



Together for an Inclusive Massachusetts' Public Comment to DESE's "Antisemitism and Societal Bias Prevention: Curriculum and Professional Development Rubric"

December 1, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public comment on the draft "Antisemitism and Societal Bias Prevention: Curriculum and Professional Development Rubric" to guide the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE), compliance with MGL Chapter 71 Section 98A. A comprehensive rubric can guide educators, schools, and districts in the selection and development of high quality classroom materials and professional development about antisemitism and other forms of societal bias. It can also clarify how different, contested understandings of antisemitism impact education, including the impact of bad faith, false accusations of antisemitism on educators' freedom to teach and students' right to learn.

We appreciate DESE's commitment to transparency and public input, both of which are critical to ensuring the integrity of education, especially concerning topics like antisemitism and other forms of societal bias about which there are a wide range of opinions and experiences. A transparent set of criteria will also help protect educators from slander and discipline for doing their mandated jobs helping students engage in inquiry learning about topics considered controversial or sensitive.

If the rubric does not guide schools and districts in addressing antisemitism and societal bias using inclusive and anti-racist principles, we risk: a) not protecting Jewish students from the major sources of antisemitism, which originate in the white nationalist right-wing; b) perpetuating and normalizing anti-Palestinian racism; and c) chilling the speech of both students and teachers and inhibiting learning. We believe that an antiracist approach to antisemitism uplifts all communities and does not harm one group for the supposed benefit of another.

There is a national trend designed to narrow curriculum in K-12 classrooms to limit what students are exposed to. Massachusetts' frameworks require that students be taught how to think critically, and **DESE must not allow this rubric to be used as a tool to further narrow students' understanding of historical and current content.**

PURPOSE AND LIMITATIONS

We understand this rubric as a tool for vetting curricular materials and professional development, not as guidance to schools for how to prevent or respond to antisemitism. The Massachusetts Attorney General's "[Guidance on Schools' Legal Obligations to Prevent and Address Hate and Bias Incidents](#)," produced in partnership with DESE and the Executive Office of Education, is already linked in the rubric. Still, we recommend quoting this sentence from the guidance in the rubric's preamble: "The Guidance describes schools' obligations under Massachusetts's anti-bullying and anti-discrimination laws; clarifies how schools can and should take action against hate-related bullying and harassment while upholding students' rights of freedom of speech and expression; details required affirmative steps to create a positive school climate and prevent hate and bias incidents from happening in the first place; and provides examples of best practices to combat hate in our schools."

We also suggest that DESE note in the preamble that since incidents that are antisemitic, racist, or that otherwise fall under the umbrella of "societal bias" invariably happen, **schools should address these unacceptable situations as learning opportunities tied to the teaching and learning goals advanced by this rubric, aligning with DESE's Safe and Supportive Schools and [Rethinking Discipline](#) initiatives, rather than defaulting to a disciplinary response.** It should also make explicit that classroom content and speech that is new or challenging is not hateful. It may make some students uncomfortable, but being uncomfortable is not the same as being unsafe. Moreover, no group should be censored or silenced, even if their identity makes others uncomfortable. In fact, helping students engage with ideas that make them uncomfortable is a core objective of education.

We also recommend that DESE make explicitly clear that this rubric is not meant to be used for evaluating educators or censoring curriculum or classroom discussion. For example, the selective listing of some standards and frameworks in the rubric may open other standards and frameworks to challenges of bias.

We have organized our feedback about the rubric into four categories: 1) priority observations and concerns; 2) specific recommendations; 3) select amendments to the rubric; 4) recommended resources and 5) citations and articles.

