

# CONTACT

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## Jewish Day Schools: New Directions

Essays by Rabbi Joshua Elkin,  
David Steinberg, Caren N. Levine,  
Peter A. Geffen, Naava Frank,  
and Virginia Bayer





**Eli Valley**  
Editor

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## JEWISH LIFE NETWORK

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**Phone:** (212) 279-2288

**Fax:** (212) 279-1155

**Email:** info@jewishlife.org

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Jewish Life Network is dedicated to strengthening and transforming American Jewry to ensure a flourishing, sustainable community in a fully integrated free society. We seek to revitalize Jewish identity through educational, religious and cultural initiatives that are designed to reach out to all Jews, with an emphasis on those who are on the margins of Jewish life.

Photographs in this issue appear courtesy of Art Today, Caren N. Levine, Joe Malcolm, Jerome and Rochelle Kutliroff, and the Solomon Schechter Day School of Albuquerque.

## New Directions in Day School Education

**Y**ears ago, Jewish day schools were generally associated with the most rigorously observant segments of the Jewish community. But things have begun to change. According to a 1999 Avi Chai census of American Jewish day schools, day school enrollment saw a dramatic increase in the 1990s. Among community and non-Orthodox day schools, enrollment rose by nearly 25 percent. Jewish day schools are increasingly viewed as an indispensable tool to solidify Jewish identity and involvement.


Now that Jewish education is attaining long-overdue esteem, the question is no longer whether day schools have a measurable impact on Jewish affiliation, but how can we make them even more effective and widespread in their reach. Many issues remain unresolved. Among future challenges are personnel recruitment and retention; the creation of guidelines for a Jewish curriculum; the integration of technology into the classroom; and a much-needed increase in funding for teacher salaries, day school expansion and tuition reduction.

This issue of Contact is dedicated to exploring the next phase of day school excellence. Contributors examine the future of day schools from diverse perspectives ranging from Rabbi Joshua Elkin's systematic assessment of day school needs to Virginia Bayer's more personal account of helping to build a Jewish high school. Taken together, these articles envision exciting new vistas of day school improvement.

Day schools are one of the most precious resources in the Jewish community. Like no other program, they impart a sustained mixture of Jewish knowledge and experience that often leads to a lifelong commitment to Jewish life. It is time to further enhance the quality of a day school education so that its benefits will resonate throughout the Jewish world.

*Eli Valley*

Eli Valley



# The Burgeoning Day School World: What Lies Ahead?

by RABBI JOSHUA ELKIN

**F**ive years ago, Michael Steinhardt and Yitz Greenberg conceived of a philanthropic partnership to substantially increase access to high quality Jewish day school education in North America. The initial program consisted of challenge grants for new elementary and middle schools. In addition to funding, schools received access to expertise.

Five years later, the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education (PEJE) has brought to fruition much of what was originally envisioned. Approximately \$8 million has been awarded to nearly forty elementary and middle schools, and over \$3 million in expertise has been provided. The matching nature of the grants has stimulated additional philanthropy, and the initial focus on elementary and middle schools has been broadened to include the burgeoning number of Jewish high schools. Two donor assemblies of major day school supporters, a resource development conference, nearly a dozen publications, and an active web site and public relations effort are all testimony to the broadening agenda.

In the context of the serious attention now being paid to day schools, we can step back and reflect on some of the challenges that lie ahead. If day schools are to maximize their potential to help foster a new generation of literate and engaged Jews, what are some of the priorities that must be successfully addressed?

## ***A Change Theory for Day Schools***

Building on the work of the Mandel Foundation, one of PEJE's supporting partners, we have conceptualized a change theory for the Jewish day

school world consisting of four quadrants: models of excellence, expertise, personnel, and advocacy and philanthropic leadership. These four priorities must be addressed simultaneously and vigorously by the Jewish philanthropic community as well as by individual day schools and their umbrella organizations.

## ***Models of Excellence***

PEJE's experience working intensively with over fifty schools has shown that vision/mission, lay leadership and professional leadership form a tripod upon which one builds and sustains an excellent Jewish day school. Weakness in any one area creates instability and limits a school's potential. Furthermore, these three parts of a day school organization must be conversant with each other and fully aligned so that the school has clarity of purpose, with lay and professional leadership capable of transforming vision into reality.

