

JEWISH EDUCATION

Spring 2006

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Highlights of the 18th

Annual Consortium

Reflections:

Rabbi Marty Schloss

Consortium News From:

Atlanta	Phoenix
Baltimore	Rhode Island
Boston	San Diego
Chicago	San Francisco
Cincinnati	Toronto
Columbus	Washington D.C.
Detroit	JESNA
Houston	
Los Angeles	
MetroWest	
Minneapolis	
New York	
Philadelphia	

About The Consortium

The Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education was co-founded by Rabbi Martin Schloss and Dr. Sara Rubinow Simon and is affiliated with JESNA. Marty is the Executive Vice President of the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York. Sara is the former Special Needs Department field consultant for the Board of Jewish Education of Greater Washington.

As expressed in its name, the Consortium was developed to strengthen special education through central agencies for Jewish education, and to provide a context in which communities' special educators can build a professional network. The Consortium's Call of Action Appears on page 23.

The Consortium encourages the North American Jewish community to use the Consortium as a resource. Consortium activities include regular correspondence among members, the Newsletter, the development of a resource database, and an annual Colloquium. Additional copies of the Newsletter are available for task forces, lay leaders, professionals, and other community groups.

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Boston Hosts Colloquium

The Eighteenth Annual Colloquium of the Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education was convened in Boston, May 6-8, 2005. Rabbi Joshua Elkin of PEJE presented a vision of day schools and the importance of enrolling Jewish students with special needs. Boston's special needs professionals discussed an overall update on their work within the community. Discussions were also held on inclusion and the impact of changes in IDEA for state and federal funding. For more information regarding Boston's Colloquium, please see the Boston article on page 6. The Colloquium was hosted by the Bureau of Jewish Education of Greater Boston and coordinated by Dr. Sandy Miller-Jacobs. Participating in the Colloquium were: Dr. Shana Erenberg, Illinois; Dr. Sara



Special Education Consortium members from across North America convene in Boston

Rubinow Simon, DC; Phyllis Meyers, Cleveland, Ohio; Shayna Levine-Hefetz, Baltimore; Sara Seligson, NY; Wilma Turk, West Palm Beach, FL; Marcia Horovitz, RI; Becca Hornstein, Phoenix; Elliot Fix, Rochester; Linda Zimmerman, Atlanta; Rachel Rotem, Haifa, Israel; Cheryl Edelstein, Tenafly, NJ; Lenore Layman, DC; Matti Kaminiski, Boston; Anita Naftaly, Detroit; Shelly Christensen, Minnetonka, MN; Dr. Jed Luchow, NY; Marlene Tewner, Columbus; Steve Kraus, JESNA; Rabbi Martin Schloss, NY.

19TH ANNUAL COLLOQUIUM OF THE CONSORTIUM OF SPECIAL EDUCATORS IN CENTRAL AGENCIES FOR JEWISH EDUCATION

The 19th Annual Colloquium of the Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education will be hosted by the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York, Monday May 8th–Wednesday May 10th, 2006. Some of the exciting highlights of the upcoming meeting of the Consortium are a live, videoconference from the top of Masada with our Israeli counterparts on the topic of global accessibility and legislation. There will also be a dialogue with foundations focusing on taking a fresh look at funding for special education. Presentations on the best practices of special education models in congregational education will also be an important feature of the upcoming Colloquium. Information will be provided about the latest data about Hebrew reading and English reading, as well as an update on Project SIR. For more information, please contact:

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REFLECTIONS

RABBI MARTY SCHLOSS

This article will be my final one in this venue. After 26 years at the BJE of Greater New York, I will be leaving to pursue other interests. As such, I would like to use this space to reflect on these past two decades of the Consortium and leave you with some thoughts as to areas that should be explored as Jewish special education moves along toward the future. In fact, much of these reflections will be a recapitulation of thoughts that have already been articulated in this space over the course of the last 15 years.

Historical Perspective of the Consortium

The Consortium was co-founded by Dr. Sara Rubinow Simon and me almost a quarter of a century ago. We were sitting in my office pondering the status of Jewish special education and its potential growth. We came to the conclusion that the isolation of the Jewish central agency staff responsible for special education was an undeniable obstacle for growth in this relatively newly developing field. We speculated about what would happen if we would call our colleagues together for a central agency summit to promote Jewish special education in North America through the mechanism of an ad-hoc association. We proceeded to Dr. Alvin Schiff's office (the then CEO of BJE) and within minutes we emerged with a commitment to develop the Consortium of Jewish Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education with the first Colloquium to be hosted in New York. Its original goals were to strengthen special education under Jewish auspice through central agencies' collaboration and serve as a North American resource for those seeking information. It would deliberate on best practices and jointly address common issues confronting persons with special needs, their families and their communities, and provide a context in which special education can grow and flourish in Jewish communities throughout North America.

After more than two decades later, Sara and I can look back with extensive pride on pioneering a vibrant, vital and viable contribution to Jewish communal life. That entity has grown into an ongoing mechanism for advocacy, resource development, agenda setting and problem solving for a heretofore underserved population in our community. The longevity and continuity of our Consortium is testimony to our dedication to meaningful collaboration and the pursuit of excellence of our craft. Our accomplishments ought to serve as validation of the notion that if the cause is right, don't be afraid to take risks. And, like the Timex watch, "we may take a licking, but we always keep on ticking." Thus, my message to you, my colleagues, "Keep trucking, we're doing just fine."

Areas for Focus

I now turn to review prominent topics that were explored in this space during the last two decades. I believe these topics ought to be further cultivated as Jewish special education progresses.

Research

Secular regular and special education are federally mandated to predicate their educational practices on "research-based" programming. So ought we. It's high time we transitioned from instructional inertia to platforming our programming on our own researched-based knowledge. We need to reflect on what we know and what we need to know to provide quality education for our constituents. And, when we identify gaps of knowledge, we ought to advocate for research in those areas.

There are actually two areas of research that I am addressing. The first area is the gathering of existing data regarding the nature and efficacy of current general and Jewish special education research, programming, curricula, strategies and materials. The database need not encompass all information but rather serve as a resource guide for where this information may be obtained. Clearly, this knowledge would be helpful in assisting central agencies, day and congregational education settings, JCC's, youth groups and other Jewish communal organizations to better reflect on their own current programming. The data-base should be stored electronically at an **Educational Resource Center and available through its presence on an accessible website.**

The second area is our own original research. I have come to believe, that whereas, the Consortium is capable of advocating for such research, it is woefully beyond our own capacity to do so. Given our individual day-to-day responsibilities, it is rather unlikely that we possess the capacity to mobilize the necessary time, energy and resources to accomplish this goal. Yet, at the same time, we should encourage others, such as universities and developmental centers, to partner with our local central agencies to undertake this type of activity. BJE in New York is currently exploring this partnership with a noted university in the original research of Jewish special education for its doctoral students. The Consortium, through its newsletter and electronic networks, should encourage such developments and share those results throughout its networks in North America.

Collaboration

Although this topic served as the focus of last year's article, it continues to merit mention here as well. As a result of my tenure as CEO, I have come to value a personal conceptual model of institutional growth predicated on social interaction. The Model suggests a modest three-tiered progression of 1) **Communication**;

2) **Cooperation**; and 3) **Collaboration**. It suggests that we enhance the growth of our initiatives by ultimately partnering with others toward a common goal. Clearly, such a proposition is quite challenging without prerequisite layering. Specifically, it means that to achieve true partnering and collaboration there must be a platform of understanding and appreciation for the contributions of each of the partners. This can only occur in an atmosphere of ongoing communication and professional dialogue. Having achieved an interactive comfort level and trust of each other's competence and contributions, the next level of programmatic cooperation can develop. Our field needs increased levels of communication, both internally and externally, for future successful growth.

The first area of focus is internal within our own field. The more we communicate with our special education peers, the more knowledge and expertise we gain and the increased likelihood for success. We can build on the knowledge and accomplishments of each other as well as learn from the unsuccessful initiatives. The future efforts of each are more firmly rooted in the broader and more extensive collective experience and knowledge of the whole. Once again, the longevity of our Consortium speaks to that very point.

The second area of communication is outside our field - to wit, collaboration with non-special education. If true integration and inclusion is to be realized, a greater dialogue between special and non-special education must be pursued diligently. Both areas can contribute to each other's efficacy through its own research and knowledge. One of the most startling findings of the BJE of Greater New York's Project SIR (Success in Reading) research was the fact that little if any communication between early childhood and elementary school teachers takes place in the non-special universe. This suggests that there are significant obstacles in the smooth and seamless transitions between early childhood and elementary school education. Effective strategies and students' gains are not necessarily carried over from kindergarten to first grade. The data further suggests that unnecessary reading difficulties may develop as a result of this instructional communication gap. This condition can only be harmful in the development of a critical platform for learning and can actually promote potential student failure and functional disabilities. Special education can take the initiative in closing this gap by sharing its own research and paving the way for a far more successful non-special education progression. After all, isn't prevention of disability a cherished passion of our field?

Other collaborative contributions include the generalization of a skill-based Judaic curriculum. For more than a quarter of a century special educators have lived with Individualized Educational Plans (IEP's) predicated on the mastery of developmental milestones upon which future

learning is dependent. Our field is comfortable with the notion of exit skills for which we are sequentially building. These concepts need greater receptivity in both Jewish day and congregational educational settings. I shudder to contemplate how many students have been educationally handicapped to date by this lack of structure. Without these structures in place resource room programming and remedial intervention will be rendered dubious at best. We need to huddle with our non-special educators to promote this agenda for the sake of too many children and their future in Jewish communal life.

Leadership

We live in an era of incredibly fast-paced change. This change, coupled with an ever present need to insure continuity, demands we pay more attention to seamless progress and growth in Jewish special education. The New York State Education Department Commissioner, Richard Mills, has consistently impressed on his advisory councils (one of which I have been privileged to have chaired for the last decade) that we must answer the questions, "Who will follow us?" and "What have we done to prepare for that transition?" These questions are relevant for both our local central agencies and the Consortium itself. Furthermore, mindful of the aforementioned change comes the need for the internalization of new paradigms for the future. Whereas, some of the challenges will remain the same, many new ones will emerge. Also, it is highly unlikely that the skills sufficient for today's leadership will be adequate for tomorrow's leadership. In fact, we believe it's quite the contrary. We, as a field, must begin to identify possible individuals with leadership skills to shepherd this field into the next generation. Additionally, we must seek communal partners to assist in this goal. Given the unique financial challenges faced by special education in the private sector, one such potential partner ought to be PEJE (Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education), with its new focus on sound fiscal infra-structure development. Such a partnership would be logical and beneficial for special education's institutional continuity and longevity.

On a second front, it would also be helpful for the Consortium to explore how other fields are dealing with continuity and transition. Specifically, we ought to join with colleagues in non-special education in promoting joint leadership initiatives. Our future leaders must be far more comfortable with educating all children within a single institutional framework as they are with new materials, programs and structures for learning. In addition to gaining greater knowledge and insights, such a relationship could foster increased exposure for differentiated instruction and individualization which would expand the opportunities for integration of children with special needs into the broader educational universe.

Educator Skills

A critical element of classroom education is the teacher. Much of the educational efficacy of learning that takes place in the classroom is directly related to the skill and expertise of the teacher. Dr. Margaret Jo Shepherd of Teacher's College, Columbia University, and Dr. Jon Saphier, creator of Research for Better Teaching (RBT), often cite growing evidence that link student product with teacher competence. In fact, in a presentation for New York's BJE Center for Educational Leadership, Dr. Saphier shared studies that demonstrate the huge discrepancies in skills that exist between students educated by quality teachers as opposed to those educated by less capable teachers. Over a period of a few years those discrepancies were exacerbated to an alarming extent. And the data most clearly suggests that poor teaching may devastate a child's opportunity for not only a meaningful and productive educational career, but for viable occupational choices beyond school.

The message for the Consortium is that one of its ongoing goals must be the advocacy for instructional equity and individual teacher competence. Nowhere is this more critical than in the area of Judaic education. It is here that a critical symbiosis of Judaic knowledge and special education expertise is the only ingredient for success. The Consortium must provide models for replication of successful pre- and in-service training.

Advocacy/Government Relations

The Jewish special education field ought to be more invested in the legislative and litigious happenings of local, state and federal governments. It has been my perspective over the last two decades that many more services could have been procured for our clients had we been more aggressive in this area.

The Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York through its government relations activities helped leverage over 5 million dollars in services and reimbursements for our schools. In addition, BJE was part of a team of nonpublic school representatives that collaborated with the New York State Education Department (SED) to preserve the full extent of related special education services for children with special needs "enrolled by their parents in private schools." This achievement was replicated in only a few other states. The rest of the country offers painfully little in special education relief for families with children with special needs in private schools. Furthermore, BJE's knowledge of the system allowed it to successfully compete and it was awarded a three-year professional growth contract (Title IIA of the Federal No Child Left Behind legislation) from the New York City Department of Education.

Advocacy and the leveraging of public funds and services from BJE's Government Relations

Department have proven to be a major asset for New York's Jewish education and special education communities.

Dedication to the Maintenance of the Continuum of Services

My article in 2001 drew attention to the fact that there exists an array of special education instructional options. They included inclusion, consulting teacher, resource rooms and self-contained environments providing prevention, intervention, accommodation, modification and alternative programming. The thrust of that article was to caution members against abandoning those options and following particular instructional fads. "True special education ought to be predicated on the [needs of] individual student[s] – not umbrella-like policies and structures. Whereas, it is legitimate for the majority of students with special needs to function in the structure of mainstream standards and curricula it is not necessarily appropriate for all students." Clearly, no one form of education fits all children. Thus, I restate my position that the Consortium supports the structure of the continuum of services. It not only makes sense educationally – it's the law.

Technology

We are in the midst of a lifestyle revolution. Technological advances are a fact of life and technology governs all aspects of our existence. This includes learning and instruction. Unfortunately, while it appears that our children have mastered the basic elements of computer use and internet function and are quite comfortable and adept at their usage, we, the adult world, have not. This perception suggests that we, the supposed facilitators of knowledge and competence, are actually impediments to student growth. And, it is not that we simply haven't mastered the technology, it is that we haven't fully understood its role in curriculum development and learning. Technology is not limited to doing old things in new ways – it's about doing new things. It's about rethinking how to engage students in content that yields greater involvement, understanding and mastery. Just because we've taught content in a particular manner in the past is not justification to continue doing it in the future. If we can do better, we should.

Therefore, we ought to enhance our own understanding of technology as a significant element of the educational process and strive for a greater comfort level in its usage for enhanced opportunities for learning. Don't worry about being able to master this – our students can help us.

Conclusion

Well I guess that's about it. Let me share with you all how much an honor and privilege it has been working with you these past two decades. It's truly been an incredible ride. May the Almighty bless you all with strength and success in

your noble efforts on behalf of Klal Yisroel. And, remember, should you want to discuss anything; I'm only a cell call away.

Till we meet again . . .

CONSORTIUM NEWS

ATLANTA

The Coordinated Network for Persons with Disabilities has served the Atlanta Jewish community for over 16 years offering a variety of services to individuals with special needs. Through the Network, individuals and their families receive support in the areas of employment, independent living, counseling, social, recreational and educational services.

This past November, 15 adults with developmental disabilities joined our Federation mission to Israel, celebrating the Federation's centennial year with over 400 other individuals. It was a mind-opening experience for everyone on the mission. The Gift of Shabbat is another program that is offered through the Network. Congregations throughout the city sponsor bi-monthly Shabbat dinners, inviting adults with disabilities to participate in services and celebrate Shabbat by joining together for dinner.

These programs are supported by the Network while offered by the participating community agencies. The Center for Jewish Education & Experiences' (CJEE) Amit Division is the educational arm of the Network.

The CJEE Amit Division provides a wide variety of services to Jewish schools, families and children with special learning needs.

Day School Services

Amit Learning Labs provide individualized and small group instruction to students with mild to moderate learning disabilities on-site at their school. Amit staff offer direct instruction, as well as, consultation with classroom teachers and after school homework assistance. This program is available to elementary, middle and high schools.

Facilitation services allow students with special needs to remain in the typical day school classroom for part or all of the school day. The facilitator shadows one or more students to ensure proper behavior and attention in the classroom.

The Amit Gar'inim Program is a modified self contained program for children with developmental disabilities and is housed at The Davis Academy, a Reform Jewish day school. Gar'inim currently serves students in kindergarten through third grade. Students receive individual-

ized and small group instruction in academics and join with their peers in Davis Academy classrooms for all non-academic programming. When appropriate, students participate in academic subject areas. Speech/Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Play Therapy are integrated into the school day. The program will continue to expand adding grade levels each year.

Yad B'Yad provides matching dollars to congregations to hire special educators to work on-site in their schools. In addition to the financial support, Amit offers consultative support and resources to the schools.

Madrichim who work in the congregational schools participate in training sessions offered through CJEE and Amit to educate them about how to assist all children in the classroom.

