

FLORIDA'S HOLOCAUST MANDATE

Florida's Legislature/Department of Education Required Instruction

In 1994 the Florida Legislature passed the Holocaust Education Bill (SB 660) which amended Section 233.061 of the Florida Statutes (Chapter 94-14, Laws of Florida), relating to required instruction. The new law can now be found in Section 1003.42(g), Florida Statutes requires all school districts to incorporate lessons on the Holocaust as part of public-school instruction.

Section 1003.42(g), Florida Statutes, 2006 requires schools to provide instruction as follows:

1. The history of the Holocaust (1933-1945), the systematic, planned annihilation of European Jews and other groups by Nazi Germany, a watershed event in the history of humanity, to be taught in a manner that leads to an investigation of human behavior, an understanding of the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping, and an examination of what it means to be a responsible and respectful person, for the purposes of encouraging tolerance of diversity in a pluralistic society and for nurturing and protecting democratic values and institutions, including the policy, definition, and historical and current examples of antisemitism, as described in s. 1000.05(8), and the prevention of antisemitism. Each school district must annually certify and provide evidence to the department, in a manner prescribed by the department, that the requirements of this paragraph are met. The department shall prepare and offer standards and curriculum for the instruction required by this paragraph and may seek input from the Commissioner of Education's Task Force on Holocaust Education or from any state or nationally recognized Holocaust educational organizations. The department may contract with any state or nationally recognized Holocaust educational organizations to develop training for instructional personnel and grade-appropriate classroom resources to support the developed curriculum.
2. The second week in November shall be designated as "Holocaust Education Week" in this state in recognition that November is the anniversary of Kristallnacht, widely recognized as a precipitating event that led to the Holocaust.

Florida Commissioner of Education's Task Force on Holocaust Education

As a result of the legislation requiring instruction on the Holocaust, then Commissioner of Education Doug Jamerson appointed a special Commissioner's Task Force on Holocaust Education. The Task Force, extended indefinitely by commissioner Frank Brogan, continues to pursue efforts to help teachers, school administrators, and other educators identify effective instructional strategies and materials for integrating the Holocaust into K-12 classrooms.

The mandate identifies both rationales and strategies for achieving Holocaust literacy. By focusing on key elements, the Task Force has created specific recommendations for the scope, content, and outcomes for Holocaust education in Florida schools.

I. Scope

The Holocaust is to be taught across the curriculum from preparatory lessons in the primary and intermediate grades, through exploratory studies in the intermediate and middle school grades, and synthesizing projects by the conclusion of the senior high school experience. Holocaust content is to be infused in ways that are age-appropriate, interdisciplinary, and consistent with other required instruction.

II. Content

The Holocaust is to be taught as a uniquely important event in modern history, emphasizing the systemic and state-sponsored violence, which distinguish it from other genocides. Florida teachers are enjoined to teach about the gradual unfolding and escalation of the Holocaust (“the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping”), with special attention paid to both the apathy and the altruism of the world community (“what it means to be a responsible and respectful person”). Finally, the Holocaust is to be taught in ways that encourage a pluralistic perspective and democratic practices.

III. Outcomes

Ultimately, the establishment of Holocaust studies in Florida schools is expected to play a significant role in the development of tolerant attitudes, cooperative and collaborative behaviors, informed, involved and compassionate citizens, and other skills encouraging civility.

Curriculum and Instruction

In 1991, the Department of Education, through the Florida Commission on Social Studies Education, recommended a new and innovative Kindergarten through Grade 12 model curriculum. The program, Connections, Challenges and Choices, The Report of the Florida Commission on Social Studies Education reflects the goals and outcomes of the Holocaust mandate. In addition, the State co-developed with Decision Development Corporation K-8 instructional materials that support the Connections program and the mandate. The literature and technology-based materials, Social Science 2000: Connections, Challenges, Choices, offer preparatory and exploratory lessons presented appropriately, and an extended study of the Holocaust is introduced at the middle school level.

In addition to the materials offered by the State, the Florida Holocaust Museum, in collaboration with Yad Vashem’s International School for Holocaust Education, The Jewish Foundation for The Righteous, Facing History and Ourselves, and The Florida Center for Instructional Technology at the University of South Florida, has created and made resources available for teachers and students. The Holocaust Documentation and Education Center at Florida International University in Miami is currently revising a state-supported curriculum guide. A list of this center and others throughout the state may be found in Section V of this framework.

Section 1.015, Florida Statutes, 2024 defines Antisemitism as follows:

Antisemitism

- (1) It is the intent of the Legislature to adopt the working definition developed by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) of the term “antisemitism” to assist in the monitoring and reporting of antisemitic hate crimes and discrimination and to make residents aware of and to combat such incidents in this state.
- (2) As adopted by the IHRA on May 26, 2016, and as used in these statutes, the term “antisemitism” means a certain perception of Jewish individuals which may be expressed as hatred toward such individuals. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish and non-Jewish individuals and their property and toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.
- (3) Contemporary examples of antisemitism include, but are not limited to, all of the following:
 - (a) Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jewish individuals.
 - (b) Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jewish

individuals as such or the power of Jewish people as a collective, such as the myth of a worldwide Jewish conspiracy or of Jewish individuals controlling the media, economy, government, or other societal institutions.

(c) Accusing Jewish people as a collective of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group or for acts committed by non-Jewish individuals.

(d) Denying the fact, scope, and mechanisms, such as gas chambers, or the intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of Nazi Germany and its supporters and accomplices during the Holocaust.

(e) Accusing Jewish people as a collective, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.

(f) Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jewish individuals worldwide, than to the interests of their respective nations.

(g) Denying Jewish people their right to self-determination, such as claiming that the existence of the State of Israel is a racist endeavor.

(h) Applying double standards by requiring of the Jewish State of Israel a standard of behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.

(i) Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism, such as blood libel, to characterize Israel or Israelis.

(j) Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.

(k) Holding Jewish individuals collectively responsible for actions of the State of Israel.

(4) The term “antisemitism” does not include criticism of Israel that is similar to criticism of any other country.

(5) This section may not be construed to diminish or infringe upon any right protected under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or to conflict with federal or state antidiscrimination laws.