PRIORITY OBSERVATIONS AND CONCERNS

1. **Most importantly, it is essential that the rubric very clearly distinguish between antisemitism, which is bigotry and discrimination against Jews as Jews, and political speech critical of Israel that is not hateful and fully protected by law.** Furthermore, since Jews are multifaceted, the rubric must assist educators to ensure that Jewish experience is not collapsed to only their Jewish identity but can explore intersectional identities.
2. The rubric will be useless at helping schools teach about antisemitism unless it very clearly also distinguishes what is *not* antisemitism. Currently, false accusations of antisemitism are being used to censor classroom content critical of Israel and/or examination of Palestinian narratives. Unless teachers are supported and protected to teach accurately about antisemitism and other forms of societal bias—without vulnerability to false accusations – teachers will feel vulnerable to politicized discipline and be less likely to address students’ questions.
3. The law says the rubric should include both antisemitism *and* other forms of societal bias. This is important because all forms of discrimination are related and interact with one another. Unfortunately, **the draft rubric fails to include other forms of societal bias as mandated**, and as a result, may lead to the unintended consequence of appearing to single out and prioritize Jewish students over others in a way that may lead to resentment, and even reinforce antisemitic tropes.
4. **Students should understand both the unique and universal aspects of each form of marginalization in historic context and the intersectional impacts on the interpersonal, institutional and systemic levels.** This inclusive approach to bias helps all students reflect on the ways they both benefit from and are harmed by discriminatory systems, stereotypes and tropes, and othering. In this way, students develop solidarity with other groups rather than competing with them. An exclusively interpersonal anti-bias framework excludes understanding systemic factors underlying forms of prejudice.
5. The law says the rubric should address both curriculum and professional development. This is important because excellent classroom materials will not have a beneficial impact if educators are not trained and supported to facilitate student inquiry about antisemitism. We find the attention given to professional development in the rubric to be weak. We suggest the rubric go into greater

detail about **criteria for selecting vendors and partners that provide formal and informal professional development so that schools and districts aren't subjected to political pressure to allow, announce, endorse or provide professional development offerings from vendors that are not vetted or do not meet explicit criteria**. We suggest that the rubric set these as criteria to **approve vendors** or partners (including parent groups):

- Align with *all* of the values and principles about diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging and justice articulated by DESE, the school or school district.
- Recognize historical and social context when addressing social justice issues.
- Distinguish between the varying and disproportionate impacts of discrimination on different groups while upholding every group's right to dignity.
- Consistently defend the rights and wellbeing of *all* students and propose solutions that benefit *all* students, not just some.
- Uphold the social justice practices the vendors espouse across their organizational work.
- Are seen as credible by and about a diverse range of communities.
- Demonstrate responsiveness to good faith critiques of their pedagogy.

We also suggest the rubric articulate criteria for vendors or partners to **disqualify vendors** who:

- Have a demonstrated history of advocating for local, state, or federal policy or legislation that undermines public education or the job security and safety of educators who prioritize excellent teaching above political considerations.
- Advocate local, state, or federal policy that censors or restricts the critical examination of the history or actions of the United States or any other nation-state.
- Prioritize any educational approach that would protect the comfort of one ethnic, religious, or national group over the rights of another.
- Seek to restrict discussion or lawful protest by students or educators about contentious topics on their campus.
- Conflate criticism of Israel with antisemitism, or use statistics that consider protected political speech in support of Palestinian rights as antisemitic. (Schools operating in jurisdictions that have adopted the IHRA definition of antisemitism must be especially careful to avoid partnering with organizations that promote censorship to protect a group from being discussed and/or criticized.)

- Engage in speech or actions that target or threaten the wellbeing and rights of Palestinians, Muslims, Arabs, and/or supporters of Palestinian human rights from any background.
- Weaponize Title VI of the Civil Rights Act by suggesting that criticism of Israel creates a hostile environment for Jews (i.e., conflating Zionism with Judaism) in an effort to bully institutions into changing their educational policies or programming.