Additional Services

AmitParentNetwork is a virtual support group for families of children with special needs. This list serve acts as a support group for Jewish families in the Atlanta metropolitan area. With today's busy lifestyles it is difficult for parents to commit to a regular time and place to meet for a support group. At the suggestion of a parent, the AmitParentNetwork was formed as a way for parents to communicate on a regular basis with questions, concerns, advice, etc. From time to time the group meets in members' homes for coffee and face-to-face conversation.

B'Yachad is a youth program for teenagers with and without disabilities. This youth group meets monthly for social, educational and religious programming. The young adults stay in touch in between gatherings by visiting, phone calls and email.

Consultation services are offered to the day schools, congregational schools, preschools and families.

The Taylor Family Foundation Parent Seminars provide an opportunity for parents to come together monthly to network and hear speakers on topics related to raising children who learn differently. This year's topics have included: Helping the Disorganized Child with Homework, Early Indicators, Beyond Medication, Planning a Bar/Bat Mitzvah and Nutrition.

Professional Development is offered routinely by the Center for Jewish Education & Experiences for teachers and prospective teachers. Included in the many topics offered every year are courses related to child development and learning differently. Two courses offered this year were "Teaching Hebrew to Children Who Learn Differently" and "Developmental Issues in Early Childhood Education - Pre-K through 3rd Grade".

The Interfaith Disability Network was formed 5 years ago to promote awareness and inclusion in faith communities. This Network is

sponsored by the Atlanta Alliance and is made up of a Board of Directors that is representative of the diversity of the Atlanta Metropolitan community. Linda Zimmerman, the Director of the Amit Division, is a past president and current board member of this Network.

Recruitment and training of quality teaching and support staff is also an important task of CJEE and Amit. Amit not only looks for highly qualified special educators for its own programs, but also assists the schools to find appropriate staff for their programs.

Advocacy is intertwined in everything we do. In addition to the work we do in the Jewish community to promote inclusion of all people, CJEE Amit is involved on planning committees at the Greater Atlanta Jewish Federation, Day School Council and community organizations.

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BALTIMORE

The Center for Jewish Education provides services to individuals with special needs, their schools, families and the community.

Educational Consultation:

Trained Special Education consultants are available to area pre-school, day, and congregational schools. They are called upon to observe and give appropriate follow-up, through meeting with teachers, parents, and administration as necessary. Additionally, our educational consultants take a proactive role through initiating correspondences with teachers and members of the administration. This year, CJE consultants have been instrumental in helping area day schools develop social skills groups, as well.

CJE was delighted to offer **SEEP (Special Education Enhancement Projects) Grants** to area schools this year, made possible once again through the generosity of the Charles Crane Family Foundation. SEEP grants are intended to help increase long-term capacity and enhance the effectiveness in integrating and servicing students with special needs in formal Jewish education settings. Grants up to \$10,000 over two years will be awarded to schools for projects that will have a lasting effect on the school's ability to include students with special needs. As part of the SEEP Grant process, all recipient schools will be required to develop a committee of their lay leadership devoted to increasing the long-term capacity of the school

to accommodate and meaningfully include students with special needs. Grants may be used for Curriculum and Professional Development, including researching and implementing established programs and educational technology to support students with special needs who cannot access the general education curriculum.

Jewish Special Educators Network supports parents, related services professionals and general classroom teachers – not only special educators! We held a two part workshop series, *Solving the Social Skills Puzzle: Helping Your Students with Special Needs Fit In*, attended by over 300 Jewish educators, professionals and parents representing day, congregational and pre-schools from across the Jewish ideological spectrum. The first session featured Eileen Costello, MD, renowned author of *Quirky Kids: Understanding and Helping Your Child Who Doesn't Fit In*. Dr. Costello illuminated the confusing list of diagnoses often applied to quirky children and discussed various coping strategies for children, adolescents and adults. The question and answer session was so riveting, the participants did not want to leave at the end of the three-hour presentation! The second session featured Rick Lavoie, MA, M.Ed., well-known for his popular videos, including *FAT City*, and author of the new book and video, *It's So Much Work to be Your Friend: Helping the Child with Learning Disabilities Find Social Success*. Rick entertained the standing-room only crowd as he focused on the challenges of friendships and social interactions that children with special needs often find elusive. Participants benefited from a networking lunch and facilitated small group reflections. Our goal for the workshop series is to help participants adapt their teaching methods for use in an inclusive Jewish classroom. In addition, we continue to maintain our list serve that enables workshop participants to connect between sessions and have a successful partnership with SPD (Sensory Processing Disorder) Network to sponsor a parent-professional networking group.

Building on our successful workshop series, the annual Spring Seminar, *Another Piece of the Puzzle: Writing Social Stories*, will feature CJE Special Education Consultants Deborah Musher and Rachel Delman Turniansky. This hands-on workshop, scheduled for May 17, will focus on giving educators and parents the skills to compose their own social stories for use with children with social skills deficits, while integrating Jewish values and individual situations. Participants will also learn how to use social stories as effective tools in teaching social skills and will make and take social stories for use at home and in the classroom.

Jewish Advocates for Deaf Education (JADE) publishes the monthly *What's Up? Accessible Jewish Community Events for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community*. This electronic community calendar promotes local Jewish programming that will be inter-

preted into ASL, such as synagogue services, family programs, featured speakers and foreign films. Some of the sponsoring organizations have offered to hire interpreters to make their programs accessible, and some of the interpreters are paid for by the Center for Jewish Education Interpreter Fund. Accessible events help make the Jewish deaf and hard of hearing community an integral part of the larger Baltimore Jewish community and serve to educate the hearing community about the needs of the deaf.

Gesher LaTorah, our Sunday Jewish education program for children with severe special needs, continues to grow, with over 40 students enrolled. Our partnership with the JCC includes Sunday Funday, a full day of respite every other week for parents of our students. Gesher LaTorah includes the TAG program for adults who are interested in vocational and community service opportunities. TAG has a meaningful partnership with an Assisted Living Facility, in which our students volunteer and learn Torah with seniors every week.

MD S.N.A.P. (Special Needs Advocacy Project) is a group of parents of children with special needs who have had extensive training in special education law. MD S.N.A.P. offers volunteer support and advocacy to families of children with special needs. This year MD S.N.A.P. is supporting over 100 families. Services offered include Individualized Education Program (IEP) and Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) preplanning, accompaniment to IEP and IFSP meetings, resources, information, and referrals. Due to the high demand for our services, we continue to train additional MD S.N.A.P. volunteer advocates on an ongoing basis.

MD S.N.A.P. joined forces with the Maryland State Department of Education to present a special Sunday session of the Family Focus Conference in March, so that Sabbath observant families would have access to information presented at this Saturday event. *The Dance of Partnership: Why Do My Feet Hurt?*, featuring nationally acclaimed author and presenter, Janice Fialka, MSW, ACSW, aims to teach families of children with special needs and the professionals who work with them "the moves" to enhance family-professional partnerships. The program includes break-out sessions focused on improving communication with all the partners in the dance including the child with disabilities, siblings, extended family, professionals, Jewish day schools, and the public school system.

In addition, MD S.N.A.P. offers ongoing workshops throughout the year for our advocates as well as others interested in the field. A collaborative workshop with Maryland Disability Law Center for parents regarding the reauthorization of IDEA will be conducted following the publication of the much-anticipated new federal regulations. MD S.N.A.P. has recently joined forces with Jewish Legal Services to provide pro bono

services to families invoking their due process rights.

The Center for Jewish Education continues to thrive in our **new state-of-the-art facility**. Our expanded space has allowed for the purchase of over 100 new special education resource materials, with more on the way. Our computer workstations have **Boardmaker** installed on them, allowing area Jewish educators to create materials for their classrooms. Additionally, our new resource center boasts complete accessibility including a wheelchair accessible computer workstation.

CJE is proud of our community collaborative projects. **Kulanu K'echad** is an interagency collaboration that includes Jewish Family Services, Jewish Vocational Services, Jewish Big Brother/Big Sister League, JCC, and the Center for Jewish Education. The **Professional Advisory Committee on Special Needs of the Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore** includes these agencies as well as other community agencies that serve individuals with disabilities in the Jewish community. These groups are working hard to communicate and plan services for children with special needs and their families.

Kodem Kol is a collaborative partnership program that provides, through Kennedy Krieger Institute, service coordination to over 60 Jewish families in the Baltimore City and County Infants and Toddlers System. The Kodem Kol Service Coordinator is a valuable member of the CJE Special Education Services team and helps her families take advantage of everything our new facility has to offer. Kodem Kol is offering a community workshop to educate parents and professionals about developmental milestones in children, ages birth to three years. Featuring area experts in the fields of Developmental Pediatrics, Special Education, Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy, workshop participants will gain the necessary knowledge to identify reasons for concern. Parents and professionals will have the opportunity to ask their questions and learn about community resources to help them gain access to assessment and services.

CJE continues to partner with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Baltimore Jewish Council to advocate for quality education for children in our community through the **PEN Project (Partnership for Educational Needs)**. The first stage of this project has been data collection to learn about the needs of the children in our community, many of which have been unserved or underserved. A liaison to the Jewish community was hired at MSDE, to help coordinate the efforts to locate and identify children with disabilities in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. The PEN project had its first challenge when the changes mandated by IDEA regarding parentally-placed private

school students went into effect. Nearly 90% of the children in our community receiving public school services in private schools are now under the jurisdiction of a different LEA (local educational agency). (They were previously being served by their county of residence and are now served by the county in which the school is located.) After much hard work, the PEN team was able to ensure that all of the service plans would be honored and the children would continue to receive Speech and Occupational Therapies on-site at their schools. The PEN project continues to work toward ensuring that culturally appropriate educational options are available to children with disabilities in our community and is hopeful that this initiative will continue to grow in its impact.

Six years since the expansion of our special education services to the Baltimore community, we continue to grow and identify unmet needs. Through advocacy and parental and administrative support, we are pleased to see opportunities expand in our community for individuals with disabilities, as well as their teachers and families. We continue to work with officials at the city, county and state levels to develop a full array of Jewish educational options for children with a variety of special needs in our community. We look forward to continuing from strength to strength.

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BOSTON

Our Revolutionary Consortium

For the first time, Boston hosted our annual May 2005 Consortium Colloquium. We heard from many professionals who work on behalf of Jewish education and individuals with special needs. Rabbi Joshua Elkin of the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education (PEJE) presented a vision of day schools and the importance of enrolling and retaining Jewish students with special needs. Individuals with genetic diseases carried by Ashkenazic Jews, as well as their parents, researchers, and consortium members spoke about these diseases and ways to conduct community genetic screening programs. Boston's special needs professionals gave an update on their work with parents, housing, social and recreational programs, camping, youth inclusion, and vocational services. As a result of this discussion and inspired by the BJE of Washington DC, our special education professional group

designated May as Disability Awareness Month in the Jewish Community. (At the moment it is still in the planning process.)

The consortium included interesting discussions on inclusion and the impact of changes in IDEA for state and federal funding. For the first time, a special educator from Haifa, principal of the Genigar School, joined our consortium and facilitated a discussion about special education in Israel. We also had some time for informal networking, sharing and laughing on a Duck tour of Boston as well as walking, shopping and picture taking in historic Lexington. Now we look forward to this year's meeting in New York City and next year in Israel!

Day Schools

Our most exciting news of the year involves the receipt of **\$2.2 million** for the next five years from our BJE/CJP Peerless Excellence Project: Day Schools and Special Education. This donation over the next five years is being overseen by a CJP Implementation Committee and its efforts are being coordinated by the BJE's Director of Special Education Services. The money is being used for:

Staffing: Four schools received funding for full-time special educators; two of our smaller schools received part-time funded positions.

Classroom supports: Schools that did not receive new staff received an allocation to purchase materials for their students with special needs.

Jewish Special Education Collaborative (JSEC) and Etgar L'Noar: Additional funding was given to JSEC to hire additional support personnel and to offer consultation to teachers in day schools. Etgar L'Noar received funding to plan for a program for students with more significant special needs in day schools.

Research and Evaluation: Through both qualitative and quantitative data collection, the outside evaluator will assess the impact of this funding on schools, teachers and students.

Professional Development: The BJE is responsible for professional development programs for special educators and classroom teachers, administrators and parents. These activities are planned taking into account research about successful professional development and standards set by the National Staff Development Council.

Professional Development Activities

Our program began with a workshop presented by the 2006 Massachusetts Teacher of the Year, sharing the ways in which she and her inclusive school have supported Differentiated Instruction. She opened her classroom and school for people to visit and meet with her, special educators, and administrators. Our newest school used a professional day for a field trip for the whole staff and principal with a debriefing session over lunch! The final part of this program was a workshop and discussion for day school staff members facilitated by the BJE.

We have also introduced the Creative Reading Program (formerly the Wisnia-Kapp Reading Program), developed by Sharon Weiss-Kapp, a speech language pathologist and Clinical Assistant Professor in the Language Laboratory in the Graduate Program in Communication Sciences and Disorders at Massachusetts General Hospital. Created to support children with language-based learning problems, this program is a multi-sensory and rules-based reading program. Three workshops were given to introduce this program and the specifics needed for implementation in the classroom. Ten of our day schools and one special educator from JSEC participated. Lunch was provided and, if needed, substitutes were paid for through the grant. The presenter, Peggy Radcliff, principal of a local special needs school, was available to visit the teachers in their classrooms on a monthly basis to offer feedback, present demonstration lessons, and answer questions. The teachers at the workshop were so energized and excited by this reading approach they requested an additional workshop to learn about how this program helps with problems in reading fluency and comprehension.

To support our teachers of Hebrew, workshops were offered by a local educator, Stephanie Bernstein, who studied with Sharon and adapted the WKRP for Hebrew instruction. This professional program also involved having the teachers attend day long workshops (with lunch and funds for substitutes available) and follow-up visits to classrooms.

Several times a year the BJE Special Educators' Network meets. This year, in addition to the network for day school special educators, a network for new day school staff was also created. The day school special educators' network, primarily attended by coordinators of support services, focused on the pre-referral process with a goal of creating written documentation for each school. The network for the new staff serves to create a collegial group of people in similar roles who work in different day schools. We addressed the goals of this project, discussed the Jewish Education Action Plan and accommodations in the classroom, and used the Osborn-Parnes Creative Problem Solving Process to brainstorm ways to provide both remediation and curriculum-based support to students with special needs.

We have been working with the Parents Alliance for Catholic Education, a non-profit, public policy and advocacy organization, to investigate ways to receive state and federal funding for our schools. Because our state has stricter guidelines for special education than the federal law, the Department of Education has requested a waiver from the federal government on the implementation of IDEA regulations regarding private school students whose town of residence is not the same as the town of their private school. Working through this has been slow. At this point (January) we have not made much progress, although we have had many positive

meetings with DOE, the Massachusetts Coalition of Education Collaboratives, and individual school special education department administrators.

Research Project on Day Schools and Special Education

In conjunction with Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education (PEJE), the BJE interviewed day school personnel and developers of resources about services provided for students with special needs. *Noteworthy Practices for Diverse Learners* has been shared with day schools and we anticipate placing this information on our web pages where it will be easy to update as more programs and resources are identified. Rabbi Josh Elkin, Executive Director of PEJE, introduced this idea at last May's consortium meeting when we distributed the interview protocol. Several members of the Consortium identified programs and resources.

Congregational and Community Schools

We continue to support congregational schools in their efforts to include students with special needs. Using CJP grants administered by BJE, our schools are providing support to students with special needs and helping classroom teachers with accommodations. One school involved in our Boston Mandel Teacher Educator Institute, established a mentor program for their teachers. The mentors have special education experience and participated in a BJE workshop on differentiated instruction held at their school. The very next day, one of the mentors helped a teacher create and implement a differentiated lesson on prayers!

Many of our special educators are also providing professional development for the teachers. One regional program, The Sudbury Valley Jewish Special Education Initiative, saw a change of directorship and faced several crisis situations involving students with behavior issues. This prompted the creation of an eligibility policy and an intake process for parents to sign before their children were served by the Initiative. They also planned and held a conference, Best Practices for Meeting the Needs for All Learners, open to all schools. Susan Senator, author of *Making Peace with Autism: One Family's Struggle, Discovery, and Unexpected Gifts*, was a keynote speaker.

This year we funded a pilot program that involves a multi-sensory Hebrew curriculum (described above). After attending an initial workshop, three synagogues and the Initiative were selected to participate. Additional workshops and materials were given to these teachers and Stephanie Bernstein invited them to visit her class to see the program in action. She has provided follow-up coaching on a regular basis. Teachers of the weekly summer "Pizza and Practice" remedial Hebrew program have participated in the training and will be using this new Hebrew

reading program this summer.

Our *TeenAde*s continue to learn and work in our congregational schools and we add new teens and schools each year. This year we have one teen who is completing his third year in the program! We have added sessions on conflict resolution and task analysis to the training.

