

FLORIDA'S HOLOCAUST MANDATE

Florida's Legislature/Department of Education Required Instruction

In 1994 the Florida Legislature passed the Holocaust Education Bill (SB 660) which amends Section 233.061 of the Florida Statutes (Chapter 94-14, Laws of Florida), relating to required instruction. The new law requires all school districts to incorporate lessons on the Holocaust as part of public school instruction.

Required Instruction - 1003.42(f)

The history of the Holocaust (1933-1945), the systematic planned annihilation of European Jews and other groups by Nazi Germany, a watershed event in the history of humanity, to be taught in a manner that leads to an investigation of human behavior, an understanding of the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping, and an examination of what it means to be a responsible and respectful person, for the purposes of encouraging tolerance of diversity in a pluralistic society and for nurturing and protecting democratic values and institutions.

Florida Commissioner of Education's Task Force on Holocaust Education

As a result of the legislation requiring instruction on the Holocaust, then Commissioner of Education Doug Jamerson appointed a special Commissioner's Task Force on Holocaust Education. The Task Force, extended indefinitely by commissioner Frank Brogan, continues to pursue efforts to help teachers, school administrators, and other educators identify effective instructional strategies and materials for integrating the Holocaust into K-12 classrooms.

The mandate identifies both rationales and strategies for achieving Holocaust literacy. By focusing on key elements, the Task Force has created specific recommendations for the scope, content, and outcomes for Holocaust education in Florida schools.

I. Scope

The Holocaust is to be taught across the curriculum from preparatory lessons in the primary and intermediate grades, through exploratory studies in the intermediate and middle school grades, and synthesizing projects by the conclusion of the senior high school experience. Holocaust content is to be infused in ways that are age-appropriate, interdisciplinary, and consistent with other required instruction.

II. Content

The Holocaust is to be taught as a uniquely important event in modern history, emphasizing the systemic and state-sponsored violence, which distinguish it from other genocides. Florida teachers are enjoined to teach about the gradual unfolding and escalation of the Holocaust ("the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping"), with special attention paid to both the apathy and the altruism of the world community ("what it means to be a responsible and respectful person"). Finally, the Holocaust is to be taught in ways that encourage a pluralistic perspective and democratic practices.

III. Outcomes

Ultimately, the establishment of Holocaust studies in Florida schools is expected to play a significant role in the development of tolerant attitudes, cooperative and collaborative behaviors, informed, involved and compassionate citizens, and other skills encouraging civility.

Curriculum and Instruction

In 1991, the Department of Education, through the Florida Commission on Social Studies Education, recommended a new and innovative Kindergarten through Grade 12 model curriculum. The program, *Connections, Challenges and Choices, The Report of the Florida Commission on Social Studies Education* reflects the goals and outcomes of the Holocaust mandate. In addition, the State co-developed with Decision Development Corporation K-8 instructional materials that support the Connections program and the mandate. The literature and technology-based materials, *Social Science 2000: Connections, Challenges, Choices*, offer preparatory and exploratory lessons presented appropriately, and an extended study of the Holocaust is introduced at the middle school level.

In addition to the materials offered by the State, the Florida Holocaust Museum, in collaboration with Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Education, The Jewish Foundation for The Righteous, Facing History and Ourselves, and The Florida Center for Instructional Technology at the University of South Florida, has created and made resources available for teachers and students. The Holocaust Documentation and Education Center at Florida International University in Miami is currently revising a state-supported curriculum guide. A list of this center and others throughout the state may be found in Section V of this framework.