Dear Editor,

I am deeply invested in the education of our youth, and I am very disappointed that children in our community are learning so little about American slavery and the role it has played in shaping our society.

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Teaching Tolerance project, only 8 percent of high school seniors graduate knowing that slavery was a central cause of the Civil War. If slavery is mentioned at all in elementary schools, it is often in the form of “feel-good” stories, with little emphasis on the harsh realities of slavery, the lived experiences of enslaved people or the lasting impact of slavery, including racial disparities in wealth, education and mass incarceration.

What’s more, textbooks and state standards present an incomplete picture of American slavery and do not offer enough support for educators to teach it more thoroughly. This must change. The superintendent and principals of our school district must begin to make teaching this hard history a priority.

Teaching Tolerance has created a collection of resources, including two frameworks for teaching American slavery – one for elementary students and another for grades 6-12 – that teachers and curriculum designers everywhere can adopt. It is time for the people in charge of our area’s educational system to engage with these frameworks, prioritize this crucial education, and provide teachers with the support and encouragement they need to deliver these important lessons to our students.

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME, CITY]