

No Place for Hate® Activity Library

Addressing Antisemitic Incidents with Allyship and Advocacy

Lesson Plan and Overview

Lesson Plan: [Antisemitic Incidents: Being an Ally, Advocate and Activist](#)

For the past several years, the number of antisemitic incidents across the U.S. has surged. These incidents include vandalism, swastikas and other antisemitic graffiti, bomb threats, harassment and assaults. K-12 schools have also experienced a steep increase in antisemitic incidents. This activity helps students understand what these incidents are, where they take place and their impact on individuals and society. It invites them to explore ways that they and others can engage in allyship and advocacy when facing or seeing these concerning incidents.

(Note to Teacher: It is important to consider that you may have students in your classroom who are Jewish. Be prepared and sensitive to those students, taking into account the extent to which they are a minority or majority of your classroom and plan accordingly. Some students who are Jewish may feel relieved and comfortable discussing these issues in class and others may feel nervous, uncomfortable or angry to be talking about a sensitive topic. You may want to talk with those students in advance and determine how they can discuss this topic while feeling comfortable and safe. Consider reflecting on this resource: [6 Tips for Supporting Jewish Students in the Classroom](#))

Grade Level

Grades 6-12

Learning Objectives

- Students will understand what antisemitism is.
 - Students will reflect on the prevalence of and surge in antisemitic incidents.
 - Students will identify ways to act an ally or advocate when facing antisemitic incidents in their school, community or society
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Materials Needed

- [Audit of Antisemitic Incidents](#)
- Paper and art supplies for poster making
- [A Guide for Responding to School-Based Bias Incidents](#)

Words You Might Use

Advocate: Someone who publicly supports or recommends a particular cause or policy.

Ally: Someone who speaks out on behalf of or takes actions that are supportive of someone who is targeted by bias or bullying, either themselves or someone else.

Antisemitism: Antisemitism refers to prejudice, discrimination, or hostility directed at Jewish people. It is generally based on negative stereotypes, myths, or misinformation about Jews, Judaism, or Jewish identity. It manifests in harmful beliefs, attitudes, language, exclusion, harassment, and violence against individuals or Jewish communities.

Bias: An inclination or preference, either for or against an individual or group, that interferes with impartial judgment.

Marginalization: The treatment of a person, group or concept as secondary, unimportant, inferior or abnormal compared with those who hold more power in society.

Oppression: A system of mistreatment, exploitation and abuse of a marginalized group(s) for the social, economic or political benefit of a dominant group(s). This happens within a social hierarchy where people are ranked according to status, often based on aspects of social identity.

Core Activity

- Begin by sharing that discussing topics of bias and hate can be challenging and can lead to strong feelings. In order to navigate these conversations and create a safe space in which everyone can share, group agreements and norms help. Share the following statements on a slide, whiteboard or chart paper.
 - Speak from personal experience.
 - Ouch (Own the impact of our words on others).
 - Oops (Consider the intent behind our words).
 - Respect others.
- Clarify understanding from students and allow students to add additional rules.

- Solicit agreement before moving on and refer back to these as necessary throughout the lesson
- Share a definition of antisemitism.
 - To engage students, begin by asking them: *What is antisemitism? How do you define it?* And use their responses to generate a list on a whiteboard/chart paper/etc.
 - Then, share the formal definition of antisemitism. (*Antisemitism refers to prejudice, discrimination, or hostility directed at Jewish people. It is generally based on negative stereotypes, myths, or misinformation about Jews, Judaism, or Jewish identity. It manifests in harmful beliefs, attitudes, language, exclusion, harassment, and violence against individuals or Jewish communities.*)
 - To elicit further reflection on this definition, consider asking additional questions such as:
 - What common themes do you notice between the definitions you shared and the formal definition of antisemitism?
 - Based on the definition, what is unique about antisemitism? Are there any similarities to other forms of hate?
- Discuss how antisemitism shows up in schools.
 - To engage students, consider asking: *Can you think of and share an example of an antisemitic incident?* Ask students to share examples of antisemitic incidents they have faced, seen, or heard about from someone else or in the news.
 - The list might look something like this:
 - Antisemitic or Anti-Jewish graffiti, including swastikas (on buildings, lockers, hallways, cemeteries, other public spaces).
 - Nazi symbol or doing a Nazi salute.
 - Throwing a penny at a Jewish person.
 - Making comments that perpetuate stereotypes (e.g., “all Jews are greedy and/or cheap,” “Jews have too much power”).
 - A Jewish person being assaulted or attacked based on their Jewish identity.
 - “Jokes” about the Holocaust.
 - Vandalism in synagogues and Jewish cemeteries.
 - Bomb threats.
 - Antisemitic comments or memes on social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok).
- Share ADL’s [Audit of Antisemitic Incidents](#)
 - Consider sharing that every year, ADL tracks incidents of antisemitic incidents including harassment, vandalism and assault in the U.S.

