

ethnic participation among most of the groups we studied. Except for "hard-core" Jews, for whom Jewishness is the central theme of their lives, newcomers to a community tend to see synagogue affiliation as low priority. Given the increased prevalence of relocation, efforts to identify and integrate newcomers are to be encouraged.

Fourth, membership dues are a problem. Many of the people interviewed said dues are too high. High membership fees are usually necessitated by building funds and the high cost of maintaining a religious school. High fees discourage younger couples, singles, the divorced and widowed from joining, unless they have children of school age. Many synagogues are encouraging young people and other new members to experience synagogue life before being asked to carry a full financial burden. Some have suggested that young couples only be charged a nominal sum during their first years of membership or until they have children to

enroll in the religious school. The objective of such a policy is to build synagogue commitment of young couples from the beginning of their marriage.

In conclusion, synagogues perform three vital community functions. They act as the *bet hatefillah*, the House of Prayer; the *bet hamidrash*, the House of Study; and the *bet ha kneset*, the House of Assembly. In Los Angeles and throughout the United States, the synagogue is a regular assembly point for thousands of Jews. Week after week substantial numbers of Jews gather there. Without this institution, many would assimilate. Synagogues give meaning to the statement, "I'm Jewish."

A famous rabbinic saying is, "Do not separate yourself from the community." The rabbis were apparently aware that Jewishness is cultivated within organized religious institutions. By promoting synagogue affiliation, the Jewish community is in keeping with this traditional outlook.

Public Education and the Jewish School*

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... the most important challenges facing the Jewish community [re. Jewish education] are creating a sense of urgency about the critical needs of Jewish education; responding quickly and effectively to the critical personnel problems; finding ways to provide greater parental and communal support to Jewish schooling; establishing clear curricular objectives that will yield needed results; providing the time to achieve these purposes; and providing the financial wherewithal to make improvements possible.

IT is here like never before! The great stir about education. As one educator recently noted in a Harvard University symposium, "The rapid fire dissemination of reports has created a sense of urgency within the educational community. There is an eagerness to act . . ."¹ Indeed, by all the accounts, the great stir has had national, statewide and local impact. The States are busily involved in finding the most effective ways to bring about dramatic improvements in education.

From my own experience in New York State, as a member of several of the Education Commissioner's Advisory Councils and the Governor's Committee on Education, I can attest to the eagerness of New York's Board of Regents and legislature to act decisively and quickly. Unquestionably, a strong sense of urgency undergirds the new efforts being launched in the name of educational improvement.

How does all the fuss being made about education during the last two years relate to Jewish education? How can the Jewish community most benefit from the spate of reports and the new

rush of activity for education? What lessons can we learn from the manifold recommendations regarding public education?

At the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York we were interested in obtaining answers to questions like these. Consequently, we thought it would be important to determine the extent to which the various segments of the Jewish educational community felt that the recommendations of the reports and studies being issued were relevant to Jewish schools.

To accomplish this, we developed a 32 item instrument which summarized the key recommendations of five of the major national studies and administered it in Greater New York and nine other communities.² Forty-seven percent of the 1076 respondents to the questionnaire are professional Jewish educators. Fifty-three percent are parents and lay leaders.

Seven of the 32 recommendations were singled out as having utmost relevance to Jewish schooling. I will refer to these in my discussion.

Essentially, there are four imperatives to be adduced regarding Jewish education from the current developments in general education.

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¹ John Barranco, "Accountable After the Politicians Have Moved On . . ." in "Symposium on the Year of the Reports: Responses from the Educational Community," *Harvard Education Review*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (February 1984), p. 6.

² A. I. Schiff and C. Botwinick, "The Relevance of the Recommendations of Major National Studies on Education to Jewish Schooling," *Jewish Education*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (Summer 1984), p. 7.

Imperative One

Despite the fact that historically Jewish learning and Jewish scholarship have played an important role in Jewish life, Jewish education as a communally-supported venture has not been a priority community concern. Jewish schooling has been relegated largely to the domain of the home and the synagogue and left to special interest groups of intensely motivated individuals seeking to promulgate the study of Torah.

