

**Background/Context:**

For [more than 50 years](#), a robust field of organizations have worked tirelessly to educate the next generation of American K-12 students on topics related to Jewish identity and history, with most efforts typically focused on the Holocaust. Cumulatively, these organizations have trained hundreds of thousands of teachers and reached millions of non-Jewish students. Today, [the majority of Americans report receiving formal Holocaust education](#) in school, with rates of Holocaust education higher among younger generations.

A growing body of research shows that K-12 education on Jewish identity and history has some impact. A recent study found that [greater knowledge and education about Jews, Judaism, the Holocaust, and contemporary antisemitism is linked with lower levels of antisemitic attitudes](#). This aligns with earlier research demonstrating the impact of Holocaust education on [empathy, pluralism](#), and [classroom climates](#).

Despite these efforts, rising antisemitism levels indicate that existing K-12 education work is insufficient. Though Gen Z and Millennials may report receiving formal Holocaust education in schools, [only a minority can correctly answer questions about the Holocaust](#). Moreover, [young people in the United States today show a disturbing increase in antisemitic views and seem to lack understanding or empathy for the Jewish people and its history](#), including its millennia-long experiences of antisemitism and its deep, ancestral connection to the land of Israel. At the same time, quality education on Jewish identity and history is facing [multi-faceted threats](#) in many states and districts across the country.

Against a backdrop of rising antisemitism in the United States, and given the evidence that enhanced knowledge and education about Jews, Judaism, and the Jewish experience, including Israel and the Holocaust, can make a difference on mitigating antisemitic attitudes, the One8 Foundation (see more about One8 below) has focused attention over the last year on ensuring high-quality, impactful, scaled K-12 education on Jewish identity and history-related topics. Our efforts to date have included commissioning research, supporting field-building efforts, and grantmaking.

Through this work, we have engaged with dozens of practitioners and funders across the field. In many conversations, we consistently heard a desire for a robust landscape scan that more clearly delineated who is doing what in the K-12 education space. These ideas were reiterated at the Think-Practice Tank convened by The Collaboratory: A Center for Jewish Education at George Washington University in July 2024. To that end, we, along with a group of partner practitioners (see list below), embarked in September 2024 on an effort to collect standardized information about the various organizations in the field – their activities, core competencies, and value propositions. Specifically, we developed and deployed a survey that was disseminated through a variety of existing formal channels and informal networks. We ultimately received responses from 72 organizations that do work related to Jewish identity and history education in formal, non-Jewish K-12 educational settings in the United States. We synthesized the responses into a full ecosystem mapping report that can be accessed [here](#) ([www.one8.org/AntisemitismResearch](http://www.one8.org/AntisemitismResearch)); the key findings from the report are also summarized below.

It is important to note that our mapping reflects the self-reported work of providers that chose to respond to the survey, and it only covers work that providers do on Jewish identity and history-related topics in K-12 education. It does not represent a comprehensive landscape of all organizations in the field, or all of the important work that these providers do.

We intend for the ecosystem report to be updated in the future, as findings may evolve as organizations are added and/or adjust their work. If your organization would like to be included in the next round of survey dissemination and analysis, **please contact Alyssa Arens ([aarens@one8.org](mailto:aarens@one8.org))**.

### **Key Findings:**

Through this ecosystem mapping project, we have identified 4 key insights regarding the current state of the field of providers doing work related to Jewish identity and history in K-12 education.

#### **1. A Robust, Diverse, Experienced, Connected, Yet Fragmented Field:**

- As mentioned above, 72 organizations indicated via our field-wide survey that they do work on Jewish identity and history-related topics in non-Jewish, formal, K-12 education settings. These respondents represented multiple organizational types, including content and/or training providers (42%); museums, memorials and/or exhibits (31%); local JCRCs and/or Federations (21%); and funders and/or intermediaries (7%).
- Only a small percentage of respondents (14%) focus exclusively on K-12 education; for most (86%), K-12 education is one of many areas of their organization's work. Within their K-12 work, organizations are split between those that only focus on Jewish identity and history-related topics (46%), and those that work on a broader array of topics (54%).
- About two-thirds of organizations focus on a specific target geography (e.g., region, state, or city) with their K-12 work (62%), while a little over a third of respondents (38%) work nationally.
- Connections are common in the field, with nearly all respondents citing partnerships with community organizations, schools/libraries, and/or other content providers.

