
IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**STEVEN SPIELBERG ANNOUNCES
AASA/SHOAH FOUNDATION INITIATIVE
AT NATIONAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE**

March 4th, 2000; San Francisco, CA –Today at the national conference of the American Association of School Administrators, Steven Spielberg announced the AASA/Shoah Foundation Initiative to promote tolerance and embrace diversity in American public schools. The Initiative combines the Shoah Foundation’s educational resources with AASA’s leadership in education to create effective school programs for building a more tolerant and humane generation of American students.

In order to further the initiative’s goal to explore current and future strategies for teaching tolerance in public schools, five representative US school districts have committed to participating in a three-year pilot program to evaluate current strategies and identify curriculum gaps in tolerance education. The districts are: Portland, OR; Fairfax, VA; Chicago, IL; Long Beach, CA; and Sarasota, FL. They will implement a program that includes curriculum materials, professional development training, mentoring support and program identification. The pilot program will identify strengths and weaknesses of current products with specific focus on the Shoah Foundation educational products, and forge alliances with like-minded organizations to address gaps in the curriculum and provide strategies and support.

Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation was established by Steven Spielberg in 1994 to videotape and preserve the testimonies of Holocaust survivors and witnesses so that future generations can learn from the past. The Foundation has collected more than 50,000 eyewitness testimonies in 57 countries and 32 languages, and is committed to the broad and effective educational use of the archive worldwide.

“I am pleased that the Shoah Foundation and AASA have joined forces to engage students in a dialogue about the consequences of bigotry and hatred. We must make sure that students learn that our very humanity depends on the practice of tolerance and mutual respect,” said Shoah Foundation founder and chairman, Steven Spielberg. *(more)*

Paul Houston, Executive Director of the American Association of School Administrators, said that AASA is pleased to see a major initiative focused on teaching tolerance in our increasingly diverse public schools. “We can think of no better effort,” said Houston, “than helping young people acquire genuine respect and appreciation for the differences that enrich our nation.”

The American Association of School Administrators is the professional organization for nearly 14,000 education leaders across the United States and Canada and in many other parts of the world. Founded in 1865, the organization’s mission is “to achieve the highest quality of public education through effective school system leadership, with emphasis on superintendents.” AASA pursues its mission by offering a variety of programs and services designed to enhance the knowledge and skills of school leaders, as well as provide them with the tools they need to increase the effectiveness of their organizations, ultimately leading to a better education for students. AASA’s major areas of focus are improving the condition of children and youth, preparing schools and school systems for the 21st Century, connecting schools and communities, and enhancing the quality and effectiveness of school leaders.

In keeping with its educational mission, the Shoah Foundation has, to date, produced a groundbreaking educational CD-ROM, *Survivors: Testimonies of the Holocaust*, and three documentaries: the Academy Award®-winning *The Last Days; The Lost Children of Berlin*, honored with the Edward R. Murrow Award; and the Emmy and Peabody Award-winning *Survivors of the Holocaust*. Individuals interested in supporting the efforts of the Shoah Foundation are encouraged to call 818/777-4673 or write to P.O. Box 3168, Los Angeles, Calif., 90078-3168. The Foundation’s home page is www.vhf.org.

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