As one of the songs of the Broadway show, "Damn Yankees," bellowed out, "Whatever Lola Wants Lola Gets." Indeed, the Jewish community has the kind of Jewish educational enterprise and level of Jewish education that it has sought. There is a variety of examples of intensive quality Jewish education and many models of poor, ineffective Jewish schooling. The American Jewish Committee, via its Jewish Affairs Committee, over the years, has been partner to and sponsor of forums and research relating to the status and needs of Jewish education in America. The picture emerging from these and other studies and considerations of Jewish education is not rosy. The chief reason for this condition is that Jewish education has not been a priority concern of the organized Jewish community.

Over the past decade many Jewish communal leaders, heretofore unconcerned about Jewish schooling, have evinced a greater interest in Jewish education and its role in Jewish life. Their new attitude has been spurred and reinforced by realities of the Jewish community: Jewish apathy, declining level of Jewish affiliation, intermarriage, disinterest of their own children in Jewish life, and the gnawing question, who will follow us in Jewish communal leadership?

We hope that the effect of the current stir in public education will be to

broaden and deepen the sense of urgency within all segments of the American Jewish population, particularly among Jewish communal leaders, about the state of Jewish education and about the need for quality Jewish schooling.

Exploiting the upsurge of interest in public education in order to make Jewish education a priority on the Jewish communal agenda is, then, the first imperative.

Imperative Two

The second imperative has to do with the profession of Jewish education and the relative roles of professionals and parents regarding the Jewish education of children.

In his landmark report, John Goodlad reminds us the "just a few years ago, any serious discussion of how to improve schools . . . was aborted frequently by the explanation that 'everything depends upon the teacher.' The conventional wisdom today in many quarters is that 'everything depends on the principal.'"³ There is, as Goodlad notes, some semblance of truth in each of these pronouncements. But, while teachers can exert great influence on children and on the learning process and principals have the power to influence the school climate and the nature of schooling in their respective buildings, each of these statements is simplistic and misdirected. Nevertheless, without effective teachers and principals we might as well close up our Jewish schools.

It is wrong to paint the picture of Jewish education or Jewish schools with a single brush. There are two major modes of formal Jewish education: the all-day school and the supplementary

³ John Goodlad, *A Place Called School*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984, p. XVI.

school. In the former, children receive their total Jewish and general education. Currently, in the United States about one-third of the Jewish pupil population is enrolled in Jewish all-day schools and yeshivot. The supplementary school is just what its name implies. It supplements for two to six hours per week, usually in a congregational setting, the general education a Jewish child receives. It is well known in Jewish educational circles that day school education is a more effective vehicle for Jewish instruction.

This is due to a variety of reasons: the all-embracing day-long Jewish atmosphere; the amount of time devoted to Jewish studies; the presence of full-time career Jewish studies teachers; and the support of parents for this kind of schooling.

Jewish supplementary education is plagued with serious problems—insufficient involvement and support of lay leaders; apathetic parents who send their kids to the congregational school in order to get Bar or Bat Mitzvahed; the lack of sufficient time for instruction; part-time, inadequately prepared teachers and principals; and the lack of continuity beyond age 13.

In the public education arena, a Rand Corporation Study warns that a general shortage of teachers is imminent.⁴ In Jewish education, the teacher shortage is already here full blast. In fact, the Jewish Affairs Committee has issued recently a background paper on this subject.⁵

Day schools and supplementary schools both suffer from the shortage of qualified personnel. Unless something drastic takes place within the next sev-

⁴ Linda Darling-Hammond, "Beyond the Commission Reports—The Coming Crisis in Teaching," the Rand Corporation, July 1984.