Examples of excellence in specific areas of day school life abound, including: integration of the arts into many aspects of the curriculum; immersion into an intensive Hebraic environment to ensure fluency; travel to Israel as an organic part of a school's program; design and construction of state-of-the-art facilities; and provision of a wide range of extracurricular activities.

In much the same way as business schools use case studies to document successful practices in the profit world, we desperately need case studies to help capture the rich texture of day school success. There is a need to document virtually every aspect of day school functioning. These case studies will be used to train and strengthen lay and professional leadership, to support professional development of teachers and to foster cross-school learning.

## ***Expanding the Availability of Expertise***

The success of PEJE's Madrikh Program, whereby grantee schools are provided a

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*Rabbi Joshua Elkin is Executive Director of the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education.*



general coach for their lay and professional leadership, has demonstrated the need to grow a culture within the day school



world of readily available expertise. No day school should be floundering when addressing a challenge that other schools have faced before. Even schools in very small Jewish communities recognize the importance of expertise, as demonstrated by an overwhelming response to the Charles Schusterman

Small Communities Enhancement Program, PEJE's new effort to make expertise available to schools in small Jewish communities.

A specific area of expertise delivery that PEJE has already begun to tackle is resource development. If day schools are to thrive, they require a stronger financial base to support excellence. PEJE is now embarking on the deployment of financial resource development experts to schools across the country. Using a matching grant program, PEJE is finalizing relationships with fifteen schools to substantially increase their resource development capacity and performance. We anticipate many more grants in the future. In order to make an impact in this area, it will be necessary to invest in the infrastructure of individual schools so that the needed financial resources can be secured. Furthermore, active board involvement and volunteer-professional collaboration are essential to any success.

PEJE is also in the initial stages of testing a more substantial expertise delivery system whereby experts will be made available to all day schools in the areas of general studies, Judaic studies and Jewish life, and organizational development. Over the course of the next year and a half, PEJE will be testing expertise delivery vehicles in the areas of financial management and joint purchasing, lay leadership development and the training of pedagogic coaches, particularly in Judaic studies.

Close collaboration with the existing day school networks and associations must be an essential feature of all expertise delivered. Worthy of particular mention is the outstanding visioning and school-strengthening project, "Jewish Day Schools for the 21st Century," led by Professor Michael Zeldin of the Rhea Hirsch School of Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles. The lay leadership network of the Solomon Schechter

Day School Association is another example of existing expertise that should be built upon. Aspects of the expertise will also be delivered online. A developing partnership between the Jewish Education Service of North America (JESNA) and PEJE will help to ensure comprehensiveness while avoiding duplication.

Another vast source of expertise can be found in independent accreditation of schools. The importance of this process lies in its reflective power. Going through a year-long self-study, followed by an on-site visit and report by a panel of educators, is one of the most powerful tools to help a day school take stock of its performance and needs. Though many day schools have undergone such self-studies and received regional independent school accreditation, there are many more schools that would benefit from this process, which must be repeated every seven to ten years.

### **Personnel**

When one hears the term personnel, administrators and teachers usually come to mind. We begin instead with lay personnel, because they are often overlooked. The need for a substantial increase in experienced volunteer leaders is crucial. The demands on day school boards today are exponentially more complex than they were twenty years ago. Day school leadership recognizes that the Nominating Committee (or Committee on Trustees) is the most influential committee in the organization. That committee is charged with the responsibility of evaluating the current Board and of searching on a year-round basis for additional talented leadership. The importance of lay leader mentorships, as well as lay/professional collaboration, cannot be overestimated.

