

Strategies to Gain Access to Social and Emotional Learning Frameworks in Public Schools

Checkmate on Secrecy
Winning Transparency for Our Children



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**“The best defense is a strong offense.
Document everything. Request everything.
Demand citations for every denial.”**

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Parents on the Level | parentsonthelevel.com



Introduction

Educators often emphasize access and equity, yet parents frequently face barriers when requesting to review SEL content. This guide outlines proven strategies to overcome common obstacles.

Parents on the Level is laser focused on protecting the family worldview. SEL concepts should be fully understood by parents, especially since the contents therein may be highly controversial and/or ideological with goals of transforming a child's worldview. Local participation is required to protect your children because, honestly, there is no cruise control for education.

A. Understanding and Overcoming Access Barriers

Parents with enrolled children generally have the strongest rights to review curricula and materials in public schools. In most states, you can request immediate access to programs, frameworks, and data related to your child.

For non-parents (and additional depth for parents), use public records requests (see Section B).

Common Excuses Used by K-12 Administrators to Limit or Prevent Parental Review of SEL Curriculum

Administrators frequently use the following tactics:

1 Minimizing the Materials: Downplaying content as “just resources,” “suggestions for independent reading,” or “we don’t teach that.”

2 Offering Partial or Misleading Access: Providing only scope and sequence documents or curated “demo” lessons.

3 Denial Based on Classification or Adoption Status: Claiming materials are “not curriculum,” mental health resources, “trade secrets,” or controlled by third-party vendors.

4 Procedural and Logistical Barriers: Huge volume, restricted gating, supervised review only during school hours, and denying access to non-parents.

5 Access and Technical Obstacles: Claims that access codes “must be created” or vendor licensing restrictions.

6 Legal and Policy Excuses: Misuse of FERPA, copyright, or licensing threats.

7 Stalling and Time-Wasting Tactics: Delaying responses in order to let the vendor contract or license expire, then claiming they are “not renewing” so there is nothing left to review.

8 Soft Reassurances Without Accountability: Vague verbal promises never put in writing.

9 Escalation and Intimidation: Heavy use of jargon and threats of legal action.

Strategic Approach: Request Standard Curriculum First

Many parents have found it extremely effective to first request access to regular curriculum materials (such as sex education) before requesting SEL or mental health materials. This demonstrates that the district is fully capable of providing easy digital access and allowing screenshots when they choose to cooperate.

The Ultimate Goal: Home Access for mental health instruction materials just like academic with access codes for the full curricula and professional development models.

Demand full access codes so you can review every module, video, assignment, and survey privately at home.



B. Create a Public Record at Every Step – And Leverage Open Records Requests

Always follow verbal conversations with a written “sugar sandwich” email recap.

Public Records Requests

Request full curricula, videos, modules, contracts, training materials, data policies, MTSS documents, emails, and grants.

Sample Language:

“Please provide all records related to [Program Name], including student-facing materials, vendor contracts, and data policies from [date range]. This request is made under [your state’s public records law].”

Demand specific legal citations for any denial.

Helpful Tool: Scribed (scribed.com)

Scribed is a useful platform many parents use to locate and review curriculum content, frameworks, and materials that may not be readily provided by the school or district.

Strategic Tip: Use Records Requests to Test Honesty and Transparency

When you already have leads or know what the district has purchased, consider submitting a public records request specifically about that information. This can serve as a test of the district’s honesty and transparency. If they deny the existence of materials you know exist or give incomplete answers, it creates a strong written record of bad faith.

