

Subject: Resources for Educators During this Time

October 13, 2023

Dear Berkeley Unified Colleagues,

Each of you got into this work to support our students' academic achievement, often in your specific subject area(s) of expertise. However, you as educators are often called upon to address issues that go far beyond the four walls of your classroom. We recognize that when these moments arise, students look toward you to provide comfort and help make sense of things that they don't completely understand.

Today, we are in one of those moments, as we witness the escalating war between the government of Israel and Hamas. Learning of the death and injury of thousands, including many young children, and the exploitation of images of violence in the media is deeply disturbing. The concerning rise in antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents, a global call for protest today, and ongoing uncertainty about this war inevitably impacts our students and comes into our classrooms. I appreciate the many ways that you are holding space for students while also supporting each other during this heartbreaking time.

After consulting various sources, we have compiled these resources to support you in this important work. These resources are not exhaustive, but they provide you with support to help students process their emotions, guide students in age-appropriate conversations about this conflict, and help them understand what is happening in Israel and Gaza within a broad historical context. I ask that you are critical of these resources and review them, using your discernment in determining which are appropriate for your students.

Setting Conditions

As educators we recognize that classrooms are communities where students need to feel safe, seen, felt, and heard. We understand the need for these spaces to be reflective of our diverse students, responsive, and humanizing. This enables students to learn, engage in critical thinking and explore and be exposed to experiences, ideas, and content.

As with all difficult and/or controversial topics, educators should be sure to:

- Attune themselves to the emotional impact these events have on students

- Pay close attention to students who are Palestinian or Israeli, Jewish or Muslim, those who may have family members in the region, and/or students who may be worried about how this crisis could impact them here in the United States. Check in with them with a concern for their wellness.
- Never single students out to speak about or explain related topics

Engaging in Critical Conversations in Class...

- [Teaching Controversial Issues: A Framework for Reflective Practice](#): This guide from Judy Pace, a teacher educator at the University of San Francisco, provides a research-based framework for teaching controversial issues.
- [Crucial Points: Talking Politics in Education, Tips for Educators and Everyone Else](#) This resource is primarily for best practices in having workplace conversations with peers around politically sensitive issues
- [Fostering Civil Discourse: How Do We Talk About Issues That Matter?](#): This guide from nonprofit Facing History and Ourselves gives educators ideas for how to prepare students to engage in reflective conversations on controversial topics.
- [Challenging Anti-semitism from a framework of collective liberation](#): PARCEO and Haymarket discussion on challenging antisemitism together with all forms of injustice.
- <https://www.challengeislamophobia.org>: Offers lesson plans and resources to assist educators and student rethink Islamophobia
- [In brief: Misinformation](#): This infographic from the News Literacy Project provides an overview of the pervasive use of misinformation and how people can be more critical readers of news and other information.

Middle East...

- [Teach Mideast.org](#): An aggregate of resources from background information to classroom activities that include multiple perspectives.
- [Making a Difference in the Midst of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict | Wide Angle: Lesson Plan](#): This high-school-level lesson plan from PBS explores the history and complexity of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict through videos, websites, and interactive activities that provide more insight into the conflict.
- [How to Talk About the Israel Hamas War](#) This Ed Week article intends to help students understand “historical context, process current events, and use media

literacy skills to analyze news coverage and social media responses and misinformation about the conflict.”

- [Processing Attacks in Israel and the Outbreak of War in the Region](#) This post helps students process violence, terror, and the loss of life in the wake of attacks in Israel and Israel's declaration of war against Hama

Discussing with our students....

- [How do I talk to my kids about violence in the news?](#) and [Explaining the News to Our Kids](#): These two guides from Common Sense Media, a nonprofit that examines the impact of technology on children, provide age-appropriate tips on how to talk to kids about what's happening in the news, especially when it involves violence.
- [How to talk to your children about conflict and war](#): This guide from UNICEF provides 8 tips on how to support and comfort children when war dominates headlines.
- [Handle With Care: Supporting Young People During Crises](#): Learning for Justice, a social justice and activism program for schools, provides ideas to support “meaningful” discussions about emotionally charged topics, with young people and potential follow-up steps and responses.

BUSD Teaching Guides

- Jewish American Heritage Month [TK-8 Teaching Guide](#), this guide is intended to be used throughout the school year.
- Arab American & SWANA Heritage Month [TK-8 Teaching Guide](#), this guide is intended to be used throughout the school year.

Books that Nourish Jewish and Palestinian Student Identities:

- [Not Your All American Girl](#) By Wendy Wan-Long Shang, Madelyn Rosenberg
- [Homeland: My Father Dreams of Palestine](#) by Hannah Moushabeck
- [A Place at the Table](#) By Saadia Faruqi
- [Baba What does My Name Mean?](#) By Rifk Ebeid
- [The Language of Angels](#) By Richard Michelson
- [These Olive Trees](#) By Aya Ghanameh
- [Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story](#) By Ken Mochizuki
- [Habibi](#) By Naomi Shihab Nye

We will continue to share resources with you as they become available and welcome you to share resources with your site teams.

In Community,

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Superintendent