



A WORD FROM YOUR NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Helena Miller • helena.miller@lbc-cje.ac.uk

Ten years ago, it would have been unthinkable that an organisation in the U.S. would have had as its Newsletter editor someone based in London. The logistics would have been impossible. Then along came the email revolution and suddenly the world has shrunk to the size of a computer screen. Even so, this first Newsletter has provided a steep learning curve for me – I'm far more used to directing and teaching than I am to collating and editing articles. But this has been a great way of being able to be in touch with old and new friends and colleagues, and I have certainly appreciated that. Particular thanks go to Leora and Nicole at JESNA, and to Lisa, our NRJE Chair, for all their support and help with this edition of the Network Newsletter. Finally, the Newsletter is an opportunity for a different kind of writing than the *Journal*. I look forward to receiving news and articles from many of you for our next, Spring 2006 Newsletter.

ARTICLES FOR THE SPRING 2006 NEWSLETTER SHOULD REACH ME BY THE FIRST WEEK OF MARCH 2006.

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ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS

Lisa Grant, *Chair* • lgrant@huc.edu

In 1996, my first year as a doctoral student, my advisor asked me if I had something to submit to the Network for Research in Jewish Education conference that was scheduled to take place in Jerusalem that year. I had just finished a paper for a course that I thought might be appropriate so I sent it off for review. To my surprise, it was accepted and off I went. The paper explored Jack Mezirow's theory of transformative learning, which ultimately became a foundational piece of the theoretical framework for my dissertation and later research on adult Jewish learning. As a newcomer to this world, I was warmly welcomed and fully accepted into this community of colleagues who asked probing questions of each other in a way that demonstrated care and concern not just for the scholarship but for the scholar as well. I knew I had found mentors and conversation partners who would provide intellectual enrichment and support for my continuing growth. *(continues)*

NETWORK OFFICERS

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From that point on, I have been an active member of the Network for Research in Jewish Education, presenting at almost every conference since and serving on the executive committee as a graduate student representative, as a conference chair, a program chair, and now as the overall chair of the Network. Assuming this role is a humbling and awesome task, given the dedication, grace, and accomplishments of those in whose footsteps I follow. The fruits of their labors have created a robust and thriving Network that provides a home for the production and sharing of the most significant research in Jewish education that is taking place today. Our annual conferences keep getting better and better. Our membership ranks keep expanding with graduate students, practitioners, and colleagues from Jewish education and other disciplines who find the Network to be an exciting venue for the presentation of their work. And, our new *Journal of Jewish Education* has already elevated the field in terms of the quality, range, and depth of scholarship.

This year, we are at work on a number of small and large changes that we hope will improve communication and outreach. Thanks to Alex Sinclair, the program chair of our 2006 conference, we now have our own internet domain – www.nrje.org. Likewise, building on the great work of Stuart Charmé, last year's program chair, Alex is working hard on form and substance for the 2006 conference that will take place June 4-6 at Hebrew Union College in New York, including the development of on-line proposal submission and registration processes for the 2006 conference.

Another wonderful enhancement is the creation of the position of NRJE newsletter editor and with this issue we welcome Helena Miller to that post. One further position that I hope to fill this year, is that of a membership outreach coordinator. Anyone interested in taking on this essential role or learning more about it are invited to contact me soon!

During my tenure as chair, I hope that together, we will stand on the shoulders of these accomplishments and continue to grow both in terms of membership and the breadth of our scholarship. At the same time, we will strive to preserve a culture of warmth and welcome, of critical collegialship and collaboration. I invite you all to work in partnership with me to achieve these goals.

NOTES FROM THE 19TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2005

Stuart Charmé, 2005 Program Chair • scharme@camden.rutgers.edu

The 19th Annual Conference of the Network was held at Brandeis University from June 5-7, 2005. The conference set a new record for the number of proposals submitted, presentations on the program, and people attending the conference. This increase was probably the result of both the natural growth of the Network and a new more flexible presentation proposal process. The program included 4 breakfast roundtables, 5 spotlight sessions, 7 consultations, 24 presentations, and 2 plenary sessions.

Post-conference evaluations from participants indicated that the conference was an overall success. There were many rich and stimulating sessions that participants mentioned as highlights of their conference experience. The most frequently mentioned were the Spotlights on Jewish Identity, on Pluralism in Jewish Education, and on teacher development; the plenary on the interface of academic scholarship in Jewish studies and pedagogical issues in Jewish education; and the presentations on Jewish day schools. And many other sessions touching issues such as Jewish education in Mexico, Jewish education for Generation X, congregational issues, and adult Jewish learning were also popular.

