

## ***ECHOES AND REFLECTIONS EVALUATION EXECUTIVE SUMMARY***

Goodman Research Group, Inc. (GRG) conducted an external evaluation of *Echoes and Reflections* – A Multimedia Curriculum on the Holocaust developed by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education, and Yad Vashem, The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority. The curriculum, including 10 modular lessons and over 2 ½ hours of visual history testimony, is primarily for use in the high school classroom. It is meant to fill an educational gap by exposing educators to the use of visual history in the classroom and promoting a way to foster a common knowledge of the Holocaust and its relevance to contemporary society.

In order to promote and disseminate the curriculum, the project team instituted a two-tiered training process. In summer 2005, ADL staff were introduced to the curriculum in preparation to conduct regional trainings in their communities. Subsequently, regional trainings for educators have been ongoing since fall 2005. In summer 2006, teams of ADL staff and educators attended a Summer Institute for *Echoes and Reflections* Scholars where they prepared action plans to promote the curriculum in their local communities.

GRG's comprehensive formative and summative evaluation, conducted from February 2005 through June 2007, was guided by three key research questions, and corresponded with different phases of the project throughout its development, dissemination, and implementation:

1. During the final stages of product development, to what extent is the product received by the intended audience as useful, accessible, and relevant to their current teaching?
2. Once the product is complete, to what extent do the trainings address the necessary points to encourage interest in and use of the curriculum?
3. Once the curriculum is distributed, who and how many educators express interest in receiving and using it? How is it used with students? How effective is implementation across the country?

In total, eleven different evaluation activities were conducted with 839 adults and 200 students. The evaluation activities (with the informants in parentheses) included the following:

- Working Groups (102 participants, 3 facilitators; observation by GRG)
- Initial and ongoing trainings (ADL staff, educators)
- Field Test (16 high school teachers across U.S.)
- National Web Survey (173 educators from across U.S.)
- Classroom study (4 high school teachers and their 200 students)

Data collection included paper and pencil surveys administered before and after participation in key activities and use of the curriculum; online surveys administered as follow up to an activity or use of the curriculum; on-site

observations of trainings and use of the curriculum in classrooms; and telephone interviews. Methods were tailored to each evaluation activity and goal.

This document summarizes key findings and recommendations from the entire evaluation. A full description of each evaluation activity and its findings is included in the Final Report. Details about evaluation methods employed, copies of the data collection instruments, and complete responses to selected items not included in the report narrative, can be found in the full Report Appendix.

## KEY FINDINGS

**After nearly two years in circulation, *Echoes and Reflections* has reached educators and students across the country, in public, private, and parochial middle and high schools, reflecting all SES levels, races, and ethnicities.**

- Over six months, ADL staff from 15 subsidized regions trained 429 educators to use *Echoes and Reflections* in their schools.
- Teachers who used *Echoes and Reflections* with their students have shared the curriculum and recommended it to two or three colleagues, on average, and some have shared it with up to 50 others. Several teachers were able to confirm that colleagues had ordered their own copies of the curriculum.

**Bringing educators together for full-day working groups in four national sites during the last stage of product development was a successful step toward ensuring the final product addressed the needs of its ultimate users, and establishing a group of educators ready to use, promote, and share feedback about the new curriculum.**

- Educators from Seattle, Omaha, Houston, and New York representing a variety of prior experiences with students and Holocaust education, all responded quite positively to the new curriculum during the working groups. They expressed interest in using it and providing feedback to the team after doing so. As they finalized the curriculum, the project team incorporated many suggestions made by group attendees.
- Initial interest was sustained; months after the working groups were held, participants described plans to use some or the entire curriculum with students.

***Echoes and Reflections* trainings have successfully prepared and motivated attendees to promote the curriculum in their communities, conduct additional trainings, and use the curriculum with students.**

- ADL staff in both subsidized and unsubsidized regions promoted *Echoes and Reflections* through trainings, presentations to school boards, and at local and national conferences. The regional trainings for educators were considered successful and helpful both by the trainers and the trainees. Educators who had not used the curriculum yet, planned to do so in the next school year.

- *Echoes and Reflections* Scholars who attended the 2006 Summer Institute increased their understanding of the curriculum's key content, received practical information for promoting the curriculum locally, and worked within their teams on action plans for promotion.

**After attending trainings and after using *Echoes and Reflections* in their classrooms, trainers and educators who participated in evaluation activities agreed the curriculum was well-suited for high school history courses.**

- Educators who used the curriculum in high school grades reported the content was at or just above their students' level, and were comfortable presenting the content to these students.

**All educators surveyed were quite satisfied with the curriculum including its content and organization. They considered the visual history component to be central to the success of the lessons they used.**

- Educators found it easy to navigate within and across lessons as they used them in their classroom. They gave high usefulness ratings (4 or 5 out of a possible 5) to all components of the curriculum.
- The visual history testimonies were easy to incorporate and the medium was perceived as engaging students more than print or lecture, addressing students' different learning modalities, and bringing history to life.
- Most teachers used some or all of each lesson; some spent more than the recommended time on each. They appreciated the vast collection of resources available, even if they did not yet use all of them with students. Nearly all described plans to continue using *Echoes and Reflections* with students, and planned to use more and more of the resources available.

