



Remembering and Reflecting on September 11, 2001 in the Classroom

Dear School District Leaders:

As you may know, CAIR is our nation's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization. Our mission is to enhance the public's understanding of Islam, protect civil rights, promote justice, and empower American Muslims of all ages.

Every year, CAIR dedicates much of our time to addressing anti-Muslim bigotry in school settings. Research has demonstrated that Muslims face bullying at twice the rate of the national average. Many Muslim children also report that they do not feel safe approaching their teachers or school leaders about bullying, which is a problem in many school districts across the nation.

For example, in 2019, Muslim students in California reported to our CAIR-California chapter that nearly 40% of them were bullied at school for identifying or being perceived as Muslim. CAIR-Massachusetts conducted a survey of 200 Muslim students and discovered that 60% of respondents reported being verbally harassed or physically abused for being Muslim. 33% of respondents had altered their appearance, behavior, or names to hide their Muslim faith.

CAIR National's 2021 Report, *Resilience in the Face of Hate*, documented 114 school-related incidents ranging from bullying, Islamophobic school curriculum, and holiday denials.

As we approach the 20th anniversary of September 11, 2001, CAIR hopes and expects that all schools will remember and reflect on this tragic day in our country's history. Teaching students about 9/11 and its impact on our nation and people around the world is critically important. It is just as important to educate students in an accurate way using reliable sources.

Although most schools teach students about 9/11 in an appropriate way, our civil rights organization usually receives a spike in complaints from students and families on anniversaries of 9/11. Some complaints involve peer-to-peer bullying, while others involve anti-Muslim content in lesson plans. In some instances, schools have used educational materials about 9/11 created by anti-Muslim hate groups.

With this in mind, we write to share informative resources that your school district can use to ensure that your lesson plans about the 9/11 attacks are accurate and reliably sourced, protect Muslim students from bullying, and educate students about the impact that 9/11 had on all Americans, including American Muslims. These resources are intended for grades 6-12. Please contact us directly if we can be of further assistance. Thank you for your service.

Sincerely,

Council on American-Islamic Relations

Tips for Teaching Lesson Plans on September 11, 2001

To educate students about the 9/11 attacks in an accurate, clear and effective manner, we recommend the following best practices:

1. Alert students a few days in advance of the 9/11 lesson plan so that families have time to prepare their children for the discussion.
2. Only use external instructional materials – such as photographs, documentaries, etc. –from vetted, reliable, mainstream sources such as museums and major media outlets.
3. Vet all materials, including internal materials such as textbooks, to ensure that they do not include inaccurate information or inflammatory content.
4. Immediately respond to any incidents of bullying or harassment that occur in the classroom during the lesson plan.
5. Refrain from asking students to engage in educational activities that stimulate the roles of perpetrators, targets, or bystanders.
6. Do not single out and prompt Muslim students—or students perceived to be Muslim—to comment on the attacks.
7. Avoid using language that validates the claims of the 9/11 attackers by associating their acts of mass murder with Islam and Muslims. For example, avoid using inaccurate and inflammatory terms such as “Islamic terrorists,” “jihadists,” or “radical Islamic terrorists.”
8. Include information about the Muslim responses to the 9/11 attacks, such as the widespread condemnations of the attacks by American Muslims leaders, international expressions of solidarity with America from Muslim-majority nations, the American Muslim leaders who joined President Bush at Washington, DC’s oldest mosque to condemn the attacks, and boxer Muhammad Ali participating in a nationally televised fundraiser for families of 9/11 victims alongside actor Will Smith.
9. When discussing the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks—the invasion of Afghanistan, the Iraq War, Guantanamo Bay, etc.—also include discussion of the bigotry and hate crimes that impacted Sikh Americans, Muslim Americans, Arab Americans and other minorities in the days, months and years after the attack.

Educational Resources about September 11, 2001

I. General Lesson Plans

1. “9/11 Anniversary Teaching Guide,” Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility. August 27, 2013. <https://www.morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/911-Anniversary-teaching-guide>.
2. “Bringing 9/11 in the Classroom—Useful Lessons,” Learning Justice. August 24, 2011. <https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/bringing-9-11-in-the-classroom-useful-lessons>

II. Educational Videos & Documentaries

1. “A look back at the 9/11 terror attacks.” ABC7 News Bay Area. September 11, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVPgjIXxmZ8>
2. “Look back at how September 11 unfolded.” CNN. September 7, 2011. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D60QnpI_xH4
3. “World Trade Center survivors tell of 9/11 escapes.” AFP News Agency. N.d. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t1ABgCneP74>
4. “On the 19th anniversary of 9/11, ask your students: How has the world changed?,” PBS. September 10, 2019. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/daily-videos/since-911-what-do-your-students-know-about-how-the-u-s-has-changed/>
5. “Muhammad Ali’s Remarks on 9/11 During America: A Tribute to Heroes Telethon,” YouTube. September 21, 2001. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8amctPdACrc>
6. “How 9/11 Shaped the Lives of American Muslims,” PBS News Hour. September 11, 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=32eeDoXTnqw>
7. “Minorities targeted in 9/11 ‘revenge attacks.’” Al Jazeera. September 5, 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMMzaVqcxe8>
8. “9/11 Changed Life For American Muslims.” WLWT. September 8, 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICLSEHF9Y>
9. “Post 9/11 Detention Of American Muslims.” Journeyman Pictures. January 8, 2008. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54a-nFgmXks>

III. Educational Articles

1. “Commemorate 9/11 by Confronting Islamophobia,” Learning for Justice. September 7, 2010. <https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/commemorate-911-by-confronting-islamophobia>
2. “9/11 at 10: Lessons Learned From Anti-Muslim Haters,” Open Society Foundations. September 1, 2011. <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/911-10-lessons-learned-anti-muslim-haters>
3. “Muslims in America, post 9/11.” APA. September 2011. <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2011/09/muslims>
4. “Hope and Despair: Being Muslim in America After 9/11.” NBC News. September 11 2016. <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/9-11-anniversary/hope-despair-being-muslim-americaafter-9-11-n645451>
5. “How Being Muslim In America Has Changed Since 9/11.” Huffington Post. September 9, 2016. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/how-being-muslim-in-america-has-changed-since-911_n_57d1a61ee4b03d2d45992990
6. “Remembering the Muslims who were killed in the 9/11 attacks.” Al Arabiya. September 11, 2011. <https://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/09/11/166286>
7. “How 9/11 Caused An Increase In Islamophobic Hate Crimes.” Refinery29. September 11, 2020. <https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2020/09/10019797/islamophobia-after-911-September-11-hate-crimes>.
8. “9/11 to now: Ways we have changed,” PBS. September 14, 2011. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/911-to-now-ways-we-have-changed>.
9. “Federal Civil Rights Engagement with Arab and Muslim American Communities,” U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. September 2014. https://www.usccr.gov/pubs/docs/ARAB_MUSLIM_9-30-14.pdf.
10. Column: Why educators still need to talk about 9/11 — and Islamophobia,” PBS News Hour. September 11, 2017. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/education/column-educators-still-need-talk-911-islamaphobia>
11. “Bullying and Bias: Addressing Islamophobia in Schools,” Council on America-Islamic Relations. November 6, 2019. <http://www.islamophobia.org/research/bullying-and-bias-in-schools.html>