

Date: October 26, 2022

To: Superintendent Morthel

From: Jewish Families at BUSD

Memo: Report summarizing Jewish Families' experiences with BUSD

In preparation for the meeting with you, we asked all families to share with us how they would describe their experiences within BUSD and what the district could do to support them. There were 47 Jewish families from a cross section of schools and grades that shared their experiences.

Most families shared they are overall happy with BUSD. In the elementary school level of schooling most families felt part of the community, and issues or conflicts about being Jewish at the school were easily and thoughtfully addressed. As the students moved to middle schools and BHS the issues became more pronounced and the families felt increasingly ignored as Jews. Throughout their time within BUSD, families shared feelings of never feeling fully included. There were also several families that have been in BUSD for over 10 years who shared a sense of frustration with a lack of any material action taken about addressing these issues. Throughout their time in BUSD, administration listened to the parents and showed empathy, yet nothing ever resulted from those meetings.

In compiling all the comments, three major themes emerged about the experience of the Jewish families.

Being seen as a Jew/DEI

The families shared feelings of being invisible and the inability and fear of sharing their whole self as Jews in the community. There is a feeling that among BUSD staff lacking awareness of Jews as a minority and often excluded from any conversations around DEI. The addition of Jewish Heritage month last year was a perfect example of misunderstanding of the Jewish experience in the United States and in BUSD. The descriptions and materials used fell short in relation to the robust educational materials for other groups. Families repeated an overall feeling of not feeling understood at best and at worst feeling ignored as a Jewish community member part of the BUSD community.

Jewish Holiday Scheduling

The most common comment shared was the continued conflict that Jewish families have with the Jewish holidays and school. The overarching message is a need for reframing the observance of the Jewish holidays not as a choice but rather a religious obligation. Too often administration and teachers tell the students that it is a choice to either attend school, the field trip or class activity or observe the holiday. The conflict that arises should not be about choice but rather, should be about making appropriate accommodations so that the families can fully embrace their Jewish observance without an undue burden. The most common holidays where conflicts occur are Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur (three days in total in the Fall) and the first and second days of Passover (two days in the Spring). Students have shared with their parents the stress of making up work, having to skip a quiz or even not being able to make up work missed for attending holiday services. It sends an implicit message to the students that they need to choose between their academics or religion. A choice that no student should have to think about. The Jewish Sabbath (every Friday evening to Saturday evening) are also named as conflicts. Almost all school activities are on Friday night and Saturday during the day. While these are all optional, it would signal to Jewish families a sense of inclusion by scheduling some school events on days that do not have this conflict.

Antisemitism

There has been a significant rise in antisemitism both in the US and worldwide. Antisemitism is a societal pathology on the same level as racism, homophobia and all other forms of identity based discrimination, bias, and hatred. By not addressing and teaching about antisemitism, Jewish students have become accustomed to hearing antisemitic comments and continued microaggressions. Many students have shared that they just brush aside comments by their peers and teachers. There is a growing question about when and how antisemitism education happens within BUSD and specifically at BHS.

Questions: There are several questions that were asked that were not covered by the above three topics

- How is the American Jewish experience taught in the Ethnic studies curriculum?
- How is the antisemitism taught in the Ethnic studies curriculum in 9th grade
- Is there any education about what Zionism and the Jewish connection to Israel?
- What type of Holocaust education and when is it taught?

Next Steps

The following are recommendations to help support and include Jewish families as full and accepted members of the BUSD community.

- Antisemitism education should be included as part of teacher education and training of the administrators throughout BUSD
- A religious holiday calendar should be published and shared at the beginning of the year with all teachers with a note of being proactive to avoid conflicts
- Create a policy of not scheduling exams, field trips or major school events on Jewish holidays and excuse absences in advance.
- Establish a committee on issues of Jewish life at BUSD to work in partnership with the district in implementing these initiatives and ongoing support.

Detailed responses from parents

Grades	Students	School	Number of Families
Pre-K	0	Oxford	5
K	0	King	13
1	4	BHS	27
2	2	Rosa Parks	5
3	3	Ruth Acty	7
4	4	Malcolm X	8
5	5	Willard	5
6	2	Longfellow	1
7	3	BIS	1
8	10	Washington	2
9	15	Thousand Oaks	2
10	7	Cragmont	2
11	8	BAM	1
12	11	John Muir	1

Current School(s) in BUSD: Oxford, King, BHS (AC)

Current Grade(s): 8, 12

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

Generally fine. Our children report occasional microaggressions from both peers and faculty, but nothing we've experienced rises to a level of serious concern. And BUSD policies haven't conflicted with our religious practice, to my memory.

