



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

# DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: October 13, 2023  
To: Local Educational Agencies  
From: Angelica Allen-McMillan, Ed.D.  
Acting Commissioner of Education

## Commissioner's Statement Regarding Recent Events

It has come to the attention of the New Jersey Department of Education that there has been an increase in conflict arising in schools due to the tragic events taking place in Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank. The Department is alarmed by reports indicating students are facing harassment at schools based on cultural or religious affiliation, including incidents involving racist and derogatory remarks, online bullying, and other harmful or threatening behaviors.

Such incidents are deeply concerning and in direct conflict with the core principles of education, which aim to provide a safe and supportive environment for all students. It is our responsibility to ensure that every student, regardless of background or beliefs, is safe, secure, and free from discrimination while pursuing their education.

The Department strongly encourages our educators and school communities to remind students and families of our collective responsibility to reduce fear and anxiety during these difficult times, including sharing the Department's resources to [prevent harassment, intimidation and bullying](#) and [Trauma-Informed & Healing-Centered Practices](#). Mindful of our state's diverse student body, it is imperative that proactive steps are taken to address incidents promptly. Every student deserves to learn and grow in an atmosphere that promotes respect, understanding, and inclusivity.

The Department also encourages education officials to ensure all students are aware of mental health or counseling services available to them through their district.

The Department is committed to supporting the education community to ensure the safety and well-being of all students and stands ready to provide any assistance that may be required to address concerns expeditiously.

I appreciate your dedication to the students and families you serve, and I am confident that, together, we can maintain an environment where every child is valued and protected. Collectively we will continue to foster a community of respect, empathy, and understanding within our schools.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

c: Members, State Board of Education  
NJDOE Staff  
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network  
Garden State Coalition of Schools  
NJ LEE Group