Beyond the specific academic content of conference sessions, participants reported the more informal benefits of the Network conference. These included the opportunities for connecting with old colleagues and getting to know new ones, the collegial atmosphere, and the range of new and exciting ideas floating in the air around the conference at meals, at breaks. Of course, the participants also produced a long list of suggestions for improvement of the conference, which has been shared with the Program Chair of the 2006 Network Conference. So we can all be confident that the annual conferences will grow from strength to strength.

INVITATION TO THE 20TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2006

Alex Pomson, *Immediate Past Chair* • apomson@edu.yorku.ca

The NRJE is proud to announce that its 2006 Conference will take place June 4th-6th, at the Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, New York. The Call for Papers for this conference is available online at www.nrje.org, and if you have never submitted a proposal before, we urge you to consider doing so this year.

Because of its location, the conference may end up being one of the largest in our history. We hope that its robust numbers will lead to even more opportunities for dialogue, learning, and networking, without losing that special collegial warmth that so characterizes the NRJE.

The call for papers has one slightly new format this year: the Consultation over Coffee format, which will provide a more informal dialogue and feedback mechanism for projects and ideas that are at the early stages of their research lives.

The Program Chair this year is Dr. Alex Sinclair, of the Jewish Theological Seminary, and the Conference Chair is Dr. Jo Kay, of HUC-JIR. Questions to the former, concerning the call for papers, the proposal submission process, and the program itself, can be emailed to programchair@nrje.org; questions to the latter, concerning logistics, accommodations, food, transportation, or anything relating to the site of the conference, can be emailed to conferencechair@nrje.org.

We look forward to seeing you in New York in June and to a vibrant conference of research, discussion and collaboration.

THE LONGEST RUNNING SOCIAL DRAMA, NOW PLAYING AT A CONGREGATION (OF LEARNERS) NEAR YOU

Isa Aron • aron@usc.edu

This paper describes and analyzes the ways in which the professional and lay leaders of Congregation Beth Am in Los Altos Hills, California, have dealt with a dilemma facing most congregational schools – whether or not to give in to parental pressure to cut the number of days of religious school from three to two (or, in some congregations, from two to one). Following Joseph Reimer, who used the anthropological concept of a “social drama” in his analyses of two similar situations, I treat the case in question as a social drama which has much to teach us – about the ambivalent feelings of “marginally affiliated” congregants, the pressures these congregants put on the synagogue, and the ways a skilled and committed group of lay and professional leaders negotiate the conflict.

The typical “script” of this social drama goes as follows: Parents:

- Our children are terribly stressed out.
- In keeping with Jewish values, the religious school should understand our situation, and cut back on its requirements.
- There are many other parents who share our views.
- Many nearby congregations have already cut back the number of hours; we’d hate to leave this synagogue, but....
- We didn’t attend Hebrew school 3 days a week, and we’re perfectly good Jews (aren’t we?).

Educator and Religious School Committee:

- We are charged by the board to create and maintain standards of excellence in Jewish education; these standards require three days of instruction.
- Look at all the families whose kids went through our program, who were not overly stressed out, and who are deeply grateful for the excellent education they received.

What makes the case of Beth Am particularly interesting and instructive is the congregation’s commitment to sustained reflection and exploration of alternative possibilities. Rather than simply close ranks and invoke “standards of excellence,” as the professional and lay leaders in Reimer’s studies did, the leaders of this congregation saw the unfolding social drama as an opportunity to engage in an extended deliberation on the place of Hebrew in the religious school curriculum. They convened a task force composed of congregants with varying positions on this issue. Over the course of five months, the task force delved into the goals of teaching Hebrew and explored a variety of alternative models and curricular approaches. The paper discusses both the “official” decisions reached at the meetings and the behind-the-scenes undercurrents in the process. In the end, the task force chose to maintain the three day structure, but to consider an alternative model in future years. The current state can best be seen as an “intermission” in a drama that will most likely have many more acts.

JOURNAL OF JEWISH EDUCATION ANNOUNCES A CALL FOR PAPERS

The *Journal of Jewish Education*, the journal of the Network for Research in Jewish Education, accepts submissions throughout the year for publication in future issues. **Only submissions for themed issues are subject to specific deadlines.**

Manuscripts for all issues should be submitted according to the Instructions for Authors available online at the *Journal of Jewish Education* website:
<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/authors/ujjeauth.asp>

Specific questions regarding submissions should be directed to JournalofJEd@aol.com.