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

Not scheduling BUSD programming that conflicts with major Jewish holidays, including scheduling any weekend school events and activities on Sunday when possible.

Responding quickly and seriously - not necessarily punitively - to address reports of anti Jewish expression or microaggressions, and proactively encouraging students to feel safe in reporting such things.

Learning about - and educating faculty on - the sensitivities regarding discussions of the state of Israel, given the history of conflation and overlap between criticism of Israel and anti-Jewish bigotry.

Current School(s) in BUSD: Rosa Parks, King, BHS

Current Grade(s): 11

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

We get a truancy letter every year after the Fall Holidays, during which my children (one currently in high school, the other currently in university) have missed school. Then they struggle to make up the work they missed, often resulting in poor grades and despair on their part. In high school they started deciding to attend school during some of the holidays, because of the stress involved in missing school. This forced choice between school and assimilation is painful.

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

There should be a plan in place district-wide for students who miss school for religious reasons - 1. It's an excused absence. 2. There shouldn't ever be tests or presentations due on those days 3. Perhaps major holidays should be district-wide holidays 4. There should be some support for how to make up the work they missed, or the work should be excused by the teacher.

Current School(s) in BUSD: Rosa Parks, Ruth Acty, King, BUSD

Current Grade(s): 7, 11

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

Excellent until high school. In the younger grades, administration and teachers were very helpful in negotiating both absences for Jewish holidays and also promoting understanding of the students' varied ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. With my current 11th grader, there is only a PSAT offered on Saturdays. There is no other option to take the PSAT. I emailed several other schools to see if he could join their Wed. testing, but because of Covid and staffing, none will allow a non-registered student to take the PSAT. And the College Board only allows school testing. So, my son will not be able to take it. Also, I am concerned about graduation being on Saturday next year.

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

Create opportunities-- academic and otherwise-- that do not occur on Jewish holidays, ideally including Saturdays.

Current School(s) in BUSD: Berkeley High School

Current Grade(s): 9, 11

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

Mixed, in some ways positive and in others negative.

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

By recognizing the important holidays and not scheduling exams/assignments on those holidays. And by welcoming different and positive perspectives on Israel.

Current School(s) in BUSD: Malcolm X, Willard, Berkeley High

Current Grade(s): 6, 8, 10

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

Overall, it has been okay, but I don't think Berkeley schools do much to recognize and appreciate the Jewish experience. Every year, our kids have to miss school for the Jewish High holidays and every year it seems to come as a surprise to teachers and the administration that this happens — tests are scheduled on those dates, homework assigned, and it is not always an excused absence. Also, I think schools forget that antisemitism is real and present and we don't talk about it enough.

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

More open discussions about what it means to be Jewish; don't schedule school, homework, or substantive assignments on major Jewish holidays; acknowledge antisemitism and its harms to the entire community.

Current School(s) in BUSD: Washington, King, BHS

Current Grade(s): 10

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

Very good so far

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

Through ongoing awareness of holidays, and a commitment to regard antisemitism as a societal pathology on the same level as racism, homophobia...and all other forms of identity based discrimination, bias, and hatred

Current School(s) in BUSD: Current--Willard, Past--Malcolm X, BAM

Current Grade(s): 6

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

Largely positive. A few challenges.

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

1) I think there could be support in addressing anti-semitism and anti-Zionism as kids get older. I also wish teachers were more aware of not scheduling things on Jewish holidays.

Current School(s) in BUSD: Rosa Parks Elementary, MLK Jr. Middle, Berkeley High School
Current Grade(s): 9, 12

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

Welcome but not always fully included --the large number of school community events and activities that happen on Friday nights and Saturdays (including BUSD graduation) systematically exclude those who observe Jewish Sabbath and puts pressure on our kids and families to assimilate. The general mindset of many of the educators and leaders is that religious observance is a "choice/priority" that kids and families make rather than looking at it from the inside out and understand that those who are religiously observant (which may include people from across religious denominations) don't see it as a "choice"--they see it as an inextricable part of their identity. Observant Jews used to this in overall US culture, but in the context of a community who pays much lip service to overcoming systematic exclusion on the basis of identity groupings (race, religion, gender, sexuality, language, etc.) this stands out as an oversight.