6. The **rubric is solidly grounded in existing Massachusetts educational policy and practice that is well-tested; it references standards, frameworks and best teaching practices found in DESE's [Educational Vision](#) and the [History and Social Science Framework](#)** and around which there is consensus among highly regarded scholars and educators. We consider this a strength of the rubric. We **support the rubric's requirement that materials align with one or more standards from the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and may not be in conflict with any of the Massachusetts Frameworks**. However, to prevent confusion or the appearance that these topics should be taught solely through the lens of Jewish history or antisemitism, we recommend that the rubric explicitly includes the history of other marginalized groups alongside Israeli history, including Palestinian history. Alternatively, we recommend removing the examples of content standards from the frameworks altogether that are listed in the draft rubric.

7. We also appreciate the rubric's vision for addressing bias, which states that

"Prejudice is countered when educational environments foster critical thinking, empathy development, and self-esteem to create positive anti-bias environments where respect for diversity is taught, modeled, and experienced. Schools have legal obligations to prevent and address hate and bias incidents."

This phrase highlights that learning does not occur solely in the classroom, but rather is learned via modeling by adults and institutional alignment with values and principles taught to students. We suggest drawing on "[Race, Racism, and Culturally Responsive Teaching in History and Social Science in Massachusetts: Frequently Asked Questions](#)" by **explicitly adding the requirement to cover current events and using resources to discuss tough topics instead of avoiding them**. This document quotes from Guiding Principle 2 of the HSS Framework, stating that "effective history and social science instruction celebrates the progress the United States has made in embracing diversity, while

at the same time encouraging honest and informed academic discussions about prejudice, racism, and bigotry in the past and present.”

8. **The draft rubric’s treatment of antisemitism as being a different and separate category of prejudice misses the mark and lacks an understanding of how antisemitism is related to other forms of societal bias.** Merriam-Webster dictionary defines [antisemitism](#) as “hostility toward or discrimination against Jews as a religious, ethnic, or racial group.” In what ways are other forms of societal bias related to prejudice, discrimination, hatred? In what ways do they all intersect? How do they differ? These are important questions to be addressed in any meaningful consideration of the topic.
9. The rubric does not clarify important terminology. For example, the rubric references “protected characteristics” in relation to both antisemitism and societal bias, although in a previous paragraph, it says societal bias is prejudice based on “identity characteristics.” This lack of consistency is confusing and may lead to divergent interpretations and actions. In addition, the rubric seems to use “societal bias” and “identity-based bias” interchangeably. **We recommend the rubric adhere to “protected characteristics” as that is a legally defined term and the basis of legal obligations of schools.**
10. Further, we recommend the rubric not use terms such as “hate”, “bias”, and “prejudice” interchangeably, but instead to specify based on the long traditions of research and practice associated with each. Whenever possible, the rubric must refer to terminology that adheres to schools’ legal anti-discrimination obligations. Given there are a range of practices that use these terms, we suggest a clarification that includes reference to [understanding inequality and injustice using a structural analysis](#), including historic context. Without exploring why there are intergroup conflicts, students may be left thinking it is simply human nature and [nothing can be done](#).

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Teaching about Jewish experience must always emphasize the diversity among Jewish people, including in political views.** We note that “broad representation of diverse Jewish identities” is mentioned in criteria #3, but since avoiding a monolithic representation of Judaism is essential to addressing antisemitism, we suggest it be carved out as its own criterion and specified. A possible framing for this criterion might be: “Materials address antisemitism and

Jewish history with a broad representation of diverse Jewish identities.”

For example, the rubric should explicitly state the importance of exploring how antisemitism was and is different in Christian majority countries vs. Muslim majority countries. It should explore the implications of different and changing ways of understanding Jewishness (e.g., as a religion or ethnicity). It must describe the diversity in political opinions among Jews on topics like antisemitism itself, the political ideology of Zionism (including Christian Zionism), the state of Israel, and Palestinian rights, etc. The Jewish community has always held diverse opinions about the establishment of a nation-state for Jewish people, from the beginning of the Zionist political movement, to before October 7, 2023, and in the last year.

