

A Brief Guide

NAVIGATING CHALLENGING CONVERSATIONS ABOUT ISRAEL

Navigating challenging conversations about Israel isn't a new concept, but sometimes there is a tendency to focus on the events of the day, rather than the bigger picture. How can we as educators link timely events coming out of Israel—sometimes everyday, it seems—as well as ongoing realities, to the timeless values of our people and our story?

We should strive to help our learners and ourselves view Israel within a broader, timeless context, to reinforce, and sometimes introduce, our core values and the essence of who we are—as individuals, as a community, and as part of the Jewish people.

These tips and best practices can help you create opportunities for the community to engage around tough issues that most likely are on their minds. They'll appreciate the opportunity to have open, honest, and fair discussions.

ACKNOWLEDGE THE AUDIENCE

- > Most participants have (or will have) experiences discussing the subject of Israel. Acknowledging that the topic is on their minds shows that you care about their lives and challenges, and providing a framework for open discussion will be appreciated.
- > Communicate your expectation that all facilitators will separate their personal, perhaps emotional, perspectives from their professional roles.

TIPS FOR FACILITATION

- > Be clear about the goals and parameters for any conversation.
- > Help facilitators understand your institution's goals for Israel education and how it plays out at different ages.
- > Help facilitators understand how they can bring their personal connections with Israel to their participants' experiences.



PROVIDE CONTEXT FOR ALL CONVERSATIONS

- > Help facilitators understand conversations around Israel within the larger context of their ongoing, developing relationship with Israel.
- > A tough discussion about controversial Israel-related issues or policies shouldn't be the only program that focuses on Israel.
- > Provide additional opportunities for facilitators to both celebrate Israel, as well as more generally explore its place in their lives.
- > Encourage conversation. At the end of a panel discussion or other exploration of difficult issues related to Israel, you might want to provide an Israeli-themed snack that sets the scene for all to linger and continue the conversation informally.
- > [The Aleph Bet of Israel Education](#) can serve as a guide for framing the discussion.

CREATE SPACE FOR MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES AND AUTHENTIC VOICES

- > Frame the conversation by reminding everyone that although we are united in our shared values, we don't need to be uniform in our expressions of them in our everyday lives.
- > If possible, bring together Israelis and North Americans whose viewpoints and experiences cover a wide spectrum, reinforcing the importance of working in partnership to bring these perspectives to participants.
- > If bringing in voices from outside your community, help presenters or panelists prepare their remarks in advance.

