

TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: FINDING COMMON GROUND

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ABSTRACT

Within the field of elementary education, Holocaust education is often looked upon with uncertainty due to the lack of substantial knowledge regarding the integration of such a serious topic into elementary school curriculums. From reviewing a sample of elementary school classrooms, it is apparent that elementary educators are quite oblivious to the strategies and methods available to promote student awareness of the aforementioned content. Consequently, Holocaust education is not nearly as present as it should be in elementary classrooms across the State of New Jersey, despite the establishment of the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education in the New Jersey Department of Education. As elementary education highly emphasizes and accentuates the need for proper literacy development, there is potential for children's literature to be applied as a vehicle for educating young students about the Holocaust.

INTRODUCTION

On March 10, 1994, the State of New Jersey established a mandate that addressed the need for the public education system to implement genocide education into school curriculums. Such a mandate was instituted due to the presence of racial and ethnic intolerance evident in various communities across the state. The New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Legislation sought to hold students and educators accountable for the prevention of potential consequences of prejudice and discrimination present in society (N.J.S.A. 18A:35-28). Although the State of New Jersey was the first in the United States to authorize such a mandate, no further revisions or improvements have been applied since the mandate's establishment in 1994. One must recognize that the professional field of education is one that continuously changes as teachers and educators introduce and integrate new strategies and methods of instruction. Thus, it cannot be expected for the New Jersey public education system to be guided by a mandate that has not been reformed or revised to best accommodate the current academic needs of this generation of students. Scholars and researchers from the professional field of education have sought to contribute their own data and insight in an effort to urge the United States education system to reconsider and reevaluate the presence of Holocaust education in school districts across the country.

The New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Legislation should not have assumed that the enactment of such a mandate would ensure that teachers could properly teach the subject matter with the necessary materials and resources. Jennifer Rich, an assistant professor at Rowan University, sought to verify the effectiveness of the legislation by interviewing and obtaining statistics from teacher candidates, who were students educated under the New Jersey mandate. As suspected, the candidates "lacked basic knowledge [and] displayed gross inaccuracies" when asked questions about the Holocaust and Holocaust education (Rich, 2019). The presence of a mandate that demands New Jersey school districts incorporate Holocaust education into their social studies curriculum, for grades four to twelve and preliminary studies for kindergarten to grade three, does not appear to be enough to promote the urgency of this field of education. It is startling to realize that there is a significant lack of content knowledge apparent among teacher candidates who will soon be responsible for educating their students about the historical event. It is

the responsibility of educators to obtain accurate background knowledge regarding the topic of instruction, because the lack of foundational context will result in unstable teachings.

RESEARCH ON HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

It was through the 1994 mandate that educators discovered a necessity to author a curriculum that would serve as a guide through such unfamiliar territory. *The Holocaust and Genocide Curriculum Guide* addressed the standards and academic needs of grades kindergarten to eight through social studies lessons that incorporated a myriad of approaches. Significant time and effort was dedicated to authoring and publishing *The Holocaust and Genocide Curriculum Guide*; however, it must be recognized that this guide has yet to be revised and improved since its publication in 1995. The curriculum displayed no acknowledgement of recent examples of racism and prejudice in modern society, despite the strong presence of such discrimination in current news. *The Holocaust and Genocide Curriculum Guide* failed to transcend time.

Social studies curriculum is taught with the intention to not only educate students about history and geography, but also instill a sense of civic responsibility and duty. The empirical evidence is clear: "Holocaust knowledge and Holocaust education experiences are positively related to self-reported beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes that can be described as citizenship values" (Starratt, et al. 2017). Intentional implementation of Holocaust education in school curricula promotes new developments in attitudes and dispositions of students. The immense influence this historical event has on an individual and his or her values cannot be ignored. It is no longer a matter of preventing history from repeating itself; rather, this presents the opportunity for educators to encourage students to develop morals and seek social justice.

