

Subject: Back-to-School Message: Addressing Antisemitism & Supporting Jewish Students

Dear Superintendents and Principals,

As the school year begins, we want to ensure your awareness of the unique challenges Jewish students and families are facing in today's climate. Since the October 7, 2023, Hamas attacks on Israel, antisemitic incidents in the United States have risen dramatically, particularly at schools and on university campuses.

Jewish students, like all students, deserve to learn in an environment where they feel safe, respected, and fully included. Such inclusion involves both ensuring positive and accurate portrayals of the Jewish community, history and experiences, as well as a commitment to safeguarding your school from antisemitism.

We are here to partner with you to ensure you have the resources necessary to identify appropriate content for classrooms and trainings on antisemitism and Jewish communities. We are also here to help ensure you can identify antisemitism and act against it, and that faculty and students have the support and resources they need to address antisemitism when incidents occur. It is important to ensure full student inclusion in the school community even in schools with larger Jewish populations, just as it is important in schools that do not have many, or any, Jewish students.

Unfortunately, antisemitism is not limited to bullying between students. It can also be promoted in lesson plans picked up intentionally or inadvertently by teachers, and in messages broadcast about the war between Israel and Hamas. School systems and districts must ensure that curricula are free from antisemitism and do not promote bias against Israel or Zionism. Educators should refrain from taking sides in this geopolitical conflict, as doing so can create tension and carry both ethical and legal consequences. Criticism of Israel - as of any country - may be contextually appropriate in some circumstances, but becomes antisemitic when it denies the Jewish people a right to self-determination by calling for the annihilation of the Jewish state; endorses violence against Jewish people; applies double standards to Israeli behavior not considered for other comparable situations; or blames Jewish people for the actions of the Israeli government. Political advocacy should not be forced on students. Teachers have a professional responsibility to neither tolerate nor engage in antisemitic behavior, including hostility toward Israel or Zionist beliefs. Jewish history and culture should also be taught in a way that is accurate and holistic, free of antisemitic tropes.



Some of your students may have family members or friends directly impacted by the conflict. We recommend that you recognize that the experience of Jewish history is one of intergenerational trauma, which is compounded by recent war, violence, and increased global antisemitism. We encourage you to utilize appropriate protocol for potential trauma responses:

- **Make counselors available** to any students who may be affected.
- **Monitor classroom discussions** about the current situation and encourage the use of reliable sources. Misinformation on social media, combined with longstanding antisemitic stereotypes, puts our youth at greater risk for bullying.
- **Be mindful of graphic content** that students may be exposed to on platforms such as TikTok, which often portray atrocities in great detail.

Action Steps for Schools

To protect students and foster a culture of respect, we encourage you to:

1. **Publish clear guidelines** stating that antisemitism will not be tolerated. Outline procedures for reporting antisemitism and other hate speech, and provide resources for students and parents who are targets of such behavior.
2. **Enhance or implement security protocols** to prevent bullying, physical attacks, and other threatening behaviors.
3. **Provide mandatory training** for teachers to recognize antisemitism, understand Jewish students' concerns and sensibilities, and respond appropriately to reports of suspected hate speech or actions.
4. **Ensure accountability** so teachers and students who engage in such acts face clear consequences.
5. **Introduce inclusive curricula** that promote tolerance and understanding, respect diversity, and provide age-appropriate instruction in critical thinking about complex topics. Remove and do not introduce curricula that demonize Israel or Jews.
6. **Enhance Holocaust and antisemitism instruction** to deepen students' historical understanding and awareness of modern antisemitism.

Resource: [How to Identify & Report Antisemitism](#)

This resource offers practical tools to help identify antisemitism and clear instructions for monitoring and reporting incidents to support a safe and inclusive school community.

Jewish Holiday Calendar (2025–2029)



We know many districts plan school calendars years in advance. [Here is a list of major Jewish holidays](#) for the next five school years, including when observant students may be absent. Jewish families may observe these holidays differently, and so some students may have a religious obligation to be absent while others do not believe such absence is necessary. Schools should ensure understanding of this variability in Jewish observance. For holidays that begin at sundown, some students may need to leave school early the preceding day. Major school events, such as meet the teacher night, Homecoming, Prom, and cultural nights should not be scheduled on these days.

Ongoing Support & Resources

This year, we will provide tailored resources for schools ahead of each major Jewish holiday. These will include cultural and historical background, classroom inclusion tips, and suggestions for celebrating diversity while ensuring Jewish students feel welcome and respected.

We encourage you to utilize the Jewish Federation as a community resource to help you to identify culturally appropriate curricula and resources relevant to the Jewish community. Should antisemitic incidents occur in your school, we are also available as a resource to ensure appropriate and effective solutions.

Please let us know how we can be a resource to you, faculty and staff, and of course, students. We look forward to partnering with you to make this a safe, respectful, and enriching year for all students.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Title / Organization]

[Contact Information]