2. Antisemitism trainings must:
 - a. decouple Jewish identity from any nation-state (e.g., Israel) or political ideology or belief (e.g., Zionism or anti-Zionism);
 - b. foreground antisemitism’s relationship to, and interaction with, other dangerous ideologies including white nationalism, anti-Black racism and anti-immigrant xenophobia.
3. We recommend adding the following topics where appropriate:
 - a. exploration of different understandings of what antisemitism is and what it isn’t; its role in white Christian Zionism and Christian nationalism; the impact of these different ideas on intra-Jewish relationships and on other groups, especially Palestinians; interrelated concepts like Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian racism;
 - b. includes broad representation of Jewish experience in the United States and around the world;
 - c. exploration of Jewish relationships with other groups with inclusion of conflicts and solidarity.
4. **Rather than referencing example content standards in the rubric, which are accessible in the frameworks and are too expansive to list, we recommend that DESE promote an inquiry approach as outlined in the National Council for the Social Studies 3C Framework:**

“...students need the intellectual power to recognize societal problems; ask good questions and develop robust investigations into them; consider possible solutions and consequences; separate evidence-based claims from parochial opinions; and communicate and act upon what they learn.”

Curriculum and professional development aligned with the C3 Framework, in addition to the Massachusetts' History and Social Studies Framework and the Massachusetts Digital Literacy and Computer Science Framework, would be a great addition to the rubric. Through inquiry-based education, students engage with a diversity of materials; ask questions and think critically; understand fact-based information and then formulate their own opinions. These skills are necessary for students to be effective citizens. **It is impossible to meet these standards if certain words or perspectives are *a priori* considered hateful, such as “genocide,” “apartheid,” and “colonialism,” and therefore censored from discussion in the classroom.**

5. In key places, expand the description of “meets expectations” to address issues that are known to be problematic. For example, discussion of the establishment of the state of Israel must explicitly include the pre-existing rich indigenous Palestinian society, including Palestinian Jews as well as the *Nakba*. Treating Palestine solely as a backdrop to Jewish history constitutes erasure and is a form of anti-Palestinian racism. Additionally, while Israeli perspectives are supported and openly discussed in the classroom, Palestinian students’ experiences — whether family history with the *Nakba*, living under conditions of occupation, as citizens or residents of the state of Israel, or direct experience of family living through war — are frequently silenced and punished, another manifestation of anti-Palestinian racism. **All students deserve to have their perspectives, stories, and experiences discussed and explored in the classroom.**
6. Massachusetts requires schools to integrate genocide education into the existing curriculum frameworks in middle and high school. The [genocide education mandate](#) requires the teaching of the conditions of genocide through examples of “historical and contemporary genocides” and encourages students to engage in inquiry. An example of an inquiry-based learning cycle is given at the high school level where students might explore and address the question “When and how should the United States intervene to address genocide?” Inquiry-based education in the current historical moment will invariably lead to numerous reports documenting that Israel is carrying out an active genocide in Gaza.

The rubric must defend educators and students from allegations equating legitimate education with hate, as expressed in the [ADL’s recent statement](#), which uses language from the IHRA definition of antisemitism to imply that accusing Israel of genocide is a form of hostility towards Jewish people. This allegation creates an environment of censorship and intimidation, effectively

preventing educators and students from learning about current events in Gaza. Censorship of well-respected and widely available primary source materials—such as reports from [The Lemkin Institute](#), [Amnesty International](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), and the [United Nations](#) as well as [Israeli](#) and [Palestinian human rights](#) organizations—would be in direct conflict with DESE's HSS Frameworks, which places importance on students' engagement with primary source materials and on generating their own questions for inquiry-based learning. We strongly believe that our classrooms must be safe places to engage in critical thinking about these issues based on DESE's educational frameworks and reflective of the current discourse among [Holocaust](#) and [genocide \(pdf\)](#) scholars. Some students may feel uncomfortable when encountering opinions they disagree with or don't understand, but this discomfort is intrinsic to learning. Feeling uncomfortable must not be confused with being unsafe.

