

FIVE PERSPECTIVES

Why Curriculum Supervisors Are Prioritizing Holocaust Education

The Holocaust was a watershed event that has fundamentally shaped the world we live in. Examining this history provides students with a learning opportunity to think critically about the choices that led to the Holocaust and their own actions today. Accurate and effective instruction is paramount, but many educators need additional support to teach about this complex history. Learn from state and district leaders who are working to successfully integrate Holocaust education into their curriculum through strategic partnerships, scaling of instructional best practices, and distribution of free, high-quality resources and professional development.

How Can You Find Trusted and Knowledgeable Partners?



LINDA BURROWS
Deputy Associate Superintendent of
Academic Standards, Arizona Department
of Education

As the former Director of K-12
Social Studies and World and Native

Languages at the Arizona Department of Education, Linda Burrows was responsible for integrating the Holocaust into the state's social studies curriculum and meeting the requirements of legislation passed in 2021. She understood that engaging the right partners would be key to the success of this work. Arizona, like nearly every other state, was facing unprecedented levels of teacher turnover. "New educators were coming to classrooms, and I was concerned that they simply wouldn't know where to start with the Holocaust."

A task force of local community members; educators; and representatives from the Arizona Department of Education, religious organizations, and **local Holocaust education centers** worked together to develop an implementation plan and toolkit for educators. As Burrows reviewed instructional resources and considered how to adequately support teachers, she also turned to educators at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, who provided **teaching guidelines, on-demand professional development videos, and curated, standards-aligned teaching resources.**

To provide free, online training to educators, the Arizona Department of Education worked with Kim Klett, a Phoenix Holocaust Association board member and educator, who is also a Museum Teacher Fellow (MTF). The Museum has trained a national corps of more than 430 **Museum Teacher Fellows** to help lead its efforts to ensure quality Holocaust education in secondary schools across the country.

That was "some of the most powerful professional development that we offered to teachers," Linda said. "These fellows have gone through all that training with the Museum but live in Arizona. They know the issues that we face here ... and could share how they implemented strategies in their classroom." Plus, Linda continued: "These are the gold standard of resources. There's no question of their authenticity, no bias, no agenda, and teachers build confidence when they use them."

How Can You Scale High-Quality Holocaust Instruction?



MICHELLE McLAUGHLIN
K-12 Social Studies Consultant, US Senate
Youth Coordinator, Office of Academic
Standards, North Carolina Department
of Public Instruction

Adequately preparing educators to teach about the Holocaust remains of utmost importance to education leaders. With limited time for professional development and competing demands, many educators

FIVE PERSPECTIVES: Why Curriculum Supervisors Are Prioritizing Holocaust Education (continued)

seek accessible instructional support to build teaching and learning resources that help students develop and apply critical thinking and analytical skills. Providing access to high-quality Holocaust education has become a top priority for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Serving as their education consultant, Michelle McLaughlin integrated Holocaust education into the state’s repository of instructional support. To begin, she relied on the expertise of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and its regional partner, the North Carolina Council on the Holocaust. The council’s experienced classroom educators, many of whom trained at the Museum, worked tirelessly to curate and develop curriculum resources that incorporate accurate historical content and pedagogical best practices.

To improve the state’s ability to provide high-quality Holocaust resources aligned with state standards, Michelle chose to participate in the Museum’s free, virtual **Belfer National Conference for Educators**. “I don’t have to worry about ensuring the materials are accurate,” McLaughlin said. “They have archived a wealth of artifacts, images, and primary sources.” She also collaborated with the council, UNC Charlotte, Queens University of Charlotte, and the Stan Greenspon Holocaust and Social Justice Education Center to enable the state to provide training on methods and instructional strategies for teaching about the Holocaust across multiple subjects and courses in grades 6–12.

Working with trained experts has enhanced the state education team’s capacity to provide high-quality Holocaust instruction in classrooms across North Carolina. Michelle is committed to developing teacher leaders through professional development. “We aim to identify and nurture strong teachers who are interested in getting more training, and who are willing to participate in the development of curriculum, so that they can grow into master teachers who are able to support, guide, and lead other teachers.”

How Do Teacher Leaders Build Instructional Confidence?