Pre-schools

We currently serve three Jewish pre-schools and there has been interest from four additional programs whose directors are now working with the BJE to apply for funding for next year. While each school has different needs and implements the grant money in different ways, each includes professional development, creation of new materials (e.g., visual cues) and additional support from therapists (e.g., speech and language, occupational).

Shabbat Minyan Me'YOUchad

Last spring we piloted four Shabbat morning services for individuals with special needs and their families or care providers. It was so successful that this year there were seven services. The service is based on Camp Ramah of New England's Tikvah service and is the only such service in New England. An inclusive service, about 30 people regularly attend. Last year a student from Etgar L'Noar was called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzvah! This service provides a participatory Shabbat community for people with special needs. The entire congregation joins the Minyan for Kiddush following the service.

Israel

This year, the BJE received a grant from CJP to initiate a Boston-Haifa Special Education Exchange and Collaboration of Ideas. We have worked with the Haifa municipality to find special educators who can explore this project with us. At the time of this writing we are still in the planning stages for an initial visit to Haifa to create liaisons between Israeli and American special educators to discuss issues such as inclusion, the special education population, and second language acquisition. Israeli schools have more self-contained and categorical schools and programs. Boston, like the rest of the United States, has moved towards inclusion, and unlike other states, Massachusetts remains non-categorical in its programming. This Boston-Haifa Connection builds on the initial conversation begun last spring with Rachel Rotem, principal of Genigar School, who attended our Consortium.

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CHICAGO

Chicago continues to offer a variety of services for individuals with special needs and their families. Numerous agencies are involved in providing services in a variety of settings. While it is true that more children and families are served today than ever before, the need remains great. Affordable residential options, expanded educational and vocational services, increased recreational and social opportunities are all priorities. Chicago agencies will continue to move forward in providing an outstanding array of high-quality services, so that the needs of all of our children can be met.

The following information was compiled from Central Agencies for Jewish Education in Chicago, as well as through the program directors. If any programs were inadvertently omitted, please accept my apologies.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Community Foundation for Jewish Education and the Board of Jewish Education developed and implemented a needs assessment survey to evaluate services for students with special needs in the supplementary schools administered by these agencies. The survey examined the number of students with special needs currently enrolled in the various programs, as well as the nature of those needs. It also analyzed levels of teacher training and preparedness for providing appropriate instruction for students with special needs. The survey asked the congregations to identify and prioritize ways in which services for these students could be developed and enhanced.

Results of the survey were based on a greater than 50% response rate. The data indicated that there is a large group of students with a wide range of special needs in the supplementary schools. Several of the schools reported that they were providing adequate services for their students, however, the majority of respondents indicated that they were not satisfied with their ability to provide services. Not surprisingly, the need for teacher training and support was found to be significant. There is much work to be done in the future to insure that all Jewish children receive an appropriate and meaningful religious school education, regardless of need or ability.

PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION

The Anne M. Blitstien Teachers Institute of Hebrew Theological College continues to offer professional preparation programs that lead to Illinois State Teacher Certification in Elementary and Special Education. The programs are aligned to State standards for teacher edu-

cation and exceed state requirements in terms of content and rigor. The programs combine intensive courses in Liberal Arts and Science, Judaic Studies, and Education with field and clinical experiences, and culminate with student teaching. Graduates of the program are uniquely qualified as certified educators, capable of teaching both Judaic and General studies. Special Education candidates are qualified to teach the full range of needs that fall within the Learning Behavior Specialist I category, including learning disabilities, behavior and emotional disorders, cognitive impairments, physical disabilities, and autistic spectrum disorders. The education programs offer a high faculty to student ratio and a challenging curriculum taught by experts in the field of education. Current teachers can also take courses to fulfill continuing education and NCLB requirements.

In addition to the education programs, Blitstein Institute offers a variety of second majors, including Psychology, English, Computers, and Business. Blitstein Institute also offers courses in preparation for graduate programs in Speech and Language Therapy, Nutrition, and a variety of other fields. Furthermore, the school has a strong commitment to serving students with special learning needs. The Writing and Math centers offer ongoing academic support, while the administration and faculty offer guidance and counseling. The Anne M. Blitstein Teachers Institute of Hebrew Theological College is dedicated to the success of all students, and strives to help each one reach her fullest potential.

As part of its ongoing commitment to teacher education, The Board of Jewish Education has generously sponsored *Advanced Seminar – Topical Issues in Jewish Special Education*, a continuing professional development series for Day School teachers who have completed the *Beyond Stickers and Stars* program. The seminar, which covers a wide range of topics related to special needs in depth, is taught across eight weeks. *Beyond Stickers and Stars* is taught in fifteen-week semesters. A cadre of teachers at the Sager Solomon Schechter Day School in Northbrook and Skokie has completed three years of study. In addition, the BJE has sponsored on site professional consultation for teachers enrolled in *Beyond Stickers and Stars*. The consultations facilitate the application of content and theory into practice. The program has been very successful, with marked improvement in teacher knowledge, skills, and dispositions noted.

In addition, the BJE is in the process of compiling a special needs reference section in the Marshall Resource Center. The Marshall Resource Center will provide books, films, educational materials and references on special needs for teachers and parents. One of the most exciting projects is the development of a resource guide, being compiled by a young man with cerebral palsy and his teacher. Look for this section to grow considerably in the coming year.

P'TACH

P'TACH is a special education program for children with learning disabilities and emotional needs. It has two locations serving over 30 children. P'TACH offers self-contained classrooms with individualized instruction for children in first grades through eighth grades. The programs are housed in Arie Crown Hebrew Day School and Joan Dachs Bais Yaakov. Students are included in the regular classroom to the fullest possible extent. The staff is highly trained in special education in both Judaic and secular studies. The children have their academic as well as their social needs met on a daily basis. P'TACH is affiliated with the Associated Talmud Torahs.

ELAN

ELAN is a network of services for children, their teachers and parents. Some of these services include referrals to various outside professionals, including the local Jewish social service agencies, diagnostic services and referrals, and assorted consultations. ELAN consults with most of the Chicago area's day schools. In addition, ELAN is available to provide consultation and liaison services to families for children facing difficulties in school. ELAN is affiliated with the Associated Talmud Torahs.

KESHET

Founded in 1982, Keshet is a not-for-profit organization providing educational, recreational, and vocational programs for children and young adults with developmental disabilities. Keshet programs include the *Ariella Joy Frankel Keshet Day School - K-8th* and the *Irving A. Hokin Keshet High School - 9th-12th*; *Keshet Transition Program* for young adults ages 18 through 21; *The Cooperative Community-Based Program for Adults with Developmental Disabilities*; *Summer Camp* programs; *Jacqueline Besser Keshet Special Olympics*; and *Keshet Sunday School*. Keshet also hosts the *Leventhal Keshet Autism Training and Demonstration Center*, and has become a TEACCH training site for the State of Illinois.

JEWISH CHILDREN'S BUREAU

The Jewish Children's Bureau is a partner in serving our community, supported by the Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation. The **Jewish Children's Bureau Yeshiva Day School** provides a therapeutic environment for students whose behavioral, social and/or learning problems significantly interfere with their academic work and/or their classroom behavior at other day or public schools. The Yeshiva requires meaningful participation from parents, mental health professionals, the community, and the students themselves. JCB Yeshiva students live in their own homes and attend school with the involvement and approval of their home school districts. JCB Yeshiva integrates strong Judaic, secular and vocational programs with an intensive clinical program of day treatment.

Founded in 1999, the **Center for Young Children with Autism** combines the latest innovative therapeutic methods with a strong family component. Serving children ages three to six, the Center is distinctive in its year-round program and full-day schedule of classroom activities and services. The Center for Young Children with Autism follows the TEACCH method, which aims to build a child's independence and communication abilities. School is in session year-round (215 days a year) and runs 5 hours a day, 5 days a week. There is a small student to teacher ratio, which encourages each child to reach his or her potential. In order to ensure that each child receives comprehensive integrated treatment, the staff includes a full-time speech language pathologist and a full-time occupational therapist. A social worker provides family support and a family liaison /educational consultant provides ongoing education to families, which allows them to generalize treatment methods from school to home. The Center offers assessment, child day treatment, family education and programs, as well as speech, language, and occupational therapy.

The Jewish Children's Bureau also offers an Early Intervention program, which provides comprehensive therapeutic services for children ages 0 to 3. Services include developmental therapy, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, and developmental play groups. Auditory-Verbal Therapy, which uses specific methods of teaching listening and speaking skills, is offered for children with cochlear implants. The early intervention program includes social work and psychological services, nursing and nutrition, and home visits.

DAY SCHOOL SERVICES AND INITIATIVES

In addition to the aforementioned programs, most of the Jewish Day Schools in the Chicago area offer resource and social work services for students with learning disabilities and emotional/behavioral issues. At the elementary level, **Hillel Torah North Suburban Day School** and **Arie Crown Hebrew Day School** are among the schools that offer pull-out resource assistance. The **Solomon Schechter Day School** system (Northbrook, Skokie, and Middle School) offer an array of pull out and in-class resource services. The Sager Solomon Schechter Day School is currently implementing and evaluating an early intervention model to serve young children with suspected learning issues, who might otherwise have "fallen through the cracks". At the high school level, the **Ida Crown Jewish Academy** and the **Hannah Sacks Girls School** offer resource services for students with special learning needs. **Gesher HaTorah** offers a self-contained therapeutic day school option for children with special needs.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For additional information about any of these programs please contact Shana Erenberg, Ph.D. at www.education@htc.edu.

CINCINNATI

Kesher, a program in Cincinnati, Ohio, inspires and supports the Jewish community in its efforts to include people with disabilities in the Jewish community.

The big news for this year is that Kesher is now located at Jewish Family Service, 11223 Cornell Park Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45242. Our new phone number is 513-766-3348, and our email address is hopeb@kesherconnects.org. We are not part of JFS, but share their space. Since we are very involved in enhancing the inclusion of individuals with disabilities into Jewish Family Service, this arrangement is working out well for all of us.

Our support of educational inclusion is slowly moving forward. We have consulted at one Day School and several supplementary religious schools during this past year. We have also done teacher training in two supplementary schools. Kesher is receiving many phone calls from other congregations about how we can help their educational programs for children and adults.

Kesher is also receiving more calls from congregations about religious inclusion, in general. This increase in communications from congregations is a direct result of our "Jewish Doors of Cincinnati" poster. This poster highlights twelve of the ark doors that symbolize "opening the doors to a more welcoming and inclusive Jewish community."

Kesher is also working with a committee of NAMI to plan a presentation that can be delivered at various houses of worship. The emphasis of this presentation will be welcoming people with emotional disabilities to services and programs at the local congregation. This group is also planning a repeat of last year's "Coping Sunday." "Coping Sunday" is an interfaith religious service that celebrates the contributions of people with emotional disabilities to houses of worship, and teaches the groups to welcome people with these disabilities to their events.

The Kesher Director, Hope Bard, is now serving on the local Advisory Council of "Faith in Action." This is an interfaith effort sponsored by Catholic Social services that links various congregations and the local community to assist people who have a disability or are senior adults, and are homebound.

"Supporting Inclusion" is an allocation from the Jewish Federation of Cincinnati that has brought Kesher to the notice of much of our Jewish community. Kesher assists groups to obtain and helps with matching payment for accommodations and modifications. During the past three years, Kesher has helped to provide Jewish agencies, organizations, schools and congregations sign language interpreters, Braille and large print materials, assistive listening devices, and portable accessible parking signs. Devices, such as TTY's and bathroom grab rails have also been made available. Kesher also trains these groups in use of the equipment so they can become more independent in being welcoming.

Big Brothers/Big Sisters continues to include children and volunteers with disabilities in its "Gesher" (bridge) program. There is now a waiting list for "Littles" waiting to get into this program. Kesher assists the agency in training the "Bigs."

The Jewish Community Center is now building a new facility. Hope Bard has been involved in the planning with committees designing this building so that people with disabilities can more easily participate in JCC activities. The JCC Senior Adult group has worked closely with Kesher to obtain such things as needed computer adaptations, TV accommodations, and assistive listening devices so seniors with disabilities can be part of this group. Kesher has also worked on searching out grants to pay for such equipment.

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati Campus, continues to work with Kesher to plan a "Disability Awareness Day" on the campus. Also, Kesher is working with the Center for Holocaust and Humanity Education at HUC-JIR to make its programs and exhibits friendly to people with disabilities. Kesher Director Hope Bard is guest lecturer at the Human Resources Class of the Rabbinic Training Program.

Awards were given to several winners at the Kesher Annual Breakfast Meeting in December 2005. Adath Israel Synagogue received the Kesher Religious Inclusion Award, given to a congregation that models a welcoming attitude to people with disabilities in all areas, including education. The JCC Senior Adult Program received the Kesher Special Projects Inclusion Award given to a specific part of an agency for its efforts to include individuals with disabilities in programming. Jewish Vocational Service is a sixty-five-year-old agency that was the first agency in Cincinnati's Jewish community that included persons with disabilities in the constituency served. They received a special award for their work in starting and continuing their vocational programs. Another special award was given to Sandy Kerlin, retiring co-director of the Inclusion Network. The Inclusion Network assisted the Jewish community in starting and

mentoring Kesher.

We continue our ever-changing program of inspiring our Jewish community to include everyone.

Hope Bard

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COLUMBUS

The Columbus Jewish Federation's Jewish Education and Identity Department provides support for individuals and families with special needs. Founded in 1996, its programs currently serve more than 70 children and adults and their families. The department works with more than 200 teachers in 13 schools and institutions in the Columbus Jewish Community.

The department provides a broad-based network of programs serving students in preschool, congregational and day school settings, as well as adults with special needs and their families. Programs are funded through the Federation's annual campaign with additional support from the Columbus Jewish Foundation and private donors.

Many programs have been implemented in cooperation with Jewish Family Services, Wexner Heritage House, Shalom House, Leo Yassenoff Jewish Community Center, Schottenstein Chabad House, Columbus Community Kollel, Columbus Speech and Hearing Center and area congregations and their preschools.

New Programs:

Sensory Strategies for Successful Students

With continued support from a grant from the Columbus Jewish Foundation, an occupational therapist was able to follow up on children identified the previous year with sensory integration issues and to evaluate kindergarten students in each of our Jewish day schools. This year the program was extended to include local Jewish pre-schools. Early childhood educators received training in identifying sensory processing issues and strategies to assist students in the classroom.

Ongoing Programs:

Services to the Deaf Community

The Columbus Jewish Federation provides interpreting at Friday evening services twice a month at Temple Israel and offers interpreting

by request for Jewish educational classes and events throughout Central Ohio. Educational support is provided to several deaf and hearing-impaired students in local congregational schools throughout Central Ohio.

Kesher

This program, providing support services in congregational religious schools to children with a wide range of disabilities, has expanded its services to include students with disabilities including hearing impairment, learning disabilities, emotional and behavior issues and mild developmental disabilities. Each child is assigned an aide to provide individualized support to enable the child to succeed in his/her religious school classroom. The number of students served increases each year. The program is funded through the annual campaign of the Columbus Jewish Federation.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah class

The sixth year of our class for students with more involved needs actively prepares middle school and high school students for participation in a Bar/Bar Mitzvah ceremony that is meaningful and specifically designed for each child. Five students representing three congregations meet for two hours each Sunday morning at Congregation Tifereth Israel. Throughout the year, the students have opportunities to integrate with the mainstream religious school. Dedicated personnel with highly specialized training are available to help each student participate as fully as possible in a wide range of Jewish learning. The Columbus Jewish Federation coordinates and funds this program.

Yachad

This program, affiliated with the National Jewish Council for the Disabled, provides unique social, educational and recreational mainstreamed programs for the developmentally disabled. Our Yachad chapter serves young adults with special challenges with programming that brings them into the mainstream of Jewish life. Activities include: field trips to museums, community programs, and sports activities. Special events are planned around Jewish holiday themes. The Columbus chapter is sponsored by the national organization, the Columbus Jewish Federation and Jewish Family Services. Additional funding is received from private donors.

Consultation to Schools

Working with individual religious schools, the Jewish Education and Identity Department provides support services for children from pre-school through Bar/Bat Mitzvah, with a broad range of special needs. These students are served in inclusive settings. Services include individual consultation with administrators, teachers and parents, including observations and assessment of individual student needs, home visits, and curriculum support.

A special education consultant is assigned to each of Columbus' religious schools for several hours each month based on enrollment. The consultant, working with the education director, observes classes, identifies children having learning and behavioral difficulties, provides educational strategies to teachers and consults with parents. The Columbus Jewish Federation funds this program.

The department also provides curricular materials on disability awareness and sensitivity training to congregational schools.

Information and Referral Service

The Special Education Department provides information and referrals in response to inquiries about educational services for persons with disabilities. The department networks with several programs in the community.

The Special Education Coordinator meets with parents and administrators in private conferences to determine the best ways of meeting the special needs of their child. The coordinator works with parents to identify educational objectives, and helps all members of the educational team to address each family's concerns.

