Jewish Day Schools: New Directions
Essays by Rabbi Joshua Elkin, David Steinberg, Caren N. Levine, Peter A. Geffen, Naava Frank, and Virginia Bayer
New Directions in Day School Education

Years ago, Jewish day schools were generally associated with the most rigorously observant segments of the Jewish community. But things have begun to change. According to a 1999 Avi Chai census of American Jewish day schools, day school enrollment saw a dramatic increase in the 1990s. Among community and non-Orthodox day schools, enrollment rose by nearly 25 percent. Jewish day schools are increasingly viewed as an indispensable tool to solidify Jewish identity and involvement.

Now that Jewish education is attaining long-overdue esteem, the question is no longer whether day schools have a measurable impact on Jewish affiliation, but how can we make them even more effective and widespread in their reach. Many issues remain unresolved. Among future challenges are personnel recruitment and retention; the creation of guidelines for a Jewish curriculum; the integration of technology into the classroom; and a much-needed increase in funding for teacher salaries, day school expansion and tuition reduction.

This issue of Contact is dedicated to exploring the next phase of day school excellence. Contributors examine the future of day schools from diverse perspectives ranging from Rabbi Joshua Elkin’s systematic assessment of day school needs to Virginia Bayer’s more personal account of helping to build a Jewish high school. Taken together, these articles envision exciting new vistas of day school improvement.

Day schools are one of the most precious resources in the Jewish community. Like no other program, they impart a sustained mixture of Jewish knowledge and experience that often leads to a lifelong commitment to Jewish life. It is time to further enhance the quality of a day school education so that its benefits will resonate throughout the Jewish world.

Eli Valley
Five years ago, Michael Steinhardt and Yitz Greenberg conceived of a philanthropic partnership to substantially increase access to high quality Jewish day school education in North America. The initial program consisted of challenge grants for new elementary and middle schools. In addition to funding, schools received access to expertise.

Five years later, the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education (PEJE) has brought to fruition much of what was originally envisioned. Approximately $8 million has been awarded to nearly forty elementary and middle schools, and over $3 million in expertise has been provided. The matching nature of the grants has stimulated additional philanthropy, and the initial focus on elementary and middle schools has been broadened to include the burgeoning number of Jewish high schools.

Two donor assemblies of major day school supporters, a resource development conference, nearly a dozen publications, and an active web site and public relations effort are all testimony to the broadening agenda.

In the context of the serious attention now being paid to day schools, we can step back and reflect on some of the challenges that lie ahead. If day schools are to maximize their potential to help foster a new generation of literate and engaged Jews, what are some of the priorities that must be successfully addressed?

A Change Theory for Day Schools

Building on the work of the Mandel Foundation, one of PEJE’s supporting partners, we have conceptualized a change theory for the Jewish day school world consisting of four quadrants: models of excellence, expertise, personnel, and advocacy and philanthropic leadership. These four priorities must be addressed simultaneously and vigorously by the Jewish philanthropic community as well as by individual day schools and their umbrella organizations.

Models of Excellence

PEJE’s experience working intensively with over fifty schools has shown that vision/mission, lay leadership and professional leadership form a tripod upon which one builds and sustains an excellent Jewish day school. Weakness in any one area creates instability and limits a school’s potential. Furthermore, these three parts of a day school organization must be conversant with each other and fully aligned so that the school has clarity of purpose, with lay and professional leadership capable of transforming vision into reality.

Examples of excellence in specific areas of day school life abound, including: integration of the arts into many aspects of the curriculum; immersion into an intensive Hebraic environment to ensure fluency; travel to Israel as an organic part of a school’s program; design and construction of state-of-the-art facilities; and provision of a wide range of extracurricular activities.

In much the same way as business schools use case studies to document successful practices in the profit world, we desperately need case studies to help capture the rich texture of day school success. There is a need to document virtually every aspect of day school functioning. These case studies will be used to train and strengthen lay and professional leadership, to support professional development of teachers and to foster cross-school learning.

Expanding the Availability of Expertise

The success of PEJE’s Madrikh Program, whereby grantees schools are provided a...
general coach for their lay and professional leadership, has demonstrated the need to grow a culture within the day school world of readily available expertise. No day school should be floundering when addressing a challenge that other schools have faced before. Even schools in very small Jewish communities recognize the importance of expertise, as demonstrated by an overwhelming response to the Charles Schusterman Small Community, the Enhancement Program, PEJE’s new effort to make expertise available to schools in small Jewish communities.

A specific area of expertise delivery that PEJE has already begun to tackle is resource development. If day schools are survival mode, they require a stronger financial base to support excellence. PEJE is now embarking on the deployment of financial resource development experts to schools across the country. Using a matching grant program, PEJE is finalizing relationships with fifteen schools to substantially increase their resource development capacity and perform an exhaustive audit to generate many more grants in the future. In order to make an impact in this area, it will be necessary to invest in the infrastructure of available schools so that the needed financial resources can be secured. Furthermore, active board involvement and volunteer-professional collaboration are essential to any success.

PEJE is also in the initial stages of testing a multi-platform delivery system whereby experts will be made available to all day schools in the areas of general studies, Judaic studies and school life, and other aspects of school development. Over the course of the next year and a half, PEJE will be testing expertise delivery vehicles in the areas of financial management, school purchasing, lay leadership development and the training of pedagogic coaches, particularly Judaic studies.

