
Israel and Hamas conflict has schools wrestling with what to do

From: **As Israel-Hamas war continues, difficult conversations unfold in MI classrooms**

<https://www.freep.com/story/news/education/2023/10/25/israel-hamas-war-poses-difficult-questions-in-michigan-classrooms/71219838007/>

“Students are asking their teachers questions, seeking honest answers. Leaders at districts ... have issued statements urging students to seek support in their schools, through social workers and guidance counselors. And teachers say they're bracing for difficult conversations to come up in class, if they haven't happened already. They've seen both students and staff members suffering as they grapple with events that affect their communities and add to daily stress.”

As a resource, we thought we should share a sample of what we are hearing.

We think the right tone was struck when someone emphasized:

Let us strive to support the well-being of all innocents.

The following statement from the School Social Workers Association of America also stressed concern for innocent lives and the importance of providing them with supports.

https://www.sswaa.org/files/ugd/34ef79_f60fbc07d18c47dcb3618d9a1dbb995d.pdf

As we witness the extensive news coverage of the ongoing events resulting from the Israel-Hamas War, our hearts are heavy as we grapple with the devastation and loss of innocent lives. The School Social Work Association of America extends its deepest condolences to our colleagues in Israel and Palestine and the families, friends, loved ones, and communities affected by these events. In the face of this unimaginable tragedy, it's crucial to acknowledge the incredible bravery and dedication demonstrated by our Jewish and Palestinian social work colleagues. They uphold the principles of our Code of Ethics by providing essential services, championing social justice, preserving the dignity and worth of every individual, and emphasizing the importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence while offering guidance and understanding.

SSWAA is a network of School Social Workers who are trained mental health professionals with unique expertise in addressing the impact of trauma on families and communities. We understand the challenges that lie ahead as individuals and communities work to process their pain and fears in the coming days, months, and years. Our national organization stands ready to support and facilitate open dialogue among social workers. We are prepared to respond to direct email exchanges and share resources to assist in this challenging time.”

From: ***New Jersey Department of Education Statement from the Commissioner***

<https://www.nj.gov/education/broadcasts/2023/oct/13/CommissionersStatementRegardingRecentEvents.pdf>

“It has come to the attention of the New Jersey Department of Education that there has been an increase in conflict arising in schools due to the tragic events taking place in Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank. The Department is alarmed by reports indicating students are facing harassment at schools based on cultural or religious affiliation, including incidents involving racist and derogatory remarks, online bullying, and other harmful or threatening behaviors.

Such incidents are deeply concerning and in direct conflict with the core principles of education, which aim to provide a safe and supportive environment for all students. It is our responsibility to ensure that every student, regardless of background or beliefs, is safe, secure, and free from discrimination while pursuing their education.

The Department strongly encourages our educators and school communities to remind students and families of our collective responsibility to reduce fear and anxiety during these difficult times, including sharing the Department's resources to prevent harassment, intimidation and bullying and Trauma-Informed & Healing-Centered Practices. Mindful

of our state's diverse student body, it is imperative that proactive steps are taken to address incidents promptly. Every student deserves to learn and grow in an atmosphere that promotes respect, understanding, and inclusivity...."

From: *Teachers face hard conversations around Israel Hamas conflict*

<https://www.wgbh.org/news/education-news/2023-10-17/mass-teachers-face-hard-conversations-around-israel-hamas-conflict>

"The attack by Hamas militants on Israel and the resulting conflict has spurred difficult conversations in classrooms and school districts across the United States. And it is only the latest in a string of hard conversations in recent years, whether it's teachers talking about the pandemic, school shootings, the murder of George Floyd or the war in Ukraine.

...

Going forward, the task is to help educators handle the conversation about what's going on with students.

"The one message ... is having sensitivity to sort of the multicultural environment that we find ourselves in in schools today and in classrooms and trying to be as inclusive as we can in terms of having different points of view, as well as an understanding of what's acceptable — and what's unacceptable — in terms of the way in which people treat each other" said Thomas Scott of the Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents.

On top of navigating how to discuss the what's going on in the Gaza Strip and Israel, educators have to handle simply being there for students through the trauma of such widely broadcasted violence.

From: *Schools commits to keep students, staff safe, informed amid Israel-Hamas war*

<https://www.newsbreak.com/news/3204191134952-baltimore-county-schools-commits-to-keep-students-staff-safe-informed-amid-israel-hamas-war>

"Baltimore County is among school systems around the country keeping a close watch on the war in Israel. The district reaffirmed its commitment to keep schools safe and students and staff members informed during the conflict.

The unrest in Israel was the first topic at BCPS Superintendent Myriam Rogers' monthly press briefing held Tuesday morning. "Our heartfelt thoughts remain with students, families and staff members impacted by the violent and tragic events in Israel and Gaza," Rogers said. "I have heard directly from Jewish and Muslim staff and stakeholders about their concerns, fears and needs. We are sensitive to them during these tumultuous times, given the uptick and targeted attacks across the nation against members of this community," Rogers said. "It is critical that we come together to support one another and reaffirm our collective commitment to keeping our schools and offices safe and free of hate and bias."

From: *Texas Educ. Agency gives schools and parents resources related to the Israel Hamas war*

<https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/news-and-multimedia/correspondence/taa-letters/educational-resources-on-israeli-conflict-for-texas-students>

"Amid the Israel-Hamas war, the Texas Education Agency shared optional resources with Texas school systems 'to help students talk about war and violence and better understand the conflict in Israel.' The four optional resources can be used by parents and educators to support lessons and conversations with students about the conflict. 'Parents and educators should determine which resources, if any, best fit the needs of their families and community,' the state agency said. They include

>How to Talk to Kids About Violence, Crime, and War" from Common Sense Media;

>What Is U.S. Policy on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict?" for grades 9-12 from the Council on Foreign Relations;

>Support for Classroom Discussion on the Hamas-Israel War" for grades 6-12 from the Institute for Curriculum Services; and

>10 Ways to Have Conscientious Conversations on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict" for grades 6-12 from the Anti-Defamation League."

This latest impact on schools underscores how essential it is for schools to develop a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of learning supports. See *Student/Learning Supports: A Brief Guide for Moving in New Directions*

<https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/briefguide.pdf>