C. Leverage Public Financial Records and Archives

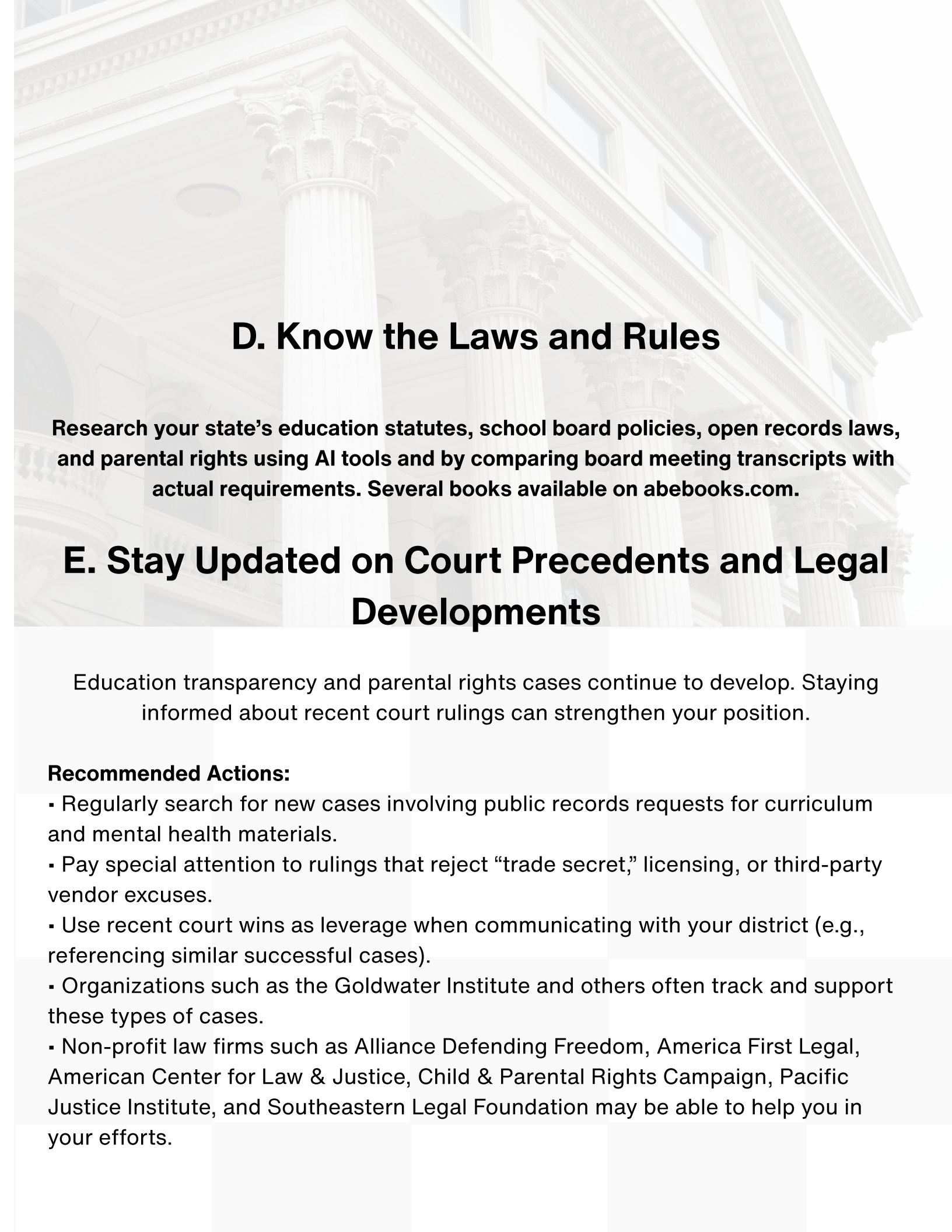
Monitor how these programs are funded using public transparency tools:

- **OpenTheBooks.com**
- State-specific portals (example: open.ga.gov)
- Search “[Your State] open checkbook” or “[Your State] government transparency”

Archive Everything

Use Archive.org (Wayback Machine), archive.is, and Perma.cc to preserve important pages, budgets, and contracts. When you find key information, immediately archive it yourself so the evidence remains even if the original site is later edited or removed.





D. Know the Laws and Rules

Research your state's education statutes, school board policies, open records laws, and parental rights using AI tools and by comparing board meeting transcripts with actual requirements. Several books available on abebooks.com.

E. Stay Updated on Court Precedents and Legal Developments

Education transparency and parental rights cases continue to develop. Staying informed about recent court rulings can strengthen your position.

Recommended Actions:

- Regularly search for new cases involving public records requests for curriculum and mental health materials.
- Pay special attention to rulings that reject “trade secret,” licensing, or third-party vendor excuses.
- Use recent court wins as leverage when communicating with your district (e.g., referencing similar successful cases).
- Organizations such as the Goldwater Institute and others often track and support these types of cases.
- Non-profit law firms such as Alliance Defending Freedom, America First Legal, American Center for Law & Justice, Child & Parental Rights Campaign, Pacific Justice Institute, and Southeastern Legal Foundation may be able to help you in your efforts.

F. Recognize Trojan Elements: Mental Health Frameworks vs. Core Curriculum (MTSS)

SEL is frequently delivered through MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports), which often bypasses normal curriculum adoption and parental review processes.