⁵ Saul Wachs, "The Jewish Teacher: Professional Status". New York: American Jewish Committee, 1984.

eral years to change the current personnel trends, we will have no teacher candidates at all, certainly no quality young people who want to become career Jewish educators. Clearly, this points to the need to do those things that will attract talented young persons to teaching: raise salaries, recognize teacher achievement, reward meritorious performance, elevate the social status of Jewish school personnel, and provide full-time employment with opportunities for professional advancement.

Three of the seven recommendations which were singled out to be extremely relevant by respondents in our BJE Study relate to teachers. These are: "Increase significantly the base salary of all *entering* teaching personnel;" "Increase significantly the base salary of all *current* teaching personnel;" and "Devise ways to honor teachers." No commentary is required here.

Simultaneously, with higher status and higher salaries, we should be able to professionalize teaching in Jewish schools along the lines recommended by the Rand Report for the public sector and incorporate in Jewish teaching those features that help most modern professions to ensure and allow competent performance. We could:

1. make entry requirements more rigorous;
2. provide supervised induction of teachers;
3. encourage autonomous performance;
4. develop peer defined standards of practice; and
5. assign greater responsibility to teachers with increased competence.⁶

Unlike public education, Jewish education is voluntary. Essentially, each school is a world unto its own. Jewish

⁶ Linda Darling-Hammond, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

education is not burdened by the kind of bureaucratic structures we find in public education. Yet, we do not use this to advantage.

Moreover, Jewish schools are small by public school standards. But, we don't exploit this condition to personalize and humanize the instructional process. Jewish schools are free to involve parents and community without having to worry about some super structure in their way.

In a recent issue of *Phi Delta Kappan*, Chester Finn makes the strong suggestion, among others, that schools be encouraged to develop responsible, creative school-level autonomy, or what he calls "strategic independence."⁷ In this vein, Goodlad recommends that schools "must become largely self-directing."⁸

Jewish schools are marked by their school level independence. Yet, do they use their autonomy to greatest advantage regarding teachers, for example? With rare exception, there are no unions in Jewish schools. Education leaders could rather easily initiate innovative career ladder programs and institute plans that reward outstanding performance. Yet, these kinds of initiatives have not been forthcoming.

Regarding the role of principal, it is abundantly clear that in small schools (and most Jewish schools are small) the principal plays an exceedingly important role in setting the objectives of the school program and establishing the tone and quality of school life.

Our study conclusively demonstrates that teachers, principals, parents and lay leaders alike feel that "improving academic leadership and supervision" is the single most important school-based

educational challenge the Jewish community currently faces.⁹

Indeed, John Goodlad recommends that "each district superintendent take, as first order of business, responsibility for selecting promising prospective principals and developing in them—and in present principals—the ability to lead and manage."¹⁰ This is so very critical for Jewish schools where creative school leadership is so lacking.¹¹

The role of parents in Jewish education is crucial. Without parental involvement and family support the Jewish school, particularly the supplementary school, cannot hope to be an effective educational instrumentality. Despite the criticism of the research of James Coleman and Christopher Jencks and their colleagues emphasizing the primacy of the home in instruction, their conclusions about the key role of parents and family in influencing the quality and effectiveness of classroom instruction especially pertain to Jewish schools.¹²

By and large, Jewish schools are not at fault for the quality of what takes place within the school walls. General education has its fierce critics and detractors. The truth is that while school support is often verbalized in our society it is not very evident in the statewide and local appropriations made for the schools. Neither do the schools enjoy the support they require from the home. The Coleman and Jencks research findings strike at the heart of this condition.¹³ If

⁹ A. I. Schiff, and C. Botwinick, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹⁰ John Goodlad, *op. cit.*, p. 277.

¹¹ Alvin I. Schiff, "Focus on the Jewish School Principal," *Jewish Education*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (1980), p. 2.

¹² James S. Coleman, *Equality of Educational Opportunity*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966.

Christopher Jencks, *Inequality, A Reassessment of the Effect of Family and Schooling in America*. New York: Basic Books 1972.

¹³ *Ibid.*

there is no will or commitment on the part of the parents, there will be no desire for learning on the part of the students; and what we will have are flat, unexciting, wasted classroom hours—"turn-off" instead of "turn-on."

