalization of DEI at DoDEA, the agency is still spending millions of dollars to promote DEI-ideology to the children in its care through contractors.

OpenTheBooks.com auditors uncovered some of these tools through DoDEA's 2021 Equity and Access summit.

Civilian parents should be paying attention to these contractors as well: These tools are used in school districts across the country.

Discovery Education:

[Discovery Education](#) , a subsidiary of Discovery, provides content to schools through online curriculums, activities, and video streaming.

During the Equity and Access Summit DoDEA educators recommended a DE [channel](#) called "Dissent, Equity, and Inspiring Change," which is intended to "help educators facilitate classroom conversations and much-needed discussions about implicit bias and systemic racism, human rights, equity, social justice, dissent, protest, and empathy."



Channel

Search



Dissent, Equity, and Inspiring Change

Recent senseless deaths of people of color at the hands of government authorities have caused waves of nationwide protest and civil unrest, and demands to end institutional racism. Many protesters desire a society that is more tolerant and inclusive for all. Racism, intolerance, and effective forms of protest have been rooted in societies around the world for decades. From the patriots of the American Revolution to those seeking social justice today, groups throughout history have raised the banner of protest. The resources in this channel help educators facilitate classroom conversations and much-needed discussions about implicit bias and systemic racism, human rights, equity, social justice, dissent, protest, and empathy. By listening to the voices of changemakers and rights defenders, examining how the Constitution supports rights and equity, and revealing the power of radical empathy, these curated resources help students see how one single voice can change a nation and the world for the better.

K-5

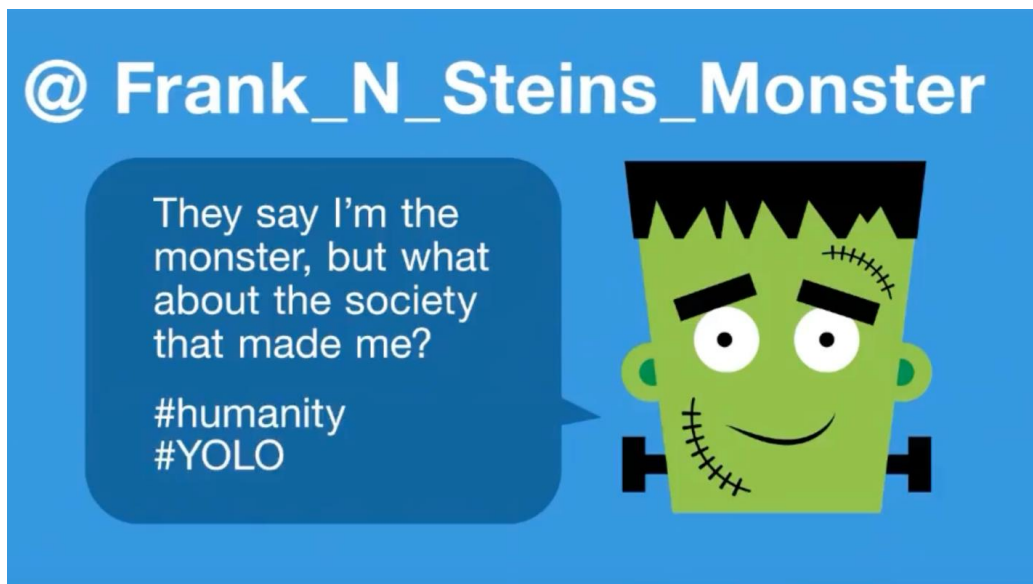
6-8

9-12

Educator



Access to DE is only available via school login credentials, but one DoDEA presenter gave a closer look into their content: [tweeting for social change](#).



Screenshot from Discovery Education video played during Equity and Access conference presentation, "HUMAN beings having a Collective Digital Learning Experience. Are we connected? How are we DOing? PART 1" (see full presentation [here](#)).

To get a greater sense of what the channels might offer, parents can view other DE-sponsored projects for teachers that are available online for free.

"[Ready, Set, RISE](#)" is a collaborative project between DE, health insurer Kaiser Permanente, and nonprofit Alliance for a Healthier Generation. The program provides no-cost resources to "improve the social-emotional health of educators and students."

