

## Wornick Talking Points and Guidance for Teachers and Families

The following are guidelines for talking points for students in different age bands. Within each band there are important developmental differences. Teachers and parents should use their discretion and adjust accordingly. This guidance represents our best attempt to provide a framework for the conversation and a structure for answering questions based on the expertise and guidance we have as a professional team.

Here are some reminders from our previous communication:

- Keep updates to your students, especially younger students, **short and factual**. Students cannot digest and comprehend the complexity of some of these situations, try to focus on small pieces of information.
- If you need to share frightening information about family members or community members, empower your students by giving them **an imaginary pause button and allow them to stop the conversation as they need to**.
- **Don't lie or tell your children things that are factually incorrect**. When trust is broken for students around traumatic events it can be damaging for students and their relationships with adults.
- If you have chosen to share more graphic details with older students, please instruct them to **not share with younger students**.
- Remember that you are **modeling** responding to this crisis and your children and students are learning from you. As such, it's normal to cry, show despair, and be worried. **Take time to explain why you are feeling the way you are**.
- As much as you can control, **keep your students off of social media**, especially if they are fluent in Hebrew. There is no reason for them to see pictures and videos of children, mothers, and elderly people being taken hostage or to hear the horrifying sounds that are emerging from Israel. Be aware of what you are watching in front of them.
- For those who want to read more, here are a few links that discuss how to talk to your students about war and how to support children encountering trauma
  - [How to talk to your students about war](#)
  - [Common Sense Media guide to talking about war, conflict and violence](#)
  - [Talking to kids about traumatic incidents](#)

Overarching guidance:

*If students ask you a question that is really hard to answer and you feel like you are struggling to figure things out, it's ok to ask for time. Remind them that these topics are difficult and say, "I need some time to think about how I want to answer that." Don't answer any question you don't feel comfortable answering.*

### TK-2nd

Basic talking points	Questions students might ask
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● We want to share something important with you that might scare you. Many</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● <b>What is a war?</b> A war happens when groups of people</li></ul>

adults feel scared and it's normal if you have some scared feelings as well. You won't always feel that way.

- A war broke out in Israel over the weekend
- The war is between Israel and another group of people who are not using words to solve their problems.
- Israel has a very good and strong army that is working very hard to protect its people
- You may notice that adults around you are scared or sad, because we love peace and pray for peace and don't want people to be fighting
- We can help by sending prayers to G-d, by drawing pictures and sending cards of peace and by sending love to Israel
- We care about Israel. Many of our community members have family there, or were born there and families, teachers and students who used to be at Wornick live there. We care about them and send our love to them

can't use their words to solve problems and end up fighting with one another using violence

- **Are we safe here?**  
There is no war in America right now. We have a very safe school and live in a very safe place and the adults in your lives are all here to keep you safe
- **When will the war be over?**  
We don't know. Israel has a very strong army and they care a lot about their people. They will be trying to end it as quickly as possible.
- **Did anyone die?**  
Yes in a war, people die and that is one of the reasons wars are so sad.

**Other tips:**

Admit that you can't answer all their questions because you don't have all the answers

Reinforce that there are lots of people who keep us safe

Allow them to ask unrelated questions about other topics- it allows them to move on and is a normal part of their processing

Normalize all reactions- some students might be silly or make jokes, that is going to happen and is their way of responding to scary situations

Young children might not know what feelings are like. If they are feeling scared, help them notice what it feels like in their bodies (ie, stomach racing, heart beating faster)

Highlight heroes and remind them that there are many brave people with lots of courage who are protecting us (police, security, firefighters etc).

### 3rd through 5th

#### Talking points

- Some of you may have heard about a war that started in Israel this weekend. We wanted to take some time to explain to you what is happening so you have information. Some of this information might make you feel sad or scared. We have extra teachers in the room and if you need to take a break we can support you doing that
- A war started in Israel this weekend between Hamas and Israel.
- Hamas is a group of people that doesn't want to use words to solve problems but uses fighting and violence.
- Israel has a very strong army and is doing everything it can to protect its people
- The war may go on for a while. Israel is going to do what it needs to do to protect its citizens.
- We care about Israel a lot and pray for Israel
- It's ok to not want to talk about this. Drawing and writing are ok and you might have a wide range of emotional responses to what is happening

#### Questions students might ask

- **What are terrorists?**  
Terrorists are bad people who use violence to make people feel afraid. Good people use their words to talk through problems.
- **Why is there a war happening?**  
Because of the actions of Hamas, Israel needs to defend itself to protect its people. Israel has a very good army. It doesn't want to fight but does when it needs to.
- **How do we know that we are safe here?**  
The war isn't here, it is in Israel. There is no reason to think it will come here.
- **Have people been hurt?**  
Yes, people have been hurt
- **Did people die? Did kids die?**  
One of the saddest parts of war is that innocent people die. That is why we are so sad and that is why Israel is working so hard to end this situation as quickly as possible
- **When will the war be over?**  
We don't know. Israel has a very strong army and they care a lot about their people. They will be trying to end it as quickly as possible.