Close collaboration with the existing day school networks and associations must be an essential feature of all expertise delivered. Without such collaboration, the net result of all the expertise available to day schools is that of purchases in isolation. A Day School Association is another example of existing expertise that could be built upon. Aspects of the expertise will also be delivered online. A developing partnership between the Day School Association Service of North America (JESNA) and PEJE will help to ensure comprehensiveness while avoiding duplication. There is no doubt that expert help can be found in independent accreditation of schools. The importance of this process lies in its reflective power. Going through the accreditation process is followed by an on-site visit and report by a panel of educators, one of the most powerful tools to help a day school set its goals and build its capacity.

Many day schools have undergone such self-studies and received regional independent school accreditation; there are many more schools that would benefit from this process, which must be repeated every seven to ten years.

Personnel

When one hears the term personnel, one thinks of teachers and administrators and the cost they must be come to mind. We begin instead with lay personnel, because they are often overlooked. The need for a substantial increase in experienced volunteer leaders is crucial. The demands on day school boards today are exponentially more complex than they were twenty years ago. Day school leadership recognizes that the Nominating Committee (or Committee on Trustees) is the most important committee in the organization. That committee is charged with the responsibility of evaluating the current Board and of searching on a year-round basis for additional talent to bolster their use. The importance of lay leader mentorships, as well as lay/professional collaboration, cannot be overstated.

On the professional side, we need to launch a multi-faceted recruitment and training program to target potential teachers while they are in college. Another source of potential teachers may be found among mid-career parents who have been involved in their children’s day schools. Meaningful incentives need to be offered to enable candidates to see teaching in a Jewish day school as a viable career choice. In addition to a competitive salary, we need to launch a multi-faceted recruitment and induction programs to attract talented teachers.

Advocacy and Philanthropic Leadership

Though day schools have received considerable attention in the last decade and though many new day schools have opened, the fact remains that roughly 80 percent of the non-Orthodox community remains relatively unconnected to Jewish day school education. The enrollment statistics are even more sobering. A recent AVI CHAI census revealed that approximately 40,000 non-Orthodox children are currently enrolled in day school. This represents well under ten percent of the population. If we are to double the enrollment of non-Orthodox students in day schools over the next decade, it will be necessary to launch and sustain a vigorous campaign which promotes the value of day school education.

Day School Philanthropy on the Local Level

The Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education is a collaborative of twelve major philanthropic partners to create new day schools and strengthen existing day schools in North America. Recognizing that day school education requires advocacy on the national as well as local levels, PEJE partners are often actively involved in additional programs to assist day schools in their own communities. A prime example is the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, which concentrates on funding Jewish education in Western Massachusetts.

Founded in 1993 by Harold Grinspoon, the Foundation funds a variety of day school initiatives ranging from a tuition incentive program to expertise delivery. It provides general operating support and, through a “21st Century Challenge Campaign,” is helping to establish endowments at five Jewish day schools serving Western Massachusetts. It also operates the Resource Center for Jewish Education, a professional development headquarters for Jewish educators in the region. In 1995, the Foundation established a program to honor inspirational teachers in Western Massachusetts. The success of this program led to a national teacher awards partnership with the Jewish Education Service of North America (JESNA). Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation has recently become a partner in this awards program.

Finally, in an effort to strengthen the entire Jewish community infrastructure in Western Massachusetts, the Harold Grinspoon Foundation supports youth and teen initiatives including the Binai Tzedek Teen Philanthropy Program, college programs and Jewish family education. By enriching many aspects of Jewish life in the region, the Foundation ensures the continued vitality of the day school movement in Western Massachusetts and beyond.

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when Jessica Mazzie was in the first grade at an Albuquerque public elementary school, she made Easter baskets in the classroom.

Jessica's mother, Sara Mazzie, recounts how the class quite literally passed over Passover. "They stressed a Christian holiday," said Mazzie, who teaches math in a local public middle school. "She told me she wished they would do something that she knew about." So for the next four years, Jessica attended the Solomon Schechter Day School of Albuquerque, the only Jewish day school in New Mexico.

"When you think about public school — and I believe in diversity — kids should be exposed to all kinds of children. But the public schools don't expose children to Jewish traditions and culture," Mazzie said. She thinks her views are shared by most Schechter parents.

Schechter Day School of Albuquerque, now in its sixth year, has 66 students in grades one through a blended sixth/seventh grade. Several educators have dubbed SSDS "a miracle in the desert." "If one were to extrapolate the size of this school to Los Angeles' Jewish community, the enrollment would multiply to more than 1,000 children," said Susan Nunnemaker Braun, president of the school's board of directors and a mother of two SSDS students.

"The student body reflects the breadth of the metropolitan area's growing Jewish community, representing families from the Conservative, Reform, Orthodox and Renewal congregations as well as a free-standing Chavura and those who are unaffiliated. The greater Albuquerque metropolitan area is, by some estimates, home to anywhere from 12,000 to 20,000 Jews in a general population of over half a million people.

"I believe the school seems a miracle to some, but to Judy Gardenswartz, the founding president of Albuquerque's SSDS and the person most responsible for making the day school a reality, it is a blessing. "I think we were now 30 years behind in Jewish education that has been the norm in the last 100 years has failed dramatically. "So we have to revolutionize the way we transmit Judaism to our children and to our children's children."

Gardenswartz disagrees with the longstanding thinking of liberal Jews and Jews in Western and Southern cities that to isolate Jewish children from a more diversified school population is not good for America and not good for Jews. "I feel just the opposite. It's the best thing for Jews. That way we enrich America. That way we add to the soup. Without the knowledge of our own culture and history we're just adding water to the soup."