The content is couched in radical left-wing language and explicitly encourages educators to take on an activist stance to dismantle systems of "power" and "privilege."

One [video](#) demonstrates:

"We need to hold our institutions accountable for their actions, processes, structures, and how rules are made and enforced. Yes, these are usually uncomfortable, but doable. This can look like...refusing to teach white-washed curriculum, and instead teaching diverse histories and literatures throughout the year, with a focus on social justice, rather than heroes, holidays, and celebrations."

If this is what DE produces for everyone to access, it would be interesting to see what is behind the paywall.

From 2019 through 2023 the federal government has awarded Discovery Education \$5,430,603 in contracts, with \$2,410,603 from DoDEA for product licenses.

Department of Justice's Drug Enforcement Agency accounts for the rest: \$3,020,000.

FEDERAL CONTRACT SPENDING FOR DISCOVERY EDUCATION

2019-2023

NAME	SUM OF AMOUNT
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE	\$2,410,603
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE	\$3,020,000
GRAND TOTAL	\$5,430,603

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Federal contract spending for Discovery Education from 2019-2023

Since 2020, DE received an additional \$699,661 in direct payments from the Federal Communications Commission to "to provide financial assistance for remote learning."

And DE is seeking to suck up even more taxpayer dollars; their [website](#) prominently features a support line for schools across America to use COVID relief funding on their products.

AVID Center:

The Advancement Via Individual Determinism (AVID) tutoring company is a major part of DoDEA life. Schools have "AVID teachers" and "AVID coordinators" and DoDEA headquarters has "AVID Instructional Systems Specialists." But DoDEA is just a drop in the bucket for AVID, which is in more than 8,000 schools serving more than two million students.

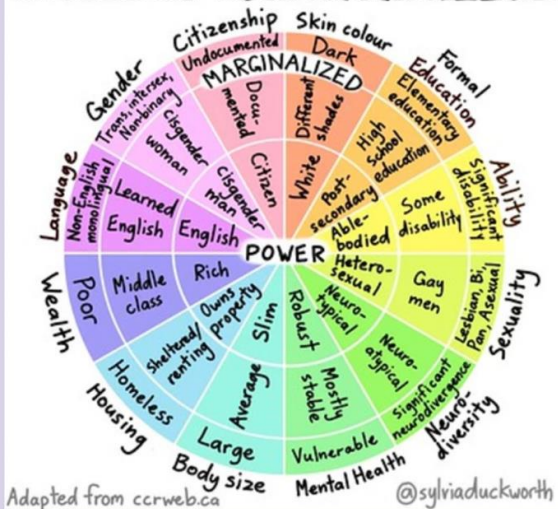
The organization was originally intended to give extra help to kids falling behind in their studies and provide counseling for college and careers. Today they have incorporated "[Equity](#)" principles into their programming, sending a message in solidarity with Black Lives Matter and [encouraging](#) teachers to "challenge our beliefs, examine our own biases, and reflect on how we need to evaluate the structures and systems in our classrooms."

TERM: **Privilege**

Defined: the advantage, benefit, or special right available to only particular individuals or groups.

In a social context, privilege represents a contrast in differing levels of opportunity, benefit, or power for individuals or groups, such as those separated by social class, race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation.

WHEEL OF POWER/PRIVILEGE



Slide defining the word *privilege* from *Equity and Access* summit presentation "REDI to Learn? Building a Common Language" by a DoDEA AVID instructor. The definition can also be found in [materials provided](#) during the presentation. Watch the full presentation [here](#).

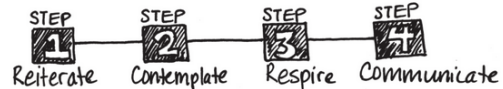
But teachers aren't the only ones being asked to get involved in structural change on behalf of "equity." As noted in "Grooming Future Revolutionaries," a DoDEA headquarters AVID specialist recommended teachers use the "Let's Talk!" handbook developed by the Southern Poverty Law Center to force "critical conversations" about race, identity, and "privilege" onto young students.