7. "Meets expectations" of Criteria #6 ("Materials include helpful supports for educators") should:
 - a. specify expectations for helping students discuss divergent viewpoints about colonialism, apartheid, US foreign policy and similar topics in a constructive way that respects narratives and also distinguishes opinion from fact.
 - b. also specify information and advice for teachers to protect themselves against false accusations of antisemitism when they include Palestinian viewpoints.

SELECT AMENDMENTS TO THE RUBRIC

TIM's Education Work Group has compiled some examples of suggested language that might be added or revised in either the "criteria" or "meets expectations" column to address some of the issues we raised in this feedback. The criteria as currently written could be clearer and expanded, but we are using the current framework for organizing these particular suggestions. See the list below for some of our ideas. **This list is not meant to be complete and exhaustive but instead is meant to be illustrative** of the type of language that would help make the rubric more specific and inclusive.

1. **Current Criteria:** Materials align with the MA History and Social Science (HSS) Curriculum Framework

Suggested criteria: Materials align with the MA History and Social Science (HSS) Curriculum Framework [and DESE's Educational Vision for Students](#)

Suggestions for “meets expectations”

- a. Remove specific references to US and World History standards and replace with:
“Instruction related to the establishment of the state of Israel includes the pre-existing rich indigenous Palestinian society, including Palestinian Jews and the *Nakba*. Treating Palestine solely as a backdrop to Jewish history constitutes erasure, a form of anti-Palestinian racism.
- b. Materials help students engage with the world: understand and think critically about local, national, and world events and societal systems; and create positive change through civic action.
- c. Materials explore various ways of conceptualizing Jewishness today and over time, including as a religion, ethnic group, race, or political orientation and the implications of these concepts on Jewish and non-Jewish people.
- d. Materials provide a comprehensive, accurate history of the diversity of Jewish experience—including as targets of discrimination and as recipients of support from other groups—across time periods and regions.

2. **Current Criteria:** Materials address antisemitism within broader context of societal bias

Suggested criteria: Materials address antisemitism within broader context of societal bias and emphasize the interaction between forms of bias and discrimination using an equity and justice lens

Suggestions for “meets expectations”

- a. Materials encourage honest and informed academic discussions about prejudice, racism, and bigotry in the past and present .
- b. Materials explore different forms of prejudice, marginalization and discrimination—including antisemitism without exceptionalizing it—comparing and contrasting the experiences of different groups and exploring the relationship among them and the functions they serve in society, the impacts on targeted people, and different groups’ coping and resistance strategies.
- c. Materials acknowledge that there are a range of understandings among Jewish and non-Jewish people about what constitutes antisemitism, and

a diversity of views among Jewish and non-Jewish people about the relation of Jewish people to Zionism and the state of Israel.

- d. Materials address the root causes of antisemitism and other forms of societal bias, and how they have upheld violence and unequal systems of power, such as Christian hegemony, slavery, patriarchy, colonialism and white supremacy.
- e. Materials explore the experience of Jewish people without using Zionist ideas that engage in anti-Palestinian racism by erasing, silencing, and discrediting the experiences and perspectives of Palestinians.

3. Current Criteria: Materials support students' mental and emotional health and building healthy relationships in combatting antisemitism and societal bias

Suggested criteria: Materials support students' mental and emotional health while helping them to build empathy, mutual respect, and healthy relationships

Suggestions for “meets expectations”

- a. Materials support the development, exploration and expression of identity of all students, generating a value for and culture of inclusion.
- b. Materials help students understand and value self: know their own strengths, interests, and areas of growth, be self-aware, be a self-advocate, and make responsible decisions.
- c. Materials help students understand and value others: understand differences and multiple perspectives, empathize with others, and build connections with peers and adults.
- d. Materials encourage emotional mental health, including constructive introspection and mutual respect for others, while conducting critical inquiry and an unrestricted exploration of current events in a safe and supportive environment; materials support students in engaging with difficult topics with the understanding that feeling discomfort is not the same as being unsafe.
- e. Material encourages students sharing their own lived experiences as a form of engaging in classroom materials and discussions.