TINA HEINECKE-KURTZ
Museum Teacher Fellow and National Board-Certified Special Education Teacher, Oconomowoc Area (Wisconsin) School District

Learning effective strategies for teaching about the Holocaust with other invested educators provides a powerful opportunity for shared growth, collaboration, and support. Tina Heinecke-Kurtz participated in the Museum’s **Belfer National Conference for Educators** with a cohort of teachers from her district and was surprised by its impact on her. “You go in thinking you’ll learn more about how to teach, but you leave with more questions,” Tina shared. “How am I going to honor this important work? How am I going to get my students to engage in more meaningful ways? And how am I going to get others to join me?”

Shortly after the conference, Tina applied to become a **Museum Teacher Fellow** and join a corps of skilled educators who participate in immersive training with Museum historians and educators. The training is designed to support and scale the delivery of accurate and effective Holocaust education. “I realized I could create a bigger ripple by bringing more teachers in from inside and outside our district,” she said.

As a fellow and teacher leader, Tina has become a trusted advisor for educators in her area. Well versed in the **Museum’s collection of primary-source-based lessons**, classroom activities, and **professional learning opportunities**, she can guide educators to appropriate resources. “If you take a lesson from the Museum, all the resources have been vetted,” she said. Tina is inspired to continue her work because the payoff is so significant and important to our future. “The goal of critical thinking is the greatest gift we can give students, getting them to question the why, exploring how the Holocaust pertains to their life and their actions.”

FIVE PERSPECTIVES: Why Curriculum Supervisors Are Prioritizing Holocaust Education (continued)

How Can We Inspire Students to Ask Why?



ANNALISE VEZINA
Bringing the Lessons Home Ambassador,
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum;
Student, American University

Learning about the Holocaust gives students an opportunity to develop civic competencies, as well as critical thinking and analytical skills as they consider the roles, motives, and actions of nations, organizations, and ordinary people. Annalise Vezina, now a student at American University, became an ambassador when she completed the Museum's 14-week **Bringing the Lessons Home** program during high school. She has always been intrigued by history and the questions it prompts about the conditions that allowed certain historical events to happen. When she initially learned about the Holocaust, she asked, "How could this have happened? How was it allowed to happen in a democratic country less than 100 years ago?"

These enduring questions set Annalise on a path to understand more. When asked why students should learn about the Holocaust, Annalise explained, "There's so much that's unexplored ... and I think young generations are the people to do that ... examining the ethics of the Holocaust, or the lack thereof, and being aware of what can happen."

Survivor memoirs connected her to the experiences of the Holocaust, Annalise said. "You can't hear from a survivor or read their testimony and not be impacted, left thinking about what they experienced—this heart-crushing feeling that this actually happened to people."

Annalise still acts on the pledge she made when she became an ambassador. "I will not judge people for how they look or who others think they are, but rather by their own actions."

Who Can Support Curriculum Leaders across the Country?



SALLY LEVINE
Executive Director, Georgia Commission
on the Holocaust

Sally Levine directs the Georgia Commission on the Holocaust, an organization that is part of the Museum's **Community of Holocaust Education Centers (CHEC)**. "We know the requirements and needs of teachers in Georgia, and we also work closely with the Museum and utilize many of the resources, training, and expertise that they offer," she said. "It is a great partnership that allows us to make sure curriculum leaders and teachers in all disciplines and grade levels have the content and guidance to confidently incorporate the Holocaust into their courses. CHEC partners can provide local and regional histories that help to build relevance for our students."

David Klevan, a Museum education outreach specialist, consults directly with state supervisors to help them advance Holocaust education. They often request support when they must address legislation and standards across disciplinary areas, David said. He recommends relevant instructional resources and on-demand, virtual, and in-person professional development opportunities. "Many educators want to teach about the Holocaust with accuracy and sound approaches but also do not feel prepared," he said. Understanding that many educators are just beginning this teaching and have limited time, the Museum and its CHEC partners offer classroom-ready, standards-aligned resources that support educators with varying levels of experience to deliver effective lessons.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is America's national institution dedicated to ensuring the permanence of Holocaust memory, understanding, and relevance. The Museum serves the American public, teachers, and students in all 50 states with **resources and professional learning opportunities**. The Museum convenes a Community of Holocaust Education Centers (CHEC), made up of local and regional Holocaust organizations, that work together to advance Holocaust education in classrooms across the country.

Learn how we can support your work advancing Holocaust education in your state. **CONTACT US** dklevan@ushmm.org