#### **2. High Degree of Overlapping Resource Coverage Across Field, With Some Gaps and Opportunities:**

- Most survey respondents develop and offer education resources (i.e., teaching resources, direct-to-student resources, and/or teacher professional development resources) as part of their K-12 work.
- When looking specifically at which topics are covered by provider resources, we found significant and potentially overlapping coverage on topics related to the Holocaust and Antisemitism (both historic and present-day).
- Conversely, there are some resources offered on topics related to Judaism and Jewish identity (both American and global), and the fewest number of resources offered on Israel (Ancient Israel, Arab-Israeli conflict, and Zionism/State of Israel). This does not necessarily indicate a need to create new resources on these topics, but potentially an opportunity for organizations to integrate existing high-quality content from other providers into their existing resources (given the critical need for the inclusion of content related to Jewish identity and present-day antisemitism in Holocaust education).
- Looking at grade bands, a high proportion of organizations target high school courses with their resources, while middle school courses are slightly less frequently targeted; the fewest number of available resources target elementary school courses.
- Looking at subject matter, social studies courses are most commonly targeted, followed by English Language Arts courses; the fewest number of available resources target Ethnic Studies courses. There may be an opportunity for providers to use high-quality resources

targeting English Language Arts courses to ensure that education about Jews and Judaism occurs as part of engagement with commonly-taught literature.

- Reach is a very important area of need. While some providers report to directly reach thousands of students and/or teachers annually, there may also be an important opportunity for high-quality providers to increase their reach with teachers and/or students, given the significant and growing need in regions across the country.

**3. Nascent Impact Evaluation, With Opportunities for Improvement:**

- While some organizations have developed and implemented robust evaluation frameworks to guide their K-12 education efforts, many organizations have not yet articulated specific, measurable outcomes and corresponding metrics to assess the quality and impact of their work. Instead, many organizations seem to rely on outputs (e.g., the number of students and/or teachers reached annually) or qualitative feedback as their primary indicators of success.
- Encouragingly, many survey respondents expressed a desire to strengthen their organizational muscles around impact evaluation (e.g., more rigorous pre/post evaluation measures with teachers and/or students that track impact on knowledge, attitudes and/or behaviors), and voiced interest in working with others in the field to develop and implement best practices around measurement and evaluation.

**4. Non-Resource Strategies Are Less Common, But Still Important:**

- As indicated above, most providers engage in multiple strategies related to their K-12 work, with resource development (i.e., teaching resources, direct-to-student resources, and/or teacher professional development resources) the most common.
- A smaller subset of organizations engage in other, non-resource K-12 strategies. These include advocacy (39%), convening (31%), and content reviews (19%). While fewer organizations engage in these strategies (as they are not within their mandates), they appear to be an important part of the work for the organizations that do.

The above summary gives a small taste of what we learned from the project, and we encourage those interested to read [the full report](#).

**Potential Opportunities and Next Steps:**

We embarked on this ecosystem mapping project with the hope of identifying opportunities to foster more strategic alignment and collaboration across organizations working on K-12 education related to Jewish identity and history. Ultimately, our objective is for the field to have an even greater impact. Given our learnings, and keeping that in mind, we believe there are three areas of opportunity to consider:

- 1. Strengthen The Field to Reduce Duplication and Fragmentation:** It is clear that there are dozens of high-quality providers operating in this space, some providers are reaching thousands of students and/or teachers annually, and there is a rich array of resources and content available for student and teacher use on Jewish identity and history-related topics. At the same time, our findings suggest the landscape is highly diffused and fragmented, with many organizations offering a significant amount of potentially overlapping content on key topics. While partnerships and collaborations already exist, improved coordination and knowledge sharing are essential to reduce duplicative efforts.