***Echoes and Reflections* is perceived by both teachers and students to add much more depth and context to students' knowledge of this subject.**

- After using *Echoes and Reflections* with students, teachers felt the curriculum objectives were met. In particular, their own as well as their students' understanding of the Holocaust and its implications, was enhanced.
- According to the teachers, students learned more of the complex history and context for the Holocaust, the power and responsibilities of an individual, and the consequences of remaining a bystander. They believed the curriculum personalized the Holocaust for their students and helped them learn to respect others and that something like this can happen again.
- After using *Echoes and Reflections*, student attitudes reflected a better appreciation for the importance of studying the Holocaust, its relevance to their own lives, and the need to act against stereotyping and racism. They demonstrated increased knowledge of specific Holocaust-related topics, and an understanding that there is much more to learn.

- Students were most impressed with the video testimony and the photographs and pictures included in the curriculum. They said they will most remember how people were treated and the firsthand accounts they viewed.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the entire set of evaluation findings, GRG makes the following recommendations for expanding the reach of *Echoes and Reflections*, including the training, promotion, resources and implementation, and further research.

### ***Echoes and Reflections* Trainings**

*Recommendation:* Continue the strong momentum that has been established and that can catalyze widespread promotion and distribution of the product both nationally and internationally. Maintain the two-tiered training model (i.e., train the trainers and subsequent regional trainings) and the staff/educator team approach. In addition, extend the reach by inviting additional Holocaust education organizations and museums to participate in the training process. Informal educators can play a larger role in helping to disseminate the curriculum, training others, and presenting the curriculum to their constituents.

*Recommendation:* In future train-the-trainer workshops, allow more time for reflection between sessions. As this is an intense and emotional subject, trainers will benefit from taking a break to discuss and share their experiences thus far. Follow-up is also important; it can include scheduling brief follow-up meetings that bring the same group together, or encouraging attendees to share contact information and continue discussions after the training has ended. An online message board would provide an ideal sharing space.

*Recommendation:* In future Summer Institutes for *Echoes and Reflections* Scholars, which bring ADL staff together with educators, offer a few special activities just for teachers and just for staff trainers that take into account the specific needs of each group. Additionally, more small-group discussions, interactive sessions, and team-building activities will help to build cohesion.

### ***Echoes and Reflections* Promotion**

*Recommendation:* Provide to all who order the product a list of strategies for promotion, distribution, and use of the curriculum (regardless of whether they receive training). The curriculum can be presented to organizations, district and school leaders, and curriculum specialists. Attendees of those presentations can, in turn, share the product with teachers both school- and district-wide.

*Recommendation:* Encourage informal promotion among teachers so as to increase the reach and the life of the curriculum. Teachers who have used the curriculum have already made efforts to recommend it to and share it with colleagues. Those who plan to stop teaching can leave the curriculum with a colleague, or with a curriculum specialist in their school or organization.

*Recommendation:* Continue to promote *Echoes and Reflections* as a product best suited to the high school student audience. Suggestions for selecting lessons and

activities or to extend the materials up or down may also be useful; teachers of younger and older students also have expressed strong interest in the materials.

### ***Echoes and Reflections* Resources and Implementation**

*Recommendation:* Include a clear outline of several alternatives for ideal use. These may include suggestions for spending more or less time on a particular lesson depending on individual and classroom constraints, and can be presented graphically in a chart or table format (e.g., ideal ways to spend seven days, three or four days, or one to two days per lesson). Providing these suggestions will correspond with the project team's original intent, and with the comfort teachers have demonstrated in tailoring the curriculum to their own needs.

*Recommendation:* If it is considered important by the project team that *Echoes and Reflections* stand out to students as a distinct resource, then specific instructions should be included for introducing the curriculum. These should take into account the fact that most teachers have incorporated the curriculum into existing Holocaust-related materials.

*Recommendation:* Provide suggestions to teachers to conduct informal evaluations of the students' understanding and response to the material. By conducting a mid-term check, teachers can adjust their teaching accordingly going forward, to ensure students are not missing information or relying on a misinterpretation as they go forward.

*Recommendation:* Continue to invite feedback and suggestions from educators who use the curriculum. Based on early feedback from field test teachers, the project team added a focus on the online resources to the regional training agenda, and made all Transparency Masters and Student Handouts downloadable from the *Echoes and Reflections* web site. Knowing their feedback is valued encourages educators to continue using the curriculum.

### ***Echoes and Reflections* Future Research**

*Recommendation:* Consider commissioning further evaluation, in order to determine conclusively the extent to which changes in student knowledge and attitudes may be attributed directly to *Echoes and Reflections*. Various research designs may be employed that could examine longer term impact, rather than short-term effects. Decisions about the research design, including whether and what type of comparison group will be employed, should be made based on the project team's primary questions of interest. Two examples of research questions are: How much exposure to the curriculum is necessary for student impact? What is the added benefit of teachers receiving training prior to curriculum use?

It is clear that *Echoes and Reflections* meets a need and fills a gap for many public, private, and parochial educators by providing materials to implement and enhance a comprehensive Holocaust education program. The Anti-Defamation League, USC Shoah Foundation Institute, and Yad Vashem have developed a strong product that has been successfully disseminated thus far. Further research and refinement will help solidify its niche as a unique and premier educational resource.