On the professional side, we need to launch a multi-faceted recruitment and training program to target potential teachers while they are in college. Another source of potential teachers may be found among mid-career parents who have been involved in their children's day schools. Meaningful incentives need to be offered to enable candidates to see teaching in a Jewish day school as a viable career choice. In addition to raising salaries and benefits, we need to grow first-rate training and induction programs at many different sites. Some opportunities already exist;

others are about to be launched. Current programs include the PARDES two year program in Jerusalem, funded by AVI CHAI for high school Judaic teachers; Ha Sha'ar in New York, funded by the Nash Family Foundation; The New Model Partnership in Jewish Teacher Recruitment and Preparation, funded by the Covenant Foundation and cosponsored by the Western Canadian Coalition of Jewish Educators and York University in Toronto; DeLeT, a new national program being launched in cooperation with JESNA and funded by a consortium of donors led by Laura Lauder; and various teacher training options available at the Jewish Theological Seminary, Hebrew Union College, and at other teacher training institutions.

On the administrative side, the needs are profound. We cannot rely solely on the training of new, unproven leaders. We must turn to the pool of talented educators who are Jewish but who have not worked previously in Jewish education. They currently work in independent and public schools. They are mid-career and need to be approached about the possibility of devoting the second half of their careers to Jewish day school education. A number of individuals have already made this switch, with some schools appointing a school rabbi or Judaic studies coordinator to compensate for the Head's weaker Judaic background. We need to provide incentives, mid-career training and Judaic learning to facilitate this transition for others.

### **Advocacy and Philanthropic Leadership**

Though day schools have received considerable attention in the last decade and though many new schools have been established, the fact remains that roughly 80 percent of the non-Orthodox community remains relatively unconnected to Jewish day

school education. The enrollment statistics are even more sobering. A recent AVI CHAI census revealed that approximately 40,000 non-Orthodox children are currently enrolled in day schools. This represents well under ten percent

promotes the value of day school education. AVI CHAI and PEJE have supported public relations and advertising campaigns for day school education at all levels.

Promoting philanthropic leadership and involvement is the other aspect of advocacy. While day schools value every donor, the fact remains that 90 percent of the funds that any day school raises comes from a very small percentage of the population. It is imperative that we increase this donor base substantially. It will be necessary to form a collaboration of day schools, federations and national day school networks to attract the next cadre of philanthropic leadership that will support local day schools. Each day school must increase its fundraising by at least 50 percent over the course of the next five years.

Finally, related to advocacy and philanthropic leadership is the challenge of day school affordability. High-quality day school education is expensive. Many parents cannot shoulder the full cost. Each day school must have available expertise to assist in establishing scholarship endowment funds, a tuition stabilization or reduction program and tax-advantaged charitable remainder trusts, whereby grandparents of recently born or soon-to-be-enrolled grandchildren can arrange to pay part or all of their grandchild's day school tuition. Such vehicles do exist; it is essential to promote their use. AVI CHAI, The Harold Grinspoon Foundation and Samis Foundation have each implemented a focused tuition reduction program, and the UJA-Federation of New York has developed the Grandparent Charitable Remainder Trust vehicle.

As challenging as these needs and priorities are, PEJE is optimistic that collaborative work among day schools, federations, private foundations and day school parents, alumni and supporters will lead to an increasing number of students attending day schools. These students will benefit from a heightened level of Jewish literacy and a commitment to *tikkun olam*. ❁