In the field of education, the incorporation of social justice education has become an increasing trend: "education programs seem to be adding statements about the importance of social justice to their mission, and a growing number of teacher education programs are fundamentally oriented around a vision of social justice" (Hyttén and Bettez . 2011). It is imperative that teachers "help our students develop the skills, knowledge, and values to create a society that will someday no longer tolerate the abject poverty of so many amidst the luxury of the few" (Wade, 2007). According to *Oxford Reference* from *Oxford University Press*, social justice is defined as "the objective of creating a fair and equal society in which each individual matters, their rights are recognized and protected, and decisions are made in ways that are fair and honest" (Simpson, et al. 1989). Many would assume that a topic, such as the one aforementioned, would be inappropriate to introduce to young students of elementary grade level. The complex nature of this field of education unfortunately dissuades educators from exploring topics that may require delicate approaches. There are others who promote social justice education in elementary schools, claiming that "this work should begin in the elementary years when children are concerned with fairness and when their empathy and perspective-taking abilities are in the formative stages" (Wade, 2007). One of the strongest revelations present throughout the entirety of *Caring Makes a Difference*, a kindergarten to fourth grade curriculum that addresses "issues of racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, and other religious prejudices, ethnocentrism, economic classism, ageism, prejudice against the differently abled, and prejudice based upon a person's physical appearance," was the authors' intentions to encourage fellow educators to "begin [teaching] at the earliest possible moments" (Hadzima, et al. 2004). Although educators may not explicitly expose early childhood students to the nature of the Holocaust, they may accentuate the incorporation of social justice education in social studies curriculum.

The developing presence of social justice education in early childhood and elementary education programs is unmistakable. However, the question persists: why do education administrators and teachers continue to struggle in integrating Holocaust education regularly into school curricula? Due to "detached understanding," students treat the Holocaust as a fragile historic event, one that is unspoken about outside of classroom walls due to its somber nature (Zembylas, 2018). Without educators properly addressing the matter to initiate scholarly conversations about the historic event through curriculum and pedagogy, issues will continue to be ignored and the aforementioned struggle of educators will remain.

RESEARCH ON PEDAGOGY AND CURRICULUM OF HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

Despite curriculum mandates and learning resources that support Holocaust education in school districts across the United States, there is significant evidence to suggest that there are academic and pedagogical issues in teaching the aforementioned historical event. Teachers are “unprepared by professional background and training” due to the fact that there is a lack of discussion amongst educators and education professionals about the “aware[ness] of the academic and pedagogical pitfalls” on incorporating Holocaust study into elementary school curricula (Stotsky, 1998). Holocaust education material differs from that of the remaining academic subjects in education: the context within which this historical phenomenon occurred is one that even “scholars continue to examine the adequacy of the explanations offered for it” (Stotsky, 1998).

There is a need for both educators and students to obtain a disciplinary understanding of the Holocaust, rather than a sympathetic understanding. Individuals should be able to convey the historical context within which the Holocaust occurred and seek conclusions that further address the persistent presence of genocides (Rich, 2019). Holocaust education invites critical discourse; however, teachers often present the learning material as given and subsequently encourage a “closed nature of their ‘teaching’ process” (Stotsky, 1998). Doing so is detrimental to student learning as it does not allow them the opportunity to synthesize historical information. However, this is the current reality of Holocaust education in the United States education system: New Jersey public education students are failing to provide “beyond basic facts or even basic emotional reactions” when prompted to recall what they remember about the genocide (Rich, 2019). Teacher candidates, who are responsible for potentially educating their pupils on this subject matter, are victims of the flaws apparent in Holocaust education.

Developments and changes in Holocaust education curriculum begin with the standards and domains that identify student learning needs. Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, created the Social Justice Standards (TTSJS), an organizational structure that presents educators with a framework for addressing anti-bias education in all classrooms from grades kindergarten to twelfth. The project acknowledges the need to educate today’s youth through available classroom resources. The Southern Poverty Law Center supports teachers by providing professional development workshops and research-based standards. The standards were born out of a desire to incorporate both “prejudice reduction and collective action” (TTSJS, 2016). They seek to engage educators and students in discourse that supports anti-bias attitudes and behaviors in society. The aforementioned standards are not restricted to social studies curriculum; the anchor standards and domains allow significant flexibility in their application to other academic subjects and their corresponding curricula.

The decision to educate students about prejudice and discrimination comes with the responsibility of promoting active conversations and learning of difficult topics concerning historical and current events. Social justice education is unique in that the nature of the material can be quite emotionally challenging for students. Thus, educators must be aware of a variety of strategies and methods to best approach certain situations that may require sensitivity. Applying the utilization of picture books to address issues and content is a particular method that teachers and teacher candidates have sought to implement in their classrooms. The authors of the article, “Addressing 21st-Century Crises through Children’s Literature: Picturebooks as Partners for Teacher Educators,” state that “picturebooks serve as mirrors offering vicarious forums to see and develop understanding, responses, character, empathy, and action” (Crawford, et al. 2019). Books offer both the insight and content necessary to portray the crises in a depiction that best addresses the matters at hand.

