

Minutes of June 6, 2023
Commission on Holocaust and Genocide Education
Next meeting: To be Determined

I. Attendance

Name	Contact Information	Present	Absent
Senator Donovan Fenton	donovan.fenton@leg.state.nh.us 603-313-7991		x
Brian Balke	Brian.balke@sau19.org 603-497-4818	X	
Dina Michael Chaitowitz, Esq.	dmichaelchaitowitz@gmail.com 603-235-0258/cell	X	
Elizabeth Curtis	ecurtis@sau81.org 603-759-1262	X	
Evan Roy Czyzowski	evanczNH@gmail.com 603-502-3233	x	
Robert Dunn, Esq.	rdunn@rcbm.org 603-434-4794	X	
Representative Arthur Ellison	Highland242@gmail.com 603-224-7425	x	
Dr. Yves Pacifique Gakunde	ygakunde@ci.keene.nh.us 603-357-9800		x
Ashley Harbel	aharbel@gmail.com 860-908-9995		x
Reverend Zachary Harmon	vicarstchristophers@gmail.com 603-329-4674		x
Kathy Preston	hamp@tds.net 603-674-6734		x
Rabbi Jon Spira-Savett	rabbijon@tbanashua.org 603-809-9736	x	
Robert Trestan, Esq.	rtrestan@adl.org 617-406-6360		X
Dr. James Waller	jwaller@keene.edu 603-358-2011		x
Tom White	twhite@keene.edu 603-358-2746		x
Representative Dan Wolf	dan@hodan.com 603-763-5176 603-526-6997/work	X	

II. Motions

Motion	Failed	Passed	Abstain
1. Motion to accept minutes of March 20, 2023, meeting		X	1

1. The meeting started at 4:01 pm.
2. Dr. Nate Greene from the Department of Education was in attendance.
3. **Minutes.** Representative Ellison moved to approve the minutes. Representative Wolf seconded. One member who hadn't been present at the last meeting abstained.
4. **Policy Subcommittee (Brian Balke):** Superintendent Balke reported that he sent out the Governor's Holocaust and Genocide proclamation with the letter that the Implementation Subcommittee drafted to the municipal association and that the proclamation appeared in the association's newsletter. The proclamation also went to school districts and to the Commissioner of Education.
5. **Best Practices Subcommittee (Evan Czyzowski).**
 - a. Evan is looking for some direction for the Best Practices Subcommittee.
 - b. Evan said that there is a lot of information on the Cohen Center website but it's almost too much for educators new to the topic to wade through. There needs to be a way to make it simpler for teachers coming to this topic for the first time.
 - c. We discussed that many teachers (especially those starting out teaching this topic) might want specific lesson plans.
 - d. Also discussed is having a toolkit with suggested responses for curve-ball questions.
 - e. Evan hopes the subcommittee can meet early in the summer and finalize materials and the mentorship program and report back to the Commission.
 - f. The Commission needs a report on the status of the Best Practices Subcommittee.
 - g. Evan mentioned that he, Kati Preston, Tom White, and others spoke about the Holocaust at the Portsmouth Public Library in connection with its showing of the Ken Burnes documentary. Kati has been speaking at a lot of schools. Evan pointed out that while these talks were not the result of the

Commission work, they do contribute to public knowledge of the statutory requirements and the Holocaust and other genocides.

6. **Implementation and Policy Subcommittees.**

a. Dr. Greene attended the meeting to give us a sense of how the Department of Education hopes to determine whether schools are carrying out the statutory mandate.

b. He explained that because Holocaust and genocide education is now part of what is required for an “adequate education,” the DOE will evaluate what schools are doing using its Input Based Accountability System. DOE requires that schools (through their principals) complete a survey every two years and the next evaluation is in January 2024. Right now, the DOE is gearing up to communicate with the schools about the upcoming IBAS. The survey will be released in the summer.

c. In the past, the survey has required about 250 questions to be answered; the DOE is working to streamline the survey significantly.

d. Dr. Greene said that since the DOE is reducing the number of questions, it is adding a requirement of a narrative response to questions relating to how the schools are meeting the statutory requirements. We discussed whether the responses will be meaningful or whether principals could fulfill the narrative requirement by saying the bare minimum (for example, “We read *The Diary of Anne Frank*”). Could there be, for example, a requirement of a minimum number of words to ensure that the answers are at least a bit fulsome? Various members of the Commission noted that the first round of responses will at least let us know who is providing any education on the requisite topics, and who isn’t.

Dr. Greene also explained that, given the shortage in staffing, DOE’s plan is to do targeted monitoring. The DOE will develop a list of schools that it has concerns about. If a school principal indicates that no education is being provided on genocide, the DOE will put the school on a list of schools about which there are concerns. The DOE will conduct some site visit monitoring. It can suggest resources and encourage districts to work with schools that have exemplary practices.

There will be a report presented to the Board of Education and Dr. Greene will find out if it will be available for us to view. The report is due in February.

Dina asked whether all schools know about the requirement of Holocaust and genocide education, and Dr. Greene said that it is difficult to reach all the schools; school officials are inundated with emails. There are over 100 districts and maybe 450 schools. Evan suggested meeting with superintendents. Brian indicated that there would be an opportunity to do this.

Evan also opined that perhaps the Commission, through the Best Practices Subcommittee and the Cohen Center, could help the DOE identify resources for struggling schools. Dr. Greene pointed out that teachers want to earn recertification credit and said that any organization providing training could write up a letter setting forth what “training” had been provided and a school district could decide whether to give any attending teacher professional development credit.

Dina asked whether there was any hope of gathering data on whether the Holocaust and Genocide Education Act is achieving its broader goals (beyond knowledge of the historical facts of the Holocaust and genocides), i.e., of encouraging better citizenship and instilling an appreciation of the consequences of intolerance, bigotry, antisemitism, and hate, and the power of individual choices in preventing genocide. The consensus of the group was that we must start with the more basic questions: are schools complying with the law and how?

7. Continuation of Commission

At our last meeting, we discussed that we might want to recommend extension of the Commission if we determine that it is necessary to achieve effective oversight. At the June 6 meeting, Representative Wolf pointed out that we need to write our report to the Governor about the work of the Commission before the DOE's report on the outcome of the survey is completed. This fact, along with the need to evaluate the data collection, supports the need to extend the Commission's work. Representatives Wolf and Ellison will write up the proposed bill. **We NEED to vote on it at our next meeting, as the filing period for the bill is between September 11 and September 15.**

Dina will send out a "Doodle" to establish the date for our next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:07 pm.