

pal made it a priority to visit with each rabbi and educator at the four partnering congregations, the PHH did not permeate the consciousness of those synagogues, remaining more or less invisible except to the families with teens attending the program.

One might wonder why the PHH remained such a well-kept secret for so many years.

When the school opened, it received a grant from a Supporting Foundation of the Jewish Community Endowment Fund through the BJE, but the local Federation Council was not asked for its input or financial support. Garnering local federation support was not on the list of priorities, since the school had a generous grant, and there were plenty of other things that needed to happen to ensure a successful program. Thus, the local Federation Council and Allocations Committee were not involved in the initial planning phases of the PHH, nor were they instrumental in securing funding from the Federation's Endowment Fund due to the internal structure by which the federation handles endowment matters. The local council therefore had no ownership of the program's success.

The synagogues also were not responsible for general and financial support; they were responsible for providing the site and rabbis to teach. They were not responsible for any community outreach to unaffiliated teens, or to help find potential funders.

Complicating matters, the PHH mostly serves teens whose parents are members of synagogues. In this federation community, there is a tension between funding non-syna-

gogue programs and providing material supports to synagogues to serve their own members. This causes reluctance to support programs perceived as exclusively serving synagogue memberships.

A final factor was turnover: The head rabbi at the largest synagogue and his colleagues (educator rabbi and associate rabbi), who were key players at the inception of the school, had all moved on. Their replacements were asked to embrace a vision they had not helped to create.

For all of these reasons, we have extensive work ahead of us as we deepen our relationships with the Federation Council and the synagogues in order to build broader support for the Peninsula Hebrew High. This year we began by inviting members of the Council to come to school one night for an interactive text learning session. After a lively evening of *chevruta* learning and *beit-midrash* buzz, the adults understood that they had participated in something the teens experience weekly – that is, engaging in stimulating and intellectually challenging Jewish conversations.

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Kesher Community Hebrew School/After School

LINDA ECHT AND AVIVA RICHMAN

Kesher Community Hebrew School/After School was founded in 1992 with the idea of combining quality after-school care with the finest Hebrew and Jewish education. It began as a means to address both the needs of working parents and their desire for strong Jewish education and community. Ten years later, Kesher's reputation for strong curriculum and

child care is well established, and it now has a waiting list as long as its list of current families.

Kesher, Hebrew for "connection," is a program that combines K-8 after-school child care with Jewish learning. In a joy-filled, nurturing environment, the program provides the Jewish knowledge, sense of community, and

vitality of spirit that lay the foundation for the formation of proud, educated Jews. In an atmosphere of respect and camaraderie, children and their families come to value Jewish learning as a process unfolding throughout their lives.

DIVERSITY AND KAVOD

Currently Keshet has families from seven different towns. Approximately 57% of Keshet families are affiliated with area congregations and *chavurot*, while 43% are unaffiliated. Among the families there is a wide range in levels of observance. Keshet's inclusive policy and attitude have attracted a number of families who, for various reasons (e.g., being mixed-faith or same-sex parents), have felt dissatisfied or unwelcome elsewhere in the Jewish and secular communities.

The program recognizes the salience of a family's need to be part of a community, particularly a Jewish community, and therefore Keshet emphasizes community building. As a foundation of its community, Keshet emphasizes *kavod* (respect) in all aspects of life: respect for oneself, for others, and for shared environment and space.

At the beginning of each year, every group of children in Keshet creates a *brit* (contract or agreement) centered on *kavod*, serving as a guide steeped in Jewish values to support what they learn and help them navigate together as a Jewish community. The children are also recognized and acknowledged by their teachers and their peers for performing "acts of *kavod*." *Kavod* is the cornerstone at Keshet from which the curriculum is built.

COMMUNITY OF TEACHERS

The leadership of Keshet is passionate and committed to the Jewish education of all of its constituents, including the *tsevet* (staff). The emphasis that Keshet puts on creating a learning community among its *tsevet* is critical to the success of creating a larger Keshet community. Keshet leadership believes that its teachers and administrators should be learning and growing both professionally and Jewishly. They also believe that teachers should be very connected to the children and their families' lives. Most of the teachers work at least 24 hours a week, which gives them time to meet with education directors,

discuss individual students, plan and study, and play with the kids before structured learning time. This also allows for regular staff meetings to discuss and reflect upon curriculum and program structure.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Keshet's philosophy of curriculum and instruction is learner-centered. This leads to a flexible approach, allowing for a range of modes through which one can learn, accommodating a variety of abilities in one classroom, and encouraging the reflection of teacher interests and strengths through the curriculum.

We enact the Judaica curriculum in much the same way as the Rabbis studied the *Torah*, each time discovering new ideas and experiences with an ever-growing depth. For us it is not only the *Torah*, but the entirety of Jewish tradition that beckons us to "turn and turn." In order to provide these turns, we have created a three-year cycle, each year setting the course for a different journey through the same Jewish text. Our cycle includes a year that focuses on Jewish values and ethics, a year that focuses on Jewish history, and a year that focuses on the Jewish calendar. Over the course of three years, Keshet students will encounter certain core ideas at different developmental levels. With each encounter, they are able to glean something new and relevant to their lives.

Keshet's program for teaching Hebrew language is based on the proficiency approach. Essential to this approach is that the language becomes relevant to the learners. This learner-centered method emphasizes the ability to function in the language. Students are divided into groups that are based on proficiency and developmental readiness. Unit themes are designed to be relevant to the kids' lives, such as Keshet environment, family, home, holidays, and Israel. The students improve their proficiency levels in all the skill areas: reading, writing, speaking, listening, and grammar. Students at all levels work with the same themes at the same time, creating a cohesive environment.

THE KESHER MODEL

We believe that creating a warm learning environment based on Jewish values is critical to the foundation of Jewish learning. By taking a holistic view of Jewish edu-

cation and creating a diverse learning community, Keshet acknowledges the changing demographics of America's Jewish families while helping children, families, and teachers understand that we each have a place in Jewish history and that we are responsible for our Jewish future. Keshet is grateful to the Covenant Foundation for recognizing the significance of its pioneering new method of teaching Hebrew and Judaica in an informal setting.

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Editor's Suggested Discussion Guide:

- Morton & Kudan list indicators of a congregation that "recognizes the valued role of the educator."
 - To what extent does your congregation meet their criteria? Which of these criteria seem "unthinkable" in your congregation, and why? What would need to change in your congregation in order to institute these changes? What, if anything, do you think this says about the rabbi-educator partnership in your synagogue?
 - Are you convinced by their thesis that the relationship between the rabbi and the educator plays a crucial role in embodying the role of Jewish education within the synagogue?
 - To what extent is the successful rabbi-educator partnership a function of specific personalities, and to what extent is it a matter of role delineation and structural factors?
- Weissman & Margolius caution against rushing to "inadequate and simplistic" conclusions, endorsing

"a process of reflection, experimentation and alignment." What were the elements in the process of change in their synagogue? Do you believe the process can tend to be of equal importance to the product in effecting transformative change?

- Unlike the after-school program described by Echt & Richman, which operates outside of any institution or denomination, the Havurah High described by Caine & Tamler operates cooperatively with various institutional partners. What are the challenges and strengths of each of these models? Will they tend to serve different constituencies? What strategies are necessary for success with each model?
- All four of these cases push us to think beyond categories and divisions toward integrated visions of Jewish education that forge connections and blur boundaries. In your context, what are the new ways you could be thinking about your institutions, your professionals, and your constituents?