For the purpose of the aforementioned study, 20 picture books were divided amongst different topics: refugee status, homelessness, poverty, and hunger were the four issues. The authors noticed that the trade books incited “thoughtful, critical reading, not only with children, but also with early childhood teacher candidates” (Crawford, et al. 2019). The texts instigated individuals’ desires to respond to current events and crises as “these storylines pull young readers internally to rehearse the intricate and personal factors impacting our ability to respond positively to our fellow human beings facing times of crisis” (Crawford, et al. 2019). Without a catalyst for insightful conversations and active responses, 21st century crises remain as verbal concepts. Without the presence of discourse, individuals may continue to struggle in emotionally connecting to circumstances of pain and suffering that have not been experienced firsthand.

Auggie and Me: Three Wonder Stories by R.J. Palacio is an example of a trade book that may be considered “unconventional” by teachers of Holocaust education, for the historical event does not serve as the main context upon which the stories were written. A lesson plan utilizing the third short story, “The Julian Chapter,” was created with the intention to teach the Holocaust to a class of third grade students for the purpose of collecting data. As the grandmother speaks about her own experiences as a young Jewish teenager during Germany’s invasion of France in World War II and her relationship with a disabled boy, domain-specific vocabulary is utilized to describe the memories. In an effort to properly address the historical context behind Grandmère’s story and utilize the moment as a learning opportunity for Holocaust education, the book, *Tommy*, would have been introduced to the third grade students.

To Tommy: For His Third Birthday, by Bedřich Fritta, is a picture book that was published when Tommy’s adoptive father returned to Terezin and discovered bundles of hidden paintings that were illustrated for Tommy’s third birthday album. *Tommy: A Guide for Pre-School and Elementary-School Teachers, Grades 1-3*, was published alongside *Tommy* to provide educators with the opportunity to explore the historical content and emotional responses of young students in the classroom. The tone of the curriculum guide is gentle and sensitive as the author recognizes the necessity for such respect and appreciation in investigating this picture book with individuals.

The guide suggests that the educator analyze the picture book through three separate phases: Stage One “studies the Tommy character,” Stage Two instigates conversations about the historical background and context, and Stage Three asks students to apply and respond to the themes that were evident in the illustrations. Following this specific procedure in sharing this picture book is significantly impactful for students as it illustrates an entire journey to allow individuals to forge a personal connection with Tommy and his father. The correlating questions to each painting prompts individuals to apply their critical thinking skills in making inferences regarding Tommy, his father, and the conditions of the particular era of the Holocaust.

This literature review has examined the standards of New Jersey as well as national and international research and standards on Holocaust education for elementary level students. It reviewed research on Holocaust education in general, focusing on a few specific examples. The following section addresses the methodology used to explore the field.

METHODOLOGY

Due to circumstances of the 2019-2020 coronavirus pandemic, it was necessary to make adaptations to the original visitation and teaching schedule. One museum visit, to The Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City, was made. Information from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. and the National Liberty Museum in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was reviewed online due to building closures. One in-person interview with a museum educator was conducted. The education departments of the aforementioned museums were contacted; however, due to the issuance of closure orders by state and federal governments, the personnel became unavailable. As detailed below, modifications were made to the projected teaching schedule. A feasible alternative, approved by the research advisor, was employed.

The Museum of Jewish Heritage - A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, located in Lower Manhattan, was chosen for its exhibits memorializing artifacts and testimonies collected from survivors of the genocide. “The Auschwitz Exhibition,” “Ordinary Treasures: Highlights from The Museum of Jewish Heritage Collection,” and “Garden of Stones by Andy Goldsworthy” were specifically explored during the museum visit, with the intention to seek their potential role as an aspect of Holocaust education. Omar Balouch, a senior history major at Hunter College and a former intern in the Education department of the aforementioned museum, was interviewed for his insight behind the department’s programs for students.

Currently on the museum website, there is a separate webpage in which links to several educational resources, as well as the museum’s personal curriculum, are available for public usage. It is evident that The Museum of Jewish Heritage seeks to support the presence of Holocaust education in schools as they provide professional development workshops for educators and classroom programs for partnered school districts. Balouch specifically touched upon his own experiences participating in and leading the aforementioned programs in middle school classrooms by utilizing various components of the

museum's virtual resources. However, before interns, such as Balouch, were allowed to partake in the program, preparation of background knowledge and classroom management was most certainly necessary. "We first had a very, very intensive training procedure, every day, from 9 to 5, for two weeks straight. [There were] lectures we had to listen to. It was very much a college classroom. And on the side of that, [we] had to memorize a 12-page script. And after that training program, [we] would go to different schools all across New York City and we would teach for the whole class."

