

# HOW SCHOOL LEADERS CAN ADDRESS THESE ISSUES

## Focus on systemic, long-term change

Addressing these challenges is not the work of one semester or one year; rather, it must be understood as a long-term process to shift the underlying cultural dynamics that enable the normalization of ideas and actions that undermine Jewish safety and inclusion.

## 1 Antisemitism education for key stakeholders

Project Shema can provide antisemitism education, tailored for the following stakeholder groups

- Administrators, DEI professionals, student support staff, and anyone responsible for building and maintaining school culture and responding to student concerns
- Teachers who are responsible for educating around these topics
- Students, if they receive education about other forms of bigotry

## 2 Prioritize a school and classroom culture rooted in inclusivity and pluralism

Jewish students across the country have reported being silenced, harassed, and demonized at school and inside the classroom. Too often, teachers push their own political agenda rather than teach the complex history of the land & people objectively.

**School leaders can address this by:**

- Ensuring teachers don't bring their personal and political biases into the classroom
- Auditing existing curriculum and conducting oversight over teachers' non-sanctioned material to ensure that (1) education about Jewish identity and antisemitism is comprehensive and diverse, and (2) any material on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict centers empathetic, dual narrative exploration that honors the concerns of all stakeholders
- Ensuring students have a trusted and credible reporting mechanism that addresses students' concerns seriously and protects them from reprisal
- Establishing clubs or working groups that empower students to respectfully engage across differences
- Teaching people skills for empathic, depolarized discourse across differences

# OTHER HELPFUL TIPS

## 01 Listen to the community

Let your students—Jewish or otherwise—know that you care about their safety, and that you take concerns about anti-Jewish harm with the utmost seriousness so that they feel both safe and seen. Acknowledge that mistakes will be made along the way, but that the school is committed to the wellbeing of students and their parents. Consider offering periodic listening sessions with Jewish students and their families.

## 02 Provide professional support

Inform students that trauma-informed school counselors or social workers are available to provide support.

## 03 Leverage affinity spaces

Though not all students process similarly, some Jewish students may find it preferable and safer to share their emotions with members of their own community. Create or encourage Jewish students to form a collective that meets periodically to foster community and reinforce mutual support.

# TWO KEY PRINCIPLES

For navigating these complex moments

## 1 FREEDOM OF SPEECH MUST BE UPHELD

**Even for speech we find objectionable**

We believe that it is not inherently antisemitic to criticize Israeli government policy, advocate on behalf of Palestinians, or call for an end to the war. The concerns raised in this guide are not about those conversations

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION SHOULDN'T IMPACT STUDENT SAFETY

Jews/Jewish institutions should not be targeted or held responsible for the Israeli government's actions, as it leads to dehumanization & ostracization, making the Jewish community more susceptible to systemic violence. Similarly, students protesting on behalf of the Palestinian people should be protected from harassment & retribution