Sudbury Public Schools' Commitment to Addressing Antisemitism and All Forms of Hate and Bias

Statement of Intent:

The Sudbury Public School Committee will combat antisemitism and other forms of hate and bias in our schools and community by directing the Superintendent to convene an Anti Hate/Anti Bias Taskforce.

The Sudbury Public School Committee will adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) non-binding working definition of antisemitism, a widely used framework referenced by governments and institutions worldwide, including here in Massachusetts. IHRA exists because confronting antisemitism requires a shared definition. Without one, institutions are left unable to recognize patterns or respond consistently. The following is the working definition of antisemitism: "Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities." Developed over many years by leading scholars and practitioners, IHRA is a non-binding, practical framework now used by the United States (federally, and by many states), the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and nearby towns including Sudbury, Concord, Westford, and Acton.

It is also worth noting that the Massachusetts Special Commission on Combating Antisemitism described IHRA as "the most prominent" educational tool in its report last year. Governor Maura Healey publicly commended the report, calling it "a critical guide for educating our children, building a better understanding of the Jewish experience, and making it clear that antisemitism has no place in Massachusetts." Demonstrating its bipartisan support, former Governor Baker issued a proclamation in 2022 endorsing IHRA.

Whereas, the mission of the Sudbury Public Schools is to enable all students to reach their intellectual and personal potential and, in partnership with families and the community, to work with integrity and respect to prepare students to become lifelong learners and effective contributors to society; and

Whereas, the district vision affirms a commitment to excellence in educating students to be knowledgeable, creative, independent thinkers who are caring, collaborative members of the school and wider communities fostering an equitable, safe, supportive, inclusive, healthy, and joyful learning environment for all students. This shared goal includes addressing antisemitism and societal bias. DESE provides guidance, resources, and information to school officials and

others about federal and state civil rights laws that protect students from discrimination and harassment and provides resources and guidance on violence prevention to support efforts to prevent and address antisemitism and societal bias in schools, per M.G.L c. 71, s. 98A

Whereas, an essential tool in combating antisemitism is the ability to first define antisemitism in each of its multiple forms; and

Whereas, in October of 2023, FBI Director Christopher Wray warned that the "U.S. is seeing historic levels of something like 60% of all religious-based hate crime," additionally, in late 2023, the ADL antisemitism, accounting for reported that antisemitic incidents had reached their highest number in any two-month period since the organization began tracking them in 1979, with a 337-percent increase, and over a 61-day period in 2023, Jewish Americans experienced an average of nearly 34 antisemitic incidents per day; and

Whereas the School Committee believes that where there is antisemitism, there is hatred of all kinds; and that one incident of antisemitic or other biased or hateful behavior is one incident too many; and

Whereas, the Sudbury Public Schools Equity Statement affirms the district's commitment to welcoming, affirming, and celebrating all students, staff, and families, and to creating and sustaining a culture that promotes advocacy, equity, and justice for marginalized groups who have been systematically oppressed and excluded; and

Whereas, the Equity Statement further commits the district to an anti-bias education that includes and values the perspectives and histories of diverse peoples; and

Whereas, the district's Theory of Action identifies the provision of safe school environments, high-quality instruction, instructional leadership and professional development, and data-informed decision-making as essential conditions for student success and for narrowing achievement gaps; and

Whereas, the Sudbury Public Schools Inclusion Statement affirms that all means all and that the district is committed to being an inclusive environment where all students are full members of the school community and feel safe and able to thrive socially, emotionally, physically, and academically; and

Whereas, the Sudbury Public Schools District Strategic Plan identifies the following strategic objectives as central to student success:

- Wellness, promoting the social, emotional, behavioral, and physical wellbeing of students
- Meeting the Needs of All Students, providing equitable learning experiences to engage and challenge every learner
- Innovation, implementing research-based practices that support safe, inclusive, and effective learning environments

Whereas, the Strategic Plan further calls for initiatives that strengthen districtwide safety protocols, promote positive school climate, enhance social-emotional learning practices, inclusive systems of support, and improve communication and collaboration with families and the community; and

Whereas, the Massachusetts Special Commission on Combating Antisemitism issued its Final Report documenting a significant rise in antisemetic incidents across the Commonwealth, including within K-12 school settings, and offering best-practice recommendations for public schools to address antisemitism while upholding constitutional rights and academic freedom; and