For additional information contact:

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DETROIT

"For every closed door...there is one that is opened."

Helen Keller

As we begin our eleventh year of operation, our Opening the Doors Partnership Program of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit's Alliance for Jewish Education continues to "open the doors of opportunity" for children with special needs in our community. This past year we helped close to 800 children in our 23 partnership schools with our team of 18 special education teachers. Our partners are Early Childhood Schools, Day Schools and Congregational Schools across the full denominational spectrum—Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Humanistic Judaism. Each partnership school receives funding from the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit to provide the hiring of our Special Educators (with Masters' Degrees or Special Education Certification) to implement

services on site. Each school model of service delivery is specialized to fit the needs and philosophy of each school.

Our full range of services includes: recruitment, placement; indirect supervision of Special Educators; teacher conferences; direct instruction; consultation; and resources. Our Special Education Department consists of: Anita Naftaly, Ellen Maiseloff, Helene Weiss Kohn, Haviva Ferrer and our 18 Special Education teachers. We appreciate and recognize the support of our Alliance Director, Rabbi Judah Isaacs.

Family Circle 2005

Believing that bullying is a serious issue, we had a major speaker discuss this topic at two of our separate programs. Our keynote speaker was educational consultant, Barbara Coloroso, author of *The Bully, The Bullied and The Bystander*. She characterized the deadly triad: bullies who terrorize, the bullied who are afraid to tell and the bystanders who participate or stand idly by. On Sunday night, November 6th, she addressed these issues for parents, teachers and professionals at our annual Family Circle Program. Close to 200 people attended and were mesmerized by her presentation and gained a deeper understanding of the roles each person plays and the serious consequences of inaction. We all learned that "it is a life and death issue that we ignore at our children's peril—thinking it's a normal part of childhood." It was a phenomenal program!

Our Family Circle committee was so impressed with Barbara Coloroso's presentation and the audience response, that she was invited back for a return speaking engagement for Family Circle 2006.

Day School Conference 2005

On Monday, November 7, about 200 day school teachers gathered at the BPS Conference Center for an afternoon professional development program. Our 9th annual conference continues to be the only opportunity for all of our four local day schools to come together for a day of learning. Our conference featured a secular session and a pre-school session. Our secular session featured outstanding educational consultant and author, Barbara Coloroso, of *The Bully, The Bullied and the Bystander*. She explained the deadly triad and also explained how bullying often occurs "under the radar of adults" and gave ways for teachers to not only become aware of it but also presented strategies for them and their students to use to stop the bullying.

The session for pre-school teachers featured **Tiffany Wright**, Program Director, Lowry Center for Early Childhood, Oakland University, Rochester Hills, Michigan. She spoke to our preschool teachers who work in the day schools about, *Fostering a Supportive Climate: Dealing with Behavior Concerns and Conflicts*.

Doors to the Future

We are grateful to be the recipients of a new two-year grant from the Mandell L. and Madeleine H. Berman Foundation for this early childhood inclusion program. It began on June 1, 2005 and will continue until 2007. This grant enables us to continue to provide early intervention that will help preschool children have a successful early childhood experience. It provides one-on-one assistance to preschoolers who need temporary intervention to help them function successfully in the classroom. We serve about 20 children each year who may be considered at risk for school, or may have learning difficulties. We place three Para educators into seven early childhood partner schools. We provide our Para educators with formal coursework at Oakland Schools to obtain Para educator certification. Our Para educator Coordinator, Helene Weiss Kohn, (with a Masters' Degree in Special Education and experience in Early Childhood Development), supervises them. Formal evaluation results from parents, classroom teachers and directors have all indicated that this service is highly beneficial and a valuable resource. We extend our gratitude to the Berman Foundation for their confidence and commitment to our program—and in enabling us to make a real difference in the lives of our young children!

This year began in September with a professional development session for our Para educators on the topic of Sensory Integration: A Different Way to Look at Challenging Behavior, featuring Jill Guz, Director, Abilities Center. In December, our Para educators visited the Lowry Early Childhood Center on the campus of Oakland University. They viewed the graduate training center and had the opportunity to hear about the various educational approaches from the Program Director, Tiffany Wright.

Special Educators Network

Our 18-member special education team meets quarterly throughout the year to discuss relevant issues and to share current thought and methodology. This year began with a visit to the Ferber-Kaufman Friendship Circle Lifetown to view their state-of-the-art facility for children with special needs. They toured the activity "city" and met with Bassie Shemtov of the Friendship Circle, who discussed their full range of social support and services in assisting children in life survival skills and cultivating friendships.

Another meeting is scheduled in March 2006 to visit and tour the new Kaufman Children's Center. This is a full service facility—with multidisciplinary services for children with special needs. Nancy Kaufman, Owner and Director, will give a tour of her new building and speak to us about her specialty, "Apraxia."

Efshar Sunday School

Our Efshar program, under the capable direction of Robyn Glickman, continues to meet the needs of children with more involved needs. Individualized instruction reflecting the needs of learning, development and behavioral challenges

contribute to a meaningful Judaic curriculum. Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation, music, crafts, holiday celebrations, drama and family programs are integral components of the Efshar program.

Parent Workshop

In November, a two-part workshop was held for parents of teens with social skills difficulties on "How to Teach Social Cues that May Be Intuitive to Others". Our facilitator was Phyllis Levitt, MA-LLP of MEND (Mental and Emotional New Directions). The first session was for parents to share their concerns in an informal roundtable discussion with strategies recommended by the facilitator. The second session was a follow-up discussion regarding results of recommended interventions.

Disabilities Awareness

We offered a two-pronged approach for our students this year. Two original storybooks with guided discussion questions were offered for our 2nd and 3rd graders. Each book was written and illustrated by Julie Schwartz, a Covenant intern and made possible by a generous grant from the Covenant Foundation. Entitled, Hanukah Fever and Birthday Blowup, they are written to sensitize children to the needs of their peers and to promote friendships. Volunteer members of our Alliance's special education committee and our special education teachers present them to children in our congregational schools. This year we made available a "lending library" of several children's books dealing with disabilities for classroom teachers to use with students in their classrooms. They ranged from books on Autism to Hearing Impairments, etc. Several special educators also read them to students to increase sensitivity and respect for differences.

Day School Support

We continue to work with day schools to support their state-mandated services for children with special needs. To supplement the public school services, a clinical psychologist is hired by us to provide psycho-educational evaluations for those in need. As we enter our 11th year of operation, we are proud of serving our community. We continue to be committed to providing quality service and meeting the ever-changing needs in our Jewish school system. We will continue our work...with our eyes and hearts focused on our Jewish children.

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HOUSTON

The Bureau of Jewish Education of Houston and Kesher, the parent advocacy group for families with special needs children, are working together to insure a successful year for our special children. The B.J.E. and Kesher provide a forum for parents and teachers to come together and discuss ways to optimize their child's Jewish education.

Workshop

The workshops planned for this year were primarily chosen for their abilities to be adapted into the classrooms for teachers to feel comfortable and successful in handling the children in their classes with learning differences. In the Fall, these were presented:

1. An all day workshop, "Differentiated Learning" was presented by Dr. Karen Gazith, Director of the Educational Services Department of the Board of Jewish Education in Montreal, Canada. She explored the latest trends in education and showed ways of incorporating this ideology into teaching. She was very well received.
2. A half-day workshop, "Learning to Learn—Finding Your Own Style," was presented by Carolyn Hollrah, M.Ed., Co-director of the Clinic for Academic Therapy in Houston and an Educational Diagnostician. She presented ways to determine learning styles, how to learn depending on the styles, and modifications that reflect learning styles and specific needs.
3. An evening workshop, "Normal Childhood Development: It Is Important" was presented by Dr. Manizah Mirza-Gruber, a licensed, board-certified psychiatrist in private practice in Houston. She reviewed the basics of normal child development and showed ways to incorporate that knowledge into the ways you guide and nurture your students.
4. Another evening workshop, "Help for the Struggling Student—Moving Beyond the Labels," was presented by Houstonian, Patricia L. Towbin, M. Ed., educational diagnostician and learning specialist at the Center for Academic and Psychological Services. She demonstrated how, by building on the basics of child development, to address the special needs of children in the classroom.
5. On January, 2006, we were fortunate to have Dr. Wendy Mogel, parenting expert and author, speak on two occasions: one presentation to the teachers and then one to the parents. For those who have not had the pleasure of listening to her, she spoke on how to use "blessings" such as longing, work, self-control, and even skinned knees to instill optimism, compas-

sion and resourcefulness in students. Her presentation, titled, "Have We Given Our Children the Blessing of a Skinned Knee?" is appropriate for all teachers.

6. Also in January, a workshop titled, "Teacher's Toolbox": Building a Better Child" will be presented by Caroline Figel and Danny Jones, creators of national music and character education curricula. They will show how one can use interactive music, movement and art as teaching tools in reinforcing language acquisition, social/emotional development and safety. The program also includes using proper classroom management techniques and building a child's receptive and expressive vocabulary to help facilitate their needs.
7. In February, at the day-long Jewish learning day, Yom Limmud, more presenters will address the topics of helping our Jewish special needs children.

Here in Houston, we find that our workshops are well attended and highly appreciated in their value to give our teachers as much support as possible in their daily handling of many children with many diverse needs. My thanks go also to the Resource workshop coordinator here at the BJE, Lisa Klein, for supporting me in my desire to include as many special needs workshops as possible.

Kesher Sunday School

This year, the self-contained class meets at the host congregation, Congregation Brith Shalom. The class is taught by a special education teacher who has instructional strategies and resources to meet a range of challenging needs. She also has two high school volunteers who assist her every Sunday morning. The class follows its own curriculum path, but also is included in Congregation Brith Shalom's school programs and chapel services. The children feel that they are part of a larger religious school community, but they still have their own classroom within which to express their talents and to experience Judaism.

Since January, 2006, we have extended the program from two hours to three hours. A parent had suggested that the students could possibly handle the extra hour and it would be more in line with the hours of the regular Sunday School. All necessary parties agreed and all is working very well. Sometimes we must listen to our parents.

Networks

The Parent Support Network meets four times a year to share and discuss their concerns. It is also a time to share updated information regarding conferences, programs and activities appropriate for their children. At our last meeting, Rabbi Goldstein of the Chabad Lubavitch Outreach of Houston, shared his program, The

Friendship Circle, with the parents. This program, established in Detroit in 1996, matches Jewish teenagers to be friends with children who have special needs. This program, though new, is touching many lives at this time here in Houston.

The Jewish Special Education Network of Teachers meets two to three times a year, for the main purpose of sharing and knowing the programs and services available at all the different Day Schools and Congregational Schools. A survey was completed last year which is available to the schools and special needs teachers. We also discuss their needs and appropriate workshops to consider for the following year.

The BJE Special Education Committee was re-established for two main reasons. This committee, represented by the professionals in our Houston community, is addressing two issues: group homes and after-school programs for our Jewish special needs children. Since we've only had one meeting, I will have to give you an update on this next year (or e-mail me at any time.) I am hoping to assess the needs of our community with a survey designed specifically to address these needs. Hopefully, by sensitizing our community to these needs, some constructive action can take place.

The e-mails and information I receive from JESNA are invaluable. Keep up the good work.

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LOS ANGELES

Volunteers/Tutor-Mentors

The BJELA's Lomed LA Program has continued to recruit, train and match volunteers in Jewish day schools and Yeshivot to work with students who require extra help in order to succeed in school. A manual entitled "How to Create a Volunteer Tutor/Mentor Program in a Jewish Day School" was developed and is on the BJE's website (bjela.org) as well as the PEJE website.

Disability Awareness Program

Kids on the Block has been an ongoing program for 20 years utilizing life-sized puppets including some with disabilities and others that are more

typical children. In a series of skits discussing various disabilities, our volunteer troupe has performed for thousands of students in 3rd and 5th grade. Included in this performance is a speaker with a disability to answer all questions the children ask. In conjunction with our halachically-based disability curriculum, "Justice, Justice for All," Kids on the Block has sensitized our students to understand that in spite of disability differences we are all the same. The troupe performs yearly at Jewish schools, public schools and non-religious private schools where they help dispel some of the discomfort attached to people with disabilities.

Seminar Series

We have continued to have 7 lectures in this series designed to provide parents and professionals with the latest information on problems facing our children. The series is entitled "Helping Children with Special Needs/Helping Children with Life Issues. During the year 2005/2006 the 2 ½ hour seminars were entitled:

- ◆ Understanding Your Gifted Child
- ◆ Your Child's School Recommends a Psycho-educational Assessment. Who Do You Go To? What Should the Test Battery Focus On and What Sort of Information Should You Expect from the Results That Will Aid Your Child's Education?
- ◆ What's The New IDEA? What You Need to Know for Your Child's Next IEP?
- ◆ Perfectionism, OCD, TICS, ADHD, and Tourette Syndrome: Genetic Findings and Cutting Edge Treatments from Around the World.
- ◆ A Comprehensive Approach to Autism: Medical Management, Therapeutic Interventions, Impact on the Family.
- ◆ Connecting Language and Behavior: A Whole Language Approach for Individuals with Autism Fosters Communication Skills Development.
- ◆ How to Recognize and Deal with the Possibility of Childhood or Teenage Depression: Why are Children Becoming Depressed at Earlier Ages?

Task Force on Jewish Education for Children with Special Needs

In mid 2005, we initiated a community-based Task Force to re-examine the services offered by our agency and their alignment with the Jewish educational needs of the children with special needs in the LA Jewish community. The vast range of needs and possible responses necessitated devising a study process that helps the BJE

to focus its attention where it is needed most. A three-part process was put in place to provide direction for our planning.

The three research components of the study are:

1. Community-wide Needs Survey to hear from parents about what they perceive as being of greatest help to them as they seek better access a quality Jewish education for their child with special needs.
2. Environmental Scan surveying BJE affiliated schools and other related institutions to determine the specific services, programs and accommodations that are currently being offered.
3. Review of existing models across the continent to help us to consider new approaches through an examination of the work being done in other communities.

It is expected that the Task Force will be finished with its work in the fall of 2006.

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METROWEST

Shadow Training Program

During the summer of 2005, the Jewish Education Association's Center for Special Education embarked upon a new pilot program for MetroWest pre-schoolers who are at-risk for special education. The goal was to enable these pre-schoolers to participate with their typical peers in a summer camp experience. The intervention that made this possible was funded by the Kulick Foundation. Teenage students were trained to serve as shadows under the guidance of a professional consultant hired by the JEA Center for Special Education. This program was most successful and enjoyed by preschoolers, teens, counselors, and parents.

Building upon the success of the summer program, the Center established "Project Sekui." This is a Shadow Training Program for at-risk children in Jewish pre-schools during the academic school year. A consultant and a Center staff member provide ongoing training and support to adults who are serving as one-on-one shadows for identified pre-schoolers in area Jewish nursery schools. Shadow trainees meet monthly. Pre-school directors and classroom teachers are also given training and support from the Center. Currently four preschools are participating in the Shadow Training Program.

Given our past success, and the great need for this service, we anticipate serving more schools in the near future. This program is made possible through a generous grant from The Healthcare Foundation of New Jersey. We are also pleased to be able to offer programs for teachers and parents around the subject of early intervention and sensory integration.

Teacher Workshops

This year the Center for Special Education is presenting three teacher workshops focusing on early childhood development. The first workshop, held in December 2005, was "The Developing Child: Meeting Milestones and Identifying Signs of Developmental Concern." The presenter was Tyrone Bentley, M.D., a developmental pediatrician and associate professor at UMDNJ Medical School. This workshop will be followed by "Understanding Sensory Integration" and "Sensory Integration: Tools for Interaction" in February.

Both workshops will be presented by Kelly Zaros Berman, a registered occupational therapist. Attendance at the December workshop exceeded 80 participants from early childhood centers. We anticipate a large turnout for the sensory integration sessions given the number of requests for this topic.

Parent Workshops

Parent Workshops are also focused on early childhood issues. A spring series is scheduled on the following topics: "Obtaining Needed Therapies from Your Health Insurance," Valerie A. Powers Smith, Esq., presenter; "Is My Child's Play Okay?" Barbie Zimmerman-Bier, M.D., speaker; and "Understanding Sensory Integration," Kelly Zaros Berman, OTR, presenter. Workshops are being held in conjunction with area nursery schools and parent groups.

Sensitivity Training

Building on the success of the past two years, the JEA Center for Special Education is continuing to offer Sensitivity Workshops to medical residents and educators in our community. A workshop was held in the Fall for guidance counselors in a local school district. A spring workshop series is planned for pediatric residents at St. Barnabas Medical Center in Livingston, NJ. Presentations include a panel of parents of special needs children and a workshop on developmental milestones of young children.