"Schechter finally opened its doors in the education wing of Congregation B'nai Israel, the city's Conservative synagogue. Weil, who recently retired after 25 years as a teacher, principal and administrator in the city's public schools and with the New Mexico Department of Education. Dr. Weil has encouraged general studies and Judaic studies teachers to work together to integrate the two programs as much as possible. In addition, the teachers in both general and Judaic studies attend morning prayers with students "in part to assist in supervising students and in part to learn more about Judaism." Weil finds this joint attendance an exciting element of the instructional approach. Rabbi Joe Black of Congregation Albert, the community's Reform synagogue, noted that the school is a dynamic institution that utilizes all the resources in the community. For example, one day the Orthodox rabbis may come to school to talk to the students about Sukkot, or the Conservative cantor may lead the students in singing prayers, or blow the shofar every school day during the month of Elul. Such synergy and interdenomina- tional cooperation make Solomon Schechter Day School the bedrock of the Albuquerque Jewish community.
Albuquerque, now in its sixth year, has her views are shared by most Schechter and culture,” Mazzie said. She thinks expose children to Jewish traditions children. But the public schools don’t kids should be exposed to all kinds of school — and I believe in diversity — Jewish day school in New Mexico. Day School of Albuquerque, the only J...
Learning and Teaching in the Digital World

by CAREN N. LEVINE

Online Resource Centers and Curriculum

Another way in which technology is impacting Jewish studies is through the growing number of tools available to teachers and students online. These resources include lesson plans and teacher-made materials for Hebrew and Jewish learning as well as sites that offer online templates to help teachers design technology-enriched learning in the form of projects, workshops, and assignments. The following are examples of the many resources for dayshpayyin:

- The Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education (www.peje.org) includes resources and publications for Jewish day schools and information about its grant and expertise development programs.
- Jewish Education Service of North America (www.jesna.org) brings together on one website a wide range of resources such as curricular materials and curricular guides to help Jewish educators use media and technology more effectively in their work. It includes an online database of Jewish software, suggested websites categorized by curricular area, resources for technology planning and linking to other educational sites, and a teacher support network.
- Online Jewish Education Resource Centers will provide educational decision-makers with relevant knowledge to guide their planning and program development. JEJSA and PEJE are also working to coordinate resources for Jewish day schools that will be made available online.
- The Lookstein Virtual Resource Center for Jewish Education (www.lookstein.org) provides curricular materials and ideas and facilitates interaction between Jewish educators worldwide. The Center includes a Virtual Library with materials on various curricular areas, an Interactive Education Library and a section on Educational Enrichment/Professional Development. It is a project of Theoubeny Shrine Directors of Jewish Education in the Diaspora at Har HaNer University.
- Other organizations have also been setting up online Jewish educational sites. The Jewish Agency for Israel, Department of Jewish Zionists Education (www.jaij-ed.org/ index.html), includes lesson plans and other curricular materials on Zionism, Israel, and Jewish holidays, as well as ongoing educational initiatives such as the Virtual Congress of Jews.

Jewish day schools have always used educational technology to support Jewish learning. However, new developments in online technology provide schools with unprecedented abilities to create, access and disseminate resources to enhance their educational mission. Used appropriately, these new technologies can be an asset to Jewish learning by assisting individual instruction, engaging students in complex projects and by providing access to asynchronous online professional development that broadens the classroom experience beyond the local school community.

Technology in the Classroom

Software and the Internet can change and enhance the ways in which students incorporate learning into their lives. Email and the Internet help support rich exchanges among fellow students and foster a sense of civil yisrael. Educational Internet netwirting projects between Israeli and Diaspora schools, such as those sponsored by Partnership 2000 and the Department of Jewish Zionist Education Pedagogic Center, help facilitate stronger, more personal links among young Jews the world over. The Internet is used in class trips to Israel and student exchange programs to document student experiences and supplement face-to-face encounters.

Other technology-enhanced curricular initiatives integrate modern technologies and curricular capabilities in ways that support and often transform Jewish learning. Rahab, which originated at the Solomon Schechter Day School of Greater Boston, is one such model. The project combines the traditional values of text study and chevrutah with new resources such as software and the Internet. With support from the Covenant Foundation, the program is being piloted and adapted in three other Schechter middle schools: Essex and Union, Raritan Valley and Greater Hartford JSkyway (see below) is a model online training component for implementing the initiative in schools, and there are plans to pilot the project on a national level.

Day schools are also exploring the use of laptops to provide seamless access to computers in school, at home and other learning settings. In addition, distance learning allows schools to expand course offerings to their core populations and accommodate gifted students and students with special needs. The Pardes School in Cleveland, for example, adopted online learning techniques developed by the Jewish Theological Seminary for its high school students. Another model is the partnership of Cleveland College of Jewish Studies with the Columbus Jewish Day School and Kivvunim to provide professional development, curriculum development and online school programming opportunities for Jewish day schools.

The program will be delivered entirely by synchronous, fully-interactive video-conferencing in which the instructor and students see and hear each other in real time.

Four dayshpayyin will participate in the program, including Columbus Jewish Day School, Austin Jewish Day School, Abraham Joshua Heschel Day School and Greater B’nai B’rith Academy in Miami. Students and teachers will work on collaborative projects with participating teachers in each school.

In addition, teachers will participate in professional development offered by the College.

