

THE WEBER SCHOOL



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My Civic Spirit project this year was centered around our school's Abe Besser Israel Poland Experience, an opt-in study abroad experience for seniors at The Weber School. Thanks to generous supporters of our school, all students who are accepted to the program

are given a service scholarship that cuts the cost of the trip in exchange for students participating in a community service project. This inaugural year, our project was focused on providing aid to Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees in Poland through our trip partners, The Taube Center for Jewish Life and Learning. Our partners have made a number of trips to Ukraine to bring much needed assistance - medical equipment, clothing, food, and generators - as well as have assisted Ukrainian refugees in Poland and we were able to raise money to assist their efforts. Although we have talked about the war in Ukraine since it broke out last year, being in Poland and seeing the efforts that so many have made to assist refugees and meeting a number of refugees during our time there helped drive home both the concepts of "*Kol yisrael arevim zeh baze*h, or all of Israel are responsible for one another" as well as our responsibility as global citizens to also look beyond our community for opportunities to help. I am proud that we were able to raise the funds that we did, and I hope that in the future, we will be able to raise even more.

Beyond this project, I often found myself thinking about how civics plays into my different courses and trying to bring in material from the various learning sessions we had over the course of the last year. In Modern Jewish History, this was particularly relevant as we discussed the various paths to emancipation that Jews experienced globally and I look forward to bringing in some of the things I learned about the Moses Seixas and George Washington exchange next year when we start the class off with those texts. We also delved into the global connections between Jewish communities

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around the world, as well as the relationships between Jewish communities and their neighbors, wherever they may be living. Students presented current events at the beginning of each class to make connections between the history we were learning and contemporary Jewish communities. In Israel History and Politics, we spent a good amount of time thinking about the connections between American Jews and Israel, and how these connections have changed over time. We also did a great deal with current events in that class, beginning with a discussion about reliable sources. In my 1968 in Europe and the US class, students explored the various ways in which citizens around the world advocated for change and discussed their effectiveness. In each of my classes, my goal was to help our students form and express their opinions while being able to engage with their classmates whose opinions differed from their own.

I honestly was not quite sure how much I would be able to bring into my classroom, since I am not currently teaching a government class, but I actually have been able to bring way more into my classroom than I could have imagined. In addition to content, I also learned new pedagogic strategies and discovered great teaching tools and sources that I have and will continue to bring into my classroom in the future. Nina's one-on-one sessions helped me see how much civic education I've been doing since I first stepped into the classroom at Weber eight years ago. I am so grateful to have had this opportunity and I am excited for more Weber teachers to benefit from the fellowship, as well as to continue to improve my own work in this area.



Seniors at The Weber School participating in the Abe Besser Israel study abroad Poland Experience.