The Museum of Jewish Heritage is not the only museum in the United States offering such educational programs and resources. The intention of the researcher was to visit the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. and The National Liberty Museum in Philadelphia, PA for their respective exhibitions on the Holocaust. The National Liberty Museum was of particular interest due to its "Forbidden Art" exhibition, a temporary collection of images of art created under the dire circumstances of the German Nazi Auschwitz Concentration and Extermination Camp (The National Liberty Museum, 2019). As the lesson plan developed during this research specifically incorporates masterpieces painted during World War II, "Forbidden Art" was intended to serve as an example of how art and culture could potentially be utilized to teach Holocaust education. Although legal and health-related mandates prevented the viewing of the actual exhibit, related news articles provided some information about the background and composition of the artworks displayed.

Exhibitions such as "Daniel's Story" and "One Thousand and Seventy-Eight Blue Skies" are difficult to replicate online; however, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's website produces a myriad of online exhibitions that are available for public usage. The media appears to be appropriate for students of middle and high school level: the academic language and domain-specific words that are incorporated suggest that the online exhibitions are difficult for younger elementary grade individuals to comprehend. Similar to The Museum of Jewish Heritage, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum also has an education department that publishes resources and materials for educators to teach about the Holocaust. They provide guidelines on approaching the subject with the sensitivity and awareness necessary for the development of Holocaust education in a classroom curriculum. It must be noted that the museum advocates for teachers to educate their pupils about the Holocaust starting in grades six and above. The museum website states that "while elementary age students are able to empathize with individual accounts, they often have difficulty placing them in a larger historical context" (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d.).

As previously mentioned, the Holocaust lesson plan incorporating *Auggie and Me* and *Tommy* was unable to be taught due to complications arising from the 2019-2020 pandemic. In replacement of being present in the classroom, the lesson plan was sent to the researcher's student teaching cooperating teacher for her feedback and critique regarding the implementation of the lesson, based upon her knowledge and observations of the researcher's teaching abilities. There were three specific areas of evaluation: the cooperating teacher provided comments on the content of the trade books, the pedagogy of the lesson, and the potential execution of the lesson plan.

It is through the information and data collected from the museums, interviews, and lesson plan feedback that the active presence of Holocaust education can be observed. The following section will demonstrate that with the researcher's direct participation in integrating the aforementioned field of education into school curriculum, provides a new perspective on Holocaust education.

DISCUSSION

Considering the research and data collected from academic literature, museum visit, interviews, and critiques by two relevant individuals, the following points can be made. Holocaust education is extensive across the United States; however, there is a lack of teacher preparation programs and resources available in Holocaust education for elementary schools. The literature is at odds with itself. There are researchers and education professionals who emphasize that elementary age students with their limited emotional capacities are unable to fully comprehend the magnitude of the Holocaust. It is a fair argument and certainly one that should be considered. However, this claim should not fully deter educators from incorporating varying degrees of Holocaust education into elementary grade curricula. It is crucial to teach

young students about the Holocaust because it is an important part of elementary students' knowledge base.

It was previously mentioned that the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum cautions educators from utilizing specific resources with younger elementary age students. Instead, experts at the museum encourage educators to "begin discussing the value of diversity and the danger of bias and prejudice" (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d.). They bring attention to "Remember the Children: Daniel's Story," an exhibition that could potentially be utilized as an introduction to the history of the Holocaust for late-elementary school grades. While the museum does not necessarily encourage an in-depth examination of the historical event, educational experts emphasize the exhibition as an opportunity for students to empathize with an individual eyewitness account, especially that of a child.

Due to persisting circumstances, as previously mentioned, the cooperating teacher was only able to return feedback regarding the content and pedagogy of the lesson plan and her prediction as to how the lesson would have been received by the students. As expected, she had reservations and concerns due to the content that the class would be exposed to, especially without emotionally and mentally preparing the individuals prior to the lesson. She conveyed hesitancy; however, the teacher also indicated that she would be interested to witness how such difficult topics could be properly taught to young students, such as her pupils.