Resource Tour-Tools for Sometimes Difficult Conversations

LET'S TALK STRATEGY HIGHLIGHTS

- **FIND COMFORT IN DISCOMFORT**
Practice makes...it, well, easier
- **BE VULNERABLE**
 - What will a discussion about race potentially expose about me?
 - Prepare by identifying strengths to help lead open and honest dialogue
- **ADDRESS STRONG EMOTIONS**
 - Some will react passively, show sorrow or express anger. Some may push back against discussing these topics. Acknowledge the difficulty and assess readiness as conversations continue
- **FACILITATE SELF REGULATION**
 - **REITERATE**-Reiterate what you heard
 - **CONTEMPLATE**-Count to 10 before responding
 - **RESPIRE**-literally take a breath to check in with yourself
 - **COMMUNICATE**-speak with compassion and thoughtfulness

[Learning for Justice: Let's Talk](#)



Slide from DoDEA Equity and Access presentation "'REDI:' First Steps for Leaders: Let's Talk!" by co-presented by AVID Instructional Systems Specialist for DoDEA Europe. [Slide first published in Grooming Future Revolutionaries]. Watch the presentation [here](#).

From the handbook:

"So, what is a critical conversation? For the purpose of this guide, it's any discussion about the ways that injustice affects our lives and our society. It's a conversation that explores the relationships between identity and power, that traces the structures that privilege some at the expense of others, that helps students think through the actions they can take to create a more just, more equitable, world."

The handbook goes on to say teachers should expect "strong emotions," during these discussions [including](#) "crying" and "explicit confrontations." But that these reactions should not deter them from keeping the "critical conversations" going.

Three federal agencies have contracted with AVID since 2019: DoDEA, the Air Force, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which also runs schools. Total spending on these contracts until August 2023 is \$1,981,659, with the lion's share, \$1,913,073, from DoDEA.

FEDERAL CONTRACT SPENDING ON AVID

2019-2023

NAME	SUM OF AMOUNT
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EDUCATION ACTIVITY	\$1,913,073
BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS & BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION	\$54,986
DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE	\$13,600
GRAND TOTAL	\$1,981,659

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AVID also received a Small Business Administration loan for COVID-19 disruptions: \$8,015,638.

MAY 8, 2021

#FindingOurVoiceJustice4ALL

Our words matter. Our beliefs matter. Our actions matter—most of all. ...we have the opportunity and the moral responsibility to examine the inequities that exist in schools and to challenge, support, and celebrate educators as they remove barriers, insist on rigor, and open opportunities for all students...

PRESENTED BY
MILICENT DODD
& CARIANN WRENCHY

AVID Solidarity with BLM Statement.

READ & REFLECT: TEXTS & ARTICLES

TOOL BOX



NOTE: These were selected as resources for adult educators; please consider appropriateness and readiness before using as a resource for students.

1. [LET'S TALK! DISCUSSING RACE, RACISM, AND OTHER DIFFICULT TOPICS WITH STUDENTS](#)
A Teaching Tolerance Guide source: Southern Poverty Law Center
(Best to download this document as a PDF; it does not retain formatting if opened in Google Docs)
2. [20 YEARS LATER, BEVERLY DANIEL TATUM ASKS AGAIN: 'WHY ARE ALL THE BLACK KIDS SITTING TOGETHER IN THE CAFETERIA?'](#)
source: Tom Weber and MPR News Staff December 28, 2017
3. [BLOG: ENGAGING STUDENTS IN CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE WITH LARRY FERRAZZO](#)
source: EdWeek Blog, Teacher & Author, Larry Ferazzo
4. [MOVING BEYOND DIVERSITY TOWARD RACIAL EQUITY](#)
(source: Ben Hecht, Harvard Business Review)

Slides from the "#FindingOurVoiceJustice4ALL" Equity and Access presentation, by an AVID instructor and a social studies specialist, showing the organization's statement in "solidarity with Black Lives Matter." AVID has declared "examining" and "challenging" "inequities" is a "moral responsibility." Another slide again recommends the "Let's Talk!" handbook. Watch the presentation [here](#).