I'm frustrated that anti-semitism has not been acknowledged and/or addressed with same consideration or attention that other -isms get addressed within the district. Our kids seem to expect they will be subject to microaggressions and anti-semitic remarks related to their Jewish heritage/identity. I'm curious about why they do not have the encouragement to raise concerns when these arise? I'm curious why non-Jewish students are not specifically made aware of the need to be an ally for Jews in the same way they are made aware that other religious minorities may need allyship? I compare this to the support and encouragement our kids have gotten around standing up for/to LGBTQ+ ism which has been deep and extensive--in and out of the formal curriculum. They do not get similar communication/support related to being minoritized/persecuted because of their Jewish identities.

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

A couple ideas:

1. Include attention in the social/ethnic studies curriculum to anti-semitism (anti-other religious minorities as well) and not only as something in our past (holocaust) but the alarming increases in hate crimes against Jews and other religious minorities.
2. Professional learning for teachers, counselors, administrators related to: (a) anti-semitism in its current forms and expressions and support that Jewish students might need. I would also suggest similar professional learning opportunities for understanding the experiences of other religious minorities as well; (b) the diversity of Jewish identities (cultural, ethnic, religious), the intersection of those identities with other identities Jews have, and how they show up for students and shape their experiences. For example, there is complex relationship between Jewish identity and race; (c) understand how educational opportunities to help all kids/society understand the role that antisemitism and hate/persecution/prejudice related to religious groups build important empathy and understanding that will support advancing social justice more broadly.
3. Many Jews think of their Jewishness as their ethnicity/culture (not only or at all as their religion) but there is no way to indicate that on demographic questions. Is there a way to add ethnicities founded in historic religious group affiliations to the way people talk about, report about ethnic identities? And, I'd love to work together to think about these and other options.

Current School(s) in BUSD: King, BHS

Current Grade(s): 9

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

anti-Israeli sentiments in the classrooms coming from the teachers and some students, students not feeling safe to say they are Israeli, swastikas draw on chalkboards and notebooks

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

make holocaust education a meaningful part of the history curriculum, bring in holocaust speakers, teach about the rise of and history of anti Semitism, discrimination and quotas within the context of the existing BHS curriculum on immigration and "historically marginalized groups", make sure middle east conflict is only discussed in classes where it's pertinent and related to the content and subject matter of the class

Current School(s) in BUSD: Rosa Parks, Ruth Acty, Longfellow, Berkeley High
Current Grade(s): 3, 12

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

Overall it has been fine but there have been scheduling issues, like the Band and Orchestra tour to Chicago when our oldest son was in 9th grade that was scheduled during Passover, and more recently the planning for Water Polo Senior Night on the eve of Yom Kippur.

Also, my 4th grade daughter often feels un-seen and un-represented in books, school activities, etc. Last year, for example, Hanukkah was in November, yet in an effort to be inclusive, the school holiday festivities included Hanukkah songs, including one that was "factually incorrect" (stating Hanukkah had 7 days/8 nights, when in fact there are 8 days and 8 nights). This bothered my daughter because Hanukkah was already over and one of the songs was promoting inaccurate info. She wanted Hanukkah to stand on its own two feet, and not be seasonally lumped in with Christmas and Kwanza.

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

Books with Jewish content and characters in classrooms, master calendar with important dates for Jewish and other communities, that all school staff have to check before scheduling special events, field trips, concerts, etc.

I also wonder about how complex, nuanced conversations about Israel/palestine could be had in the upper grades

Current School(s) in BUSD: Oxford, King, Berkeley High

Current Grade(s): 8, 12

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

Overall fine. Definitely some microaggressions and limited flexibility around Jewish holidays.

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

Offer no homework days on Yom kippur and Rosh Hashanah. Make it easier to arrange extensions and makeup work for holidays. Somehow build safety around speaking positively about Israel.

