



# Guidance for K-12 Schools on Teaching and Discussing the US/Israeli war with Iran

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## **K-12 Administrators and Educators Should Be Alert to:**

- Heightened emotions among students, faculty, and families across all backgrounds.
- The critical distinction between the Iranian regime and the Iranian people — and the importance of ensuring Iranian-American students are not made to feel implicated in or responsible for the actions of the Iranian government.
- The critical distinction between the Israeli government and American Jews — Jewish students must not be held accountable for Israeli government policy.
- Increased risk of misinformation and social media amplification, including content that distorts the context or circumstances of these operations.
- The potential for politicized or polarized classroom discussions.
- The need for developmentally appropriate framing at each grade level.
- The importance of ensuring that no student is asked to represent a nation, religion, or ethnic group.

## **TAKING ACTION**

### **K-12 Educators Can Be PROACTIVE By:**

- Providing clear, factual framing, using credible news sources and expert analysis to help students contextualize this moment within a broader geopolitical picture.
- Emphasizing the distinction between governments and people to prevent bias or hostility toward students based on their background or identity.
- Creating structured, well-facilitated opportunities for students to ask questions grounded in respectful, fact-based dialogue.
- Communicating proactively with families, centering best pedagogical practices, and promoting student well-being.
- Monitoring and responding promptly to harassment, bullying, and bias incidents — including online — and reinforcing school social media policies and responsible digital citizenship.
- Promoting informed civic learning and critical thinking while maintaining a nonpartisan educational environment. Help students distinguish between policy — the concrete decisions governments make to address security, human rights, and national interests, and politics — which involves partisan agendas and political positioning. In relevant courses such as humanities and social studies, successful lessons allow students to explore complexity and nuance through reputable sources, structured inquiry, and thoughtful facilitation.
- Reminding students that the Middle East is one of the most dynamic and complex political theaters in the world. Simple binaries of good and evil are often unhelpful in understanding a region where ancient and modern identities and narratives intersect with the complex realities of today's geopolitics.

## **K-12 Educators Should AVOID:**

- Equating Jewish students or Israelis with the policies of the Israeli government, or Iranian-American students with the actions of the Iranian regime.
- Permitting debates that question Jewish identity or Israel's right to exist, or implicitly amplify antisemitic tropes such as Israel or Jews as "puppet master."
- Conducting simulations or role-plays that require students to assume identities connected to ongoing trauma or conflict.
- Drawing false equivalencies between democratic states responding to security threats and terrorist organizations or authoritarian regimes targeting civilians.
- Minimizing acts of terrorism, repression, or threats to civilian populations.
- Relying on unverified or viral social media content as instructional material.
- Asking students to speak on behalf of a religion, nationality, or ethnic group, or to take or express political positions, pledge support for a particular group, or engage in specific acts of political action (e.g., attending rallies, protests).

## **Essential Questions Educators Can Use to Frame Lesson Plans About this Conflict:**

- What factors should be considered by our government when entering a military conflict?
- How should our government weigh the potential success of an operation against the potential danger to American troops, or civilians of any nationality?
- What does the Constitution say about war powers? How have presidents throughout American history acted with respect to military engagement and the Constitution?
- How should news coverage of an active military conflict be assessed? What questions should readers ask?
- AWARENESS
- Teaching current events requires recognizing and naming that what is taking place is dynamic and evolving. The high geopolitical tensions of recent years, — including the October 7, 2023, Hamas terror attacks on Israel, the ensuing war in Gaza, and two direct rounds of military engagement between Israel and Iran (in April 2024 and June 2025) — have deepened the complexity of this moment. In past periods of geopolitical escalation involving Israel and the broader Middle East, Jewish students have experienced increased antisemitic rhetoric and social isolation.

## **RECOMMENDED RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE**

[Education Week Article on "How to Talk to Students About the U.S.-Iran Conflict"](#)

[Religion News Service: How to use the classroom as a place to confront antisemitism without deepening divisions](#)

## **Graphic Novel and Movie (for Upper Middle/High School):**

"Persepolis" and "Persepolis" the movie, both by Marjan Satrapii

## **Books on Iranian Jews:**

From the Shaha to Los Angeles: Three Generations of Iranian Jewish Women between Religion and Culture by Saba Soomekh

Light and Shadows: The Story of Iranian Jews, David Yeroushalmi, editor.

Esther's Children: A Portrait of Iranian Jews, Houman Sarshar, editor.

## **Books on Iran:**

Iran: A Modern History by Abbas Amanat: A detailed, up-to-date, and comprehensive overview covering the last 500 years.

A History of Modern Iran by Ervand Abrahamian: A highly recommended, concise, and critical analysis of 20th-century Iran.

Empire of the Mind: A History of Iran by Michael Axworthy: A highly regarded narrative history exploring Iran's cultural and political identity.

All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror by Stephen Kinzer: A detailed, engaging account of the 1953 CIA-led coup and its long-term consequences.

## **Documentary:**

"The Evolution of the Revolution": Documentary on the Islamic Revolution, how it happened, why it happened, and the history of the Shah and the United States.