



NORTH AMERICAN VALUES INSTITUTE



September 4, 2025

Dear Rabbi,

As the High Holidays approach, families in your congregation are looking for messages and guidance that will be meaningful during these challenging times.

The High Holidays, a season of renewal, also coincides with the beginning of the school year. The North American Values Institute (NAVI), an organization dedicated to supporting liberal values and opposing radicalism in K-12 education, and the Zionist Rabbinic Coalition, dedicated to love of the Jewish people and Zionism, believe this is a moment that calls for moral leadership from those most trusted by our community. We believe it is essential to draw attention and sound the alarm about what is happening in schools across the country.

Troubling ideological trends are reshaping K-12 education. Ideas once confined to small corners of college campuses have now entered the mainstream and appear in school curricula. While some methods of how children are taught to understand history, identity, and justice are acceptable, others fuel hostility toward Israel, Judaism and the Jewish people.

We are writing to you to ask for your partnership in raising awareness about this growing trend, as it presents a serious challenge to how non-Jews perceive us and how Jewish students feel about their own identity and history.

Among this country's greatest blessings is the open and free exchange of ideas. This, coupled with the protection of freedom of conscience, thought, and expression, has enabled Jews and other minorities to thrive. But the ideology we speak of in K-12 and higher education rejects disagreement, discourages honest engagement, and enforces conformity—all of which are antithetical to values we hold dear. We are concerned about the long-term and short-term damage of this approach. We are therefore urging you to alert parents to pay attention to this growing challenge, which threatens the civic principles and moral commitments that have long safeguarded Jewish life in America and prevented ideologues from indoctrinating our kids.

What's happening in many K-12 schools would have been unthinkable just a few years ago:

- **Jewish identity is marginalized and racialized.** In some cases, students are asked to complete “identity maps” or “power and privilege charts” that label Jews as white and privileged, obscuring our people's history, faith, and experience.
- **Zionism is being delegitimized.** Israel is often presented in classrooms through a one-sided “settler colonialism” political lens. Jewish students who voice support for Israel may be intimidated and treated as morally suspect or pressured to recant.
- **Complexity is erased.** Curricula organized around ideas like “decolonization” or “critical consciousness” divide students into binary categories of oppressors/oppressed, which leaves little room for dissent, context, or Jewish historical experience and presents a distorted and negative perspective of Jews.
- **Parents are being sidelined.** Jewish families who raise concerns are often ignored, shamed, or excluded for expressing discomfort with ideological content.
- **Silence is common.** Teachers and administrators who object to politicized materials are intimidated and often afraid to speak up out of fear. The result is a narrowing of discourse that echoes throughout the school community and harms Jewish and other students.

The principles of open inquiry, critical thinking, and respectful disagreement—or in the Jewish tradition “*Makhloket Leshem Hashamaim*”—are being replaced by moral and intellectual orthodoxies. Not only is this a distortion of history and reality, but it has a clear political agenda that will have long-term detrimental impact on us as well as on America as we know it.

As a rabbi, you are uniquely positioned to help your community meet this moment with courage, wisdom, and leadership. The values that have sustained Jewish life for millennia—the dignity of the individual, the pursuit of justice with humility, and honest and open discourse—offer a powerful alternative to the dangerous ideologies now taking hold.

We dare not allow this to continue unchallenged. We do so at our own peril. To help counter the rise of radical ideology in our nation's schools, we ask you to please consider the following actions:

- **Raise awareness within your community.** Use sermons, newsletters, or conversations to help parents understand what is happening in schools. Many people are unaware of the extent or nature of these changes. Convene meetings of parents of school-age children to inform them and to discuss what is happening.
- **Encourage curiosity.** Invite parents to ask: What frameworks are shaping the classroom? What assumptions are being made about identity and justice?
- **Uplift Jewish values.** Remind families that Judaism celebrates complexity, self-reflection, and moral courage. These values should be central to a good education.
- **Support those speaking up.** Parents who raise concerns often feel alone. Your voice can offer them support and legitimacy. Encourage your parents to question and learn more about the curriculum and how these subjects are being taught.

You might consider incorporating messages such as:

- “Ask your children what they are learning in school. Look at the materials and resources that are being used. Materials that appear values-driven may carry assumptions that conflict with the values that have enabled Jewish life to thrive.”
- “In Philadelphia, public schools are using curriculum designed by someone who praised the October 7 attacks. These materials are in classrooms right now.”
- “Don’t assume that everything labeled ‘justice’ aligns with our values. Ask who created the material. What does it say about our nation’s values and what has enabled Jewish life to thrive?”
- “Our tradition values *machloket l’shem shamayim*—argument for the sake of heaven. We believe in teaching children how to think, not what to think.”
- “Silence in the face of harmful ideas is not neutrality. We have the duty and responsibility to our children and our communities to speak up when something is off.”


What is happening in schools may seem like only an academic or political issue, but it should also be of great concern to the Jewish community because it affects the safety and sense of belonging of our children. We want our children to grow up thinking independently, proud of their heritage and of Israel, and ready to contribute to the free and open society that supports Jewish life. We want non-Jews to respect and appreciate our history and heritage and not to have a negative distorted image of who we are. We need renewed leadership and the affirmation of the values that are necessary for the next generation and for our nation and community to thrive.

We would be honored to speak with you about how we can support one another in this work.

With gratitude and hope,



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Zionist Rabbinic Coalition



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