



Mohammed Choudhury
State Superintendent of Schools

February 1, 2023

Mr. Howard Libit, Executive Director
Baltimore Jewish Council
5750 Park Heights Avenue, Suite 329
Baltimore, Maryland 21215

Dear Mr. Libit:

Thank you for reaching out to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to inquire about updates regarding our shared commitment to Holocaust education in Maryland. As the Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning at MSDE, I have been asked to respond on behalf of the agency.

To provide your membership with an update on the steps that have been taken since 2019 to support Holocaust education in Maryland, I am providing the information below that includes background information about state frameworks and state standards, an overview of the revisions made to the state frameworks by grade band, and a timeline of the steps taken by MSDE for strengthening Holocaust education professional development in Maryland schools.

MSDE's Framework Development Process

The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.04.08.01, *Requirements for Social Studies Instructional Programs for Grades Prekindergarten – 12* states that, “each local education agency shall provide in public schools an instructional program in social studies each year for all students in grades prekindergarten – 8; and offer in public schools a social studies program in grades 9 – 12 which enables students to meet graduation requirements and to select social studies electives.”

Social Studies State Frameworks are developed by MSDE to support local education agencies in providing high-quality instructional programs in social studies. State Frameworks are defined as supporting documents and provide guidance for implementing the State Standards in Social Studies, which are reviewed and adopted by the Maryland State Board of Education every eight years. State Frameworks also provide consistency in learning expectations for students in social studies programs across the twenty-four local education agencies as local curriculum is developed and adopted using these documents as a foundation.

MSDE shall update the State Frameworks in Social Studies in the manner and time the State Superintendent of Schools determines is necessary to ensure alignment with best-in-class, research-based practices. The tenure and stability of State Frameworks affords local education agencies time to procure supporting instructional materials, provide professional development, and to measure student growth within the program. Educators, practitioners, and experts who participate in writing workgroups for State Frameworks represent the diversity of stakeholders across Maryland. State Frameworks in social studies were developed, reviewed, and revised by teams of Maryland educators and practitioners, including local education agency content curriculum specialists, classroom teachers, accessibility staff, and academic researchers and experts in close collaboration with MSDE.

Background

MSDE continues its long-standing support for the teaching of the Holocaust and other genocides. Since the development of Maryland's first content standards framework in the 1990s, the Holocaust and other genocides have been required for students to study. MSDE is responsible for developing frameworks that reflect the needs of all students in Maryland. As a result, all 24 local education agencies have always had objectives covering the Holocaust in the curriculum they develop for high school United States and Modern World History.

The Holocaust is also taught in English Language Arts. Often students read *Night*, *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*, *The Book Thief*, *Between Shades of Grey*, *Maus*, *Number the Stars*, *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*, and *the Diary of Anne Frank*. This multi-disciplinary approach guarantees students multiple opportunities to encounter and understand this tragic and instructive period in global history.

In August of 2019, MSDE received inquiries about the status of Holocaust education in Maryland. MSDE met with representatives of your organization to garner stakeholder feedback to strengthen Holocaust education in Maryland. This included:

1. seeking opportunities for inclusion in the revised State Frameworks in the elementary frameworks;
2. seeking opportunities for inclusion in the revised State Frameworks in Grades 6 and 7 frameworks;
3. strengthening the objectives in High School United States History;
4. strengthening the objectives in Modern World History State Frameworks; and
5. providing ongoing professional development for teachers in Holocaust education.

Below is a summary of the revisions made in each grade band to increase opportunities for the inclusion of Holocaust related objectives.

Early Learning Grades

Guidelines from national organizations including the [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#) and [Facing History and Ourselves](#) recommend teaching the Holocaust in Grade 6 and above. These experts cite the developmental ability to empathize with individual eyewitness account and the content needed to contextualize events surrounding Holocaust history as limiting factors for introducing the content to young learners. Instead, these organizations advocate for the inclusion of objectives that have young learners analyze the value of diversity and the dangers of bias and prejudice. The PreK – Grade 5 state frameworks provide opportunities for students to learn concepts such as freedom, bias, power, authority, diversity, and the role of the individual in supporting the common good.

Middle Level Learning

The pandemic delayed the planned revisions to the grades 6 and 7 frameworks. Initially slated to start in the fall of 2020 the revisions process began in spring 2021. The intention within these frameworks was to advocate for the addition of an objective(s) regarding the roots of antisemitism that would help students to contextualize the study of the Holocaust when they get to high school. These state frameworks are currently being revised and are undergoing academic review at the time of the writing of this letter. Upon approval, final revisions and public release is expected in May 2023.