Current School(s) in BUSD: BHS, BIS

Current Grade(s): 9, 12

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

Good overall

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

Wondering about graduation date. I have two seniors and hope it's not on Shabbat

Current School(s) in BUSD: Malcolm x

Current Grade(s): 1, 4

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

Tricky

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

Awareness of kosher food needs

And Jewish holidays

Current School(s) in BUSD: Oxford, Washington, BHS

Current Grade(s): 10

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

Somewhat aggravating. This stems from frustrated attempts to get schools to schedule their evening social and fundraising events SOMETIMES on nights other than Friday night. But very consistently, year after year, fundraising and social evening events at Oxford took place on Fridays, and only on Fridays, even after I spoke with the principal about it.

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

It is critical that teachers are not just aware but also CONVEY to students that racism and anti-semitism are both (a) real and present in our society and (b) have no place in our schools. Teach critical thinking; this relates directly to how BUSD can best support.

Current School(s) in BUSD: Jefferson/Acty, King MS

Current Grade(s): 8

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

fine, except for the last Supt's omission of antisemitism - along with racism - in his message about the events of Jan 6

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

Include UC Berkeley antisemitism education initiative as part of its DEI awareness / training

Current School(s) in BUSD: BHS

Current Grade(s): 9, 10

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

OK

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

Increase teacher awareness of high holidays

Current School(s) in BUSD: Washington

Current Grade(s): 2, 4

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

BUSD, district-wide, does not do a good job including Jewish families/issues as they relate to anti-racist work. Despite increases in anti-semitic attacks, BUSD doesn't uplift Jewish voices in celebration, as a response to stereotypes and Jew-hating. It would be great if BUSD included Jewish culture as a part of heritages that are recognized throughout the year. Last year was the first year that Jews were included, but no actual activities occurred that reinforced this acknowledgment. I also think BUSD should follow LAUSD's example and make the first day of Rosh Hashanah and the first day of Yom Kippur as school holidays (and Eid, for Muslim students) in recognition that Jewish people are valued and that the BUSD calendar doesn't just respond to Christian holidays.

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

see above

Current School(s) in BUSD: Ruth Acty

Current Grade(s): 1

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

ok, but not super acknowledged.

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

more education around jewish culture and religion-- i.e.- my daughter's first grade class scheduled a field trip on Yom Kippur and was unaware it was a holiday. the teacher apologized and changed the date once i brought it to her attention but surprised this was not on the radar or calendar of the district.

Current School(s) in BUSD: Washington

Current Grade(s): 2, 5

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

Invisible

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

Current School(s) in BUSD: BUSD

Current Grade(s): 9, Our older children Max (age 26) and Emily (22) both attended BHS all the way through and in high school especially felt it unfair that BUSD wasn't accommodating to Jewish students that were religious

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

It's been awful. Our older children were very torn about attending services and felt it was discriminatory some teachers were willing to accommodate (move tests or allow for make ups others not so much). We met with Donald Evans and Brent Stephen's asking them to consider changing High Holy days to PD days allowing both teachers and students to attend services to no avail.

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

Turn High Holy Days into PD days!

Current School(s) in BUSD: Thousand Oaks Elementary, Ruth Acty, MLK middle school

Current Grade(s): K, 8

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

Non existent at all for my son who went through two schools (Ruth Acty and MLK). It was and is extremely disappointing that while other cultures being acknowledged and celebrated during special heritage months, it was not the case at all for the Jewish culture. During the Jewish heritage month, it was barely mentioned and nothing has been done to celebrate it or to learn about it. This led to a feeling of discrimination.

My daughter has a much better experience at K so far (Thousand Oaks), but it is only due the fact that her teacher is Jewish.

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

Celebrating Jewish culture during the Jewish heritage month. It will be great to acknowledge that there are Jewish holidays.

Current School(s) in BUSD: Current King Middle School, prior Rosa Parks

Current Grade(s): 8

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

We were at Rosa Parks elementary for 7 years TK-5th. Proud of BUSD's teaching about U.S. diversity including LGBTQ pride. I worked hard on the school site council to support all our students with supportive resources, volunteered as a reading tutor. The daily all-school line up celebrated every ethnic group for heritage or pride months at least once a week. Not once in 7 years did Rosa Parks celebrate Jewish American heritage month or have one presentation on Jewish Americans. My young daughter noticed, asked me about it, and asked me, don't we count? So overall experience was this: good schools and Jewish Americans are ignored or don't count. I believe there is room for an anti-racist curriculum and also to celebrate diversity in all its forms.

