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Ways to Advocate on Behalf Of Your Child in School

The following guidelines can help you be proactive in communicating with your schools about matters of cultural sensitivity and holiday observances. Please keep in mind when you advocate on behalf of your own child that there is a wide range of Jewish observances in our community. Know that while schools may try their best to be sensitive to students from many backgrounds, they have a responsibility to acknowledge and respond to your concerns.

- 1 Talk to teachers at the beginning of the school year about any concerns and issues you have.** Offer to partner with the teacher in creating a positive learning environment that respects the identities of all students. Work in a constructive way to get the teacher invested in your child.
- 2 Bring teachers a copy of the JCRC Jewish Calendar and Guide, an informational brochure of observance dates and practices.** As soon as possible, make note of the holidays when your child will be absent from school and request make-up assignments.
- 3 Determine the district administrator who is responsible for your school calendar.** Make sure that administrator has a copy of the JCRC Calendar and Guide. JCRC sends this annually to Bay Area public school districts, but it may not necessarily reach the desk of the appropriate administrator.
- 4 Find out if parents can serve on the school calendar committee or in an advisory capacity to the committee.** This is another opportunity to insure that Jewish holiday observances are taken into consideration and your voice as a parent can be heard.
- 5 Know the laws (Santa Claus is legal).** However, don't hesitate to discuss with teachers how they might present a more balanced picture of holidays or curriculum that doesn't marginalize students of different faiths. Know that this can include information about different religions but not activities that, in themselves, students would experience as religious.
- 6 Determine if there is a grievance committee at your school site or in the district.** Learn about the issues this committee tackles and consider joining.
- 7 Feel free to share resources with your teachers and administrators.** JCRC can provide recommendations of workshops and programs for teachers and families on issues of cultural sensitivity and discrimination.
- 8 If an issue comes up in the classroom or on the school yard that requires attention, start by going through the appropriate channels:** teacher/counselor/principal/mid-level administrator/district administrator.
- 9 Contact the JCRC if you need assistance, so we can work with you to ensure positive results with the least amount of outside intervention.** If necessary, a meeting may be required to determine if there are systematic problems in the school and/or district that require further attention.
- 10 In the most serious cases, where anti-Semitic threats or racist graffiti are involved, contact the JCRC and Anti-Defamation League immediately.** There might also be a need for intervention by law enforcement.

Download the Calendar of Main Jewish Religious Observances from our resource page at jcrc.org/resources or contact JCRC for more information.



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