Project Ezri

The JEA Center for Special Education is engaged in a second year of shadow training within congregational schools. Four Hebrew schools have elected to access the services of the Center on a consultative basis. A Center staff member consults with each school and supplies training, materials and support to shad-

ows and staff. We are happy to report that several students who were shadowed last year have now been mainstreamed.

Yaldeinu

The Yaldeinu Program, located at the Joseph Kushner Hebrew Academy is enjoying another successful year of learning. We are growing in number. We anticipate 20 students by the end of the year. We continue to focus on our Tefillot curriculum with both a multi-sensory approach and a focus on sensory needs. Our staff benefited from a two-part workshop on sensory integration and how sensory issues affect the learning of our students. Amy Feldman, O.T. of SUNNY DAYS Early Intervention, conducted the workshop and also provided consultation to each of our classes, spending time providing suggestions to enhance our use of sensory integration techniques for individual children. It was an enlightening experience which provided more to our staffs' knowledge base.

Yaldeinu turns twenty-two years old this year. We have seen so much growth and development in those years now reflected in the Yaldeinu students who have been promoted to our adult program named Sylvan Kohn Torah Workshop program. Sylvan Kohn Torah Workshop program has been in existence since the 1940's when former executive director Sylvan Kohn set up a mutual fund to support this program for years to come. The program has 11 regular participants. The Center is in the process of exploring the possibility of collaborating with another UJC agency (called the Jewish Service for Developmental Disabilities) and B'nai Shalom of West Orange, to enhance the program by exploring new funding sources, setting and curriculum.

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MINNEAPOLIS

The Minneapolis Jewish Community Inclusion Program for People with Disabilities is one community's innovative response to cultivating awareness and facilitating support for Jews with disabilities, family members, synagogues, schools and agencies. The Inclusion Program is a model for faith communities across North

America, teaching others how to build collaborative partnerships that strengthen institutional commitment to inclusion. The response from the community indicates that the Inclusion Program is addressing a significant need and is viewed as the resource to call for questions on disability, inclusion, programming and resources.

Community Inclusion Guide

Many institutions have appointed a liaison to the Inclusion Program. Members of the Liaison Committee have gone back to their institutions and founded Inclusion Committees. The Inclusion Committees raise awareness and provide information about inclusion for their organizations. Many have spearheaded projects that address architectural barriers. Some have worked to support educational efforts. All of the committees have been searching for ways to increase participation and circumvent barriers of attitude, communication and architecture. The liaisons wanted to develop their own concrete plan to help navigate the numerous issues that came to their attention as the institutions themselves became more aware of the needs of people with disabilities.

The Inclusion Program response was to invite the liaisons to join us to develop the Community Inclusion Guide—a guidebook that provides direction to each institution. The Community Inclusion Guide (CIG) will give each institution instruction on how to evaluate and assess needs, set priorities, develop goals and objectives and create a unique work plan. Ideas, suggestions and resources are included in the Community Inclusion Guide and address areas of need identified in the evaluation and assessment.

The CIG process is supported by the Inclusion Program and works directly with the Inclusion Committees to provide guidance and support. The CIG addresses most areas of community life: worship, organizational, recreation, youth groups, social opportunities, preschool, day, religious, adult education and b'nai mitzvah. Evaluation questions were designed to help the organizations focus on the current level of physical, communication and attitudinal barriers. Results guide the goal setting and prioritization processes to increase awareness and meaningful inclusion.

The CIG is receiving a warm welcome from community institutions and is another strategy in developing collaborative and creative solutions to inclusion.

Collaborations

An important role of the Inclusion Program is to recognize areas of need and partner with agencies and organizations in the Jewish community to develop solutions. New collaborations for 2005 include:

1. **All About M.E.** A support program for mothers of children with special needs, ages birth through six. Often isolated from their parent peers and unfamiliar with the resources available in the Jewish community, All About M.E. seeks to bring mothers together for information and social support. Our goal is to build awareness of programs available to them and their children in the Jewish community and link them with other parents who understand parenting a small child with special needs.

2. **Kesher.** A program for young adults ages 18 to 30 who are interested in social action and friendship with peers. Participants told us they were not interested in a “disability-only” group, so Kesher members participate in Hillel programs, as well as, develop their own ideas for social action projects. They also participate in community-wide social action programming. Three Kesher members just returned from their first trip to Israel. Through the auspices of Yachad and birthright, they had a wonderful time and cannot wait to return!

3. **Parent and Professional Training.** We developed a more strategic way to respond to requests from organizations to help navigate the challenges of inclusion. Training parents and professionals how to meet in a collaborative environment has been helpful in resolving some of these challenges. Our training on professional empowerment has been very effective, opening up avenues of partnership with parents that promote healthy relationships and are beneficial for children. We continue to explore different ways to support both parents and professionals.

4. **Faces of Inclusion.** The 2005 Twin Cities-wide interfaith conference featured keynote speaker Becca Hornstein, Consortium member and Executive Director of the Council for Jews with Special Needs in Phoenix, AZ. This was our third conference and attendance, by far, exceeded previous years. Many Jewish organizations and individuals with disabilities and family members participated in presenting and attending. Faces of Inclusion is sponsored by the Twin Cities Interfaith Inclusion Consortium, which we co-founded as a way to share best practices among faith communities.

Alliance for Full Participation

Mazel tov to our colleague Sara Rubinow Simon for recognition as the recipient of the Henry Nouwen Award in September. Sara received this award as part of a pre-summit program on inclusion in faith communities at the Alliance for Full Participation Summit in Washington, DC.

In addition to attending the pre-summit, I spoke at a seminar at the Summit called *Recovering the Heart and Soul of Hospitality: The Power of Faith Communities as Pathways to Community Membership*. It was an opportunity to raise awareness within the disability community about the role that faith communities can play to enhance community participation and

well-being.

On the Radar

2006 promises to be another year of great leaps for our community. We are developing a camp inclusion model that will be used as a guide for all camps, a parent to parent mentorship program, and are optimistic that adults with disabilities in our community will be able to travel to Israel. Our online Resource Guide will be available to organizations in the community and will include links to numerous disability and health related sites, in addition to local and national organizations.

Five Year Milestone

The Inclusion Program passed the five year mark in 2005. It's been busy and eventful. On October 29th we had the opportunity to reflect on how the Inclusion Program has met the needs of people with disabilities and their families.

One of our very first program clients celebrated becoming a Bat Mitzvah at the synagogue she joined in 2001. Her goal at the time was to become involved in her new synagogue. Since that time she has diligently attended Erev Shabbat and Shabbat morning services. She is one of the original members of her synagogue inclusion committee, and in that role planned the first Inclusion Shabbat dinner. She persisted for 14 years to find a way into the Jewish community. Doors remained closed to her, not because she couldn't get into the buildings using her wheelchair, but because of attitudinal barriers that existed. She studied with two other congregants and on that wonderful Shabbat in October, she chanted from Beresheet, “In the beginning...” The sanctuary was full that morning of people who came to worship and celebrate Shabbat with her. Her name is Sharon, and she continues to teach each of us the importance that Judaism has in all of our lives.

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NEW YORK

The mission of BJE's Special Education Department is to maximize the opportunities of persons with special needs for a meaningful and productive life in the global Jewish and general communities. Towards this mission, the Department, through creative programming continues

to advocate, collaborate, coordinate, create, negotiate, evaluate and educate on behalf of persons with special needs and their families. Below is a listing of new and ongoing developments in conjunction with BJE's Special Education Department. Currently, Rabbi Marty Schloss serves as BJE's Executive Vice-President and CEO and Dr. Jed Luchow serves as the Director of the Special Education Department.

New Initiatives:

Special Education Video (Directed by Dr. Jed Luchow and Menachem Daum)

On January 17, 2006, BJE premiered its Project SIR film, *The Case for Early Literacy Intervention*. The film is an outgrowth of Project SIR's achievements (see Ongoing Programs), supported by the Butler Family Foundation and the Ariel Educational Fund of the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York. The video demonstrates the importance of quality pre-school education in the area of phonemic awareness and language development as well as understanding the importance of evaluating student development in light of NY State Benchmarks. The unique element of this effort is the focus on Jewish schools. It is expected that by using educational scenarios under *Jewish* auspice coupled with administrators, teachers and students visibly Jewish, identification with the film's message will be enhanced. With this goal in mind, the Department was fortunate to procure Dr. Menachem Daum to produce the film. Among Dr. Daum's credits are numerous films including *Stranger Among Us* and *Hiding and Seeking* which have been nominated for screen awards.

Government Contracts (Sara Seligson and Judy Oppenheim)

The Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York has recently received two contracts from the New York City Department of Education for the implementation of two major Federal initiatives. These contracts recognize BJE as a legitimate and quality provider of professional growth for the City of New York. Needless to say this is a remarkable achievement with profound implications on future developments.

Project Serv II (Coordinated by Jeanette Sassoon)

The New York City Department of Education awarded BJE a contract to enhance school personnel's understanding of the psychological issues confronting children. This includes helping school personnel recognize the indicators of stress, trauma, abuse, neglect, eating disorders, substance abuse and other conditions. The training includes legal mandates and protocols and community resources to turn to for assistance. The goal of this effort is to empower school personnel as legitimate partners in creating a supportive and nurturing environment for chil-

dren. The grant is a Federal Program responding to the impact of September 11th on children.

Title IIA (Coordinated by Judy Oppenheim and Sara Seligson)

The New York Department of Education also awarded BJE a contract to provide Professional Development training for Nonpublic Schools in the areas of Language Arts, Science, Math, Social Studies, Quality Assessment and Curriculum Development. BJE's Project SIR (see below) is also a prominent area in this initiative. Title IIA is part of the broad federal legislation entitled, No Child Left Behind.

Yeshivot and Day School Needs and Efficacy Survey (Coordinated by Dr. Joel Dickstein, Dr. Jed Luchow and Dr. Margaret Jo Shepherd)

UJA/Federation of Greater New York and the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York have joined forces and are collaborating on ascertaining what is working and what continues to be needed to effectively educate children with special needs in Yeshivot and day schools. The project predicated on the early work of Independent School Management (ISM) includes surveys and interviews with persons involved with Jewish day school education. The informants include administrators, principals, teachers, parents, students and other key members of the Jewish community. The project will result in the production of a report that will serve as an ingredient for Jewish Communal planning and investment in the area of special education in Jewish day schools. To help guide the project, an advisory committee was created, whose members represent Jewish education, general education, special education, day school administration and university teacher preparation.

Ongoing Programs:

BJE's Center For Educational Leadership (Coordinated by Sheldon Fine)

Developed in collaboration with Harvard's Principal's Center, BJE's **Center for Educational Leadership's** (CEL) was created to provide principals and administrators a forum through which they can enhance their skills through collegial support and collaboration. CEL's activities include study groups on particular school leadership topics, professional summits with key elements of Jewish and general educational life and an electronic communication network. Members of the CEL are automatically members of the Harvard Principals' Center and entitled to all the benefits thereof. In addition, a highly prestigious Advisory Board has been assembled to help guide the direction and activities of the CEL. The advisory board is comprised of deans of noted general and Jewish Universities, well-known Jewish special educators, members of the New York State Board of Regents, elected officials, lawyers, professors, leading school principals, CEO's of major Jewish communal

agencies, and lay leaders.

Recent Summits have included New York State legislators and Education Department leaders, UJA/Federation and other Jewish foundations, and law firms for discussions on school governance, entitlements and legal protocols. The most recent CEL Summit was conducted by Jon Saphier, founder of Research for Better Teaching (RBT) who discussed construction of school environments for learning. This spring's study group will continue that focus and collaborate with the Wagner College Center for Educational Leadership.

BJE Resource Room Council

(Coordinated by Dr. Jed Luchow & Phyllis Miller)

The BJE Resource Room Council represents an initiative to enhance the efficacy of Resource Room programs in Yeshivot and Jewish day schools. The Council members share best practices, conduct special educational seminars and workshops and collaboratively address educational issues of common concern. In the past, the Council met with New York State and City Government officials to better understand new legislative developments and their implications for resource programming in Jewish day schools, as well as, met with university professors to learn about the latest research and directions in resource room instruction.

Project SIR: Success in Reading

(Directed by Dr. Jed Luchow)

Based on twenty years of special education research, BJE's Special Education Department, in conjunction with BJE's Early Childhood Center and the Jewish Board of Family and Children Services (JBFC), initiated a reading disability prevention project aimed at kindergarten and pre-1A youngsters in Jewish day schools. The project, a five-year longitudinal assessment and enrichment program, replicates the federally funded research of Drs. Frank Vellutino and Donna Scanlon. Vellutino and Scanlon developed an assessment tool and intervention program designed to detect and correct potential pre-reading problems in youngsters. In a journal article reviewing their research, Vellutino and Scanlon demonstrated that as many as 50% of students classified in fourth grade as having learning disabilities in the area of reading, actually had no real disabilities other than, perhaps, poor instruction. Currently, Vellutino and Scanlon along with Dr. Margaret Jo Shepherd and

Dr. Abraham Tannenbaum, both formally of Columbia University, serve as the project consultants. The project is directed by Dr. Jed Luchow, BJE's recently appointed Director of Special Education and former Assistant Professor at the College of Staten Island/CUNY.

To promote state of the art reading instruction, Project SIR also sponsors Reading Summits incorporating the latest Research in the field of reading instruction and special education. On

November 20th, 2003, Project SIR presented its Project's first *Summit on Reading*. The presenters were Drs. Sally and Bennett Shaywitz of Yale University's Center for the Study of Learning and Attention. The husband and wife team presented their latest research on reading which validated and supported the activities of Project SIR. Drs. Margaret Jo Shepherd of Columbia University and Joanna Uhry of Fordham University served as presentation respondents, as well as the coordinators of the question and answer period. Signed copies of Dr. Sally Shaywitz's new book on reading, *Overcoming Dyslexia*, were made available to the more than 250 participants at the event.

On November 17th, 2004, the second Summit featured Dr. Joseph K. Torgesen of Florida State University, who is one of the world's leading researchers in Reading and special education. Dr. Torgesen reviewed his latest data and that of the field of reading, as well. The panel of respondents included Dr. Joanna Uhry, Dr. Jed Luchow and Dr. Eileen Marzola of the New York City Department of Education.

On January 11th, 2006 Dr. Joanna Williams of Teachers College, Columbia University, began the next chapter in The Project SIR Programming by focusing on beyond decoding, or the beginnings of comprehension.

The goal of Project SIR is to maximize the ability to read for our Yeshivot and Day school students for greater opportunities in the educational experience and successful life occupation choices.

Noteworthy is the fact that Project SIR is currently under contract by foundations to provide SIR training for teachers at a low performing NYC Public School.

The Sulam Project

(Rabbi Arnold Samlan, Contact)

The Sulam Project is a Congregational education initiative that addresses special education services in Congregational settings in Long Island. Based on a community coalition, a number of Congregations collaborated with BJE, the Federation Employment and Guidance Service (FEGS) and the National Council of Jewish Women on a joint regional program. The project began by receiving a planning grant from the Long Island regional offices of New York's UJA/Federation. This provided ample time to hire a special educator, who together with an advisory committee, assessed the needs of the community and created a consortia-based program. The program focuses on serving a population of children who have various forms of autism and related conditions. The project is currently being monitored and evaluated for replication in other communities.

Student Health Department (Coordinated by Shayna Oppen)

In an attempt to better coordinate the variety of agency health services initiatives for school children, BJE created a distinct department designed to focus on the development of prevention and intervention programs for students. To date, those programs include student trauma, eating disorders, child abuse, substance abuse and behavior management. The department works closely with other BJE programs as well as with Jewish and general communal organizations. Currently, the Department's programming includes:

1. The School Trauma Project

In collaboration with the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services (JBFCs), BJE mounted a research and intervention school trauma project. Funded through a UJA/Federation grant resulting from 9/11, the project researched the actual effects of trauma on students through an evaluation tool designed specifically for students in Jewish educational settings. Presently, the project is entertaining new activities in this area.

2. Eating Disorders Prevention Program

The Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York and the Maimonides Medical Center of Brooklyn, New York developed a joint health initiative for Jewish schools involving eating disorders prevention. The program incorporates the curriculum for healthy body image and attitudes by Kathy Kater of Minneapolis, Minnesota, entitled, *Healthy Body Image – Teaching Kids to Eat and Love Their Bodies Too*, as well as, research by Dr. Henry Anholt, formerly of the Maimonides Health Center, that indicates a higher than average occurrence of certain diseases in the Jewish community relating to inappropriate diet. The program includes on-site school curriculum development, consultation, workshops, seminars, and publications. The Program also provides community education seminars and parent workshops. Currently, the intensive curriculum and staff development program components are being piloted in several target schools. These school programs continue to be evaluated with the goal of sharing the results for possible replication.

As a result of last year's activities, the program has increased its number of pilot schools, upgraded its curriculum and field-tested a second-year curriculum to serve as critical reinforcement of the first. The Program has entered into its fourth year and is increasing its impact on the prevention of eating disorders system-wide throughout our Yeshivot, Day and Congregational education programming.