The Collaborative is designed to promote the use of technology as a teaching and learning tool for Jewish education and to build a cadre of teacher leaders. It targets in-service educators and focuses on their initial educational settings. Fellowships enroll in a two-year Master’s Degree in Instructional Technology at NYIT that emphasizes the use of educational technology for core Jewish and secular subjects. In addition to regular course work, participants are provided with academically rigorous study toward their studies, leading-edge technology and access to expert mentors in Jewish education. In addition, there is a technology return, graduates of the program are expected to further develop the field by serving as mentors to future participants and by assuming leadership roles in their educational communities.

CAREN N. LEVINE is the Assistant Vice President of Jewish and Technology at JEESNA, Jewish Education Service of North America. She is also an adjunct instructor at Antioch University, School of Jewish Education and Administration. Caren may be reached at caren@jesna.org.

21ST CENTURY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In addition to enhancing the day school educational experience, new technologies also provide in-service professional development for teachers. Many Jewish institutions have always used educational technologies such as those sponsored by Partnership 2000 and the Department of Jewish Zionist Education Pedagogic Center, help facilitate stronger, more personal links among young Jews the world over. The Internet is used in class trips to Israel and student exchange programs to document student experiences and supplement face-to-face encounters.

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THE POWER OF PROMOTION

Avi Chai is a private foundation that promotes commitment to Jewish tradition and understanding among Jews of different religious backgrounds and communities to observance in North America and Israel. In 1999, after reviewing the results of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey, Avi Chai concluded that at least nine years of Jewish day school education mark the most significant upward jump in Jewish involvement and affiliation as an adult. Avi Chai then began focusing on intense investment in day school education in North America, becoming a leader in enhancing the quality of day school education, expanding the number of students enrolled in day schools, and promoting the value of an intensive Jewish education throughout North America.

Avi Chai is widely known for its provocative advertisements extolling the virtue and necessity of day school education. Avi Chai employs a two-pronged approach to marketing it creates ads that can be broadcast via television, radio, newspapers and magazines, utilizing print, television and statewide campaigns.

In 1999, Avi Chai launched a bold ad campaign in the full-page ad of the New York Times. It was considered a major step to advertise not only in Jewish newspapers, but also in the secular media. According to Avi Chai trustee Mem Bernstein, it was a logical step. “The New York Times has the largest Jewish circulation of any publication,” she said.

“Advertising there engenders greater credibility of the cause.” This day, the ads are memorable for their candor and the effect they had in stimulating a growing community interest in Jewish day school education. Ms. Bernstein explained that the ads were slightly flippant, “the body of the text speaks directly about what we’re interested in parents’ responsibility to educate their children, and Jewish philanthropy’s responsibility to provide for the education of the next generation.”

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www.jesna.org

www.caje.org

www.cohl.org

www.ewchinuch.org

www.looking.org

www.lookstein.org

www.jesna.org

www.jaij-ed.org/index.html

www.jskyway.org
Learning and Teaching in the Digital World
by CAREN N. LEVINE

Resources, ideas and professional development that broaden the classroom experience beyond the local school community.

Technology in the Classroom
Software and the Internet can change and enhance the ways in which students incorporate learning into their lives. Email and the Internet help support rich exchanges among fellow students and foster a sense of civil inquiry. Educational Internet-networking projects between Israeli and Diaspora schools, such as those sponsored by Partnership 2000 and the Department of Jewish Zionist Education Pedagogic Center, help facilitate stronger, more personal links among young Jews the world over. The Internet is used in class trips to Israel and student exchange programs to document student experiences and supplement face-to-face encounters.

Other technology-enhanced curricular initiatives integrate moderate levels of computer capabilities in ways that support and often transform Jewish learning. Rabbot, which originated at the Solomon Schechter Day School of Greater Boston, is one such project. The model combines the traditional values of text study and chevruta with new resources such as software and the Internet. With support from the Covenant Foundation, the program is being piloted and adapted in three other Schechter middle schools: Essex Union and Ramat Valley and Greater Hartford JSkway (see below) each with an ensemble training component for implementing the initiative in schools, and there are plans to pilot the project on a larger scale.

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Four day schools will participate in a program, including Columbus Jewish Day School, Austin Jewish Day School, Abraham Joshua Heschel School of Greater Academy in Miami and Students and teachers will work on collaborative projects with participating children, using the software MxLabs. In addition, teachers will participate in professional development offered by the College.

Online Resource Centers and Curriculum
Another way in which technology is impacting Jewish education is through the growth of online tools available to teachers and students online. These resources include lesson plans and teacher-made materials for Hebrew and Jewish learning as well as sites that offer online templates to help teachers design technology-enhanced learning in the form of projects, workshops, curricula and supported student activities such as WebQuests. Referenced below are a few examples of the many resources for Jewish day schools.

The Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education (www.peje.org) includes resources and publications for Jewish day schools and information about its grant and expertise development programs. Jewish Education Service of North America’s Jewish Educators’ Electronic Toolkit (www.jesna.org) brings together on one website a broad range of Internet-based curricular and curricular guides to help Jewish educators use media and technology more effectively in their work. It includes an online database of Jewish software, suggested websites categorized by curricular area, resources for technology planning and links to other educational sites, such as Learning Sodah. Online Jewish Education Resource Centers will provide educational decision-makers with relevant knowledge to guide their planning and program development. JECEJ and PEJE are alternating leadership roles with the coordination and support from the Covenant Foundation. The JESNA Center for Jewish Education (www.jesna.org) provides resources for Jewish day schools that will be made available online.