4. Criteria: Materials have students evaluate and analyze information and sources aligned with the expectations across the MA Curriculum Frameworks

Suggestion for “meets expectations”

- a. Materials build students’ capacities for research, reasoning, making logical arguments, and thinking for themselves.

5. Criteria: Materials include general elements of high-quality curricula and are accessible for all students

Suggestion for “meets expectations”

- a. Materials help students attain academic knowledge and skills and apply their competencies in relevant, real-world contexts.

6. Criteria: Materials include helpful supports for educators

Suggestions for “meets expectations”

- a. Provides guidelines for helping students discuss divergent viewpoints about colonialism, apartheid, US foreign policy and similar topics in a constructive way that respects narratives and also distinguishes fact from opinion.
- b. Offer information and advice for teachers to protect themselves against false accusations of antisemitism when they include Palestinian viewpoints.

7. Criteria: Professional development is aligned to and meets the criteria for high quality

Suggestions for “meets expectations”

- a. Provided by vendors and presenters whose expertise and main focus is education, not political advocacy.
- b. Acknowledges and explores the diversity of Jewish thought.
- c. Approaches antisemitism and other forms of societal bias through an intersectional, equity framework.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Together for an Inclusive Massachusetts would like to also share high quality curricula and resources that are especially relevant to creating this rubric.

- [Criteria: How to choose credible, principled sources on racism and antisemitism](#) (DroptheADLfromSchools)
- [Training Curricula](#) (Parceo)
- [Dismantling Antisemitism](#) (Bend the Arc Jewish Action and the Collaborative for Jewish Organizing)
- [Diaspora Alliance](#)
- [Social Justice Standards](#) (Learning for Justice)
- [Transforming School Culture to Address Antisemitism and Islamophobia](#) (Learning for Justice)
- [A Very Brief Guide to Antisemitism](#) (T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights)
- [Restorative Practices Can Prevent and Heal Bias-based Harm](#) (Intercultural Development Research Association)
- [Against Erasure: Anti-Palestinian Racism and Curricular Violence in Schools and What We Can Do about It](#) (Teach Palestine)
- [Recommendations For Countering Anti-Palestinian Racism In K-12 Schools](#) (The Institute for Anti-Palestinian Racism)
- [Criticism of Israel and Antisemitism: How to Tell Where One Ends and the Other Begins](#) (T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights)

CITATIONS AND ARTICLES CITED IN THIS RESPONSE

(in order of appearance)

- Ismael Jimenez, [Anti-Semitism and Anti-Blackness: Who Is Protected in American Schools?](#), November 29, 2025.
- The White House, [Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling](#), January 29, 2025
- Laura Baker, [Texas Board of Education moves forward with plan to narrow social studies curriculum, prioritize state history](#), Nov. 21, 2025
- Marianne Dhenin, [Educators Worry Palestine Censorship Could Reshape Public Education Entirely: New efforts to shut down honest discussion of Palestine could restrict everything from literature to science classes](#), November 29, 2025
- MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, [Rethinking Discipline Initiative](#)

- MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, “[Race, Racism, and Culturally Responsive Teaching in History and Social Science in Massachusetts: Frequently Asked Questions](#)”
- Learning for Justice, [Social Justice Standards: The Learning for Justice Anti-Bias Framework](#), September 2022
- Kerry Ann Escayg, “[Who's got the power?": A critical examination of the anti-bias curriculum](#)”, ICEP 13, 6 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40723-019-0062-9>
- Caroline Morganti, [Are 95% of Jews Really Zionists? Polls of American Jewish opinion on Israel may not be asking the right questions](#), Jewish Currents, October 29, 2020
- Yakov M. Rabkin, [A Threat from Within: A Century of Jewish Opposition to Zionism](#) (2004)
- Caroline Morganti, [Recent Polls of US Jews Reflect Polarized Community: Trying to keep up with shifting opinion on Israel/Palestine, surveys of American Jews are beginning to ask new questions](#), Jewish Currents, June 29, 2023
- Zainab Iqbal, [Why so many young Jewish Americans are anti-Zionist](#), February 8, 2024
- National Council on Social Studies, [The College, Career, and Civic Life \(C3\) Framework for Social Studies State Standards: Guidance for Enhancing the Rigor of K-12 Civics, Economics, Geography, and History](#) (2013)
- MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, [FAQs: Genocide Education in Massachusetts](#)
- The Lemkin Institute, [Active Genocide Alert - Israel-Palestine: There is No Justification for Genocide](#), October 13, 2023
- Amnesty International, [Israel's genocide against Palestinians in Gaza continues unabated despite ceasefire](#), November 27, 2025
- Human Rights Watch, [Israel's Crime of Extermination, Acts of Genocide in Gaza](#), December 19, 2024
- United Nations Human Rights Council, [Legal analysis of the conduct of Israel in Gaza pursuant to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide](#), September 16, 2025
- B'Tselem, [Our Genocide](#), July 2025
- Letter to ICC Prosecutor from 100 organizations (including many Palestinian Human Rights organizations) and 6 genocide scholars, “[Urgent: Issue Arrest Warrants, Investigate Israeli Crimes and Intervene to Deter Incitement to Commit Genocide in Gaza](#)”, October 19, 2023
- Shira Klein, [The Growing Rift between Holocaust Scholars over Israel/Palestine](#), January 8, 2025

- Mari Cohen, [Can Genocide Studies Survive a Genocide in Gaza?](#) Jewish Currents, Fall/Winter 2024

CONCLUSION

The first draft rubric is too broad and lacks the clear and consistent terminology needed for providing meaningful guidance to evaluate and select materials on antisemitism and societal bias. The rubric as it currently stands will also not help protect educators who want to address antisemitism and other forms of societal bias through an antiracist, inclusive lens and who want to use materials that explore history and current events regarding Israel and Palestine from a Palestinian perspective. This perspective is already heavily censored, and combined with repressive recommendations such as “problematic curriculum” and bias reporting systems coming from the Commission, the rubric has the potential to help pave the way for state-sponsored censorship. We hope that the next draft of the rubric addresses our concerns.

As you review the public comments on this draft rubric, please be aware that there are some people and organizations who seek to rigidly codify standards and narrow what can be taught and explored in our schools; police educators and curricula under the guise of keeping “divisive materials” out of schools; and advance and reinforce certain political positions by preventing students’ access to curricula, including ethnic studies and health curricula, that allows them to understand and challenge US policies and prevailing narratives.

Please consider us as a resource as you strive to provide this very important tool to Massachusetts educators and policymakers. Given the importance of this topic, we request that a second draft be made available for public comment before the rubric is finalized.

Sincerely,

Steering Committee and Education Work Group
Together for an Inclusive Massachusetts
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Together for an Inclusive Massachusetts (TIM) is a diverse group led by Alliance for Water Justice in Palestine, Arlington for Palestine, Boston Workers Circle, the Council on American-Islamic Relations - Massachusetts, If Not Now Boston, Jewish Voice for Peace Boston, Jewish Voice for Peace Western Massachusetts, Massachusetts Peace Action, MTA Rank and File for Palestine, National Lawyers Guild - Massachusetts,

Sawa: Newton-Area Alliance for Peace and Justice, with the support of more than 40 organizations from across the state that came together around the belief that **addressing antisemitism is essential, and must be done with care, reflecting the diversity of all Jewish people in the Commonwealth and within a framework that embraces equity and inclusion for all. We want to ensure that the Commonwealth's next steps are inclusive, transparent, and constructive.** To be clear, it is our deep and unwavering commitment to equality and justice for all—including Jewish people and Palestinians—that compels our work.