

Holocaust and Genocide Education Curriculum Guidance

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Issue

Explain whether the Connecticut Holocaust and genocide curriculum addresses (1) ethnic hate speech, (2) the link between racial intolerance and violence, (3) the link between (a) prejudice and discrimination and (b) genocide, (4) the responsibility of individual citizens to fight racism and hatred, and (5) cultural diversity.

Summary

A state law enacted in 2018 requires each public school district to include Holocaust and genocide education and awareness in its social studies curriculum ([CGS §§ 10-16b\(a\)](#) and [10-18f](#)). But the law does not have specific requirements regarding the topic. Rather, the State Department of Education (SDE) provides Holocaust and genocide education [guidance](#) that addresses a range of topics. The topics include hate speech, how this speech can be used to fuel racist ideology, and the dangers of citizens being silent or indifferent to the suffering of others. The SDE guidance also includes questions for students to consider, such as whether understanding the role of prejudice and hate speech in past genocides can inform efforts to prevent future ones.

Turning to the state's overall kindergarten through grade 12 [social studies framework](#), the topic of the Holocaust was already part of the recommended high school world history curriculum before the requirement passed in 2018. Also, when considering the framework more broadly, some of the concepts this report focuses on are included in other areas of social studies. For example, the framework includes cultural diversity in a number of different contexts, such as early Connecticut history.

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[PA 18-24](#) requires each public school district to include Holocaust and genocide education and awareness in its social studies curriculum starting in the 2018-19 school year. The law does not include specific requirements regarding hate speech and the other topics mentioned above. Rather, it allows local and regional boards of education to use existing and appropriate curriculum materials, including those the State Board of Education (SBE) must make available. The act also requires SBE to assist and encourage local school boards to include Holocaust and genocide education and awareness in their social studies curriculum.

In general, state law, curriculum guides, frameworks, and other SBE documents do not dictate specifics about public education curriculum. This applies to the Holocaust and genocide education requirement. On SDE's webpage, the specific terms mentioned above regarding teaching about the Holocaust and genocide are addressed in some instances. In the instances where the exact phrase is not addressed, the meaning of the actual terms used is essentially the same.

Under the topic of "Reasons for Teaching the Holocaust and Genocide," the SDE [guidance](#) suggests that students learning about possible means to prevent genocide is one of the rationales for this curriculum. This topic addresses how students "should learn to recognize and counteract steps that served as the precursors to genocide in the past, such as systematic discrimination and dehumanizing hate speech." It continues, "the study of the Holocaust and genocide serves as a warning of the dangers of being silent or indifferent to the suffering of others." This specifically mentions hate speech and links genocide to prejudice and discrimination. Further it includes the responsibility of individual citizens to fight racism and hatred. The document's "Concluding Reflections" also points out that genocides often "include the presence of racist ideology that is fueled by demonizing stereotypes and hate speech."

In addition to the guidance mentioned above, SDE's Holocaust and Genocide Education webpage includes [resources by grade and subject](#), which offer a wide range of links to documents, videos, slideshows, and reputable organizations.

General Social Studies Frameworks

SDE's K-12 social studies framework includes the Holocaust and refers to other 20th century genocides (e.g., the Nanking Massacre and the Armenian Genocide) in the high school history curriculum ([framework page 126](#)). Since it addresses the entire spectrum of grades, the framework does not provide a lot of detail on any particular topic, including the Holocaust.

Additionally, the state's K-12 social studies framework addresses some of the topics mentioned above in the broader area of social studies. Most prominently, the framework mentions cultural diversity in a number of different contexts, including early Connecticut history (third grade) and early American history (fifth grade). For fifth grade American history, the framework suggests that curriculum planners could chose cultural diversity and American national identity as a course theme that could be used throughout the school year ([framework pages 66-68](#)).

The framework's topics include various United States civil rights movements and racial and religious conflict.

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