3. Child Abuse Prevention Program The BJE Special Education Department and the Jewish Board of Family and Children Services (JBFCs) are now in the 9th year of their joint Child Abuse Prevention Program, *Be'ad Haya'ed*, for the Jewish community. The ongoing program provides educators and administrators with critical information regarding child abuse and reporting

procedures and protocols. To accomplish this goal, the program presents conferences, seminars and workshops on topics including indicators of abuse, legal mandates, Jewish and general community resources and Halachic considerations. To date, the program has reached thousands of educators in over 170 settings spanning the Jewish ideological continuum. In addition, the program provides in-service and pre-service courses in child abuse prevention, which meet New York State certificate requirements for all human service providers. The program also seeks to prevent child abuse through the development of healthy family living. Towards this end, the program sponsors community seminars dealing with communication skills, conflict resolution and dangers within the family. These seminars have now been expanded to include students in college and Jewish teacher's seminaries. Another aspect of the program is the creation of an educational curriculum and resource center to assist teachers in helping their students recognize and respond to inappropriate relationships.

4. The Substance Abuse Prevention Program

Fifteen years ago, through a grant from UJA/Federation, BJE created a substance abuse prevention program for Jewish educational settings. The program included workshops, on-site staff development and publications. The publications included curriculum guidelines for early childhood, middle school and high school-aged children. The curriculum guidelines contained the New York State education syllabi for substance abuse prevention, as well as, Judaic resources and programmatic recommendations for religious education teachers. Presently, BJE is seeking to update and upgrade the current curriculum guidelines. Copies of the original curriculum guidelines are still available through the Department of Student Health Services.

BJE's Institute of Graduate Studies

(Coordinated by Sara Seligson)

To further advance its professional training, BJE continues to explore partnering with a number of recognized and highly regarded universities for graduate and post-graduate degree and certification programs. These programs are designed to serve teachers and principals in Jewish educational settings. Through this collaborative model, BJE is able to provide quality training tempered with understanding and sensitivity to the religious needs of the participants and the Judaic curriculum. The overriding goals of these programs are to significantly and systemically elevate the quality of school leadership and educational instruction in Jewish schools and an improved capacity to educate a more intellectually diverse student body, including students with special needs. Over the years, the Institute has included:

1. School Administrators' (SAS) and District Administrators' (SDA) Certificate Program

BJE has run a joint certificate program in

Educational Administration and Supervision with Long Island University (LIU) at the C.W. Post Campus. The post-graduate SDA (School and District Administrator) program provides participants a New York State Certificate in Educational Administration, allowing them to serve as a state approved Principal (SAS) or District Superintendent (SDA) in any NY State School District and in any NY State-approved special education program. The first cohort of twenty students began the program in the Summer of 2002 and received their SAS or SDA certificates in the Summer/Fall of 2003. For most of the students, the required internships were conducted in Jewish educational settings. The cohort model offered students a built-in professional support group and enabled BJE to negotiate significant student scholarships.

BJE is now working with local government agencies leveraging funds through various Title programs to bolster this expertise in administrators by offering courses through recognized universities.

2. Masters Degree Program in Instructional Technology

BJE, in collaboration with the New York Institute of Technology and funded, in part, by a grant from the Covenant Foundation, began its Master's Degree Program in Instructional Technology in the 2001 Fall semester. The 36-credit program is designed to run for two years. Like the post-master's program, the instructional technology program uses a cohort model. This means that the students stay together for the duration of the entire program. This model has produced enhanced interaction and sharing among the students with a supportive environment for each participant. In addition, each student is assigned a mentor who is available to assist the student in his/her activities. Each mentor is a leader in the field of Jewish and general instructional technology. The courses and student projects can be found on the BJE website, "www.bjeny.org" under the heading of the Education Technology Collaborative. To avoid time conflicts, the program is held on Sundays for the Fall and Spring semesters and during the weekdays in Summer. In addition to providing the traditional course of study, the program also provides opportunities for the additional focus of Judaic studies. Given the technology developments in general and Jewish education, this program seeks to enhance teacher skills and opportunities for effective anytime-anywhere learning in day, congregational and informal Jewish educational settings. The program has significant additional implications for improved teaching for children with learning disabilities and other special needs.

On September 7, 2003, the Collaborative graduated its first class in a special graduation ceremony held at the Board of Jewish Education's new facilities. The graduates were addressed by Dean Kress, New York Institute of

Technology; Dr. Judith Ginsberg, Covenant Foundation; Jeff Corbin, BJE's President and class representatives. The students presented a CD encapsulating their two-year program experiences. The graduates have already presented workshops and seminars on the use of technology for Jewish educators and have planned educational technology conferences for educators in Jewish schools.

Currently, efforts to further the educational technology agenda throughout all facets of Jewish education are under way through the development of a "white paper" on this topic. This initiative is funded through an additional grant from the Covenant Foundation.

3. Master's Degree in Special Education

Originally funded through a Butler Family Foundation Grant, BJE's Special Education Center, in collaboration with The College of Staten Island of the City University of New York and Touro College, provided a Master's degree program leading to New York State Certification as a Special Education Teacher. This program has graduated more than 450 students with graduate degrees in special education. Well over 90% of the graduates are currently teaching in Jewish or public school special education programs. Many have gone on for additional certificates and degrees in bilingual extension, school administration, and doctoral programs. The master's program is not being administered this year, but continues to explore the possibility of alumni programs that follow the graduates through their professional careers.

Child and Family Advocacy Program

(Coordinated by Phyllis Miller)

Through a grant of the Butler Family Foundation, BJE's Special Education Department, in conjunction with the New York UJA/Federation Task Force on Disabilities, runs an advocacy program serving persons with special needs and their families. The program provides a comprehensive communal network of information and resources for persons with disabilities. The goal of the program is to provide up-to-date quality information regarding services and resources for persons with special needs. In addition, the family advocate is positioned to provide critical information for communal planning agencies regarding existing gaps in service for the purpose of identifying future initiatives. BJE joins the Westchester Jewish Community Services and the Federation Employment and Guidance Services (FEGS) in serving as lead agencies for this project.

The Advocacy program utilizes the latest technology to enhance timely responses for those in need. Valuable information is available on the BJE website (www.bjeny.org) which provides a 24-hour information service. To date, the program has responded to over 4,000 requests for assistance.

Association of Jewish Special Educators

(Coordinated by Dr. Jed Luchow and Phyllis Miller)

The Association of Jewish Special Educators (AJSE) is beginning its 26th year. The AJSE brings together persons with disabilities, parents, teachers, human service providers and other interested parties for the purpose of sharing valuable information regarding special education. During the past 25 years, the AJSE has sponsored numerous conferences, seminars, workshops, and symposia for over 16,000 participants. It published a newsletter entitled Special Edition and a professional journal entitled The Jewish Special Educator. The Jewish Special Educator is indexed in ERIC and has received recognition from professional organizations as a new exciting special education publication. AJSE maintains a distribution list for dissemination of valuable information to its membership and is currently working on an online newsletter.

Guidance and Consultation (Special Education Center Staff)

The Special Education Department provides ongoing help to organizations, schools, administrators, teachers, parents and persons with special needs. The Department provides assistance to day and supplementary schools in starting various special education programs, to parents seeking appropriate schooling for their children with special needs, to educators looking for positions, and to government agencies and organizations in their special education initiatives. The Department regularly assists graduate school students in their quest for a doctorate or master's degree in special education. It has also assisted in the creation of a private college's department of special education.

Volunteers in Special Education

(Coordinated by Betty Nissenfeld)

Volunteers in Special Education (VSE), funded through a grant by the Butler Family Foundation, continues to recruit, train and place qualified persons in Jewish schools to help students with special needs keep up with their schoolwork. To date, VSE has placed approximately 1,800 volunteers in over fifty educational settings serving close to 4,500 students. A number of high school VSE volunteers have selected special education as their future career. Some have pursued graduate studies and become special education program directors. VSE is planning the development of a manual of its volunteer program so that other communities can replicate VSE's success. One of the VSE volunteers was honored for her work in assisting teachers and students alike at the Ezra Academy of Queens, New York. The VSE project also includes the use of parents as volunteers in pre-school programs.

The Parent Education Program

(Coordinated by Betty Nissenfeld)

The Parent Education Program (PEP) funded through a grant from the Butler Family Foundation, is beginning its 13th year. PEP is designed

to heighten parent knowledge, understanding and involvement in special education. PEP continues to sponsor and co-sponsor ongoing parent workshops, seminars, and conferences. PEP, in conjunction with the Jewish Parent Advocate Coalition, sponsors an annual Parent Empowerment Conference and Resource Fair to help parents access important and necessary services for their children. Presentations focused on a variety of behavior management programs in home and school. Past year's Conferences have included such notable presenters as Dr. Stanley Turecki, author of, *The Difficult Child* and *Normal Children Have Problems too*, who reviewed his research regarding behavior management and children with behavior problems.

The Vocational Preparation Program (Coordinated by Dr. Paul Levitz)

The Vocational Preparation Program (VPP), now in its 22nd year, continues to assist disabled and non-disabled individuals in planning viable and meaningful occupational careers. Although the program has a particular focus of providing a smooth transition from high school to the world of work, VPP is open to people of all ages. VPP networks with government, federation and private agencies to provide a most comprehensive array of potential vocational opportunities. To date, VPP has served over 2,400 individuals.

Additionally, VPP offers periodic career aptitude tests with follow-up consultation throughout the school year. The aptitude tests seek to provide individuals with important information regarding their skills and abilities for realistic and successful employment.

BJE/Chai Lifeline Telecommunications Network

(Originally coordinated by Marty Schloss)

BJE and the Chai Lifeline organization administer a technology-based communications program linking hospitalized and homebound children with their schools, tutors, families, and/or friends. The program uses video telephones, the Internet and other technology to provide children with cancer and/or other critical illness the opportunity to maintain ongoing education, remedial, and social activities. The technology prevents the loss of an academic school year while the child is recuperating from a bone marrow transplant or other forms of treatment. From the hospital room or bed at home, the child is in sight and sound of the classroom where he/she can fully participate in school activities. The program also maximizes the use of tutors for homebound children. Instead of working with three to four students a day and having to spend substantial time in traveling, the homebound teachers can double his/her tutoring load without moving from his chair. The motto of the program is, "Your classroom is only as far away as your telephone." The videophones can be attached to large TV monitors, as well as, camcorders for varied educational use. To date, close to 60 youngsters have benefited from the

program. The program was the subject of a Ch. 12 Long Island Cable News report.

The Jewish Heritage Program (BJE Program Spin-off)

The Jewish Heritage Program (JHP) is beginning its 26th year. Originally created by BJE, the JHP is currently independently administered in Jewish community centers throughout the greater New York area, serving approximately 100 developmentally disabled individuals. In addition to the ongoing Sunday school program, JHP has conducted annual Pesach Model Sedorim and other special events. JHP has published special materials, including a Siddur and Haggadah for its students so they will be successful in joining in Jewish communal ceremonies and celebrations. JHP is currently developing a Jewish Holiday Cycle Curriculum Guide for use in Congregational schools and informal special education programs for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Government Relations (Coordinated by Marty Schloss, Sara Seligson & Judy Oppenheim)

BJE staff serves on federal, state and city government councils and task forces representing Jewish education programs, issues and concerns. BJE advocates for Jewish education interests on the federal level in the US Department of Education's Office on Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) and National Leadership in Private Education. The Department contributed to the development of the regulations associated with Public Law 105-17 (IDEA). On the New York State level, BJE serves as a member of the NY State Education Department's Advisory Panel on Special Education Services and as chairperson for the NY State Education Department's Commissioners Advisory Council on Non-public Education, the NY State Taskforce on Educational Technology as well as on the NY State Board of Practitioners, which reviews all innovative programming to meet the new regulations of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. These roles allow BJE to play a significant role in advocating for the needs of the Jewish day schools. This past year, BJE joined Agudath Israel and the Catholic Conference in rewriting NY State legislation as it related to special education services for children with special needs enrolled in private schools at parent choice.

BJE staff also serves on the NY City Committee of Non-Public School Officials. The Government Relations Team participates in developing regulations, distributing government funds and services, and advocating on behalf of schools, teachers, students and families. For this past school year, BJE's government relations' team was able to leverage five and a 5.5 million dollars of services for the Yeshivot and day schools in New York City. This included allocations from Title IIA, IID, III and V among other federal and state entitlements. In addition to leveraging the

entitlements, Ms. Oppenheim and Ms. Seligson procured state-of-the-art services in staff development, programs, materials and technology. This includes working with Research for Better Teaching (RBT), Aussie (a Language program) and Plato (an educational technology company).

Instructional Technology (Coordinated by Sara Seligson)

The Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York is committed to enhancing learning through the use of technology. Research conducted by the New York City Department of Education indicates that the use of technology can improve learning for those children with learning and other disabilities. Included among the many activities that BJE runs are: pre-and in-service educational training programs (see Master's Program in Instructional Technology with NYIT); distance learning programs; guidance to Judaic and general studies educators in educational hardware and software, consultations with program developers and distributors of Judaic and general studies software; advocating for government funds and services; assisting NYC Board of Education in selecting and distributing educational software; evaluating education technology grant proposals for the NY State Education Department; collaboration with organizations and companies in the development of educational software and programs.

Also, through the use of the internet and BJE's website, BJE has developed a robust communication system allowing schools to receive important information immediately. The BJE website also runs a job opportunities section which has been responsible for placing special education teachers in appropriate educational settings.

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PHILADELPHIA

What's Happening in Special Education from The Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education

Community School Classroom

This is the fourth year of the community special needs classrooms. It continues to be a wonderful program with children attending from several synagogues. One of the students went on a community trip to Israel in December and became a Bar Mitzvah along with several others

on the trip.

Speaker Program

This year we hosted a program with Howard Gardner. He spoke about his Theories of Multiple Intelligences. Although it was the intention to offer this as a special needs program, the school directors and pre-school directors wanted their faculties to have the opportunity to learn with Howard Gardner. This program had 1,300 people in attendance, as well as, 970 Day School teachers, synagogue school teachers and early childhood teachers in attendance! There were also parents, secular school teachers and psychologists in attendance. Gardner spoke for two sessions and the 970 teachers had the opportunity to attend one of 27 workshops on specific content areas that showed how to incorporate Multiple Intelligences into their lessons. The teachers learned that by incorporating Multiple Intelligences into their lessons, they were meeting the needs of all of the learners in their classrooms. We also gave each teacher a guide to help them plan titled: **Curriculum and Project Planner for Integrating Learning Styles: Thinking Skills and Authentic Instruction** by Incentive Publications. The planner is a good motivator and organizer and several schools have been asking for additional workshops and training in the area of Multiple Intelligences. The entire day was a huge success and very exciting. We have just recently engaged Dr. Robert Brooks to speak in March, 2007. He will speak about the contents of his book, **"Raising the Resilient Child."**

Teen Training Program

Our teen program, TAP, trained a new cohort of 24 teens to work with children who have special needs. We currently have 46 teens working in our synagogue schools. The first year, TAP teen program was an enormous success and the teens decided they wanted to continue to study together. A second-year TAP program was created for them. They continue to attend monthly training seminars and work with special needs children in their synagogues. We have publicized this program and have been fortunate to receive two grants to help sustain the program.

Special Needs Assistant Program

Because of the success of the TAP program we are beginning a new program to train adults to be volunteers in the schools (both day schools and synagogue schools) to work with children who have special needs. The training is modeled after the TAP program and is called SNAP. The adults will attend eight sessions in which they will study about learning disabilities, autistic spectrum disorders and behavior issues. They will learn how to be sensitive to the needs of the individual learners, as well as how to make accommodations for their needs. The principals of the day schools and the synagogue schools are very supportive of this program and are eager to have the trained adults help in their schools.

Grants

Federation continues to fund grants for special education. This year six schools received grants. We were also able to use proceeds from our speaker programs to add additional funds to the grants. Our advisory committee is actively involved with reviewing the grants, making determination of the grant amounts and also observing the programs that received grant money. Teams of two observe the programs. The teams then report back to the committee after the observation with an oral and written report.

Advisory Committee

The Special Needs Advisory Committee is very active and involved with all of the special needs program. In addition to the work on the grants, as described in the previous paragraph, they helped develop a very extensive survey that has been mailed to all schools. The survey will be publicized to give information to the public about special needs services available in the synagogue schools. The survey also allows us to do a needs assessment and give directors and their staff training and information they need. They are also working on improving the grant application forms. They are an extremely dedicated and hard working group of individuals.

Rabbis and Bar/Bat Mitzvah

It is our hope to help the rabbis in our area get a better understanding of children with special needs. While tailoring the requirements of a child becoming a bar or bat mitzvah is an easy task for some, others need more guidance. With the guidance of one of the members of the special education advisory committee, Rabbi Robert Layman, a meeting of the rabbis will be planned for June, 2006. At that time, the rabbis will have the opportunity to describe accommodations they have made, as well as others will ask for suggestions on how to make accommodations. We hope to publish a guide for rabbis to use when helping a child with special needs prepare for his/her Bar/Bat Mitzvah.