## **Day School Philanthropy on the Local Level**

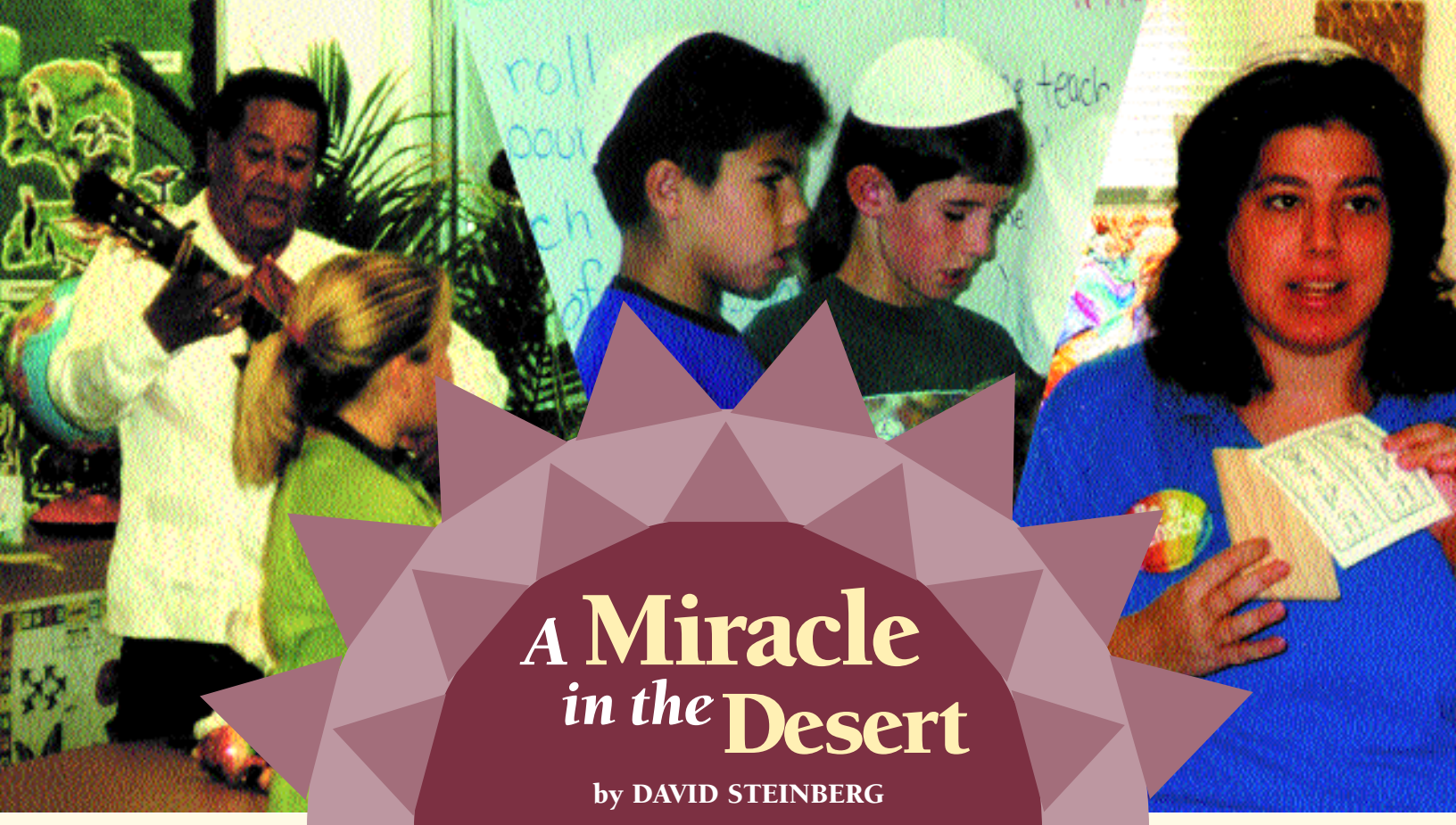
**The Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education is a collaborative of twelve major philanthropic partners to create new day schools and strengthen existing day schools in North America. Recognizing that day school education requires advocacy on the national as well as local levels, PEJE partners are often actively involved in additional programs to assist day schools in their own communities. A prime example is the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, which concentrates on funding Jewish education in Western Massachusetts.**

**Founded in 1993 by Harold Grinspoon, the Foundation funds a variety of day school initiatives ranging from a tuition incentive program to expertise delivery. It provides general operating support and, through a "21st Century Challenge Campaign," is helping to establish endowments at five Jewish day schools serving Western Massachusetts. It also operates the Resource Center for Jewish Education, a professional development headquarters for Jewish educators in the region. In 1995, the Foundation established a program to honor superlative teachers in Western Massachusetts. The success of this program led to a national teacher awards partnership with the Jewish Education Service of North America (JESNA). Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation has recently become a partner in this awards program.**

**Finally, in an effort to strengthen the entire Jewish community infrastructure in Western Massachusetts, the Harold Grinspoon Foundation supports youth and teen initiatives including the Bnai Tzedek Teen Philanthropy Program, college programs and Jewish family education. By enriching many aspects of Jewish life in the region, the Foundation ensures the continued vitality of the day school movement in Western Massachusetts and beyond.**

of the population. If we are to double the enrollment of non-Orthodox students in day schools over the next decade, it will be necessary to launch and sustain a vigorous campaign which





# A Miracle in the Desert

by DAVID STEINBERG

**W**hen Jessica Mazzie was in the first grade at an Albuquerque public elementary school, she made Easter baskets in the classroom.