Schoology

Schoology was briefly mentioned in an Equity and Access Summit talk called “Ally 101.” During this presentation two DoDEA teachers gave advice on how colleagues can discuss gender and sexuality topics with students of “all ages.” Rota Middle School teacher Genevieve Chavez [said](#) “You can talk about LGBTQ+ things in elementary school, it’s actually the ideal time,” continuing:

“Kids as young as 4 years old are already starting to develop a stable understanding of their gender identity. So elementary school is the perfect time because you can really show students the diversity of gender expression and gender activity.”

The slide features a blue header with the text "Equity and Access Summit" and "Ally 101- Creating an Inclusive Classroom for LGBTQ+ Students". Below the header, there are two columns of text listing speakers and a central graphic of a rainbow flag with text. The DODEA EUROPE logo is in the bottom right corner.

Lindsey Bagnaschi (she/her) Drama/ELA GSA Sponsor Stuttgart, Germany	Genevieve Chavez (she/her) ELA/Humanities GSA Sponsor Rota, Spain	
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dodea
EUROPE

Introductory slide from Equity and Access summit presentation “Ally 101.” The purple flag color includes the text “all ages.”

At the very end of this talk, Chavez [tells](#) participants about LGBT online chatrooms on Schoology. There’s a chatroom for teachers, and another for students. Teachers can add students to the chatroom, which is closed off to parents.

Watch the entire presentation [here](#).

DoDEA Policy

- Memorandum from Oct 2016 that "serves both as a reminder and affirmation of the Department's policy on discrimination based on gender identity and the accommodations that will be afforded to transgender youth and students in Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) Schools and youth programs conducted by DoDEA and the Military Departments."
- "To be clear, transgender youths in DoDEA schools and other DoD youth programs are permitted to use restrooms and facilities consistent with their gender identity."
- "...allow transgender students to participate in activities, and access restroom, locker and such facilities, consistent with their gender identity."
- "...prohibits sex discrimination [discrimination based on gender identity is a form of sex discrimination] in educational programs, activities and facilities [including] restrooms, locker rooms, athletics, single-sex class, single-sex schools, social fraternities and sororities, housing and overnight accommodations, among others."

A subsidiary of PowerSchool, Schoology's [website](#) says it is the "leading k-12 learning management system with over 20M users and 7M students globally in over 60,000 schools." While the software seems intended to help teachers manage their assignments and curriculum, DoDEA is also apparently using it to facilitate secret conversations among students and teachers about sexuality and gender.

Between 2019 and 2023 Schoology and PowerSchool have received \$1,487,296 in federal contracts from DoDEA.

**ALL FEDERAL SPENDING ON
SCHOOLY AND POWERSCHOOL
2019-2023**

NAME	SUM OF AMOUNT
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EDUCATION ACTIVITY	\$1,487,296
DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY	\$976,821
U.S. COAST GUARD	\$444,400
BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS AND BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION	\$61,612
MARITIME ADMINISTRATION	\$46,336
GRAND TOTAL	\$3,016,464

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Conclusion

In December 2024 the National Defense Authorization Act was signed into law by President Joe Biden. The law contains a [new "rights"](#) for the parents of children attending DoDEA schools, authored by Representative Elise Stefanik (NY-21) which will go into effect in two years. The rights include, [among](#) other items:

- The right to review the curriculum of the school
- The right to review all instructional materials used by their students

While these measures are certainly progress for military families, much can still be obfuscated. Teacher training, such as the Equity and Access Summit, should be included as well. And it is not clear if the full spectrum of tools included in Schoology, such as the secret LGBT chatrooms, would be disclosed as “instructional materials.” Moreover, if extremist materials are disclosed, there does not seem to be a recourse for opting children out of these lessons.

Millions of dollars are currently going to groups promoting left-wing extremism in DoDEA and around the country, the nature of which DoDEA has proactively attempted to hide by deleting public access to links, driving DEI infrastructure underground, and liberally redacting the most basic Freedom of Information Act requests.

DoDEA’s focus on DEI, Thomas Brady said, is compelled by President Biden’s 2021 [Executive Order 14035](#), which among other items charges all agencies with “assessing the current state of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility within their workforces.” But even before EO 14035, Brady strived to inculcate DEI ideology at the agency, announcing in June 2020 that DEI must be “embedded in everything we do.”

