



Bruce Rauner, Governor  
Janice Glenn, Acting Director

Friday, April 28, 2017

### **An Open Letter to Illinois School Districts and Higher Learning Institutions Regarding Preventative Strategies to Address Acts of Discrimination and Bigotry**

The State of Illinois is committed to ensuring that every administrator, educator, staff member, parent, guardian, appointed or elected official, and most importantly, every student unite in condemning intolerable acts of hate, regardless of message or motivation, and stand together to denounce and prevent any acts of discrimination and bigotry, including hate crimes, in our local schools and institutions of higher learning.

Acts of discrimination, bullying, harassment, violence, vandalism, or any form of intimidation have no place in an academic environment, no matter their source, target, or reason. The state, through the Department of Human Rights, takes acts of discrimination seriously and will partner with the State Board of Education, the Illinois Community College Board, and the State Board of Higher Education to investigate any and all reports of them taking place within our schools. It is incumbent on all of us to ensure that all students are aware of their rights and understand that hateful and unlawful actions will not be tolerated. This message must be emphasized at all levels of the education system.

We are urging all school districts, colleges, and universities to develop proactive strategies aimed at preventing forms of discrimination and bigotry before they occur. No matter the situation or climate, it is unacceptable to delay action until after intolerable behavior takes place in our places of learning. Preventative measures include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Commit to consistent review and dissemination of bullying, harassment, and other anti-discriminatory policies to all students, educators, staff, and other stakeholders.
- Initiate training for educators, staff, and administrators to recognize and act on the signs of students being a victim of discrimination, including anxiety, trauma, and sudden changes in academic performance.
- Ensure that there are clear lines of communication so that discriminatory acts can be reported and that individual or group support services are available.
- Be aware of behavior that may occur at extracurricular events, on social media, and at other outside locations by communicating with students that discrimination and harassment is unacceptable at any level.
- Develop, either internally or with the assistance of outside entities, programs aimed at promoting cultural understanding, preventing bullying or harassment, and fostering positive learning environments.

Each of us has a responsibility to our students to ensure safe and welcoming environments. This can only be accomplished by implementing sound and consistent policies that address discrimination, bigotry, and hateful acts in all academic settings. The Illinois Department of Human Rights, the Illinois State Board of Education, the Illinois Community College Board, and the Illinois Board of Higher Education will continue to support local school districts and higher learning institutions in the development of policies and programs aimed at promoting equal opportunity. In accordance with the Governor's directive, we will post anti-hate, anti-bias, and Holocaust education resources available at <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Anti-Bias-Anti-Hate.aspx>. Safe schools, colleges, and universities where all students feel welcome and supported are indispensable to a vibrant and robust Illinois.

Sincerely,



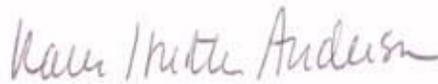
Janice Glenn, Acting Director  
Illinois Department of Human Rights



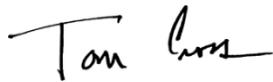
Dr. Beth Purvis, Secretary of Education  
Office of Governor Rauner



Tony Smith, Ph.D., Superintendent  
Illinois State Board of Education



Dr. Karen Hunter-Anderson, Executive Director  
Illinois Community College Board



Tom Cross, Chair  
Illinois Board of Higher Education

## Available Resources

The **Anti-Defamation League's "A World of Difference Institute"** provides anti-bias education for students, educators, and community organizations. More information is available at <https://www.adl.org/who-we-are/our-organization/signature-programs/a-world-of-difference-institute>

The mission of **Facing History** is to engage students of diverse backgrounds in an examination of racism, prejudice, and anti-Semitism in order to promote the development of a more humane and informed citizenry. Students are more able to make the essential connection between history and the moral choices they confront in their own lives by studying the historical development of the Holocaust and other examples of genocide. For more information, go to <https://www.facinghistory.org/>.

The **Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center Teaching Trunks** are a free resource to schools around the state. They provide K-12 educators with a wide array of materials for classroom units on character education, equality, human rights, the Holocaust, and/or genocide. Each trunk allows educators to create meaningful, age/grade-appropriate lessons employing award-winning fiction, non-fiction, historical reference materials, as well as DVDs and teaching posters. Each trunk has been carefully developed to address state and national learning standards. To reserve a trunk, visit <https://www.ilholocaustmuseum.org/pages/for-educators/teaching-trunk-program/>.

The "**Make a Difference! The Harvey L. Miller Family Youth Exhibition**" provides interactive activities, role play, and lessons that foster leadership skills, self-esteem, empathy, and positive decision-making. School groups will receive 50 percent off published school group admission fees for the exhibition at the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center in Skokie for the remainder of 2017. Learn more at <https://www.ilholocaustmuseum.org/pages/visit/tours/school-field-trips/>. Please note that the museum provides Opportunity Scholarships that cover admission and/or transportation for qualifying schools.

Additional resources are available at **Prevent School Violence Illinois**, a coalition of organizations working to create optimal conditions for effective learning in a school environment free of bias, violence, bullying or intimidation. Go to <http://www.psvillinois.org/> for more information.

"**Teaching Tolerance**," a project of the **Southern Poverty Law Center**, offers Perspectives for a Diverse America, which is an anti-bias social justice curriculum for educators. It is available at <http://perspectives.tolerance.org/>.

The **Simon Wiesenthal Center Midwest Office** takes a lesson from the past — the Holocaust — and uses it to teach and defend the safety of Jews worldwide. But it also addresses contemporary issues like bullying and texting and the internet. The center teaches how to confront these issues so a Holocaust doesn't happen again. More information is available at <http://www.wiesenthal.com/site/pp.asp?c=lsKWlbPJLnF&b=8411231>. In March, the office released the 2017 Digital Terrorism and Hate Report at [Digitalhate.net](http://Digitalhate.net).