UPCOMING THEMED ISSUES

The Preparation of Rabbis for the Modern Rabbinate

Intent to submit requested by January 1, 2006;
Manuscript due by July 1, 2006

The traditional role of the rabbi is that of a teacher. However, the modern rabbinate demands much more, and there has been relatively little research directed toward understanding how rabbis are being prepared for the many roles they are now asked to fill. Among these roles are creators of informal educational experiences, teachers of adults, teachers of youth, supervisors of other professionals, leaders of congregations, spiritual guides, pastoral counselors in the many contexts in which such counseling can take place, teachers of text, raisers of funds, managers of life milestone events, preparers and deliverers of sermons, mediators of congregational conflict, controversy, and change, collaborators with Board members and lay leaders, builders of positive relationships with their communities, and more.

The *Journal* is interested in research that addresses one or more of the above areas. Papers can include descriptive or comparative research about a range of training approaches and recipient characteristics, analysis of preparation experiences from the perspective of rabbis as well as lay leaders and congregants, and other forms of research. International perspectives are welcome. Successful articles will describe the context of their inquiry, detail the research methods used, highlight key findings, and discuss implications not only for the education of rabbis but also linkages to other aspect of Jewish education.

Curriculum Integration Revisited and Researched

Intent to submit requested March 1, 2006;
Manuscript due by January 1, 2007

Writing in *Jewish Education* (the forerunner of this journal) in the winter of 1978, Bennett Solomon analyzed a widespread interest in the correlation or “integration” of general and Jewish studies in Jewish schools. Over the following years, Solomon’s analysis has provided the starting point for vigorous debate around the problems and possibilities for the curriculum integration of Jewish and general studies.

Taylor & Francis, publishers of this journal, are digitizing Solomon’s piece making it available online to subscribers. To mark this occasion, the *Journal* will to revisit some of Solomon’s assumptions and conclusions. The *Journal* invites papers that research the purposes and practices of curriculum integration. Research studies from diverse settings as well as those that employ a wide range of research methodologies and conceptual pieces are welcome. Papers may explore this topic from within a variety of disciplines and intellectual perspectives. The *Journal* also welcomes inquiries into the ramifications of integration, for example in relation to teacher education, school organization, and the assessment of learning. Successful articles will describe the context of their inquiry, detail the research methods used, highlight key findings, and discuss implications for the field of Jewish education and other cognate fields.

Teaching and Teacher Development

Intent to submit requested by January 1, 2007;
Manuscript due by July 1, 2007

For many centuries, studying, teaching and learning have been perceived and cultivated as important values of Jewish life and culture. From the biblical dictum “teach your children diligently” to rabbinic narratives about the nature of the relationship between teacher and student, from the emphasis on *hevruta* learning (a special kind of partner in learning) to ideas about what subjects can appropriately be taught at given ages, Jewish tradition has expressed its interest in a wide array of themes that are connected to teaching and learning. Recent interest in topics related to teaching, learning and learning to teach invite us to attend to these areas in the contexts of Jewish education.

The *Journal* invites articles that explore current issues and challenges in Jewish Education related to teaching, learning and learning to teach, including research about the

preparation and professional development of teachers, their classrooms, their students and the families and communities with whom they work. Research is to be understood broadly and submissions can fall into one of three broad categories: empirical work, including a variety of qualitative and quantitative approaches to research; thick descriptions and analysis of programs and practices; and conceptual analyses, which may include philosophical or historical studies. Successful articles will describe the context of their inquiry, detail the research methods used, highlight key findings, and discuss implications for the field of Jewish education and other cognate fields.

NRJE 2006 YOUNG SCHOLARS' AWARDS

In 1999, the Network for Research in Jewish Education established a Young Scholars Fund designed to assist graduate students through annual grants in support of individual research projects. The purpose of the Young Scholars' Award is to support the work of doctoral candidates who are present or potential members of the Network and who show promise as future contributors to its intellectual vibrancy.

- Grants are awarded yearly to individuals who are members of the Network (student membership fee is \$50).
- Grants will be considered for amounts from \$500-\$2,000
- Grants may be used for expenses such as books and publications, travel, technical and/or clerical support, purchase of equipment and child-care.

To apply for a grant, please send an email with a letter of intent (as an attachment) that describes your research project and the progress you have made to date. A separate attachment should include a brief (2-3 pages) proposal or abstract of work already completed.

The following information must be Included in the letter of intent:

- The name of the program in which you are enrolled
- The name(s) of those guiding your research
- How the funds provided by the Network will be used

In addition, indicate other funding sources (excluding personal and family support) that you have received during your graduate studies.

Projects are evaluated for their quality of exposition; the

potential for the goals of the project to be realized; the engagement of the research with relevant literatures; and especially the envisioned contribution to the scholarship of Jewish education. Award-winning projects are ones that have the potential to present significant advances in knowledge or in methodology to carry the field forward.