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The Power of Promotion

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Avi Chai is widely known for its provocative advertisements extolling the virtue and necessity of day school education. Avi Chai employs a two-pronged approach to marketing its many ads that can be categorized by themes. The first is the “parsha” theme, which emphasizes the Torah’s weekly portion. In the past, Avi Chai has used such ads to advertise not only in Jewish newspapers, but also in the secular media. According to Avi Chai trustee Mem Bernstein, it was a logical step. “The New York Times has the largest Jewish circulation of any publica-
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cate their children, and Jewish philanthropy’s responsibility to provide for the education of the next generation.”
What About Israel?

The Kivunim Approach to Israel Education for Educators

by PETER A. GEFFEN

F or too many teachers in Jewish Day Schools have a narrow and limited Jewish education themselves. In order for Judaism to come alive in our classrooms, our teachers in Jewish and general studies must not only raise their level of Jewish literacy, but they must also experience Jewish life on the highest and most intellectually challenging plane.

Created in 1999, the Kivunim summer institute is an intensive two-week program aimed at dramatically enhancing the intellectual, aesthetic, and creative discourse in Jewish day schools across North America. Kivunim, the Hebrew word for “directions,” contains within it the deeper meaning of Kuvanah, “intention.” Israel is a laboratory; its scholars, artists and social activators are teachers. Kivunim has brought a new and dynamic level to the professional development of day school faculties. With more than 180 participants from 1999-2001 and 120 expected for 2002, the program has become the largest in-service training program that brings teachers from North America to Israel.

Kivunim is not a guided tour, but an experience in curricular integration, modeling the very approach that it seeks to inculcate in its participants. Every presentation is given by experts in the field. Kivunim moves from the ancient to the modern, from politics to the arts, from controversy to spirituality. Teachers who have been to Israel many times, even Israeli-Americans who visit Israel annually, report having understood Israel in entirely new ways. Kivunim provides a new direction in teacher training for the Jewish day school of the 21st Century. Teachers must be models of inquisitiveness and expansiveness. In order for Jewish education to be truly effective, Jewish schools must become places where the great ideas of Judaism and civilization are explored and debated.

Understanding the Need

Kivunim reveals a troubling undersupply of Jewish educational staffing. A full 35-40 percent of 1999-2001 participants, both Jews and non-Jews alike — and even one Jewish studies teacher who had never been to Israel before this program. It is hard to believe, but imperative to confront, that individuals who have never been to Israel are teaching our children in Jewish day schools across the United States and Canada. Kivunim schools are either established schools of recognized excellence or Partnerships for Excellence in Jewish Education (PEJE) Grantees selected for their potential future development. A broader sample would likely reveal more distressing statistics.

In the first two years of Kivunim, both the Columbus Jewish Day School and The Austin Jewish Community Day School set a new standard by committing funds to bring virtually their entire staffs to the Kivunim programs. Other participating schools witnessed the power of building personal relationships between teachers. By working with the entire faculty (Jews and non-Jews, general studies and Jewish studies teachers, specialists and classroom teachers), and by encouraging the participation of school administrators, the program has already succeeded in reshaping the culture of the schools with respect to their relationship to Israel.

Why Israel?

A meaningful and comprehensive Jewish education is not possible without Israel. Both the intellectual and emotional encounter with Jewish history in relationship to Israel, and the literal experience of traveling in Israel must be central to the day school experience. Currently, this is not the case.

For a Jewish child to be moved by the story of Jewish history, she/he must comprehend the enormity of the creation, in our own times, of a Jewish State. Israel cannot be taught from a distance. Moreover, it is not possible for a Jewish school to teach about Israel if its entire faculty, Jewish and general studies teachers alike, have not walked the streets of Jerusalem...

Beyond Israel

Making Israel a vital part of the school's culture is about far more than Israel itself. Kivunim awakens teachers and inspires them to reconsider important ideas and concepts. For the Jewish studies teacher, Kivunim's Israel-based experience may offer obvious opportunities. Less obviously, Kivunim provides the general studies teacher with an appreciation and integration of the higher goals of Jewish education. It creates a team. Many teachers report feeling as “outsiders” in schools where they have taught for decades. Kivunim provides a way in.

In addition, teachers need to feel respected, honored and appreciated for their remarkable role in nurturing the love, the power of Jewish history, we sensed the profound potential Israel represents. This is the foundation upon which authentic and serious curricular integration can be built. And Israel, as a multi-cultural, multi-generational and multi-sensory land, forms the core of that foundation.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel captured the profound potential Israel represents: “We were carried away by an awareness of the soul, overwhelmed by a vision of the profound seriousness of Jewish history. Suddenly, we sensed the link between the Jews of this generation and the people of the time of the prophets.” (Abraham Joshua Heschel, Israel, An Echo of eternity. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1967)

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by PETER A. GEFFEN

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At too many teachers in Jewish Day Schools have a narrow and limited Jewish education themselves. In order for Judaism to come alive in our classrooms, our teachers in Jewish and general studies must not only raise their level of Jewish literacy, but they must also experience Jewish life on the highest and most intellectually challenging plane.

Created in 1999, the Kivunim Summer Institute is an intensive two-week program aimed at dramatically enhancing the intellectual, aesthetic, and creative discourse in Jewish day schools across North America. Kivunim, the Hebrew word for “directions,” contains within it the deeper meaning of Kavunah, “intention.”

Israel is a laboratory; its scholars, artists and social activists are teachers. Kivunim has brought a new and dynamic level to the professional development of day school faculties. With more than 180 participants from 1999-2001 and 120 expected for 2002, the program has become the largest in-service training program that brings teachers from North America to Israel.

