



AJC Action Plan for Confronting Antisemitism in Schools

A Toolkit for Public School Administrators



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Public schools are anchors of our communities. They create opportunities for students to learn about multiple cultural narratives and celebrate diverse perspectives and values. In addition to ensuring the safety and well-being of Jewish students, faculty, and staff, they have a unique and pivotal role to play in confronting antisemitism and educating students and community members about the Jewish community.

To that end, American Jewish Committee (AJC) has developed a concise action plan that outlines immediate, near-term, and long-term actions to enhance the environment within public school systems. Our strategy is designed to align seamlessly with the [U.S. National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism](#)¹, which presents a comprehensive set of actions to counter antisemitism and uphold the integrity of our shared institutions, including primary and secondary schools. AJC has also designed a [Guide for Administrators of U.S. Public Schools](#)² to assist them in implementing the National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism. AJC's team of experts is available to collaborate with public school administrators in cultivating an environment that is resilient against the rising tide of antisemitism.

By implementing these recommendations, public schools can take significant steps toward countering antisemitism, promoting understanding, and fostering a more inclusive and respectful educational environment. We look forward to working alongside you in this crucial endeavor.

¹ www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/U.S.-National-Strategy-to-Counter-Antisemitism.pdf

² [AJC.org/educationguide/publicschools](https://ajc.org/educationguide/publicschools)

What schools can do right now:

Host antisemitism education programs. Given that antisemitism is not well understood by many Americans, education on antisemitism is crucial to fostering an environment with zero tolerance for anti-Jewish hate. It is also crucial for reassuring Jewish families in the school community that the school sees them in this moment and is prioritizing their safety and well-being. Organize educational programs on antisemitism for the school community, as well as age-appropriate student programming for primary and secondary schools. Use resources like [AJC's Translate Hate glossary](#)³, which helps identify different sources of antisemitism and exposes antisemitic tropes, words, and symbols that often hide in plain sight.

Convene mandatory antisemitism training for school administration and faculty. Implement mandatory antisemitism education programs for school administrators, grade deans, and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) professionals. Antisemitism shares commonalities with other forms of hate but also exhibits distinct manifestations. A comprehensive understanding of antisemitism among school leadership is vital for effectively addressing this issue. Our experts who specialize in educational spaces can provide this training for you.

Incorporate Jews and antisemitism into DEI philosophy. If your school has a DEI department, ensure that Jews are equally included with other minority groups that the school actively seeks to support and that antisemitism is equally included among the hatreds that the school actively combats. AJC offers a [Guide to Jewish Religion and Culture](#)⁴ to help schools plan around Jewish holidays and become better acquainted with key Jewish cultural practices.

Prioritize campus physical security. Ensure that campus security policies thoroughly address and deter antisemitic incidents. The war that started in October 2023 between Israel and Hamas has resulted in threats to Jews around the world, especially in educational settings. Review security plans and procedures to ensure they address the potential for antisemitic activity and remain in contact with local law enforcement to understand potential catalysts.

Establish and publicize a system to report antisemitism within the school. Antisemitism is significantly underreported in the United States, including in school settings. Jewish students often hesitate to report antisemitic incidents, as they may believe that their experiences are

not “bad enough” compared to other forms of oppression faced by their peers. Your school must have a clearly outlined mechanism for reporting antisemitic incidents. One option is designating an educator, administrator, or advisor as a point person or resource for students if they experience antisemitism in the school setting. Take care to ensure that the responsible adult is someone who students will feel comfortable speaking to about antisemitism. Another option is a portal on the school website or an independent website such as [EthicsPoint](#)⁵, through which members of a school can anonymously report discrimination, harassment, or hate speech violations. Schools should clearly outline the process for reviewing and adjudicating antisemitic incidents each year. Schools should also provide transparency to any affected students about how incidents will be investigated and addressed.

Review and publicize key school policies. Review and publicize social media and disciplinary policies to make clear to all students the bounds of acceptable behavior for your school community. In addition to publicizing school policies surrounding social media postings by students and faculty, we suggest that schools also hold conversations about appropriate and healthy use of social media.

Communicate clearly with your school community if and when antisemitism occurs. Your school community needs to receive clear and unequivocal messaging from the administration when an antisemitic incident occurs. Normalization occurs when antisemitism is ignored, downplayed, or diluted and when authority figures fail to specifically name and condemn antisemitism. Administrators must specifically name and condemn antisemitism without reservation when it occurs, even in the larger context of free speech. Additionally, provide productive pathways forward, including plans to address the issue through education and attention to mental health resources for affected students.

