

## David Fleishman is Not Fit to Be President of JVS Boston

David Fleishman, the superintendent of schools for Newton, Massachusetts, has resigned and has been hired as president of Boston's Jewish Vocational Service. Does the JVS really know who he is?

Fleishman's nearly 12-year tenure as leader of the Newton public school system has been wracked with controversy. Not only was Fleishman exposed (and fined) for having plagiarized a graduation speech, he allowed a radical anti-Israel curriculum to be inserted in Newton high schools and was roundly condemned by many in Jewish community.

In the fall of 2011, the father of a student at Newton South High School discovered that his Jewish daughter's history curriculum included a lesson [claiming](#) that "Israeli occupation forces" had "imprisoned, tortured, and killed" hundreds of Palestinian women. The father, quite upset, found that these blood libels came from *The Arab World Studies Notebook*, a text funded by the Saudi government and used by Newton teachers. The American Jewish Committee had studied the book and [labeled](#) it a one-sided "sympathetic view of the Arabs" which presented "historical distortion" and was guilty of "uncritical praise, whitewashing, and practically proselytizing" for Islam. The book even includes a terrorist poem ending with the lines, "The [Jewish] usurper's flesh will be my food / Beware — beware — of my hunger / and my anger!"

When the father confronted the school, he was rebuffed by teachers, and the principal, who believed that this was acceptable material to be taught, as fact, in heavily Jewish Newton. As word spread, other parents were horrified, and formed an *ad hoc* group to bring the material's use to the attention of the Newton school committee — on which sat David Fleishman.

From the first moment, the committee, and its superintendent, showed no interest in the community's concerns. They echoed the teachers' responses to the parents, and stonewalled all efforts to investigate, let alone remove, or mediate, the hateful, mendacious curriculum.

As it turned out, Newton history teachers had attended a training session on teaching "the Middle East" in 2010 at Harvard's Center for Middle East Studies. The training, much like the *Notebook*, was organized by a Saudi-funded (and deeply anti-Israel) project which included the book in its teacher training materials.

Soon, more biased curriculum was discovered. The parents wanted to see all the materials being taught, but were told they would have to go through a costly legal process, and force the school to reveal what was being taught through expensive FOIA requests. Eventually, Newton activists got hold of the materials and were astounded. Primary sources given to students were doctored. Secondary material came from unreliable, inappropriate, and unauthoritative sources. Among the many biased, misleading, and inaccurate teaching [materials](#) they found were:

- A deceptively edited and abridged translation of the Hamas covenant. The real [text](#) calls for the extermination of all Jews worldwide, but Newton students were given a version which made it appear — falsely — that Hamas's grievance is merely with Jewish nationalism and not, as it makes

evident, with the existence of the Jewish people. For example, a sentence from Article 28 of the original covenant — “The Nazism of Jews has included women and children” — was deleted entirely from the Newton text.

- A set of four maps claiming to show the progressive diminishment of “Palestinian” land through Jewish occupation between 1947 and 2005. The maps incorrect. The original, PLO-created [graphic](#) had the words “These maps are for illustrative purposes only. Boundary representations are not authoritative” in fine print below them. Unfortunately for Newton students, that disclaimer was snipped off the bottom in the [photocopies](#) handed out in class.
- Hand-outs from a now-deleted, unscholarly website called “Flashpoints: Guide to World Conflicts” which labeled Jerusalem as the capital of “Palestine” and Tel Aviv the capital of Israel, and warned of Israeli “influence over American domestic politics and Middle East policy.”
- Use of the book *A Muslim Primer* by Ira Zepp, which whitewashes the generally dreadful status of women in Islamic societies, ignoring the rape, child marriage, honor killings, clitorrectomy, and gender apartheid endemic to much of the Muslim world — all inconvenient, politically incorrect truths.
- Use of the book *Islam, the Straight Path* by John Esposito, which appears to argue the truth of Islam and the falsity of Judaism and Christianity by endorsing historical inaccuracies about the preservation of the Judeo-Christian scriptures, and even describes Arabic, the language of the Qur’an, as “in a very real sense... the language of God.” Inclusion of texts which seem to fall under the category of apologetics open the door to religious indoctrination, not simply historical study.
- The 2018 screening at a school-wide “Middle East Day” of a film called [Ismail](#), depicting Israeli soldiers as brutal abusers of innocent Palestinian refugees. The film was screened by agents of anti-Israel activist [Ali Abunimah](#)’s website *The Electronic Intifada*, and was produced with funding from Qatar, an Arab dictatorship which funds Hamas. It was also discovered that Newton teachers had made use of a [Qatari](#)-funded training program and teaching materials.

In the face of all the evidence of anti-Jewish indoctrination and dozens of residents’ respectful testimonies, the Newton school committee, and David Fleishman, remained firm: there was no problem. Other than, perhaps, that the *Arab World Studies Notebook* should be retired from use — not for libeling Israeli soldiers as the murderers of defenseless Muslim women, but because, as Fleishman [wrote](#) in a 2012 statement, “there was a general sense that the materials were outdated.” Nevertheless, he proudly defended the *Notebook* as having been used in exercises “teaching critical thinking,” despite the evidence clearly showing otherwise. When [confronted](#) for this dishonesty, time after time at school committee meetings by frustrated Newton citizens, Fleishman sat bemused and unconcerned. It was later [revealed](#) that he had lied about the *Notebook* being removed by 2012.

Exposure of further dishonesty fazed neither Fleishman nor the committee. In 2014, Newton South High School’s student newspaper, *The Lion’s Roar*, [discovered](#) that Fleishman had plagiarized phrases from a Boston University commencement address by then-governor Deval Patrick in his

own commencement speech to Newton graduates two weeks later. For example, Governor Patrick told graduates that “Real human connection, the nuance of empathy and understanding, is often more gradual and elongated than Twitter.” Fleishman said that “Personal connection, the nuance of empathy and understanding, is often more incremental and complex than Twitter.” Fleishman got away with an unimpressive [apology](#) and a fine.

Even a 2018 [protest](#) outside the Newton school committee’s chamber, with around 400 locals demanding Fleishman’s resignation, failed to move the superintendent’s conscience, and the committee continued with business as usual, unphased by yet further [pleas](#) from community members.

Now David Fleishman is going to head the Boston branch of the JVS. It is unclear whether his new organization is aware of or cares about his thoroughly stained past. That their new president is a plagiarist who stonewalled Jewish parents’ efforts to prevent local high school students being brainwashed to hate Israel, or, far worse, their own children.

Fleishman [speaks](#) of his “personal and professional commitment to advancing issues of... social justice through the lens of education,” but through his nearly 12 years as superintendent of Newton schools, he showed only the fiercest opposition to pursuing the like for his fellow Jews battling anti-Semitic bigotry within his own school system. Clearly, Fleishman’s failure as a community leader — as a Jew and a *mensch* — has contributed to the chilling rise in anti-Semitism we see all around us. Consideration of David Fleishman for this position is highly inappropriate and will prove divisive and demeaning to the Jewish community.