

Dear Families,

This spring, our school will be observing Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) with a special unit of learning across all elementary grades. We are writing to inform you about this important educational initiative and to invite your partnership in supporting your child's learning. Teaching about the Holocaust is not about creating fear or despair. It is about honoring survivors, learning from history, and empowering our children to be agents of justice and compassion. Our curriculum is age-appropriate and trauma-informed. We emphasize resilience, resistance, and human agency. Here's what each grade will explore:

3rd Grade: What was the Holocaust? Why do we remember? How did survivors rebuild their lives? Students will learn about a survivor from our community and understand that even in dark times, people can survive and thrive.

4th Grade: How does propaganda work? How can we recognize lies and stand up for what's right? Students will learn how critical thinking and friendship helped people survive, and how we can recognize propaganda in our own world.

5th Grade: What moral choices did people make during the Holocaust? How do Jewish values guide us? Students will explore how love, hope, and moral courage helped people survive, and how we can live according to Jewish values.

6th Grade: How do systems of injustice develop into genocide? What is our responsibility as global citizens? Students will analyze warning signs of genocide and understand their power to prevent future atrocities.

We understand that learning about the Holocaust can bring up strong feelings for families. If you have concerns about the curriculum, if your child is struggling with what they're learning, or if you would like to discuss this further, please reach out to us. We are here to support your child and your family. If your child has experienced trauma or has specific mental health needs, please let us know so we can provide appropriate support.

We are excited to embark on this important learning journey with your child. The Holocaust is a difficult subject, but it is also a story of human resilience, moral courage, and hope. By learning about this history, our children become keepers of memory and continue on the Jewish legacy.

Thank you for your partnership in supporting your child's education and growth.

Sincerely,

Mardi Caminer

How You Can Support Your Child

Talk with your child about what they're learning. Ask open-ended questions: "What did you learn today?" "How did that make you feel?" "What questions do you have?" These conversations help children process what they're learning and deepen their understanding.

Share your own family's story. If your family has connections to the Holocaust or other historical events, sharing your story helps children understand that history is personal and that our families' experiences matter.

Normalize emotions. It's okay for children to feel sad, angry, or moved when learning about injustice. These are healthy responses. You might say: "It's okay to feel sad about what happened. That shows you care about people. And it also shows us that we need to work to prevent these things from happening again."

Emphasize agency and hope. Help your child understand that people have the power to make a difference. You might say: "Even in terrible times, people made choices to help each other. You have the power to make choices that help people too."

If your child is upset, listen to them, validate their feelings, and help them process what they've learned. If you have concerns about how your child is responding, please reach out to us.

Resources for Families

Please see below for opportunities to learn more at home:

- **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum:** www.ushmm.org (educational resources for families)
- **Yad Vashem:** www.yadvashem.org (survivor testimonies and educational materials)
- **My Jewish Learning:** www.myjewishlearning.com (articles about Jewish values and the Holocaust)
- **Age-appropriate books:** "The Boy in the Striped Pajamas" by John Boyne, "Number the Stars" by Lois Lowry, "The Diary of Anne Frank"

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Is this curriculum too heavy for elementary students?

A: We have carefully designed age-appropriate lessons. We focus on survivors' stories and their strength, not on graphic details. Students are capable of understanding important historical events when they are presented thoughtfully and with support.

Q: What if my child becomes upset?

A: It's normal and healthy for children to have emotional responses to learning about The Holocaust. We have support available in the classroom. If your child continues to struggle, please reach out to us so we can work together to support them.

Q: Can I opt my child out of this unit?

A: We believe this is important learning for all students. However, if you have concerns, please reach out to us to discuss. We want to work with you to support your child's learning.

Q: How can I talk to my child about this if I don't know much about the Holocaust?

A: You don't need to be an expert. Simply listen to what your child is learning, ask questions, and validate their feelings. You might say: "That sounds like something important you're learning about. Tell me more." Your interest and support matter more than having all the answers.