Kivunim is not a guided tour, but an experience in curricular integration, modeling the very approach that it seeks to inculcate in its participants. Every presentation is given by experts in the field. Kivunim moves from the ancient to the modern, from politics to the arts, from controversy to spirituality. Teachers who have been to Israel many times, even Israeli-Americans who visit Israel annually, report having understood Israel in entirely new ways. Kivunim provides a new dimension in teacher training for the Jewish day school of the 21st Century. Teachers must be models of inquisitiveness and expansiveness. In order for Jewish education to be truly effective, Jewish schools must become places where the great ideas of Judaism and civilization are explored and debated.

Understanding the Need

Kivunim reveals a troubling underside of Jewish educational staffing. A full 35-40 percent of 1999-2001 participants, both Jews and non-Jews alike — and even one Jewish studies teacher had never been to Israel before this program. It is hard to believe, but imperative to confront, that individuals who have never been to Israel are teaching our children in Jewish day schools across the United States and Canada. Kivunim schools are either established schools or recognized for Excellence in Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education (PEJE). Grantee selected for their potential future development. A broader sample would likely reveal more distressing statistics.

In the first two years of Kivunim, both the Columbus Jewish Day School and The Austin Jewish Community Day School set a new standard by committing funds to bring virtually their entire staffs to the Kivunim programs. Other participating schools witnessed the power of building personal relationships between teachers. By working with the entire faculty (Jews and non-Jews, general studies and Jewish studies teachers, specialists and classroom teachers), and by encouraging the participation of school administrators, the program has already succeeded in reshaping the culture of the schools with respect to their relationship to Israel.

Why Israel?

A meaningful and comprehensive Jewish education is not possible without Israel. Both the intellectual and emotional encounter with Jewish history in relationship to Israel, and the literal experience of traveling in Israel must be central to the day school experience. Currently, this is not the case. For a Jewish child to be moved by the story of Jewish history, he/she must comprehend the enormity of the creation, in our own times, of a Jewish State. I do not refer to an idealized Israel free of blame and imperfections. Quite the contrary, the Israel needed in our classrooms is the real one, filled with challenges and unrealized promises, yet having the achievement of a dream fulfilled.

Israel cannot be taught from a distance. Moreover, it is not possible for a Jewish school to teach about Israel if its entire faculty, Jewish and general studies teachers alike, have not walked the streets of Jerusalem, gazed at Israel’s desert vistas, spoken with its opinion-makers, listened to its music, prayed in its synagogues, appreciated its artists and craftsmanship.

Hence Kivunim. Kivunim is the experience of Israel for teachers. An intensive two-week excursion into history, culture, sociology, religion, arts and more, Kivunim brings teachers to an Israel of ideas and inspiration. From that experience flows creative and imaginative teaching.

Beyond Israel

Making Israel a vivid part of the schools’ culture is about far more than Israel itself. Kivunim awakens teachers and inspires them to reconsider important ideas and concepts. For the Jewish studies teacher, Kivunim’s Israel-based experience may offer obvious opportunities. Less obviously, Kivunim provides the general studies teacher with an appreciation and integration of the higher goals of Jewish education. It creates a team. Many teachers report feeling as “outsiders” in schools where they have taught for decades. Kivunim provides a way in.

In addition, teachers need to feel recognized, honored and appreciated for their remarkable role in nurturing the next generation. Using Israel as the laboratory, Kivunim provides teachers with two weeks of thinking, of honing their senses, and of expanding their view of what constitutes “Jewish.” This is the foundation upon which authentic and serious curricular integration can be built. And Israel, as a multi-cultural, multi-generational and multi-sensory land, forms the core of that foundation.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel captured the profound potential Israel represents: “We were carried away by an awaking of the soul, overwhelmed by a vision of the profound seriousness of Jewish history. Suddenly, we sensed the link between the Jews of this generation and the people of the time of the prophets.” (Abraham Joshua Heschel, Israel, An Echo of Eternity. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1967).
A Judaic Curriculum for Jewish Day Schools: The Time Is NOW

by NAAVA FRANK

Jewish day schools strive for excellence in the fields of both general studies and Judaic studies. Although they can share excellent curriculum resources in general studies with public and private schools, far less is available in the areas of Hebrew language, Jewish texts, Jewish culture, Israel studies and prayer.

The factors that may account for the lack of a Judaic curriculum are varied, including the economic problems of a relatively small market that inhibits investment by professional publishers, and the high expense of testing materials, training to use them, and professional development. There are many experienced and dedicated teachers who have significant knowledge of Judaic curricula. However, they lack systematic support to create and review curricula.

Curriculum is the totality of learning experiences that educators structure and students experience in schools. An ideal curriculum flows from the vision of the school and a portrait of its ideal graduate. It is important that newly-designed curricula be sensitive to the social trends of complex Jewish families and to the development of personal Jewish meaning in the context of interaction with the secular world.

Curriculum development should be combined with training in pedagogy. New Developments.

Having pointed to the obstacles and deficiencies in Judaic curricular development, there are a number of positive developments worth noting.

As the number of day schools grows and day schools receive increased investment, one hopes that resources will become available for curriculum development. There is a lack of sufficient comprehensive curricula, especially in Hebrew, for teaching Prayer, Israel, Ethics and Laws in non-Orthodox schools. The Association of Modern Orthodox Schools and Yeshiva High Schools (affiliated with Yeshiva University) has recently embarked upon a number of new curriculum development projects based on individual schools’ mission statements as reflected in their portrait of an ideal graduate. The projects utilize the model of empowering teachers to develop curricula tailored for the school. Six elementary schools are developing their own in-house Tanach curricula for grades K-8, which will be available for distribution and adaptation in the future. In addition, the Association is developing a curriculum for the Study of Israel. The Association has contracted with the Lookstein Center for Jewish Education in the Diaspora at Bar-Ilan University to provide education support for this project.