Children's literature has become a formidable tool in elementary education as trade books have become increasingly present in the field of education to promote interdisciplinary learning. Teachers may utilize the *Magic Tree House* series by Mary Pope Osborne to introduce the winter and summer solstices or incorporate the *Who Was?* books to expose students to the genre of biographies. Crawford emphasizes, "Content knowledge, providing accurate and reliable information, as well as dispositions arising from the heartfelt themes within the pages of children's books, can provide prospective teachers, as well as children, with the means to better understand these often overwhelming and confusing contexts."

Some of the most prevalent titles concerning the topic of the Holocaust are *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry and *The Diary of Anne Frank* by Anne Frank. Both pieces of literature are enhanced by teachers with the content knowledge and emotional connections necessary to convey their intentions across to their respective audiences. Dr. Errol Putman, an assistant professor at the State University of New York - Geneseo, presented evidence of how Lois Lowry's novel could be utilized as the introduction to "several universal issues, such as fear, intimidation, and helplessness, that are relevant today" (Putman, 2003). In providing directions for four activities that could be facilitated in a social studies classroom, Putman acknowledged that *Number the Stars* supported the literary and historical narratives necessary to establish connections and relationships between then and current society (Putman, 2003).

As a result of studying the literature, the researcher recognized that "emotional responses serve as an entry point for critical academic study, combining attitudes and beliefs from the students' own lives with knowledge grounded in a universal context" (Rich, 2019). Thus, the researcher sought to create a lesson plan that would include text and trade books that provoked emotional responses from young elementary students. As *Auggie and Me* provided a testimony of a Holocaust survivor through the perspective of the classroom bully the students were already familiar with, it was expected that the students would be able to establish an emotional connection with Julian's grandmother. *Tommy* was included for individuals who may desire to contextualize through visual aids as the collection of paintings depicted life in the Terezin ghetto. It was imperative that the researcher was mindful to consider the necessity to incorporate multimodal forms of learning, especially with a topic that is expected to be difficult to accept and comprehend.

Echoes and Reflections is a professional development program that offers educators "research-based strategies" for teaching Holocaust education (Echoes and Reflections, n.d.). They provide webinars, such as "'Safely In, Safely Out: Teaching the Holocaust without Traumatizing,'" in order to equip education professionals with the necessary preparation to teach difficult topics present in social studies curricula. The program advocates for the usage of primary source materials as it is crucial to not only "understanding the loss of life on a massive scale; it also means appreciating that these masses were mothers, fathers, siblings, grandparents, children, and proud citizens – people just like us" (Echoes and Reflections, n.d.). Such principles support the organization's desire to promote inquiry-based learning

models as they have deemed it necessary to provide young students with the opportunity to interpret perspectives through their own critical thinking. Jennifer Rich describes this methodology as “disciplinary thinking,” a comprehensive understanding obtained through “using primary and secondary sources; considering narrative structure; understanding change and continuity, cause and effect, and turning points; and employing inquiry” (Rich, 2019).

When addressing current issues of racism and prejudice in the classroom, teachers ensure that their students are given the historical contexts behind what instigated the need for many social justice movements across the nation. Disciplinary thinking marries contextual knowledge and critical thinking skills as both are equally necessary to encourage academic discourse in the classroom. Educational research currently suggests that most members of society are unaware and uninformed of the various elements that collectively contributed to the Holocaust. Generations of students in the United States continue to graduate and become active participants in society, unconcerned of history’s potential to repeat itself. Although a difficult topic, the Holocaust must be thoroughly explored in a classroom setting as it is critical that those students, holding the future of the United States in their hands, are aware of such controversies and issues of discrimination.

By presenting the opportunities to learn about the horrific realities of world history, educators are inviting academic discourse and application to be present in an effective learning environment. Academic curricula in elementary school should promote the usage of primary and secondary sources extensively by exposing students to books, music, photographs, letters, etc. The integration of such sources, especially in social studies, encourages students to practice their critical thinking skills as they are “keys to independent judgement and learning” (Patrick, 1986). Elementary level students need the opportunity to develop their own morals and sense of social justice by learning about historical events in history that have oppressed the human rights of those belonging to minority ethnic and racial groups. Such schooling begins with educating the teachers of the United States to better address the necessary topics that may be deemed “too difficult” to discuss in a classroom environment. Sensoy and DiAngelo state, “Just agreeing that social justice is important is not enough without the practice of social justice” (Sensoy and DiAngelo, 2009). Oppression remains steadfast in a society that is guided by a lack of knowledge and passivity towards issues of human rights (Sensoy and DiAngelo, 2009). As educators seek to instill morals and values into their students, they must hold themselves accountable to practice social justice not only inside of their classroom, but also outside of it as well.