Deadline for receipt of letters of intent for grants to be made in the spring of 2006 is March 15, 2006. The grant committee will acknowledge receipt of all Letters of Intent and, if necessary, will request further information.

Please send all application materials via email to Diane Schuster at dt.schuster@verizon.net. In the subject line, indicate "Young Scholars' Awards."

Last year, Beth Cousens, a doctoral candidate at Brandeis and Allen Selis, a doctoral candidate at the University of Maryland shared this award. Read about their research projects below.

ALLEN SELLIS

Take one Jewish Studies educator with training in the black hat Yeshiva world. Add twenty teenage students from Reform, Modern Orthodox and Conservative backgrounds. Place them together in the classroom of a pluralistic community day school, and what do you get?

Here others may find an enigmatic headache, I found a compelling question about how a heterodox group of Jews work to create community. Over the course of the next year, I will spend eight months peering into the life of one such classroom. As an ethnographic field worker, I intend to learn some important lessons about how individuals negotiate the culture of their classrooms, schools and community. Ultimately I hope that these discoveries will strengthen the field of Jewish Day school education by suggesting models of how diverse Jewish learning environments can flourish.

I am honored to be a co-recipient of this year's Young Scholars award. Funds from this award will off set my travel and transcription costs, as well as that most important outlay: child care expenses. Thank you to NRJE for considering the importance of all three costs.

BETH COUSENS

At the time of the Network conference, I had completed half of the field research for my dissertation, "Tradition, Spirit and Texts in the City: Examining the Jewish Growth of Adults in their Twenties and Thirties." I am exploring the Jewish growth of adults in their 20s and 30s, crafting a case study of a synagogue-based project in Boston. After ethnographic observation of Torah study, Friday night synagogue and living room worship, Shabbat dinners and an Israel experience, and after participant and educator interviews, I am identifying patterns of Jewishness and Jewish growth of this population related to the needs of the teachers and learners shared authority in the classroom, constituents simultaneous irreverence and respect for tradition, the import of Jewish community for some members of this population, and the population's personalization of the tradition as they attempt to make it meaningful to them.

This award will help me to travel to other communities to understand other community projects and will allow me to pay the on-going entrance fees for events that I will research and to purchase books and other artifacts.

This award is testament to the Network's growth in this field. I am grateful and will do my best to add as much to this community as it has offered to me.

CONFERENCES OF INTEREST

REFRAMING JEWISH DAY SCHOOL EDUCATION WORLDWIDE: THE SCHOOL IN THE COMMUNITY ~ COMMUNITY IN THE SCHOOL

The Melton Centre for Jewish Education at the Hebrew University, in partnership with the Joint Distribution Committee, the Education Department of the Jewish Agency for Israel, and the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education is pleased to announce an international conference, "Reframing Jewish day school education worldwide: the school in the community ~ community in the school."

DATES: June 27-29, 2006.

LOCATION: The Hebrew University

FOCUS: The conference is intended to provoke new ways of thinking about the social functions of Jewish day schools; externally, in terms of their role within the larger Jewish

community, and internally in the relationships and commitments they cultivate among children, parents and professionals. An important element in the conference will be an attempt to derive insights from a comparison of all-day Jewish schools in Eastern Europe/FSU with those in North America.

The conference will address the following guiding questions:

- What is the relationship between day schools and communities beyond the classroom?
- What educational goals are compatible with the cultivation of community in school?
- How can community be cultivated in schools with diverse populations?
- What comparative contexts can sharpen understanding of community building in Jewish schools?
- How does social and cultural context influence the Jewish school's role in the community?

CALL FOR PAPERS:

If you are interested in presenting a paper, please send a paper abstract by December 1, 2005 to Stephen Markowitz, msmarko@mscc.huji.ac.il or Alex Pomson apomson@mscc.huji.ac.il There will be a "blind review" of all abstracts. Notification of the outcome of the review will be sent out by February 1, 2006.

Send the Abstract of the paper without names stating:

2. Title of Paper

1200 word Abstract of the Paper

Send cover sheet and abstract via email attachments saved as Word documents by December 1, 2005 to msmarko@mscc.huji.ac.il

For information about the conference, please see the conference website at <http://melton.huji.ac.il/schoolandcommunity> or email: msmarko@mscc.huji.ac.il

CONFERENCE CHAIR: Alex Pomson, Melton Centre for Jewish Education, Hebrew University

CONFERENCE COORDINATOR: Stephen Markowitz, Melton Centre for Jewish Education, Hebrew University

PEJE ASSEMBLY FOR JEWISH DAY SCHOOL EDUCATION

DATES: March 19 – 21, 2006

LOCATION: The Sheraton Boston, Boston, MA

The Assembly is geared for day school professional and volunteer leaders as well as community leaders dedicated to Jewish Day school leadership.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: RON HEIFETZ, Professor at Harvard's Kennedy School will speak on ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

CAJE CONFERENCE

DATES: August 6 – 10, 2006

LOCATION: Duke University, Durham, NC

CAJE (The Coalition for the Advancement in Jewish Education) is synonymous with excellence and professional advancement! Its mission is to promote excellence in Jewish education across the spectrum of Jewish life.