MTSS Tiers:

- Tier 1: Universal (~75-90% of students)
- Tier 2: Targeted (~10-25% of students)
- Tier 3: Intensive (<10% of students)

All students are subjected to mental health evaluations in the American School system.

Key Red Flags:

- Scoring of student dispositions and personal/family data collection
- Ideological content (social justice, gender identity) framed as mental health
- Limited opt-out options
- Delivery by counselors and teachers throughout the day
- Peer-to-peer counseling with no opt-out

Action Steps:

- Ask whether the SEL program is classified as curriculum or as a mental health intervention under MTSS. There are probably several different ones in your school district.
- By open record, request to see all expenditures for The American School Counselor Association for the past six years and identify all counselors that are members. Be sure to see this Rumble Channel for exposé: The American School Counselor Association. Review social media accounts of your administrators and counseling department for your own discoveries.
- Consider opt out forms on our website to file in the event you have to take your district to court. Remember, opt outs provide little to no protection in the American School System. They simply provide legal standing tools for court cases. Peer to peer teaching and social media bring great influence - do not rely on opt outs to protect their heart and mind.

G. Question Credentials and Qualifications in SEL/MTSS

Many SEL and MTSS programs involve emotional, behavioral, and mental health interventions with children. However, the staff delivering these programs often lack traditional clinical credentials and many align with the “ethics” of the American School Counselor Association. Be sure to go to their website to evaluate their theories.

Parents should investigate and ask:

- What are the specific professional licenses and credentials of the people delivering SEL/MTSS interventions and assessments?
- Are they licensed psychologists, licensed clinical social workers (LCSW), licensed professional counselors (LPC), or licensed marriage and family therapists?
- What formal training have they received in clinical mental health assessment, diagnosis, or intervention?
- Who provides clinical supervision and oversight for these programs?
- Are universal screeners and tiered interventions being conducted by staff who may be operating outside the scope of their actual licensure or training?
- What does a universal screener involve? What company is used and where is this extremely personal data on my child and family going?
- Do ASCA* counselors and their ethics comport with my family beliefs and goals?
- Do you want your child rated in terms of cultural competence?
- Who’s values are used to determine competence in cultural issues?

***American School Counselor Association**

Important Context:

Framing these programs as “Social and Emotional Learning,” “behavioral support,” or “MTSS interventions” rather than clinical mental health services can sometimes allow districts to use staff with significantly lower qualifications than would normally be required for actual mental health treatment. Document the credentials (or lack thereof) of the staff involved.

Why a Private Facebook Group?

- Safety and trust: Once parents start sharing real documents, screenshots, personal experiences with their own children, or sensitive strategies, they need a protected space.
- Operational security: Private groups reduce the risk of school administrators, district staff, or opponents monitoring your conversations and documents in real time.
- Deeper coordination: This is where you can actually organize, divide tasks, discuss next steps, share full documents, and have honest conversations without fear of backlash or doxxing.
- Reduced noise: Public groups often get flooded with casual observers, trolls, or people who aren't serious. The private group stays focused and productive.

Why Both (The Real Strategic Logic)

This is a classic funnel + protection model used by many effective parent advocacy groups:

Public group = Front door / Awareness layer

→ Attracts people, builds visibility, and grows the movement.

Private group = Inner circle / Action layer

→ Serious, committed parents move here for real work and secure sharing.

Most people who join the public group won't be ready (or safe) for the private one.

Having both lets you:

Cast a wide net publicly

Protect sensitive information and serious coordination privately

Create a natural progression for engaged parents

It's the same reason many successful movements and organizations run both a public-facing presence and a private working group.

Next Steps Checklist

- Submit written requests and document everything
- File public records requests (including to test honesty/transparency when you have leads)
- Use tools like Scribed to locate curriculum content, Parents on the Level channel on Rumble
- Understand the role of the American School Counselor Association- see Rumble channel
- Watch videos about SEL: Parents on the Level
- Check state checkbooks and financial transparency sites
- Archive important pages on Archive.org and similar tools
- Require cited legal codes for any denial
- Review all materials thoroughly
- Investigate staff credentials in SEL/MTSS programs
- Build one public and one private Facebook group for local parents
- Share findings responsibly
- Connect with advocacy organizations
- Be sure to read Rev 2 of this document on parentsonthelevel.com for more insights, too!

Final Tip:

Don't give up. Document everything. Tell your story.

Your story may help protect other children.

All my best,

**Marsha Metzger
Parents on the Level**