The question remains: how can the United States education system better support educators by providing resources and opportunities to gain knowledge and awareness in addressing the Holocaust and social justice in an elementary education classroom? Regardless of whether or not an elementary level educator seeks to encourage Holocaust education to become an active presence in academic curricula, it is necessary for teachers to be fully equipped and prepared through professional development. There are certain topics in social studies curriculum that may require increased delicacy and awareness when brought up in conversation. Topics such as immigration and internment camps are examples that indicate a need for sensitivity among both educators and students. Online sources and professional development courses are just two of many resources available to novice and veteran educators. However, one must recognize that without the sensitivity and knowledge required to properly implement Holocaust education, educators’ efforts are futile.

CONCLUSION

One may argue against the relevancy of the Holocaust to this nation’s current circumstances: World War II occurred more than seven decades ago and many Americans struggle to empathize with those who suffered under the German regime. However, the inability to relate and respect the Holocaust’s presence to this world’s history is what makes Holocaust education a necessary topic in the education field.

According to the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education, its mission is to continually “survey the status of Holocaust/Genocide Education; design, and encourage and promote the implementation of Holocaust and genocide education and awareness; provide programs in New Jersey; and coordinate designated events that will provide appropriate memorialization of the Holocaust on a regular basis throughout the state” (N.J.S.A. 18A:35-28). However, it is apparent that, although there are

state mandates such as the one mentioned, the United States education system continues to persist in its neglect of Holocaust education as a crucial aspect of academic curricula.

Such a movement to reform the future of social justice and Holocaust education will remain at a standstill at the hands of detached education professionals. It is the responsibility of current educators and teacher candidates to desire to promote the presence of Holocaust and genocide education as a necessary component of social studies. Resources and teaching materials for Holocaust education are not scarce; rather, there are numerous education professionals who choose to invest their time and effort into designing preparation programs and curricula to support school districts and their educators. Memorial museums, learning centers, and the authors of children's literature are also providers of Holocaust education available to aid in teaching elementary school students about difficult topics. Despite the prevalence of such sources for Holocaust education, a lack of teachers' knowledge remains, making them unable to educate elementary level students on the aforementioned topic.

The New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education has not updated its legislation and mandate since March 19, 1994, the day the law was adopted. The field of education has changed substantially over the last few decades as societal norms and current issues have adapted with the times. One should expect the New Jersey Department of Education to continue to improve and amend the established legislation to better address the needs of the current generation of primary and secondary students. Educators in this profession must persuade legislators and policymakers to revisit the mandate as they should come to recognize the importance of keeping New Jersey school districts accountable for implementing the mandate. Considering how important social justice and human rights education have become as of late, it is imperative that education policy and legislation reflects the needs of society.

The State of New Jersey Department of Education requires educators and teacher candidates to provide Holocaust and genocide education to their students. School districts should arrange for their teachers to participate in the necessary professional development programs to broaden and strengthen their skills and knowledge. One can deduce, from the collected data, that teachers across New Jersey have varying degrees of knowledge regarding Holocaust and genocide studies. Resulting from this reality are generations of students who graduate from primary and secondary schools without proper comprehension and understanding of this horrific event. The New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education must seek to foster a partnership between the members of the commission and New Jersey school districts to ensure that public school educators are receiving the proper training and equipment to address the topic with the students. Teaching Tolerance and Echoes and Reflections provide excellent forms of professional development programs for social justice and Holocaust education, respectively. By investing in those resources for their teachers, school districts will be able to establish a stronger foundation upon which they may be able to implement elements of Holocaust education into academic curricula.

It is understandable that educators may continue to be apprehensive about addressing Holocaust and genocide studies in their classrooms because there is a need for extreme sensitivity amongst not only the students, but the teachers as well. In order to cushion the emotional impact that young students may experience in learning about the Holocaust, the researcher recommends the utilization of picture books and novels to aid students in empathizing with the people who experienced the detrimental consequences of the genocide. Educators may find that a variety of literary genres are effective in providing options for the introduction of Holocaust material.

As the world continues to struggle in addressing sensitive matters of current events and world history, the need to properly integrate Holocaust education, especially with students in elementary school, will endure. Without teachers actively partaking in controlling the narrative of Holocaust education in school districts across the United States, it can only be assumed that generations of students will mature without having fully understood and comprehended the consequences of the Holocaust and its subsequent impact on the world. This research study has explored several paths to address the issue.

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