

Resolution Adopted by the Delegates Assembly on Behalf of the United Jewish
Communities
2001 GENERAL ASSEMBLY
WASHINGTON, D.C.
November 11 - 13, 2001

Background:

Jewish education for our children and ourselves is a sacred responsibility and one of the highest domestic priorities of the North American Jewish community. Today there is a significant nationwide shortage of personnel for Jewish day school, supplementary school and pre-school classrooms, family education programs, camps, youth groups, Jewish centers and the like. In our communities, large and small, talented veteran teachers are leaving Jewish education in alarming numbers while only a small number of new teachers are entering the field, as evidenced by low enrollments at teacher training institutions.

Over the years, Jewish educators have made important strides toward excellence and innovation and are held in high esteem for the central role that they play in providing a network of quality formal and informal educational opportunities for our children and ourselves.

At the 26th Conference on Alternatives in Jewish Education held this summer in Ft. Collins Colorado, over 1000 signatures of Jewish educators were collected on a resolution calling for a partnership with Jewish leadership to address the issues of recruitment and retention of personnel. Jewish educators, representing every denomination, expressed their belief that cooperation between the profession, the consumers and advocates of Jewish education had the strongest likelihood of addressing and solving this critical problem.

The personnel crisis facing Jewish education today needs to be addressed by Federations, in conjunction with all Jewish denominational groups, all agencies and organizations involved in the delivery of Jewish educational services and in all Jewish educational settings. This collaboration will focus attention on these important issues and be the impetus for meaningful change.

Action Steps:

The United Jewish Communities recommends that:

1. Community-wide discussions on the current personnel crisis in recruiting Jewish educators be held with all its stakeholders including, parents, teachers, administrators, clergy and community agencies.
2. A supportive climate be created in the community in which the status of the Jewish educator is appreciated and valued.
3. Local Jewish communities must explore venues to attract qualified individuals to careers in service, including providing them with a negotiated contracts, offering competitive salaries and appropriate benefits for both full-time and part-time work.
4. A more steadfast retention program be established to retain talented people in the field. The program should provide these individuals with a work environment that sustains reasonable expectations for time and task, and with sufficient support systems in place.
5. Jewish career options should be brought to the attention of those individuals who are about to choose a profession or considering changing careers. Additionally, a central employment clearinghouse should be created in order to make possible for people wishing to enter the field or wish to change positions to find available jobs. Communities should be encouraged to utilize existing resources such as internet websites, including the Everett JewishJobFinder.com (<http://jewishjobfinder.com/>) and UJC's Career Center (http://www.ujc.org/career_home.html).
6. Veteran educators be encouraged to mentor new personnel entering the field and offer other techniques

proven to aid in retaining, nurturing and treasuring valued personnel.

CAJE Resolution

Whereas, the Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education represents 4500 Jewish educators and is the largest Jewish educational membership organization in North America; and

Whereas, as Jewish educators, we have devoted our lives and our talents to strengthening the Jewish people through learning Torah and building Jewish community in North America; and

Whereas, as Jewish educators, we understand our responsibility to speak out for the welfare of our students and be standard-bearers for the continuity and renaissance of the Jewish people; and

Whereas, we have become aware that there is a significant nationwide shortage of personnel for day schools and supplementary schools, as well as pre-school classrooms, family education programs, camps, youth groups, Jewish centers, and the like; and

Whereas, we are witnessing talented veteran teachers leaving Jewish education in alarming numbers, while at the same time we are concerned about the small numbers of new teachers entering the field, as evidenced by low enrollments at teacher training institutions:

We, the members of the Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education (CAJE), gathered in Ft. Collins, Colorado, call upon the North American Jewish Community and its leadership to partner with us in our efforts to:

1. Create a climate in which the role and status of the Jewish educator is valued.
2. Attract qualified people to careers in service to the Jewish community by providing competitive salaries and appropriate benefits for both full-time and part-time work.
3. Retain talented people in the field by providing a work environment with reasonable expectations for time and task and sufficient support systems in place.
4. Bring Jewish career options to the attention of those who are about to choose a profession or to change professions.
5. Encourage the mentoring of new personnel entering the field by veteran educators and other techniques proven to aid in retaining, nurturing, and treasuring valued personnel.

We believe that the personnel crisis in Jewish education must be addressed by all Jewish denominational groups and in all Jewish educational settings.

We call upon the community as a whole to make this a priority issue – by devoting attention and resources to finding creative solutions and by taking meaningful steps to address this crisis for the sake of the next generation and for the future of the Jewish people.