OROT

OROT, the special needs initiative in Philly's day schools, started the year with over 50 students. The three branches of the Perelman Jewish Day Schools, Politz Hebrew Academy and Torah Academy are host schools to two OROT classes each. Most of the OROT classes are self-contained with the children going into their typical classes for science (very hands-on in most schools), gym, art, music, lunch and recess. The majority of OROT teachers can teach Judaic studies, as well as secular studies. We program for the "Jewish" part of each child's day, as well. This year OROT started charging tuition above the day school tuition. Generous scholarships were given and almost 100% of our parent body now participates in helping to fund the program. Since becoming a 501(c)3 over a year ago, our Director of Development has worked hard to

bring in money from corporate sponsors, as well as family foundations and private donors. When we achieved 501(c)3 status, OROT moved into its own offices and has become an independent agency of the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia.

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PHOENIX

THE COUNCIL FOR JEWS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS in Scottsdale, Arizona began in 1985. The agency provides resources and support to children and adults who have a variety of disabling conditions to enable their full participation in the activities of the Jewish community. With the Council's support, local Jewish schools and camps receive observation, consultation and teacher training to facilitate meaningful and successful inclusion. In 2005, we started a pilot project to provide individualized training in each pre-school for a four-week period. The Council's Pre-school Inclusion Consultant offers specialized training in the classroom to meet the unique needs that are identified and provide strategies to promote successful inclusion.

Adults and teens with special needs come together twice a month for social clubs and Jewish studies classes led by special education teachers. The Yad B'Yad Adult Studies class held a b'nai mitzvah in 2003. The two groups, Yad B'Yad and Keshet, have become popular volunteer opportunities for typical teens and adults.

Families receive assistance through support groups for grandparents, parents and siblings. In 2005, we created a new group for adults who have a sibling with a disability. This group seeks to prepare those adult siblings for the responsibilities they will inherit when their parents can no longer oversee the needs of their adult son or daughter who has a disability. The group will hear presentations on topics such as guardianship, conservatorship, special needs trusts, residential options, government resources, grief counseling, and end-of-life decisions.

The Council is also beginning its first Social Skills Training program. In 2006, the first six-week training will address the needs of high school students who have learning disabilities, attention deficit disorders and emotional disorders. The students' parents will spend time with a counselor while the students engage in their training session.

In 2005, the Council collaborated with several other local Jewish agencies to offer a Jewish genetic diseases education and screening event. This was the first screening event in greater Phoenix in over 25 years. An aggressive fundraising campaign yielded sufficient funds to subsidize and make affordable the costly tests for Tay-Sachs, Canavan, Cystic Fibrosis and Familial Dysautonomia diseases carrier status. The event drew over 200 participants; 134 people were screened for being carriers of the most prevalent Jewish genetic diseases. 16% of the individuals tested positive as carriers of Jewish genetic diseases; one person tested positive as a carrier of two Jewish genetic diseases. A similar event will be held in April 2006. Efforts are underway to establish a large endowment fund to eventually support the cost of subsidizing affordable testing in the future.

The Council maintains the only database of agencies and organizations that provide resources to Jewish individuals who have disabilities. The agency publishes the *North American Disability Resources Directory of Jewish Agencies, Schools, Camps, etc.* and was updated in January, 2006 to include over 200 entries from the US and Canada. Sign language and oral interpreters are available for Jewish programs and events. Disability awareness workshops and a speaker's bureau are provided upon request.

The Council's website was updated in 2005 and continues to draw numerous e-mail inquiries from metropolitan Phoenix, as well as, outside of Arizona and the US. A newsletter is printed three times a year and distributed throughout the Jewish community.

In 2001, the Council opened its first supervised Jewish residence, Shalom House.

It presently has three adult men who have autism or developmental disabilities living there. Shalom House is also the meeting place for the adult social club and adult Jewish studies class every month. It has become the adults' central gathering place for holidays and Shabbat events. Other families are already planning future residences based on the Shalom House model.

The Council receives a small allocation from Jewish Federation of Greater Phoenix but raises most of its operating budget through fundraisers, a membership drive and private donations. There are three, full-time staff members and a dozen part time employees.

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RHODE ISLAND

Rhode Island has been busy with congregational schools. We currently have six sites with independent teachers and spaces housed in the religious schools.

This year Barbara Zenofsky who began our program 20 years ago retired.

Marsha Horovitz began as Special Education Director at the Bureau of Jewish Education of Rhode Island in July.

New and veteran teachers would become the Special Education staff for 2005-06. Rivkie Gerber, Cheryl Glick, Sara Kelsey, Sue Ann Goodman, Leah Ross-Coke and Marsha Horovitz.

We were involved in resolving Special Education, specifically IEP, issues in our Hebrew Day School and the Jewish Community Day School. The city of Providence was not providing services to the schools due to funding caps and lack of staff. The children began services in February of 2006. Unfortunately, they lost the months of September through January.

Professional development and additional services are our goals for the coming school year. We are in the midst of discussions with the directors and advisors of Jewish Youth Groups such as BBYO, USY and NFTY to begin to include our youth with disabilities in their programs. The plan is to provide one or two students to "mentor or shadow" a child during a programming activity. They would not need to attend business meetings but will be invited to join the group in recreational activities.

Rhode Island has one Jewish camp in Point Judith. Camp Jori will host its first 2-week overnight program for children with special needs this coming summer.

Our future goals include the possibility of a Jewish Group Home for our over 21 population. We currently have five families who have expressed interest. In the future, we would also like to have singles programming for our over 21 community members who would have a Jewish venue for meeting others.

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SAN DIEGO

The Special Needs programming at the Agency for Jewish Education of San Diego County is going through both an evaluative and transitional process.

The Delet program, which was run by the AJE for three years, was a self-contained classroom addressing the needs of students with cognitive, communicative or social impairments. The class was very small consisting of two to four students. For funding reasons, it was decided to not continue the program under the auspices of the AJE. The synagogue, at which site the Delet program had been held, took over the program and the students. As well, the teacher transitioned into their school. The AJE now provides some funding and educational support for Delet.

The Agency for Jewish Education continues to serve students in supplementary schools who have learning disabilities through the assistance of their Special Needs Resource Educators. These educators observe the students in the classroom and help the classroom teacher and aides make curriculum accommodations for the special needs students. The AJE also enlists our Special Needs Resource Educators to go to schools which request observations and team consultations prior to having a resource educator on site on a continuing basis.

The Special Needs programming of the AJE is currently participating in an evaluation process being led by the School Services & Programs Committee of the AJE Board of Directors.

In the preliminary outcome of the evaluation process, it appears that the need is growing within the congregational schools to have more on-site Special Needs Resource Educators. If this is true, the AJE will need to hire additional trained professionals to service the schools.

The AJE also provides workshops for Jewish community educators regarding different learning issues: e.g. sensory integration, better understanding of Autism & Asperger's, classroom accommodations, etc.

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SAN FRANCISCO

The Special Education program at the Bureau of Jewish Education, now in its eighteenth year, continues to address the needs of children with disabilities, their teachers, principals, families, and other members of the community. It is funded by a grant from the Jewish Community Federation Endowment Kohn Fund.

Special education has become an integral part of both congregational and day schools. Most of the larger sites have special education teachers on staff who teach a self-contained class, administer pull-out programs or provide in-class support to students with mild disabilities. The smaller schools provide individual assistance to students as needed. The Special Education Consultant spends a significant amount of time providing consultations to parents, teachers and principals who are seeking out the best solutions for successful educational experiences.

As part of the BJE's professional development opportunities for teachers, the special education consultant goes to the congregational and day schools to present workshops to program directors, teachers, and madrichim on topics such as Classroom Accommodations, Sensitivity to Individual Learning Needs, Madrichim Who Make a Difference, and Teaching Hebrew to All Students. Each workshop or series is tailored to the particular staff, making it possible to address the school's unique issues. Workshops are also offered in central locations for gatherings of congregational school and early childhood teachers from various sites. The Bureau of Jewish Education's *Handbook for Special Education Programs in the Synagogue Schools* is still available at no charge. It contains policy statements, procedures for setting up or maintaining a special education program, and forms that can be copied and/or adapted for use by individual schools. To receive a copy, please contact Flora Kupferman.

The most exciting program we run is the, "Shabbat Weekend for Children with Disabilities and Their Families." The fifth annual family camp will take place in May 2006. As in the past, this year's weekend will be open to approximately 30-35 families. Space and logistical limitations preclude participation by all the families who want to attend this fun and popular program.

Structured like a typical Jewish family camp, the weekend features recreation, "no-shush" family Shabbat services, Havdallah, Israeli folk dancing, singing, arts and crafts, hiking, swimming, paddle boating, campfire, talent show, yoga and more. Counselors and specialists come from many parts of the community and include special educators, people with disabilities

and interns from the psychology department of a nearby university. Many people feel so strongly about this program that they volunteer their services. Our campers, who have Autism, Fragile X, Cerebral Palsy, Bipolar Disorder, Down Syndrome and a variety of developmental disabilities, flourish in the relaxed, accepting, and encouraging environment.

Their siblings love not only the camp activities, but also the sibling groups we schedule. They are thrilled to spend time with others who share the unique experience of being Jewish and having a disabled sibling. Discussion and play groups have blossomed into lasting friendships. In the camp setting, the parents have found their peer group, and they have so much to share. Structured discussion/support groups, led by therapists, have become the highlight for many of the adults. Over the past four years, they have formed a large extended family who eagerly looks forward to seeing each other again and who warmly embrace newcomers. This year we are doubly blessed because we finally received funding for a second weekend, which will be held in another local Jewish sleep-away camp in September 2006.

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TORONTO

Background

Tikun Chaim, funded under the auspices of UJA Federation Board of Jewish Education, Toronto, is an initiative designed to help organize a centralized and comprehensive network of professional special educational services for the community. The mandate for Tikun Chaim was outlined in a UJA Federation BJE research report entitled, "Isn't Every Child Special?" (February 2001). Inaugurated in September 2001, the functions and services of Tikun Chaim have been guided by Debbie Gladstone, Director; Special Education Consultants; and an Advisory Committee made up of lay and professional staff from the education community.

2005-2006 Consultation Services and Program Initiatives

Tikun Chaim is committed to expanding the knowledge and skill base of administrators and teaching staff so that students with exceptional needs can be fully supported in their home schools.

Senior Special Needs Consultant: (Dori Levine - 4 days per week)

Dori Levine is responsible for providing comprehensive services, including teacher training and supervision. Dori develops customized workshops for the staff of specific schools requesting her input. Her process starts with school visits to observe, confer, and then plan for individual school needs. Her work also includes support to parents, as well as student consultation. Dori is also a participant on a number of professional and lay committees.

Dori was a member of the UJA Federation Board of Jewish Education, Tikun Chaim/York University Certificate in Special Education program development team. She is a member of the teaching staff and acts as a mentor to the participants. She helps to facilitate the prospective participant intake process for this course.

Dori chairs the Tikun Chaim Planning Committee that provides training and support for resource teachers, senior special education educators, and administrators.

Gifted Education and Programming for High Ability Learners (Dr. Joanne Foster: on call basis)

Through targeted teacher training and consultation in the area of gifted education, Joanne Foster helps educators plan and implement programming adaptations for high-ability learners. She works to clarify understanding of gifted-level development, and to ensure that suitable learning opportunities are put into place—educational experiences that are flexible, challenging, and designed to effectively meet individual students' needs, learning profiles, interests, and strengths. She works with administrators to facilitate resource access in schools, and to provide teacher development programs on giftedness and subject-specific advancement. She follows up these initiatives with consultation as required, providing teachers with constructive feedback, and practical recommendations.

Joanne offers support to parents of advanced learners by addressing their concerns and strengthening their understandings of giftedness through Parent Forum meetings.

Consultation: Hebrew/Judaic Studies, General Studies: (Dafna Ross: Full time)

Dafna Ross works with day school special needs educators to infuse awareness, knowledge, and skills regarding support for children with special needs. She leads workshops for teachers on how to implement these changes in the classroom. She also conducts professional development sessions within the broad areas of Second Language Development, Language Acquisition, Hebrew basic skills for special needs, and Non-Verbal Learning Disabilities. Dafna is currently actively involved in collecting and promoting the acquisition of advanced and proactive Hebrew resource material. Dafna is also the coordinator of the York University/UJA Federation, Tikun Chaim Certificate in Special Education.

Outcomes: Consultation Programs

- Increasingly, more schools are requesting customized professional development in special education, including how to program for gifted/high ability learners.
- Consultation has begun the process to:
 - Equip teachers of both general and Judaic studies, through professional development, with skills to lead a differentiated classroom, i.e. where each student will receive process and produce according to his/her learning profile.
 - Create greater awareness and acceptance of the importance of collaborative and effective service delivery models, to lead us to reconsider and explore different configurations of cooperation between e.g. JVS Toronto, JF&CS Toronto, BJE Toronto, Feuerstein Instrumental Enrichment approach, MATIA ISRAEL.
- Continue to acquire relevant, applicable and updated resources such as books and CD's/ DVD's as well as conducting research in and creating, translating, and typing relevant material in Hebrew – for both day school and supplementary school environments.

Early Years Consultation: Early Intervention Program (Heather Finestone: 3 days per week)

Research has demonstrated that kindergarten children, who are screened early for learning problems and then receive appropriate interventions, are then more able to achieve their full academic potential due to enhanced self-esteem, potentially better work habits, and less disaffection towards learning and school.

To this end, in January of 2004, Tikun Chaim implemented a pilot initiative initially developed by Dr. Karen Gazith, Director Educational Services, Bronfman Jewish Education Centre, Montreal, Canada. It was facilitated by Heather Finestone, Tikun Chaim's Early Years Consultant, and was instituted in three senior kindergarten classes at two day schools.

During the 2004 -2005 school year, 93 children in five different classes in three schools participated in this program. In this current academic year, Heather is working with 127 students in seven classrooms, at four schools.

Both teachers and administrators have positively received the Early Intervention Program. They recognize the benefits of screening kindergarten children in small groups at the beginning of the year, then providing regular intervention with identified students in skill areas that need developing, and in the spring re-screening only those students with whom teachers have con-

cerns.

The Early Years Consultant is viewed both as a model as well as an integral part of the "school team". Heather attends meetings with parents and school team members around student concerns and difficult situations occurring in the classrooms. She maintains contact with the Occupational Therapist, Speech and Language therapist, and other resource professionals in order to monitor students' progress.

All screening and re-screening results are reviewed by Heather in conjunction with all appropriate personnel. Recommendations are made and discussed again with the Grade One teachers receiving those students who were re-flagged. It is felt that it is beneficial to review the children who were re-screened the previous spring with their grade one teachers, to see if any changes have taken place as the children have matured and/or received additional support.

Heather also conducts on-going professional development for Early Years teachers.

Outcomes: Early Intervention Program

- Additional schools have expressed interest in participating in this program.
- Schools receiving this service are looking into ways to enlarge the program in order to incorporate all their kindergarten children.
- Program evaluations are very positive – in particular, what teachers are learning about their students and what they are learning about how to appropriately support them.

Supplementary School Consultation

(Beth Komito-Gottlieb & Chari Schwartz: each work 1.5 days a week)

Upon request Beth Komito- Gottlieb and Chari Schwartz work directly with teachers and administrators in affiliated supplementary schools. They respond to the different needs and approaches that are required in this setting. To date during this school year, 37 students have been observed and/or discussed, in addition to support and direction given to the teachers of five classes that have a high ratio of students with special needs.

The most common presenting challenge in schools serviced by this Tikun Chaim continues to be children with the label or characteristics of ADD/ADHD, followed by behavioural problems often resulting from family issues and/or teacher or school limitations. There has been a rise in children on the autism spectrum and related developmental mental disorders, particularly in the synagogue schools, as more parents seek to have their children with developmental disabilities included in their communities.

Outcomes: Supplementary School Program

- Increasingly, teachers and administrators see the need for regularly scheduled special education consultation support.
- Developing a positive approach to lead to individual teaching and student learning strategies - teachers presenting to the consultant student concerns and their own observations, along with direct service to students and their teachers.
- Developing a positive approach to lead to individual teaching and student learning strategies - teachers presenting to the consultant student concerns and their own observations, along with direct service to students and their teachers.
- Creating material for resource kits and learning strategies for teachers to use.
- Facilitating professional development sessions customized for individual schools.
- Time constraints: The Consultants (two people working three days per week collectively) do not have enough time to meet community needs due to:
 - Some schools require special needs support, more frequently, than the present consultative model can provide, or they require more hands-on assistance to follow through on recommendations.
 - Six additional schools have either recently requested support for the first time, or are newly affiliated with the BJE and require consultative support.