Whereas, the Commission's findings emphasize that antisemitism must be addressed both as a distinct and escalating form of hate and as part of broader efforts to combat all bias and discrimination; and

Whereas, School Committee policies including IB (Academic Freedom), AC (Nondiscrimination Including Harassment and Retaliation), JB (Equal Educational Opportunities), and JBB (Educational Equity) establish the district's obligation to uphold constitutional principles, protect student dignity, ensure equitable access to educational programs and services, and maintain safe and inclusive learning environments; and

Whereas, members of the Sudbury community have expressed concerns regarding bias-based incidents, including antisemitic behavior, as well as questions related to district protocols, data tracking, response consistency, and communication with families; and

Whereas, the district's 2022 Equity Audit emphasized the importance of examining systems, policies, and practices, including incident reporting, disciplinary procedures, data tracking, communication practices, and student connectedness, to ensure equitable access, consistent responses, and a sense of belonging for all students, including those from smaller or underrepresented populations; and

Whereas, the Equity Audit further identified the middle school level as an area where student connectedness and perceptions of fairness decline, underscoring the importance of focused attention and coordinated district support; and

Whereas, the School Committee previously adopted an Anti-Racism Resolution in 2020 affirming the district's responsibility to confront racism and hate and to examine policies and practices that affect student safety, belonging, and access to educational opportunity;

Be it furthered resolved that:

The Taskforce will begin its work with a primary focus on combating antisemitism and on the middle school, but will continue its work to ensure that all forms of hate and bias in all of our schools and across the district and community are comprehensively addressed to the maximal extent possible.

1. Members will be appointed by the Superintendent after consultation with the School Committee and will include but not be limited to individuals representing the following stakeholders:

- School Committee member
- District and/or School Administrators
- District educators (from each school)
- Community and faith organizations
- Town leadership (including police).
- Stakeholders who represent the community

2. The Taskforce will be charged with developing recommendations designed to improve the culture and climate in our schools so that:

- Individuals who engage in hateful or biased conduct are educated and held accountable; and
- Students and families who are targeted are heard, supported, and protected.

3. These recommendations will address changes and/or enhancements to Sudbury Public Schools policy and practices, including but not limited to the following areas:

a. Protocols related to incident reporting, data tracking, investigation, response, and post-investigation communication to families/stakeholders, and revising student handbooks and other documents accordingly.
b. Formal age-appropriate educational programming and/or curriculum shifts to proactively teach students, families, and the community about antisemitism, racism, and other forms of hate and bias that result from lack of understanding of other cultures and lived experiences and that degrade the safety of the learning environment.
c. Professional development for staff.
d. Formalizing structures within the school district and with other community partners (e.g. the Sudbury Police Department) to regularly review incident data and plan ongoing, coordinated responses and education
e. Incorporating these action steps, as appropriate, into district and school improvement plans.
f. Collaboration and Coordination i. Strengthening partnerships with families, community organizations, and municipal agencies to support coordinated responses and prevention efforts.
g. Continuous Improvement i. Incorporation or recommended actions into district and school improvement planning, as appropriate.

4. The Taskforce will begin its work with a primary focus on combating antisemitism, but will continue its work to ensure that all forms of hate and bias in all of our schools and across the district and community are comprehensively addressed to the maximal extent

possible.

5. The Taskforce will hold an initial convening no later than April 2026 and report on progress at least quarterly to the School Committee through the Superintendent, with a first progress report no later than June 8th, 2026.

6. The School Committee intends for this Taskforce to be exempt from the Open Meeting Law in order to facilitate speedy progress.

Resources:

1. Non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism (IHRA)
2. American Jewish Committee (mainstream explanation and defense of IHRA)
3. Town of Acton, MA use of IHRA
4. Massachusetts Special Commission on Combating Antisemitism report
5. Town of Sudbury, MA use of IHRA
6. US National Strategy to Combat Antisemitism
7. Commonwealth of Massachusetts endorsement of (IHRA)
8. Anti-Deformation League audit of reports of antisemitism
9. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education resources

Adopted by the School Committee for Sudbury Public School on February 9, 2026. Vote: 5-0.

Karyn Jones, Chair
Jessica McCready, Vice-Chair
Nicole Burnard
Julie Durgin-Sicree
Elisabeth Sues