In 3rd grade when she was 8 years old her teacher handed her a book on Anne Frank and the Holocaust because, and said, hey aren't you Jewish? Not age appropriate material to hand an 8 year old about generationally traumatic history. And like all ethnic groups, our children like to see positive representation. She started off proud to share her Jewish heritage in the early grades, and by the end of elementary school, she got the message to keep silent and that she was not included or counted. By the start of middle school, she came to me and asked why Israel was so bad and how she wanted nothing to do with Israel. Since there is nothing that is supposed to be taught in early grades on modern Israel, I was troubled that she already had very negative ideas from teachers that I had to address with history and context.

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

What can be done to support Jewish students in BUSD?

1. Positive representation of Jewish Americans, such as celebration of Jewish Americans in heritage months, and include Jewish Americans in other celebrations of diversity.
2. Education on how Jewish Americans are an ethnic group with a subset that actively practice the religion of Judaism. Jewish Americans are an ethnic group that is connected through a shared history, ancestry, culture, religion, sacred texts, and more. Understand that Jewish Americans are diverse in appearance, skin color, ethnic subgroup, and religious practice.
3. Hand out calendars of the key holidays in Judaism so avoid large events on those days and so students will get excused absences.
4. Tell all 7th grade teachers at all middle schools about the demands of a bar, bat, or b'nei mitzvah and how it can impact academic load that year.
5. Treat Jewish American affinity groups and clubs the same as other ethnic groups.
6. Celebrate all diversity that does not fall into four racial categories in addition to addressing important anti-racism and racial diversity.
7. Take antisemitic speech, graffiti, bullying, threats, weaponizing of Holocaust imagery or anti-Israel rhetoric as seriously as racist threats. A swastika, like a noose, creates a hostile environment for students.
8. Talk to high school history and English teachers about creating a safe space for civil discussions about Israel, as they should for all controversial issues, and ensure teachers and students all follow respectful guidelines for discussions and present balanced lessons.
9. Invite parents from lots of backgrounds to share ethnic information on key holidays, stories, rituals, especially K-5th.

Current School(s) in BUSD: BHS

Current Grade(s): 10, 12

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

Good

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

Not sure, but at least ask teachers not to do things that negatively impact kids if they don't attend school on the High Holidays, e.g. give tests, dock them for not completing in-class exercises

Current School(s) in BUSD: Berkeley High

Current Grade(s): 10, 12

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

Overall very positive. Both of my kids have many Jewish friends and a strong sense of Jewish identity.

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

Ideally they would take off the high holidays. Short of that, I would like teachers to not assign homework or tests on Jewish holidays. Both of my kids were very stressed after taking the high holidays off and feeling behind.

Current School(s) in BUSD: BHS

Current Grade(s): 11

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

Mixed - plenty of cultural interest, difficulty missing class for holidays

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

School closures for Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur, Passover (1st & 2nd day)

Current School(s) in BUSD: Cragmont, King, BHS

Current Grade(s): 5, 9

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

independent = there is no public support for Jewish families. Our Jewish life exists outside of public school

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

Start with awareness

Current School(s) in BUSD: Thousand Oaks, King and BHS

Current Grade(s): 9, 12

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

Mostly fine but feelings of disregard around important holidays we observe

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

Pay attention to the Jewish high holiday schedule and give children the opportunity to choose school or observance without suffering academic consequences. Do not make children feel badly for prioritizing holiday ritual and family time over homework. At the very least please don't schedule tests on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Current School(s) in BUSD: Oxford, BAM, King and BHS

Current Grade(s): 8

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

Basically, that Jewish families and our holidays are not relevant.

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

To acknowledge Jews as a minority population who are valued

Current School(s) in BUSD: Malcolm X, BHS

Current Grade(s): 9, 11

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

Ok. Some antisemitic episodes in elementary school. Taking a day off school for Yom Kippur was difficult with missed assignments.

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

1) more awareness that Jewish kids will miss school on Jewish holidays, and allowing for stigma-free accommodations 2) increase sensitivity around anti-semitism

Current School(s) in BUSD: King

Current Grade(s): 8

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

There seems to be very little (if any) education about Jewish people until the holocaust (is my understanding)— my child has not had any projects about Jews, Judaism, Jewish history in his education thus far and I'm very concerned that Jewish history will continue to get pushed out, further marginalizing Jewish people with the newer curriculum.