Project 2001: Flexible Scheduling and Staff Development - Models for Jewish Day Schools, funded by the Jim Joseph Foundation, supports eight Jewish day schools (and more in the future) in designing schedules with longer blocks of instructional time to allow for the incorporation of powerful instructional strategies based on the latest research from cognitive science.

Another promising development in recent years is the use of Israeli resources, such as selections from attractive Israeli children’s literature. The difficulty with Israeli material is the need to adjust the Hebrew vocabulary for non-native speakers. However, organizations such as MATACH (the Center for Educational Technology) are producing materials for new immigrants to Israel, some of which are immediately adaptable for use in North America.

A Hebrew language curriculum development project, sponsored by Union of American Hebrew Congregations and funded by the Jim Joseph Foundation, incorporates a significant advocacy component that aims to raise the bar for Hebrew language study throughout Reform movement day schools. It includes opportunities to bring heads of schools, lay leaders and Judaica coordinators together to examine the goals for Hebrew language acquisition in all aspects of school life. The curriculum emphasizes active language production and its connection to children’s own worlds. It is content-rich, emphasizes Jewish values and is intended to complement, not replace, a Judaic curriculum.

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Naava Frank is Senior Project Director at the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education (PEJE).
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Curriculum is the totality of learning experiences that educators structure and students experience in schools. An ideal curriculum flows from the vision of the school and a portrait of its ideal graduate. It embodies the values and goals of the school, is tailored to meet the educational needs of its student body and is based on the latest research about how children learn. A successful curriculum development process includes opportunities for teachers to shape the curriculum, as well as teacher guides and teacher training. Rather than the hit-and-pieces, year-by-year approach that many schools have been forced to use for curricula, Jewish day schools would benefit from a comprehensive, spiralized curriculum across grades that takes into account developmental milestones, the connections between different areas of study, the use of educational technology and teacher input and training. An excellent Judaic curriculum would pay careful attention to helping students make personal meaning from sources, as opposed to a rote approach to learning. Such a curriculum would succeed in engaging both teachers and students.

As the number of day schools grows and day schools receive increased investment, one hopes that resources will become available for curriculum development. There is a lack of sufficient comprehensive curricula, especially in Hebrew, for teaching Prayer, Israel, Ethics and Laws in non-Orthodox schools. In the Modern Orthodox community, the greatest needs are for curricula that have been designed in-house by teachers, reflecting the principles of Modern Orthodox including the perspective of religious Zionism. It is important that newly-designed curricula be sensitive to the social trends of complex Jewish families and to the development of personal Jewish meaning in the context of interaction with the secular world. Curriculum development should be combined with training in pedagogy.

New Developments

Having pointed to the obstacles and deficiencies in Judaic curricular development, there are a number of positive developments worth noting. The largest and most well-developed independent Judaic curriculum development program comes from Montreal and receives Canadian government support. Tal Sela is an integrated program that has been on the market for a number of years. Tal Am, the newly revised and highly successful integrated program, is now available for grades 1-2. It is being used in schools across the denominational spectrum throughout North America. Because of its magnitude and scope, this program is hard to change and adapt.

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Talor Umesorah supports teacher development of Judaic curricula with its Creative Learning Pavilion, which contains over 10,000 catalogued and digitized teacher-prepared Judaic materials available on CD-Rom or at e-chinuch.org.

An example of a centralized curriculum development project, with a well-developed approach to teacher training, is the MaTok Bible curriculum developed by the Solomon Schechter Day School movement with a grant from the Jim Joseph Foundation. The movement has developed a plan to deploy trainers across the United States to keep up with the turnover of Judaica teachers. They are writing both Hebrew and English teacher guides for Israeli-born and North American-born teachers.

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Another promising development in recent years is the use of Israeli resources, such as selections from attractive Israeli children’s literature. The difficulty with Israeli material is the need to adjust the Hebrew vocabulary for non-native speakers. However, organizations such as MATACH (the Center for Educational Technology) are producing materials for new immigrants to Israel, some designed to be immediately adaptable for use in North America. Other Israeli agencies, such as the Jewish Agency and the Melton Center for Jewish Education in the Diaspora of Hebrew University, produce Judaic curriculum for supplementary schools and have a growing interest in day school material. A new Hebrew language program for high schools, funded by Ari Chai, is currently under development at Hebrew University. It is an example of a productive Israel-North American partnership.

Judaic curriculum development in North America could move forward with a number of targeted initiatives. Schools should cultivate lay interest and support so that they can allocate appropriate resources to curriculum development. The rich resources of Jewish day school teachers’ knowledge should be mined to produce curricula. Collaboration between schools should be encouraged. Israeli resources should be systematically reviewed and partnerships developed to produce new materials. Since much curricular work has been starred for vision, an increased dialogue should raise the discourse about “who is an educated Jew?” and identify a “vision of the ideal graduate” so that it can inform the overall structure of new curricula. Individual schools should take on systematic curriculum review and development.

Schools with the ability to fund teachers to develop curricula have been very well rewarded by their efforts. It is essential to the future of North American Jewry that our day schools develop the ongoing capacity to offer students a high quality Judaic curriculum that is rigorous, engaging, compelling and personally meaningful.
In September 2002, the Abraham Joshua Heschel School (AJHS) will celebrate the beginning of its twentieth year with the opening of a high school program. This accomplishment is the culmination of years of rewarding educational experiences and the readiness to embark on a new challenge for our community.