High School Learning

MSDE altered the language of two objectives in the high school state frameworks for Modern World History and United States History. These revisions were finalized in November 2019.

State Framework	Before Revision	After Revision
Modern World History	Analyzing the systematic and state-sponsored atrocities perpetrated by governments in Europe and Asia during World War Two.	Analyzing the systematic and state-sponsored atrocities perpetrated by governments in Europe and Asia during World War Two. Evaluate the causes, course, and consequences of the Holocaust.
High School United States History	Critiquing the domestic and foreign policy response of the United States to the Holocaust and refugee crisis.	Analyze the origins of the Holocaust and the motives, pressures, and fears that shaped the American response.

Holocaust Education Professional Development

The successful implementation of state frameworks relies on adequate and sustained professional learning. Below is a timeline of professional development opportunities developed by MSDE and associated groups to support educators in teaching the new objectives.

December 2020

Social Studies Supervisor Briefing - “American and the Holocaust” with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

March 2021

Social Studies Supervisor Briefing - “Racial Laws in Nazi Germany” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

May 2021

Social Studies Supervisor Briefing - Announcement and introduction to the Jewish Museum of Maryland and the MSDE teacher cohort for 2021-2022

September 2021

Social Studies Supervisor Briefing - “History Unfolded” Resources and Lesson Plans United States Holocaust Memorial Museum <https://newspapers.ushmm.org/>, Introduction to the Jewish Museum of Maryland (JMM) and MSDE’s Maryland Teacher Cohort, Introduction to Towson University’s Holocaust Initiative with Dr. Todd Kenreich

2021 – 2022

Maryland Holocaust Education Cohort

MSDE and JMM created a cohort of teachers to support the development of teacher resources for the revised objectives in the state frameworks for High School United States History and Modern World History. Educators who attended the Summer Institute at JMM in the last three years were invited to participate in the first cohort. Building on their learning from these conferences the selected teachers attended professional development sessions hosted by JMM and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) focusing on the Key Guidelines for Teaching the Holocaust from the USHMM. The teachers wrote lessons that draw from resources archived at JMM and the USHMM. The lessons were reviewed by the JMM in the summer of 2022 and shared with social studies supervisors in December 2022.

MSDE/JMM Cohort Outcomes:

- Participants will be able to utilize national and local resources to develop lessons that support Holocaust education in the high school United States History and Modern World History courses.
- Secondary level social studies teachers in Maryland will have access to lessons that address Holocaust related objectives in their courses that have been designed by master teachers and vetted by JMM and MSDE.

Selected Cohort Teacher Leaders

- Six total representing:
 - Baltimore City
 - Talbot County
 - Anne Arundel County
 - Howard County
 - Harford County
 - Baltimore County
 - Carroll County

Cohort Workshops

October 26, 2021

- Review of USHMM principles for teaching about the Holocaust
- Teacher development of belief statements

November 2, 2021

- Application of USHMM principles and responsible pedagogical approaches to teaching about the Holocaust
- USHMM American and the Holocaust and JMM resources

November 9, 2021

- Research behind the importance of using testimonial in Holocaust education
- Survivor testimony

Winter 2021-2022

- Lesson plan development

Summer 2022

- JMM review of lesson plans and materials
- Recruit MD teachers for Winter and Summer Institutes at the JMM and USHMM

December 2022

- Lessons and materials shared with supervisors at the Social Studies Collaborative Meeting

January 2023

- 23 Maryland educators registered for the “Teaching *The U. S. and the Holocaust* Documentary,” facilitated by the Baltimore Jewish Council and the Jewish Museum of Maryland.

In addition to the opportunities provided by MSDE listed above, USHMM and JMM have offered professional development to Maryland teachers during Winter Institute held in February, Summer Balfour Conference, as well as Summer Institute in both August 2021 and 2022. These opportunities are expected to continue in 2023 – 2024.

I welcome the opportunity to meet with you regarding Holocaust education. Please feel free to provide me with available dates and times that you are available to meet within the next two weeks. I can be reached by email at deann.collins@maryland.gov or by telephone at 410-767-0651. Thank you again for your interest in social studies education in Maryland.

Sincerely,

Dr. Deann Collins
Deputy Superintendent of Teaching and Learning