



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on June 1, 2021

N.J. Fifth Grader Writes Teacher-approved Report on Hitler's "Pretty Great" Accomplishments

A fifth-grade student dressed as Adolf Hitler and [hand wrote](#) a list of his "accomplishments" in an essay that was hung in a school hallway among those about historical figures. The eyebrow-raising incident took place at an elementary school in Tenafly, a borough in Bergen County, New Jersey.

Students selected their individual figures from history as part of a "character development" presentation to the class, parents said, adding that the report praising one of the bloodiest dictators of the 20th century was not only approved by the teacher, but was also displayed in a school hallway for nearly a month.

Writing in the first person, the student cited "accomplishments" by the mass-murdering Nazi Party tyrant, which include "uniting a great mass of German and Austrian people behind me."

The student went on to explain the titles Fuhrer and Reichskanzler, and then wrote, "I was pretty great, wasn't I?"

The last line of the report acknowledges that Hitler was anti-Semitic, which drove him "to kill more than six million Jews," though the penultimate line read, "I was very popular, and many people followed me until I died."

The shocking school project drew [outrage](#) from the Tenafly community, which is reportedly 40-percent Jewish.

In a [letter](#) posted on the district website Sunday, Tenafly Schools Superintendent Shauna DeMarco said she learned Friday of "a serious matter involving a school project completed recently on Adolf Hitler" and announced that she will be running an investigation into the matter and will determine if "further" action needs to be taken. "I have requested that all associated information related to this project be provided to me," DeMarco wrote. "Once I receive and review the full information, I will determine any further action that should be taken."

DeMarco [declined](#) a request for additional information Monday, saying she could not comment without potentially compromising "the integrity of the investigation, the rights of those involved and any responsive actions that may be required."

The investigation, however, has not quelled the outrage some parents have over the incident.

"In an insane world, where almost nothing is shocking anymore, this is literally unbelievable," one parent said, [according](#) to Daily Voice.

"This is being tone deaf and not reading the room to the infinite degree. [How] did everyone check off



Graphic: Pachai-Leknettip/iStock/Getty Images Plus



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on this before it actually went to the presentation level?" another added.

Tenaflly Borough Council president Lauren Dayton tried to defend the student. In a Facebook post, Dayton [said](#) that she knows the child who did the project on the notorious Nazi leader, and believes it was not intended to offend people.

"The child stuck to the requirements of a school assignment. The child had NO intention to be anti-Semitic, offensive or hateful towards our Jewish community," Dayton wrote. "I personally know this child and her family, and I would welcome them into my Jewish home anytime."

The disturbing project also got a reaction from Tenaflly Mayor Mark Zinna (D), who [said](#) in his own Facebook statement, "No discussion of the murderer of six million Jewish people can ever be presented in a positive light."

"We have a responsibility to show our children right and wrong, and what we teach them now can impact their moral compass for years to come," he continued.

The mayor said that the project has since been removed from the walls of the school and that the Board of Education is investigating how the events unfolded starting several weeks earlier.

Jordan Shenker, CEO of Kaplen JCC on the Palisades in Tenaflly, a local Jewish community organization, [said](#), "This incident further illustrates the need for increased awareness in our community about the harmful impact our words and actions can have on others."

"Regardless of the educational intent here, the teacher failed to recognize the profound impact this can have on students, family members and others in our community who could perceive this project as condoning or even glorifying the atrocities of one of the most evil individuals in world history," Shenker said.

It is not the first time New Jersey schools draw national attention for normalizing anti-Semitism.

Most [recently](#), the chancellor of New Jersey's flagship public university condemned antisemitism and then, under [pressure](#) from a pro-Palestinian student group, apologized for the condemnation.

[In 2019](#), Nutley High School athletics director Joe Piro made the remarks that Hitler was "a good leader" while showing Hitler's picture next to a photo of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

[Also](#) in 2019, a school district failed to stop harassment of a Jewish student of Marine Academy of Science and Technology at Sandy Hook, allowing swastikas being drawn onto cafeteria lunch tables and students reading Adolf Hitler's "Mein Kampf" in class.

[Back](#) in 2007, Judge Joseph Greenaway of Newark ruled New Jersey schools may not bar fifth-grade students from wearing a Hitler Youth button to protest school uniforms.

According to a [recent](#) report of Anti-Defamation League of New York and New Jersey, New Jersey saw its third-highest rate of anti-Semitic incidents in 2020. The 2020 audit showed 295 incidents across the Garden State, which is down from 2019 but still high, officials say.



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