AJHS is a community day school on the Upper West Side of Manhattan with 492 students from nursery through eighth grade. The education we provide is progressive and enables students to learn in a variety of modalities in Jewish and general curricula. Whether its lessons on animal anatomy and the laws of kashrut, or an eighth grade Israel trip that synthesizes geography and literature, our students learn the art and analysis of interdisciplinary learning.

Our growth pattern has been dramatic. Starting with only a few young grades, we added one grade per year until we reached the eighth grade. As of 1996, the entire school had two classes per grade and a second building to house our Middle School. The education we provide is professional, intellectual, and humanistic principles. To quote from the Abraham Joshua Heschel School mission: “The Heschel High School is grounded in a strong curriculum which requires each student to seek personal meaning in that curriculum. By stressing integrity as well as academic achievement, the school will encourage academic resourcefulness, intellectual rigor and social responsibility.”

We are a school that is devoted to Jewish learning and experience, respectful of the diversity that exists within the Jewish community and aware of the social realities and challenges our students face. Have undertaken this enormous task if we did not feel a responsibility to our community and to the Jewish people. We are a school that is devoted to Jewish learning and experience, respectful of the diversity that exists within the Jewish community and aware of the social realities and challenges our students face. We are a school that teaches the skills of inquiry and expression, critical thinking and respect for multiple perspectives.

Dr. Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote: “Each human being has something to say, to think, or to do which is unprecedented. A person has the capacity to create events.” The Heschel School, founded as an elementary school, is now expanding to prepare and inspire high school students to create communities of shared humanity and mutual respect, to repair and fashion a better world.
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matic. Starting with only a few young

years, seemed unreachable — extending the school throughout the high school
years. Not everyone on the Board agreed. Some felt we should expand solely as an
N-8 school, whose graduates would
choose from the wide variety of options in New York for public, private and Jew-
ish high schools. Others felt that a high
school was the natural outgrowth of the
demand for this type of education. In the
words of our Director, Roanna Shorofsky,
“The teenage years provide opportunities
for more in-depth exploration of the big
ideas that are already a part of the Hes-
chel mission.”

The Board decided to invest a great
deal of time and thought to better under-
stand how to articulate the essence of the
current school within a high school
framework. At the same time we surveyed
our school population and studied the
demographics of the broader community.
The results of both were promising. We

created strategic planning committees to
lay out the curricular and philosophical agendas, and an Educational Advisory
Committee of professionals from our par-
ent body and the broader community to
give advice on areas such as science, his-
tory and Talmud. The committees produced
documents outlining fresh approaches to
both the traditional and innovative
areas of study. The articulation of the vision allowed for
discussion, but perhaps more importantly, it gave
shape and form to what had previously been only an
idea.

We spent close to a year looking at
potential sites until we found one that
met our needs. We had spoken to
potential donors

throughout this process, but no one was
willing to make a financial commitment
until there was a concrete site. When we
found a site with two buildings, a great
location near Lincoln Center and a full
block front, the necessary enthusiasm
and support followed, which enabled us
to make the purchase. We continue to
raise additional funds to create a state-
of-the-art facility. Our overall campaign
goal is $55 million, of which $44.5 mil-

lion has been raised as of October 2001.

We formed additional committees, one of which was responsible for com-
munication with our families and the
broader community. We created a
newsletter, The Blueprint, and included
updates in our weekly Heschel News.
With the help of an outside search firm,
a search committee was created to out-
line the position of Head of the High
School and to find a person who was
eminent qualified in both Judaic and
secular studies. We were very fortunate
to have hired Ahuva Halberstam, who
has expertise not only in both areas but
also in teaching and administration.
She also brings experience in building a
new Jewish high school from her last posi-
tion as a principal on the West Coast.
Ahuva assumed her position in August
2001, which gave her a year to supervise
the necessary planning, recruitment and
hiring before we open in 2002.

Various staff and parents put together
materials for prospective students detail-
ing the philosophy and goals of the high
school program. The materials are an
expansion of core Heschel School educa-
tional principles. To quote from the
statement on educational philosophy:

“The Heschel High School is grounded
in a strong curriculum which requires each
student to seek personal meaning in that
curriculum.

“By stressing integrity as well as aca-
demic achievement, the school will encour-
ge academic resourcefulness, intellectual
rigror and social responsibility.”

“Rather than expecting our students to
seek one right answer we will teach them to
ask questions and become learners together
with their classmates and teachers. We
will encourage students to have a voice
both in the classroom and outside it.”

“General and Judaic knowledge and
culture will be integrated throughout
the day, and Jewish life will inform and
enrich every aspect of the school.”

The statement on student life has yet to be prepared because we believe
that students should have a
voice in such areas as clubs, teams,
co-curricular activities, student govern-
meter and an honor code. Lead-
ship opportunities abound while a
new culture is developed and
nurtrued in conjunction with a highly-
trained and caring faculty.

The lay and professional leaders
of the Heschel School would not

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Reflections on Building
a Jewish High School

by VIRGINIA BAYER

We are a school that is devoted to Jewish
learning and experience, respectful of the diversity
that exists within the Jewish
community and aware of the social
realities and challenges our students face.
In the context of the serious attention now being paid to day schools, we can step back and reflect on some of the challenges that lie ahead. If day schools are to maximize their potential to help foster a new generation of literate and engaged Jews, what are some of the priorities that must be successfully addressed?

—RABBI JOSHUA ELKIN