

TO: St. Paul Public Schools (SPPS) Board of Education; Interim Supt. Dr. John Thein

FROM: 531 SPPS stakeholders

DATE: Dec. 10, 2024

RE: Take action to address antisemitism in SPPS schools

Dear Dr. Thein and Members of the St. Paul Public Schools Board of Education:

We are St. Paul Public Schools students, parents/guardians, educators, staff, taxpayers, and alumni. Many of us are Jewish, but some of us are not. We are sending you this letter to ask you to take action to make SPPS a safer and more inclusive environment for Jewish students and staff.

Last month, the St. Paul Federation of Educators (SPFE) passed a divisive [resolution](#) that erased Jewish experiences and [promoted](#) the terrorist organization Hamas' narrative describing the October 7, 2023, invasion of Israel as "multiple resistance organizations in Gaza revolt[ing] against Israel." This narrative justifies the killing, kidnapping, and rape of innocent people, normalizing the worst antisemitic massacre since the Holocaust.

Before the vote, Jewish SPFE members read a [letter](#) from the rabbis of St. Paul's most prominent synagogues, warning "this resolution makes [the St. Paul Jewish community] feel less safe and secure in our schools and homes." Contradicting the Jewish community's most respected leaders, the resolution's proponents – adults responsible for teaching our kids – claimed their justification of October 7 was somehow consistent with "building a safer world for all oppressed people, including Jews."

At best, these claims belie a deep ignorance of Jewish identities, peoplehood and history. At worst, they mask anti-Jewish ideas.

Regardless of intent, the impact of this resolution and the rhetoric surrounding it invites systemic isolation, exclusion, and dehumanization of Jewish voices and concerns in our schools. And while SPPS has a longstanding commitment to fostering safe and inclusive learning environments for all students and staff, the painful and insulting erasure of consensus Jewish concerns in the SPFE discourse reveals a critical gap in the protection and support for our Jewish community members.

Combating systemic antisemitism in our schools requires action from SPPS leadership.

To ensure that our schools remain places of safety, respect, and learning, we respectfully urge SPPS leadership to require training from Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas (JCRC, which is the consensus public affairs voice of the Jewish community) on Jewish Identity and Antisemitism for all staff members.

This initiative should aim to:

1. **Raise awareness** of the complexity of Jewish identity.
2. **Increase understanding of** the unique ways anti-Jewish language, symbols, and behaviors manifest, and their impact on individuals and communities.
3. **Empower educators and staff** to recognize and appropriately respond to incidents of antisemitism in classrooms, hallways, and online platforms
4. **Foster inclusive practices** that create a sense of belonging for Jewish students and staff, reinforcing their right to safety and respect within our schools.
5. **Build stronger alliances** between educators, parents, and community members to proactively combat hate and discrimination in all forms.

Every student and staff member deserves to feel safe and valued in our schools. By implementing training on Jewish identity and antisemitism, SPPS will reassure and protect its Jewish community members while setting a powerful example of leadership in combating bias against minority communities in public education. Let us take this necessary step to ensure that all members of our community can learn, teach, and grow without fear of discrimination or harm.

We urge you to consider this proposal with the seriousness and urgency it demands, and we respectfully request a meeting to discuss the training proposal.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to your response regarding a stakeholders meeting. And we look forward to seeing St. Paul Public Schools lead the way in fostering an environment where all individuals and communities are respected and supported.