David Seeley, former President of the New York Public School Association, calls the products teachers try to sell to unwilling pupils from unmotivated homes "undeliverable merchandise."¹⁴ The problem with much of our teaching, he claims, is that teachers teach too hard. Students don't learn hard enough. You can't teach pupils, he concludes, you can only learn 'em'.

Imperative Three

Imperative number three deals with the goals and curricula of Jewish education. Some of the criticism of the reports on public education center on their great emphasis on scholastic achievement to the exclusion of other kinds of learning. It goes without saying that the cognitive domain is a significant concern of Jewish education. Learning for learning's sake occupies an important place in Jewish tradition. But, for our current Jewish education needs, given the composition of our student population (with the exception of children from Orthodox homes) transmitting knowledge per se is not an over-riding goal.

In Jewish schools we are concerned with the Jewish attitudes and behavior of students as with the knowledge they have gained.

David Cohen of Harvard criticizes the goals set forth in the reports for their over-emphasis on solving what he calls the "Toyota problem." The reports underscore the need to improve produc-

tivity and efficiency, yet they give little or no attention to teaching children how and why to participate in the democratic process.¹⁵

Translated into Jewish educational terms, this suggests that Jewish schools should give greater attention to the affective domain—helping children participate in Jewish life by learning *how* to live Jewishly and *why* they should do so.

In the past several years there have been a variety of innovative Jewish curriculum efforts made by various Jewish groups across the country. To date, there is no way of measuring how they are improving Jewish education. What we really need is a greater understanding of what we want to achieve and greater commitment to accomplishing our objectives. This requires commitment and cooperation on the part of lay leaders, principals, rabbis, teachers, parents and pupils.

While they are generally outside the pale of the Jewish community, it is interesting to note that the sectarian ultra-Orthodox and Hasidic groups know exactly what they want to achieve in their schools. Their educational programs are enthusiastically supported by the parents; the professional personnel are singularly committed to the realization of the yeshiva's objectives; and the schools provide ample time to accomplish their aims. Indeed, in their terms, they eminently succeed in realizing their objectives.

Imperative Four

The fourth imperative relates to the support of the education system. Reacting to the recent spate of national reports on public education, Harold Howe II, former U.S. Commissioner of

¹⁴ David Seeley, *Education Through Partnership: Mediating Structures and Education*. Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger Publishing Co., 1981.

¹⁵ David Cohen, "The Condition of Teachers' Work," *Harvard Education Review*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (Feb. 1984), p. 12.

⁷ Chester E. Finn, Jr., "Toward Strategic Independence: Nine Commandments for Enhancing School Effectiveness," *Phi Delta Kappan*, April 1984, p. 518.

⁸ John Goodlad, *op. cit.*, p. 276.

Education, wrote, "Suddenly, corporate barons, presidential candidates, university presidents, governors, and legislative leaders in Congress and in state capitals have mounted a crusade to improve schools . . . Will the governors, the corporate leaders and the others who are now fanning the fires of educational reform be willing to stay with that important task over time?"¹⁶

In response, Howe said, "The kinds of changes now being recommended will not come easily or quickly because they challenge vested interests. It is essential that the interest of groups outside education be sustained and, particularly, that business leadership remain supportive, since one necessity for educational improvement is more tax money to support that improvement."¹⁷

Howe's blunt analysis and recommendation apply with particular force to Jewish education. (Incidentally, the reports offer little advice on how to obtain the huge amounts of money needed to carry out their recommendations.)

Will the Jewish community meet the challenge of more fiscal support?

The BJE Study findings underscore the urgency of the challenge. Every one of the respondents, without exception, views the recommendation to increase communal funding to Jewish schools on both national and local levels to be "absolutely essential."¹⁸

In the context of voluntarism, Jewish schools are, by and large, fiscally dependent upon parents via tuition fees and membership dues, and on the sponsoring groups (the school boards and synagogues), through a variety of fund raising activities.

