

New Williamsburg public school program seeks to combat antisemitism, other prejudice

Students will learn “the histories of Puerto Rican and Dominican and African American and Satmar migration” to the area.



Councilman Restler with a Haredi constituent. Credit: L

By [Lauren Hakimi](#)

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Some public school students in South Williamsburg and Bed-Stuy are learning a new anti-hate curriculum meant to combat antisemitism and other forms of prejudice.

The program, which was crafted in consultation with the New York City Commission on Human Rights, began earlier this month in some middle schools, Councilmember Lincoln Restler told Shtetl. Restler is also working with the United Jewish Organizations of Williamsburg and North Brooklyn, a social services organization that serves the area's Haredi community, which is largely Satmar but also includes other Hasidic sects. Los Sures and Bridge Street Development Corporation, two other local community organizations, are also involved.

"It's important for African American, Latino, and Jewish leaders to all be part of this conversation together, **because indeed this isn't just about antisemitism,**" Restler said. "It's about anti-hate more broadly and working to **build deeper cross-cultural understanding and tolerance.**"

Visible Jews such as Hasidim are [disproportionately affected](#) by antisemitic attacks. Just recently, the New York City Police Department's hate crimes unit said it was [investigating an attack](#) on Hasidic boys in Williamsburg after footage posted on social media showed a man appearing to assault an 11-year-old and 13-year-old who were playing on the sidewalk.

Restler's comments come as a recent [analysis](#) by Shtetl found that although Haredim have long borne the brunt of antisemitism, they are underrepresented in the New York City Department of Education's curricular materials about Jewish communities.

Restler declined to share details about the curriculum, but said it's tailored "to the **histories of Puerto Rican and Dominican and African American and Satmar migration to the Williamsburg** and Bed-Stuy communities." If it's successful, he said, the program might be expanded.

The council member said the program was inspired in part by the spate of antisemitic attacks in recent years, many of which he said were committed by teenagers, making education a potentially effective part of the solution. The program focuses on middle schools because unlike students at public high schools, middle schoolers usually attend school near where they live. Haredi children almost all go to private schools, and neither Restler's office nor the UJO responded to a follow-up question about whether private schools would also adopt this curriculum.

There's been at least one other neighborhood-level effort to improve education about Haredim. In Crown Heights, where relations between local Hasidic and Black communities have historically been fraught, local leader Rabbi Eli Cohen [said](#) he has seen positive outcomes after partnering with Black activist Geoffrey Davis to visit public schools in the area.

Black, Latino, and Hasidic communities have coexisted in North Brooklyn for decades, at times working together to further shared interests, and at other times standing at odds. The history goes at least as far back as the period following World War II, when Satmar Hasidim established a community in South Williamsburg, also home to large Puerto Rican and Dominican communities. Vast demographic growth has since pressed the Hasidic community to [expand](#) outward into the northern part of Bed-Stuy, a historically Black neighborhood.