It is clear then that DoDEA did not dismantle its DEI efforts, it’s redoubling them, and it is leveraging public record laws to the hilt to prevent the public from knowing details of its efforts while spending millions on objectionable content for school children.

Given DoDEA’s recent history and press regarding extremist content in schools, far more transparency is needed for parents, policymakers, and taxpayers.

Further Transparency and Spending Findings from DoDEA

DoDEA Pay Reporting

For another example of the agency’s lack of transparency, DoDEA does not disclose salaries of all individual employees, unlike almost every other federal agency (available to search on [OpenTheBooks.com](#)).

DoDEA spends about \$3 billion a year to education 66,000 children of America’s military personnel in their k-12 system.

As [OpenTheBooks.com](#) auditors discovered via FOIA request, \$1.362 billion of that spending went towards payroll alone. The agency was unable to provide more granular data.

2022 PAYROLL COST BY EXPENDITURE

NAME	SUM OF AMOUNT
BASE PAY	\$834,476,413
BENEFITS	\$307,166,046
CASH AWARDS	\$15,745,390
COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENT	\$61,189,296
EXTRA DUTY	\$13,858,157
HOLIDAY	\$741,677
LIVING QUARTERS ALLOWANCE	\$121,645,710
OVERTIME	\$865,855
SUNDAY PAY	\$312,963
OTHER	\$2,819,535
SUPPLEMENTAL PAYMENTS	\$3,743,339
GRAND TOTAL	\$1,362,564,380

Payroll cost provided by DoDEA via FOIA

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Kelisa Wing's New Position and Likely Departure from DoDEA

As DoDEA officials noted when the DEI department was dissolved in March 2023, Kelisa Wing was not dismissed from the agency, but rather given a new role. Auditors at OpenTheBooks.com [discovered](#) this new position was called "assessment branch chief," where she was charged with the "tracking of outcomes of the system-wide assessment system" for student learning. Her pay stayed the same as her DEI Chief role, at \$141,192. However, it appears as though she did leave the agency in 2023, as her DoDEA email no longer works and the agency was [seeking to hire](#) a new Assessment Branch Chief in August.

Auditors also checked for Steering Committee events on Kelisa Wing's calendar, but those turned up empty.

We reached out to Kelisa Wing for comment on her status as a DoDEA employee and have not received a response.

Additional Reading

[Grooming Future Revolutionaries](#) | The Claremont Institute Center for the American Way of Life | September 2022

[Letter to Secretary Lloyd Austin](#) | Rep. Elise Stefanik, Rep. C Scott Franklin, et al. | September 2022

[Kids Must Cry](#) | The American Mind | September 2022

[Pentagon equity chief praises book calling 9/11 first responders 'menaces' as she pushes for 'revolution'](#) | Fox News | October 2022

[DOD is Forging A Woke K-12 Army With Race And Sex Indoctrination In Military Schools](#) | The Federalist | October 2022

[Biden's Pentagon stuffing Stacey Abrams' conspiracy theories and 'anti-historical' history into k-12 schools](#) | Fox News | November 2022

[Pentagon drags out decision after probe into 'woke' diversity chief accused of anti-White people tweets](#) | Fox News | November 2022

[DoDEA sources speak out about woke 'Marxist' indoctrination: 'I'm not a...sexual realignment engineer'](#) | Fox News | January 2023

[DoD schools diversity chief responds to 'racism' claims](#) | Military Times | February 2023

[Military Stonewalls Investigation Into Controversial Diversity Official Leading K-12 Schools](#) | OpenTheBooks.com | March 2023

[Military Personnel Subcommittee Hearing: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Impacts to the Department of Defense and the Armed Services](#) | House Armed Services Committee | March 2023

[Stefanik Announces Removal of Woke Officer from Military Children's Schools](#) | Elise Stefanik | March 2023

[Pentagon disbands DEI unit after chief accused of 'racism' against Whites, injects agenda deeper into agency](#) | Fox News | March 2023