¹⁶ Harold Howe II, "Education Moves to Center Stage: An Overview of Recent Studies," *Phi Delta Kappan*, November, 1983, p. 167, 169.

¹⁷ Harold Howe, II, "The Unattended Issues of Recent Educational Studies," *The Education Digest*, May 1984, p. 2.

¹⁸ A. I. Schiff, and C. Botwinick, *op. cit.*

The major source of communal support for Jewish education on the local scene is the Federation. Although not quite keeping up with the increases in grants for all other local needs, Federation allocations to Jewish education increased significantly over the past twenty years to its current level of \$45 million. Of this amount, \$13 million is allocated to central agencies and \$32 million is distributed to educational institutions, largely to Jewish day schools.

To place the amount of local communal support in proper perspective we must realize that the \$45 million represents only 7% of the total annual expenditures (\$600,000,000) for Jewish education on this continent. Increasing the level of communal funding for Jewish education will require reprioritization of Federation purposes. This upward change in support, as Howe points out for the public sector, will not come easily or quickly because it challenges vested interests.

The problem in the Jewish community is that the vested interests are good humanitarian causes. Nevertheless, if Jewish education is to make its much needed potential contribution to the continuity and enrichment of Jewish life, changes in Federation funding priorities will have to take place. Support of Jewish education must be viewed as an urgent Jewish communal responsibility since it concerns the very quality and future of Jewish life.

Increased Federation funding will have to be accompanied by increased support from parents (who can afford it) and from synagogues.¹⁹

Parenthetically, the problem of Jewish school finance in Montreal—a bastion of all-day education—has been greatly alleviated by the significant allocation of funds by the Province of Quebec. This

¹⁹ Alvin I. Schiff, "Funding Jewish Education: Whose Responsibility?" *Jewish Education*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (Summer 1973), p. 5.

government posture relates directly to the current debate in the United States over the First Amendment and the conflicting interpretations ascribed to the concept of separation of church and state and the idea of accommodation.

National Jewish support to Jewish education is virtually non-existent. Not only is there no national or continental Jewish instrumentality for subsidizing Jewish educational efforts, but the several national Jewish agencies dealing with formal and informal education are supported by local communal funding.

Providing support for Jewish education via a national or continental instrumentality requires the development of an appropriate funding mechanism not unlike the U.S. federal government Title IV and Chapter II programs, or the large private foundations that support secular, cultural and educational endeavors. The time has come for the organized Jewish community to begin considering ways in which it could provide the necessary national leverage to maximize the effectiveness of Jewish education. This is in addition to the need for increasing substantially local support for Jewish education.

Louis Rubin notes "In the aftermath of the reports, what is abundantly clear is that school improvement must be achieved through local policies."²⁰ This is equally true for Jewish schools. How-

²⁰ Louis Rubin, "Formulation Education Policy in the Aftermath of the Reports," *Educational Leadership*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (October 1984), p. 10.

ever, for Jewish education, national initiatives are also needed. After all, only 340,000 pupils are enrolled in Jewish schools in North America. While spread over the whole continent, the relatively small size of the total Jewish school enterprise lends itself to a concentrated continent-wide stimulus for change and improvement on the local level. Indeed, such an effort is necessary and long overdue.

Essentially, the national initiative should provide matching seed money and guidance to local communities for developing creative responses to their unique educational needs.

In sum, there are many problems that beg to be addressed in Jewish education. Using the current spate of reports and studies in public education as a frame of reference, the most important challenges facing the Jewish community are creating a sense of urgency about the critical needs of Jewish education; responding quickly and effectively to the critical personnel problems; finding ways to provide greater parental and communal support to Jewish schooling; establishing clear curricular objectives that will yield needed results; providing the time to achieve these purposes; and providing the financial wherewithal to make improvements possible. This latter challenge means increasing significantly local support to Jewish schools and creating a national foundation to fund and guide the development of much needed innovative initiatives.