³ [AJC.org/TranslateHate](https://www.aJC.org/TranslateHate)

⁴ [AJC.org/Culture](https://www.aJC.org/Culture)

⁵ secure.ethicspoint.com/domain/en/default_reporter.asp

Actions for the current academic year:

Adopt the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism. School districts should adopt the [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance \(IHRA\) Working Definition of Antisemitism](#)⁶, which provides a clear and widely accepted framework for identifying and addressing antisemitic incidents and its many manifestations, including debates about Israel's right to exist and Zionism. The IHRA definition offers contemporary, practical examples of anti-Zionist forms of antisemitism and explicitly notes that criticism of Israeli policy is not antisemitic. Many states and municipalities have already adopted the IHRA Definition, so it may already be an available resource.

Provide faculty training on discussing the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Offer training to faculty members on how to approach discussions related to the Israel-Palestinian conflict in the classroom that promote balanced and respectful dialogue. Our [team of experts](#)⁷ would be happy to provide training to your staff and faculty.

Engage with parents and community leaders. Convene your Parent Teacher Association to discuss antisemitism and consider encouraging Jewish parent affinity groups to provide a platform for open dialogue and mutual support. Attend and encourage other administrators to participate in programming organized by local synagogues or Jewish community groups to express solidarity and better understand the needs and concerns of the Jewish community.

Host an interfaith or intergroup panel. Create forums for students to engage in ways that move conversations toward cultivating empathy and building bridges that support living together in the community.

Celebrate Jewish American Heritage Month (JAHM). Create schoolwide and divisional programs and initiatives that acknowledge and celebrate [Jewish American Heritage Month \(JAHM\)](#)⁸ each May to promote awareness and appreciation of Jewish contributions to American society.

Long-term action items (by the opening of the 2024-25 school year):

Conduct a curriculum audit. Conduct a comprehensive audit of the school curriculum, from kindergarten through 12th grade, to determine where education about Jews and antisemitism currently exists and identify opportunities for improvement and expansion. By studying the history of antisemitism, including the Holocaust, students can gain valuable insights into the history of discrimination and oppression and the broader struggle for social justice. Students will also learn powerful lessons about resilience through Jewish history that are so important in our current times. Windows into Jewish history and the contributions Jews have made to our world will humanize Jews and help foster mutual respect.

Revisit Holocaust education. Many states [require](#)⁹ Holocaust education, but legislative requirements do not control the quality of that education. Whether or not Holocaust education is required in your state, ensure that Holocaust education is a mandatory, prominent, and well-integrated component of the curriculum, emphasizing the historical importance of this subject. Ensure that Holocaust education focuses deeply on Jewish physical, cultural, and spiritual resistance to Nazi oppression.

Incorporate Jewish literature and cultural studies. Incorporate selections of Jewish literature and the study of Jewish culture into the curriculum to provide a deeper understanding of and empathy for the Jewish people and their contributions to world culture.

Add a course on the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Consider introducing a dedicated course on the Israel-Palestinian conflict, which presents multiple narratives and nuanced perspectives about the history and present-day situation. Such a course would help prepare students for campus life and adulthood by giving them an academic grounding in the conflict, as well as by teaching them how to examine complex issues with integrity and empathy and interpret source material responsibly. Our [team of experts](#)¹⁰ would be happy to work with you to help you design a curriculum and to recommend specific training for educators.

⁶ [AJC.org/WorkingDefinition](https://www.ajc.org/WorkingDefinition)

⁷ email: independentschools@ajc.org

⁸ [AJC.org/jewishamericanheritagemonth](https://www.ajc.org/jewishamericanheritagemonth)

⁹ [AJC.org/NeverAgain](https://www.ajc.org/NeverAgain)

¹⁰ email: independentschools@ajc.org

[American Jewish Committee \(AJC\)](#)¹³ is the global advocacy organization for the Jewish people. With headquarters in New York, 25 offices across the United States, 14 overseas posts, as well as partnerships with 38 Jewish community organizations worldwide, AJC's mission is to enhance the well-being of the Jewish people and Israel, and to advance human rights and democratic values in the United States and around the world.