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

Including Jewish people in the discussions about marginalized communities.... I.e Bipoc, aapi, etc. Jews are being completely left out of "ethnic studies" courses on the presumption that Jews are white. I, and several other parents of black Jewish students are outraged by this oversight.

Current School(s) in BUSD: Cragmont-Willard-BHS

Current Grade(s): 9

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

Invisible, at best a footnote. Only mentioned in 10th grade within the context of the Holocaust, as if that is the end all of the Jewish experience.

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

Including Jewish people in discussions/actions/curriculum that are focused on marginalized groups. Discuss the historical and contemporary role that antisemitism plays in white supremacy and systematic racism. Bring in Jewish community members and scholars to support the inclusion of Jews in the ethnic studies program.

Current School(s) in BUSD: Oxford, King, BHS

Current Grade(s): 7, 12

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

We feel invisible. Not included in conversations or thinking about DEI, etc.

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

Raise awareness among staff and teachers that our kids are part of a minority that is unacknowledged in any meaningful way in the BUSD context. This brings challenges beyond outright anti-Semitism, including a sense of isolation that results from assumptions and biases on the part of peers and adults.

Current School(s) in BUSD: n/a

Current Grade(s): None yet, but will likely have a high schooler in 2025

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

n/a

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

Accommodations for Jewish holidays. Also, maybe some kind of programming to introduce all major religious groups to all BUSD students. (Maybe this already happens?)

Current School(s) in BUSD: Willard, John Muir

Current Grade(s): 3, 7

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

positive

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

not sure - my kids were worried about missing school for some holiday. Teacher reassurance would help

Current School(s) in BUSD: malcolm x

Current Grade(s): 1, 4

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

mixed

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

increased awareness of jewish calendar.

Current School(s) in BUSD: Washington, Willard

Current Grade(s): 5, 8

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

I feel we are overlooked, at best. We are not considered a minority, when in fact, we very much are. Our holidays never align with the BUSD calendar, so we are forced to take our children out of school to celebrate (Passover seldom aligns with Spring Break, for example. 2023 will be a rare occurrence when we can actually travel to family for the holiday). Worse, meetings and field trips are often scheduled on the holiest days of the year. My daughter's 5th grade overnight happened on Yom Kippur. Her teachers were mortified when I informed them, but they didn't/couldn't change the date.

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

1) Make sure the BFT and all Principals use the Jewish calendar when planning schoolwide or grade wide events. 2) Educate the PTAs about the Jewish calendar, starting with the PTA Council. Don't leave it up to us individual members to constantly, exhaustingly remind our peers. 3) BUSD makes it a priority to infuse our children's education with DEI. Last time I checked, the I stands for Inclusion, which means Jews should get more than lip service. Build learning about anti-semitism into the curriculum. Help me explain to my 10 year old why a police car is stationed outside the JCC on Kol Nidre. 4) In an era when Kanye West tweets nasty things about us and the former President says we need to shape up, the hate speech and truth distortion on the internet and social media is real, and it is terrifying. Build awareness of such intolerance through digital citizenship curriculum and any other available method.

Current School(s) in BUSD: BHS

Current Grade(s): 11

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

It takes some juggling, but at least there's not much overt anti-Semitism. We appreciate the support for the BHS Jewish Student Union.

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

School closures/restrictions on testing & due dates on major Jewish holidays; increased tolerance for pro-Israel stances.

Current School(s) in BUSD: Ruth Acty

Current Grade(s): Pre-K, 2

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

It's been quite positive. My kids have more Jewish classmates than I expected. Busing to after school Jewish programming is amazing.

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

Continuing to fight against antisemitism in the community, scheduling activities which don't conflict with major Jewish Holidays

Current School(s) in BUSD: Ruth Acty, MLK Middle School, Berkeley High

Current Grade(s): 5, 8, 10

How would you describe your experience in BUSD as a Jewish family?

Ok. Not great, not terrible. The teachers in primary school are open to having parents come in and teach about holidays, which is nice. Other than that, there doesn't seem to be much consideration for Jewish families

How do you think BUSD could best support Jewish students?

Don't start new topics, projects or hold exams on major Jewish holidays when many Jews would be out of school to observe the holiday. My daughter had to stay in the class during recess for 3 days to catch up on a project done in class on Yom Kippur this year. My son had a test he had to reschedule due to Rosh Hashana. Teachers should address the rise of anti-semitism, just like they address other racist events that have occurred in the country in the recent past.