Certificate in Special Education

(Coordinator: Dafna Ross)

Tikun Chaim's Director, Debbie Gladstone along with Tikun Chaim consultants, Dafna Ross and Dori Levine, in association with York University staff, initiated and developed curriculum for an Ontario Ministry of Education approved Certificate in Special Education program in August 2004. Our purpose was to make professional development available to any teacher working within the Jewish school system, with any academic background, to expand expertise in teaching children with exceptionalities.

The participants in the program represent the spectrum of religious and cultural diversity in our community, and reflect the specific needs and characteristics of our day and supplementary school environments from preschool to high school.

This program encompasses a combination of weekly classes (over 125 hours per term), case studies, reflective journals, reading assignments,

along with a participant-driven term-length research and practicum project ("The Teacher Inquiry"). Dafna Ross is the Coordinator and York University Liaison for this program.

Dafna researches, writes, and facilitates a number of the weekly learning sessions, as well as hosts the weekly sessions, maintains ongoing communication, provides mentoring around the Teacher Inquiry Projects, reads and marks the participants' weekly journals, and guides weekly discussion groups. She also invites specialized educators from various sectors of the special education community to address the participants.

Outcomes: Special Education Certificate Program

- Twenty-three participants graduated from the complete program (out of the 25 who started). They represented 16 different day and supplementary community schools.
- The participants submitted overwhelmingly positive program evaluations. High endorsements were given to what they learned and how they were able to apply this knowledge to provide supportive educational programming for students in their classrooms. Many commented that this program provided basic children requiring "special" education.
- Useful programs were developed through the Teacher Inquiry projects, which are currently being used in classrooms. There is much interest from members of the Tikun Chaim Planning Committee to learn more about the work done in this area and what can generally be made available for use.
- Colleagues view the graduates as additional sources of in-school support in special education.
- The participants, supported by Dafna, developed a collaborative professional network around issues in special education.
- Participants from the first cohort are currently engaged, as a group, in regularly scheduled additional professional development that has been developed and coordinated by Dafna Ross. As well, some members of this cohort continue to attend sessions of the current year's program.
- A mentoring program was established with some members of the first cohort. They are learning how to act as mentors for the teachers within the second cohort of students, as well as developing leadership skills.
- Enrollment in Masters level programs and BJE Midrasha programs were initiated by some graduates.
- The second cohort (2005-2006) of this course is over-subscribed (26 participants).
- This program will also help us to identify the need to create:

1. A new level of leadership/special education coordinators within the schools.
2. A way to equip teachers with skills and knowledge to learn and then teach about second language acquisition.

UJA Federation Board of Jewish Education, Tikun Chaim Special Education Mission to Israel, July 2005

As a culmination of the issues studied and discussed during the Certificate program, a Special Education Mission was initiated by Debbie Gladstone, Director Tikun Chaim, and developed by Dafna Ross (UJA), Rabbi Natan Kandler (Jewish Agency), and Jewish Agency staff in Israel. It was sponsored by The Jewish Agency, Jewish National Fund, and Partnership Two Thousand.

The Goals of this Mission:

- To learn about and to become inspired by the demonstrated spiritual, theoretical, and practical innovations of the Israeli spirit in its response to special education.
- To cultivate an educational and meaningful partnership that will yield a network of mutual opportunities and educational products.
- To immerse participants in an extraordinary professional development environment in order to inspire, equip, and broaden their ability to educate all students successfully.
- To strengthen ties with the land of Israel, its people and ways of education, via a mutual "give and take" process and concrete connections
- To accomplish the above through:
 - Learning about and from various communities including UJA Toronto's twinned city of Eilat.
 - Learning about ourselves and the Jewish community in Toronto.
 - Learning about and giving back to the sources we learned from.
 - Cultivating engaging educational products.

Outcomes: Special Education Mission

The very successful July, 2005 UJA Federation BJE Tikun Chaim Special Education Mission to Israel has become a model for future professional development in Israel.

A second Special Education Mission to Israel is being planning for July, 2006 with members of both cohorts as participants.

Community Related Grants:

Temple Sinai: Jewish Education for

All Children:

This supplementary school program, through its support program and Hebrew Lab, provides Judaic and religious education for 62 children with a range of exceptionalities, excluding medical issues. The spectrum of support includes: review of student profiles, developing IEP's, one-to-one assistants, observation, extra classroom teachers (training for teachers including special education professional support), on-site monitoring, parent support, and a self-contained classroom (10 children).

Support Programs for Educators, Parents & Families:

Tikun Chaim Planning Committee

(Dori Levine: chairperson)

The participants on this professional committee are resource teachers, senior special education educators, and administrators who represent the full religious and cultural spectrum of day schools in our community. The representatives discuss pertinent special education issues, exchange relevant information, plan and deliver professional development, as well as invite specialized special education facilitators from the greater educational community to speak. This committee has become part of the platform on which we provide additional professional development, therefore help create a positive shift in attitude within schools for the purpose of enhancing opportunities for children with special needs. As a result, there is now a greater awareness and sensitivity to children with exceptionalities, and an acceptance of the need to train teachers to work with the diversity of children in the classroom.

Parent - to - Parent Group

Tikun Chaim's Director, Debbie Gladstone along with community agencies, initiated this program as a result of an identified gap in support services to parents of children with exceptionalities. Professional staff representatives from Jewish Family and Child Services, Reena, Zareinu Education Centre, JVS Toronto, The Bathurst Jewish Community Centre, YACHAD, The Family Resource Centre, and The Friendship Circle explore various types of support for Jewish parents. Professional facilitators are invited to lead programs that provide an arena for the exchange of vital information and opportunity for social interaction and networking with other parents who have similar needs. Another outcome of these sessions is the lessening of isolation that may be experienced by children with special needs, their siblings, and parents.

Parent Forum (Dr. Joanne Foster, facilitator)

Tikun Chaim, with Dr. Joanne Foster as the facilitator, hosts a number of support group meetings for parents of gifted/high ability learners. This program offers an opportunity for par-

ents to meet, to hear about and discuss matters that relate to giftedness and subject-specific mastery, and to ask questions and learn how to support high-level development. Topics have included emotional and social issues, motivation, resource access, and strategies for handling day-to-day realities at home and school.

In addition, during the winter and spring of 2004, Tikun Chaim and JVS senior staff met to discuss ways of modifying the JVS Psycho-educational Day School Program's service delivery, to better the special education support for children in the classroom, as well as make the program more financially viable to any family and all affiliated schools. This work continues and JVS modifications to the program are currently in progress.

Community Direction and Support:

Tikun Chaim Advisory Committee (Chair: Rhona Shulman)

The chair of this committee, Rhona Shulman, has contributed her time and expertise to this special education initiative, now called Tikun Chaim, for the last seven years. The members include lay leaders with personal and professional interests related to students with special needs. The committee represents a wide range of the religious spectrum, as well as individuals with links to various community agencies and schools that provide support and services to day and supplementary school students.

The mandate of this committee, which meets regularly throughout the year, is to help set policies, monitor and evaluate initiatives, and ensure fiscal responsibility.

Community Inclusion for Jewish People with Special Needs

Tikun Chaim, through its Director Debbie Gladstone, is represented on the UJA Federation's Inclusion Task Force. This committee was initiated as a result of the "Opening the Doors" Conference held in July 2002, and hosted by Tikun Chaim. The agenda of this committee is to identify the community resources, as well as the support gaps, so that all people with special needs, across the life span, and their families, have access to and benefit from greater Toronto's Jewish community's religious, social, recreational, and spiritual programs.

Reena – Learning and Development Committee

Debbie Gladstone represents UJA Federation Board of Jewish Education on this and other Reena-related committees.

The goal of this committee is to assist Reena in developing new initiatives to facilitate the enhancement of professional development for Reena staff, as well as create and support, in conjunction with George Brown College, a new Ministry of Education recognized program, "The Developmental Disabilities Counsellor Program," designed to train novice front-line staff.

JVS Toronto Educational Services Committee

Debbie Gladstone is the UJA Federation Board of Jewish Education representative to this committee. This working group monitors and evaluates the work of the JVS Toronto School Psycho-educational Program.

In addition, during the winter and spring of 2004, Tikun Chaim and JVS senior staff met to discuss ways of modifying the JVS Psycho-educational Day School Program's service delivery, to better the special education support for children in the classroom, as well as make the program more financially viable to any family and all affiliated schools. This work continues and JVS modifications to the program are currently in progress.

Consultation to the Informal Jewish Education Sector

Debbie Gladstone and Dori Levine were invited to participate on a committee, along with UJA Federation Noar's director, Dani Fine, and senior camp staff, to evaluate the current challenges that their particular camp's Inclusion Program is facing, and to develop better intake and planning processes, staff development, and programming for their program.

As a result of this initial work, Tikun Chaim staff and Dani are working to develop effective training programs for Jewish community summer camp and youth group staff, in order to provide nurturing environments and effective and fun programming for the children who bring a spectrum of exceptionalities to these programs.

Foundation Program

Tikun Chaim is exploring the concept of partnering with a community day school to create a transitional Senior Kindergarten to Grade One class for children with learning exceptionalities. This is in keeping with the philosophy of supporting children with special needs who wish to

remain in a day school setting, as well as remain in their own home school setting.

Alternative/Vocational Jewish Community High School

A committee was drafted to discuss the possibility of developing an alternative/vocational/co-op program within the Community Hebrew Academy of Toronto (Toronto's community Jewish high school) school environment. This alternative high school program would provide a broader range of opportunities to meet the needs of students who do not qualify for the high academic programs currently standard at CHAT, thus allowing them the option to remain in a Jewish day school environment. Vocational training programs would try to match skills to needs in the community.

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WASHINGTON D.C.

The Special Needs Department of the Partnership for Jewish Life and Learning provides information, resources, consultation and professional development to parents, teachers and administrators in pre-schools, congregational and day schools in our community. In addition, we offer assistance to professional and lay leaders of area synagogues to help increase inclusion opportunities in the Jewish community for people with disabilities. At this time, we are beginning to reach out to area youth groups as well to provide disability awareness training and to help develop opportunities in our Jewish youth groups for teens with disabilities. Professionals in the department are available to meet with individuals with disabilities, their parents, school educators, youth directors and synagogue staff and lay leaders to offer guidance regarding resources, accommodations and services in the community. Our goal is to help ensure that every member of the Jewish community, children and adults alike, have access to the range of social, educational and religious opportunities that the Washington area has to offer. Another critical goal for our agency is to help increase the level of services and opportunities in our Jewish community for individuals with disabilities.

Community Initiatives

On December 4, 2005, over 200 educators, rabbis, individuals with disabilities, advocates and caring community members gathered together for the 3rd annual conference of "Opening the Gates of Torah: Including People with Disabilities in the Jewish Community." Held this year at Temple Rodef Shalom in Falls Church, Virginia, the participants engaged in a range of discussion topics including: mental illness in the Jewish community, ways for people who are deaf and hearing to connect to the Jewish community, setting up inclusion committees in synagogues as well as several other issues related to Jewish inclusion. The keynote address was given by Rabbi Naomi Levy, author of *To Begin Again and Talking to God*. Becca Hornstein, founder and Executive Director of the Council for Jews with Special Needs in Scottsdale, Arizona, delivered the endnote address. Next year's conference will be held on Sunday December 3, 2006 at Adas Israel Congregation in Washington, DC. The keynote speaker will be Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson, Dean, Ziegler School of Rabbinic

Studies and Vice President of the University of Judaism.

As a result of participation in previous Opening the Gates of Torah Conferences, as well as, participation in Jewish Disability Awareness Months, over a dozen area synagogues have established synagogue inclusion committees. A newly formed Synagogue Inclusion Committee Network for chair-people of these committees meets on a regular basis at the Partnership for Jewish Life and Learning. This newly formed network enables the synagogue lay leaders to learn from each other, share resources and to work together on the joint goal of making our area synagogues more inclusive and welcoming to people of all ages with disabilities. Resource packets for Jewish Disability Awareness Month have been published by the Special Needs Department and disseminated throughout the community to area synagogues. These resource guides are available for sale to other communities.

Professional Development

Over 125 educators from area day and congregational schools attended a three part seminar called: What's the Big Idea? Practical Methods of Hebrew Reading Instruction and Assessment, given by Dr. Scott Goldberg, Assistant Professor of Education and Psychology at Yeshiva University's Azrieli Graduate School of Education. Dr. Goldberg presented both research and strategies for Hebrew literacy and spent a portion of his time in the community, consulting with two area day schools, as well.

On Thursday March 30th, area educators will be gathering together for a day long seminar: "Understanding Anxiety Disorders in Children". Dr. Golda Ginsburg and Dr. Julie Kingery from John Hopkins University will be presenting. The workshop will take place at Beth Shalom Congregation in Potomac, MD. Please contact Lenore Layman (301-255-1952) for registration information.

Professional development in the community is planned in conjunction with the Day School Learning Specialist Network which was founded eight years ago. Plans are underway to prioritize future professional development which will include built-in on-site consultation time at area schools.

New Initiatives

Please take a look at our new agency website, www.pjll.org, that was recently launched in the community. Many resources for individuals with disabilities, their family members and community professionals can be found on the special needs section of the website. This section can be accessed by clicking on sections entitled "parents," and "families," and "professionals," on the top of the website. Information about camp programs, area schools, Jewish deaf resources, seminars for parents and professionals, as well as links to many other Jewish disability organizations, can

be found here.

Since our recent merger with JET (Jewish Experiences with Teens) and Hillel of Greater Washington, we are expanding our services as a department. We are seeking funding which will enable our agency to provide training to youth directors and teens in the community, resulting in expanded social opportunities for youth and teens with disabilities in our Jewish community. We anticipate the establishment of a Youth Initiative which will consist of a Friendship Circle, Youth Director Training and Teen Training Institute (modeled after the successful models in Boston and Philadelphia.) We look forward to sharing more details about these exciting opportunities in the coming months.

Keshet Connection, our Jewish Community Resource for People with Disabilities and their Families has gone online, and can be accessed on the Jewish Federation website: www.shalomdc.org.

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Organizational Background

JESNA was created in 1981 by the Jewish Federation system to provide advocacy, guidance, and support for the Jewish community in its efforts to strengthen and improve Jewish education. In the twenty five years since, JESNA has become a leading force promoting consistent excellence in Jewish education through a combination of high-quality community services and innovative initiatives that address Jewish education's foremost challenges. As our community has evolved, so has JESNA's strategy for promoting excellence, which now focuses on three overarching areas of activity:

PEOPLE: Recruiting talented educators and creating the conditions that will enable them to thrive;

BEST PRACTICE: Identifying and disseminating models of excellence in educational practice; and

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS: Developing creative new approaches to expand the impact of Jewish education.

Partner Organizations

Virtually all of JESNA's projects are carried out in partnership with other organizations to create synergies that move Jewish education forward most powerfully. JESNA identifies allies who complement our strengths, allowing us to use our assets to maximum effect and to strengthen our partners as well. JESNA collaborates with a wide-range of local and national organizations including federations, central agencies for Jewish education, schools, youth programs, religious movements, Hillels, Foundations and individual funders.

While partnering is an important strategy in our work, JESNA is unique in the field of Jewish education. JESNA works to raise the standards of Jewish education across the board, as a system-builder on a national level, as a convener, bringing together the people, ideas, organizations and resources needed to create excellent Jewish education, and as a developer of solutions, generating practical steps toward that will make an impact on every community across North America.

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Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education
Call for Action

In recognition of the obligation to provide a religious education for all Jewish persons with special needs, the Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education, in conjunction with JESNA, the Jewish Education Service of North America urges all Jewish communities throughout North America to develop and support systems to:

- ◆ Identify Jewish persons with special needs including individuals with developmental, learning, behavioral, neurological, physical, medical, and sensory disabilities;
- ◆ Deliver Jewish educational services to special persons that will enrich their Jewish lives and those of their families. Such services include special educational programming in early childhood; day and supplementary schools; continuing adult education programs; and programs in residential, social/recreational and camp settings;
- ◆ Explore various funding sources for the provision of the aforementioned services through federal, state and local government entitlements and foundations as well as local community and private sources.

The Consortium, in conjunction with JESNA, endorses this proactive approach to provide services to Jewish individuals with special needs.

"It is enough that an individual is disabled. Let us not disable him or her as a Jew as well."

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CONSORTIUM OF SPECIAL EDUCATORS IN CENTRAL AGENCIES FOR JEWISH EDUCATION

Rabbi Martin Schloss –Co-founder, Consortium
Dr. Sara Rubinow Simon –Co-founder, Consortium
Steve Kraus –Co-editor, Newsletter
Blair Chipkin –Co-editor, Newsletter

The Newsletter is a publication of the Consortium of Special Educators in Central Agencies for Jewish Education which is affiliated with JESNA, the Jewish Education Service of North America, 111 Eighth Avenue, 11th Floor, New York, New York 10011-5201. The Newsletter is published and distributed by JESNA.