Through its research and its conferences, CAJE works to promote excellence in the areas of Judaic content, pedagogic skills, and the culture of education. The current work of the organization includes a focus on Jewish educators working in congregational schools, early childhood settings, and day schools. In addition, CAJE seeks to increase the engagement of those between the ages of 25 – 35 in providing quality Jewish education to knowledge-seekers at all levels and in all settings.

Research relating to recruitment and retention of, as well as salaries and benefits accorded to, Jewish educators; the importance of early childhood Jewish education as a gateway to Jewish life; and the numbers of Jewish educators and students in formal educational settings in North America are among the studies the organization has conducted.

CAJE's conferences offer professional development and Torah Lishma, as well as means of networking with peers informally.

The focus of CAJE 31, August 6-10, 2006, at Duke University in Durham, NC, will be on Jewish literacy. What does a Jew need to know about Judaism? Is there a canon, an agreed-upon core of knowledge and experience? If the goal is the creation of sacred community, what is the relationship between what we teach and how we teach it? These are among the issues that will form the contextual background for the Conference.

Similarly, the Conference for Early Childhood and Day School Educators will continue to concentrate on specific, common, vexing issues faced in the classroom. To be held Sunday, June 25 through Wednesday, June 28 in New York, the 2006 conference will feature in-depth workshop experiences with significant educational thinkers and practitioners.

For information about CAJE, its work, its research, and its conferences, please go to www.caje.org.

CHANGES TO THE MEMBERSHIP CALENDAR

As a result of the Network assuming ownership of the *Journal of Jewish Education*, we have adjusted our membership cycle to correspond to the calendar year. This means that annual membership dues for the 2004/5 year covered an eighteen month period that expires on December 31, 2005. At that time, renewals will be due for the 2006 calendar year. Annual dues are \$50 for students and \$75 for all others. This includes a subscription to the *Journal*. Please go to www.nrje.org and follow the instructions to renew your membership. Checks should be made payable to the Network for Research in Jewish Education and sent to:

c/o JESNA
111 Eighth Avenue, 11th Floor
New York NY 10011

Thank you!

ANNUAL RESEARCH UPDATE

Each year, the *Journal of Jewish Education* makes available to its readers an annotated bibliography of the most current research in Jewish education. Criteria for listing in the annual update include that the research contains data relevant to Jewish education and that a report on the research is available to scholars online or that the author and/or sponsoring agency will provide access to the report. Researchers and institutions wishing to have research reports included in future Research Updates may submit information about how to access the research report to JournalofJEd@aol.com.

NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS

OFRA BACKENROTH has been appointed assistant professor of Jewish Education at Gratz College

SHANI BECHHOFFER has been awarded her doctorate from Northwestern University and been appointed assistant professor at the Azrieli School at Yeshiva University.

CAROL INGALL received a Merit award from JTS to work on an anthology of portraits of women who have made significant contributions to American Jewish Education

BEN JACOBS has been appointed as assistant professor of Social Studies education at the college of education and Human Development, and as a core member of the Centre for Jewish Studies faculty at the University of Minnesota.

ALEX POMSON has recently published *Pomson ADM (2005)* "One classroom at a time? Teacher isolation and community viewed through the prism of the particular," *Teachers College Record*, 104(4): 783-802
Pomson ADM (2005) "Parochial school satisfactions: What research in private Jewish day schools reveals about satisfactions and dissatisfactions in teachers' work," *Educational Research*, 47 (2): 163-174

JENNIFER ROSENBERG has recently become the Director of Research for UJA-Federation of New York

MICHAEL SHIRE has been appointed Acting Principal of the Leo Baeck College – Centre for Jewish Education and will publish Shire M "A Jewish Theology of Childhood" in *Religious Perspectives on Spirituality in Childhood and Adolescence*, S. Sasso et al (eds), New York: Roman and Littlefield (Spring 2006)

**20TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
of the NETWORK FOR RESEARCH IN JEWISH EDUCATION**

SAVE THE DATE

JUNE 4 - 6, 2006

***HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
NEW YORK***