- 2. Deepen Focus on Specific, Measurable Outcomes and Rigorous Impact Evaluation:** Our findings suggest that there is more work to be done at both organizational- and field-levels to articulate a clear vision and specific, measurable intended outcomes for high-quality education on Jewish identity and history-related topics; to identify the specific core concepts that should be addressed to achieve progress against these outcomes; to ensure the availability of high-quality content across these concepts; and to rigorously evaluate the impact of existing efforts. A strategic commitment to measurement and evaluation will be critical for the field to identify and scale the highest-quality, most impactful interventions and resources that reduce antisemitism and promote Jewish inclusion and safety.
- 3. Consider Demand and Implementation:** Finally, the field must continue to consider the many constraints and competing priorities that teachers and administrators face when offering education on Jewish identity and history-related topics. Providers should be laser-focused on creating and curating resources that reflect what educators want, need, and are willing to use; on optimizing the highest-quality resources that already exist, rather than crowding the marketplace and confusing the end user by continuously adding new resources; and on articulating specific target audience(s) for their unique offerings. Navigation is an enormous issue for educators, who find it difficult to find quality resources and discern which are suitable for the number of hours they teach, the subject they teach, and their teaching objectives. Many teachers source content by searching online, a reality that can compromise finding suitable high-quality content. Providers must therefore be dogged about identifying the best distribution strategies to ensure high-quality, high-fidelity implementation of their resources.

In the coming months, the One8 Foundation plans to respond directly to these areas of opportunity through our work in the field of Jewish Identity and History in K-12 Education. Our planned efforts include four primary workstreams: 1) deepening the field's understanding of educator needs and opportunities through national quantitative and qualitative teacher research; 2) supporting the development of a shared curricular and outcomes framework that can be used commonly across the field; 3) enhancing collaboration by supporting ongoing convening efforts; and 4) continuing to support high-potential opportunities through strategic grantmaking.

With antisemitism on the rise, now is the time to double down on the community's work in the K-12 space and ensure that all non-Jewish Americans have a critical foundational understanding of Jewish identity, history, and related topics. We look forward to partnering with practitioners, funders, scholars/researchers, policy experts, thought leaders, and other key stakeholders to make this happen.

### **Who We Are:**

[The One8 Foundation](#) is a venture philanthropy that works side-by-side with grantee partners to create social change. Our grantmaking priorities are founded in the abiding belief that education is the doorway to individual success and self-determination, and anchored in the Jewish values of human dignity, repairing the world, and building caring communities of meaning and purpose. We have robust Jewish Life & Israel portfolios focused on making Judaism accessible, increasing understanding of Israel, addressing antisemitism, and supporting Israel to be a thriving Jewish democracy. Through our Education portfolio, we support best-in-class STEM and Applied Learning education nonprofits to transform classroom learning in Massachusetts. We support partners with planning assistance and real time problem-solving, devising multi-year scale plans that deliver impact and the funding to make it happen. We expand schools' ability to access these programs by providing grants to schools that offset the costs

One8 Foundation

Jewish Identity and History in K-12 Education: Ecosystem Mapping Summary

December 2024

of adopting new programs. We currently partner with nearly 700 schools in Massachusetts, reaching over 230K students.

**Ecosystem Mapping Partner Practitioners:**

- Ariel Behrman & Clara Hess (former), Anti-Defamation League (ADL)
- Aaron Bregman, American Jewish Committee (AJC)
- Fraidy Aber, Contemporary Jewish Museum
- Lindsay Friedman, Echoes & Reflections
- Aliza Cramer Elias, Institute for Curriculum Services
- Dan Osborn, JCRC Boston (former)
- Amy Amiel and Rochel Klionsky, The Center for Jewish-Inclusive Learning powered by the Jewish Education Project
- Andrea Fleishaker and Etzion Neuer, UJA-Federation of New York
- Rebecca Krasner, The Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History