

## Supporting Jewish Students During Rising Antisemitism A Trauma-Informed Educator Handout

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### **Why This Matters—Now**

Jewish students are living in the context of a global rise in antisemitic attacks, including violence, threats, vandalism, harassment, and coordinated online hate targeting Jews and Jewish institutions around the world. These events are not experienced as distant news. Through social media, family ties, communal connections, and historical memory, many Jewish students experience them as immediate, cumulative, and personal threats.

For students, distress is often intensified not only by the attacks themselves, but by what happens afterward: silence, minimization, politicization, or denial within schools and peer environments. When Jewish fear and grief are debated rather than acknowledged, students may experience Traumatic Invalidation: the denial, distortion, or erasure of lived experience, which compounds harm and interferes with learning, belonging, and trust in institutions.

### Common Signs of Distress to Recognize

- Withdrawal, silence, or fear of speaking
- Avoidance of visibly Jewish behaviors
- Increased absences or disengagement
- Irritability, sadness, anxiety, or exhaustion
- Sudden academic decline

### **Educators are uniquely positioned to interrupt this cycle.**

#### 1. Regulate Before You Educate

Periods of heightened antisemitic threat place many Jewish students in a state of nervous-system activation.

Educator skill: Regulate the environment first.

- Use calm, steady tone and predictable routines
- Slow discussions when emotions escalate
- Explicitly name safety: “This is a space where Jewish students are protected.”

Regulation creates the conditions for learning.

## 2. Name the Harm—Do Not Politicize It

For Jewish students, antisemitism is an identity-based trauma, often layered with intergenerational trauma.

Educator skill: Name antisemitism as harm.

- Do not turn disclosures into debates or teachable controversies
- Do not require Jewish students to contextualize pain politically
- Do not ask students to educate peers about Jews, Judaism, or Israel
- Naming harm restores clarity and safety.

## 3. Validation Is Protective

Validation does not require political agreement. It requires recognizing lived experience.

What validation sounds like:

- “What’s happening to Jews is frightening, and it makes sense this is affecting you.”
- “You’re not imagining this, and you’re not alone.”
- “Your safety and wellbeing matter here.”

### At the School Level

- Acknowledge antisemitism explicitly in communications
- Ensure reporting systems are accessible and trusted
- Partner with mental-health professionals and community resources
- Signal clearly: Jewish students belong here

### What Not to Do

- Do not remain silent after antisemitic attacks
- Do not minimize harm because it is verbal or online
- Do not compare or rank suffering between groups
- Do not assume resilience means students are fine
- Silence is often experienced as abandonment.

### A Final Word to Educators

In a time when Jews are being targeted around the world, many Jewish students come to school carrying fear, grief, and uncertainty. They are watching closely to see who notices, and who stays silent.

Students will not remember perfect language. They will remember whether an adult showed up. You do not need to be an expert. You need to be willing to name antisemitism, validate fear without debate, and create spaces where Jewish students feel protected and seen. Your response can be the difference between isolation and belonging, fear and trust, and harm and healing.