Other tips:

Admit that you can't answer all their questions because you don't have all the answers

It's normal for students to be more concerned about death, especially around the ages of 8-10. It's important in this age band to emphasize that this situation is not permanent.

Reassure students that they are safe. Assure them that they can ask as many questions as they need to but that we may not have all the answers.

Encourage students to make a difference by brainstorming ways to help but be more careful in this age group to not make them feel responsible for solving all the problems.

Use real words with this age group and avoid euphemisms

	Be especially mindful about talking about death with this age group, developmentally they are grappling with the permanency of the world (i.e. death is not reversible).
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**6th through 8th**

<p>Talking points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We want to share some information with you about a war that broke out. You may already know a lot about what is happening or you may not know much. We want you to be informed so you that you have the right information</li> <li>● You may notice adults in the building and students in your grade are feeling sad and you might feel sad or angry or many other feelings. There are many adults here to support you and we are available to talk if you need to</li> <li>● If you want to take a break from the conversation we have extra adults in the building to help you with that</li> <li>● Remind students that we share a campus with younger students and to not discuss these topics with students younger than them</li> <li>● Hamas started a war against Israel on Saturday morning. Hamas and Israel have gone to war before but this attack was one of the worst attacks in the history of the state of Israel</li> <li>● America is in full support of Israel and President Biden has expressed his full support of Israel.</li> <li>● Tens of thousands of Israelis including our past shinshinim are being called up to serve in the army and support the war effort</li> <li>● There is a lot we can do to support Israel including praying, raising funds, sending messages of positivity and staying informed about what is happening. In the coming days we will empower you to figure out how we can make a difference as a school.</li> </ul> <p><b>For 7th and 8th grade only below</b></p>	<p><b>Questions students might ask</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Why did this happen?</b> Wars are often the complicated result of many conflicts and fights that cannot be resolved with words. This conflict started because Hamas attacked Israel</li> <li>● <b>I heard that people were taken hostage, is that true?</b> It's true that lots of scary things happened during this war. There are some topics like these that you should speak about with your parents and not with teachers.</li> <li>● <b>Are people being killed?</b> In war, innocent people die. That is the saddest part of war, that is one of the reasons we are so sad.</li> <li>● <b>Are we safe here?</b> There is no war in America right now. It's normal for these events to make us feel like we are less safe. We have so many measures in place and adults around us who are working hard to keep us safe</li> <li>● <b>I saw _____ on social media</b> There are lots of scary things on social media right now. Not all of it is real. It's important to know that you don't have to look at videos right now. You can stop scrolling and you shouldn't be scrolling through these apps. Talk to your parents if you see something online that scares you.</li> </ul> <p><b>Other things to know</b></p> <p>Admit that you can't answer all their questions because you don't have all the answers</p> <p>In Middle School some students might not want to talk about this at all and might completely ignore this topic. If they do, let them. Don't force them to</p>
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- Hamas is a terrorist organization that not only targets soldiers but also civilians who are not engaged in war. Hamas is committing a war crime by targeting Israeli civilians and using Palestinians as a human shield. They want Israeli's to feel afraid.
- Hamas started this war, and Israel is responding in order to make sure that this doesn't happen again. Israel, like any other nation on earth, has the right to defend itself against terror attacks.
- We may see a harsh response from Israel in the coming days, that maybe will shift the media and social media against Israel. We need to understand that Israel does not act like Hamas - we have no desire to hurt innocent civilians.
- For Israel, this is not a war about land (Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005) - this is a war for the right to exist as a Jewish state and to defend itself against those who want to subvert this idea.

engage or take part in any conversation

They may come from homes where this is discussed excessively. They may want to come to school and share with others. Acknowledge that there may be differences in the classroom. We can make space for conversations but we should avoid having casual conversations if possible. Some students might feel really scared and might not want to talk. Their knowledge of consent from puberty education can help them in this context. Students should not assume that their peers are ok with talking about this.

Help students go from victimhood to feeling empowered. Help them go from despair to action and remind them that they truly can make a difference.