- Allow students time to independently explore the resource.
- Then engage students in a discussion by asking some or all of the following questions:
 - *Who are the targets of these incidents? Do these incidents impact Jewish or non-Jewish people or both? Please explain.*
 - *What impact do these incidents have on people who are Jewish and the Jewish community? What is the impact on others and the larger community or society?*
 - *As individuals, what can we do about it?*
 - *As a community and society, what should we do about it?*
- Finally, discuss with students how people can act as allies or advocates when it comes to antisemitic incidents. Elicit/explain definitions of ally and advocate:
 - **Ally:** Someone who speaks out on behalf of or takes actions that are supportive of someone who is targeted by bias or bullying, either themselves or someone else.
 - **Advocate:** Someone who publicly support
- After definitions have been shared, have students brainstorm ideas they have about how to act as an ally or advocate when facing or hearing about antisemitic incidents in their school, community, online or society. The list might look something like this:
 - *Educate students about antisemitism (as we're doing now) and about Jewish people and identity.*
 - *When you hear antisemitic "jokes" or slurs, speak out about it.*
 - *Help clean up swastikas and other antisemitic graffiti.*
 - *Report what you see on social media (to find out how, use [Online Hate and Harassment Safety Guide](#)).*
 - *If you encounter antisemitic tropes, "jokes," or other biased language online, say or do something.*
 - *Hold community events about antisemitism and other bias.*
 - *Create a study or book club to learn more about the Jewish community and antisemitism.*
 - *Challenge and dispel antisemitic myths, stereotypes and misinformation in person and online, both publicly and in private.*
 - *Reach out to your elected officials and ask them to take actions on antisemitism in your community.*
 - *Participate in community and political forums to raise the issue of antisemitism and encourage the press to cover these events.*
 - *Encourage your school or community library to carry books that feature the Jewish experience and that address antisemitism.*
- Have students take one of the ideas and create a poster or create a short video that elaborates on the suggested action.

Optional Follow-Up/ Going Further

NOTE: These additional activities can be done as follow-ups to the core activity and they can also serve as an additional NPFH activity if the core activity is completed first.

- Based on some of the ideas generated in the Core Activity above, have students work in classes or small groups to create an action plan to bring some of the allyship and advocacy ideas to fruition. The action plan should include the following: (1) a statement with the overall goal, (2) what success looks like (i.e., expected or desired outcomes), (3) tasks needed to reach the goal, (4) who is responsible and who needs to be involved, and (5) timeline and workplan. For each group, assign an adult liaison (school staff, parent/family member) and have students meet regularly to plan their project(s), which could take weeks or months. Before launching into the action plan, have each group present their recommendations and plan to the school's administration or the NPFH Committee.
- Depending on what is happening in your school or community in terms of biased incidents, explore another form of bias incidents (e.g., anti-Muslim bias, racism, heterosexism). Invite students to go through a similar process where they reflect on examples, learn more about the facts with data and examples, and brainstorm different ways to address those bias incidents with allyship and advocacy.
- Engage students in a process where they create their own audit of antisemitic incidents, another kind of biased incidents most prevalent in their school/community, or a combination of all biased incidents. The survey should also include questions about the impact these incidents have on individuals and their community. You can develop the survey with a committee (or use the NPFH committee and build out from there), decide what you want to learn, develop a survey tool to collect the data, identify ways to get a strong response, collect data and then analyze the data. When the data is collected and analyzed, use the data to reflect (as a school or community) on what's happening in terms of biased incidents and what you can do about it, acting as ally or advocate.
- Use ADL's [A Guide for Responding to School-Based Incidents](#) to engage in a school-wide process to strengthen your school's response to bias-based school incidents.
- Find a current article about teenagers taking steps to combat antisemitism. Print copies of the article for students to read in small groups. Direct students to reflect upon the article thinking about things like: how were students able to effectively act as allies? How were students able to effectively act as advocates? What can we learn from this group of students to be better allies and advocates within our own community?
 - Looking for an article? Consider this one: "[Subway Riders Scrub Anti-Semitic Graffiti, as 'Decent Human Beings'](#)".

Home Connection

(optional)

Share ADL's Table Talk [Antisemitism Today](#) with families.

How Activity Meets NPFH Requirements

Students will learn about and reflect on the rise in antisemitic incidents in schools, communities and society. They will then explore the different ways people can act as allies and advocates in order to address and challenge antisemitism. This will help set a foundation for exploring other systems of bias and how students can engage in allyship and advocacy in order to make a difference.