Jessica's mother, Sara Mazzie, recounts how the class quite literally passed over Passover. "They stressed a Christian holiday," said Mazzie, who teaches math in a local public middle school. "She told me she wished they would do something that she knew about." So for the next four years, Jessica attended the Solomon Schechter Day School of Albuquerque, the only Jewish day school in New Mexico.

"When you think about public school — and I believe in diversity — kids should be exposed to all kinds of children. But the public schools don't expose children to Jewish traditions and culture," Mazzie said. She thinks her views are shared by most Schechter parents.

Solomon Schechter Day School of Albuquerque, now in its sixth year, has 66 students in grades one through a

blended sixth/seventh grade. Several educators have dubbed SSDS "a miracle in the desert." "If one were to extrapolate the size of this school to Los Angeles' Jewish community, the enrollment would multiply to more than 1,000 children," said Susan Nunemaker Braun, president of the school's board of directors and a mother of two SSDS students.

The student body reflects the breadth of the metropolitan area's growing Jewish community, representing families from the Conservative, Reform, Orthodox and Renewal congregations as well as a free-standing Chavura and those who are unaffiliated. The greater Albuquerque metropolitan area is, by some estimates, home to anywhere from 12,000 to 20,000 Jews in a general population of over half a million people.

The existence of the school seems a miracle to some, but to Judy Gardenswartz, the founding president of Albuquerque's SSDS and the person most responsible for making the day school a reality, it is a blessing. "I think we were right to establish a school with a national movement. It gave us credibility in the larger community, whereas all three previous efforts created independent Jewish day schools that had failed," Gardenswartz said. "I think it is working

in part because many young people moving to Albuquerque are coming from urban areas outside of New Mexico and know about Solomon Schechter."

An early root of the school was a preschool established independently by a half dozen parents in 1968. "It limped along for a few years as the Albuquerque Gan," Gardenswartz said. Then the parents wanted to expand the preschool into an elementary school. At the time, there were about a dozen kids in the entire school.

According to Gardenswartz, approximately nine years ago a local resident started a day school that lasted one year, with about 20 children in the first few grades. These same parents reorganized and started yet another day school. It, too, lasted one year.

"At that point I was driven," Gardenswartz said. "I wanted to prove to the naysayers I was arguing with for 30 years that we were now 30 years behind other communities in the United States" in offering Jewish education. "I was up against Jews who didn't want to be perceived as being 'too Jewish' or who feared the school would remind them of a little *cheder* in a big city. They had no concept."

Gardenswartz was convinced that without a revolution in Jewish educa-

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*David Steinberg is an Albuquerque journalist who sits on the Solomon Schechter Day School board. His daughter, Sarah, is a Schechter third-grader and his son, Nate, attended Schechter for four years.*





tion, the future of Judaism – and of Jews – was threatened. “We will just melt into that silent majority out there,” she said. Asked to explain this “revolution,” Gardenswartz said the Jewish education leadership is aware that the kind of Jewish education that has been the norm in the last 100 years has failed dramatically. “So we have to revolutionize the way we transmit Judaism to our children and to our children’s children.”

Gardenswartz disagrees with the longstanding thinking of liberal Jews and Jews in Western and Southern cities that to isolate Jewish children from a more diversified school population is not good for America and not good for Jews. “I feel just the opposite. It’s the best thing for Jews. That way we enrich America. That way we add to the soup. Without the knowledge of our own culture and history we’re just adding water to the soup.”

Schechter finally opened its doors in the education wing of Congregation B’nai Israel, the city’s Conservative synagogue. As Gardenswartz remembered, “We hoped for 10 children that first year and

we had 24 in the first, second and third grades. The second year we had 40.”

After four years at the synagogue, the school moved into spacious quarters on the new campus of the Jewish Community Center of Albuquerque at the start of the 2000-2001 academic year.

*Without the knowledge of our own culture and history we’re just adding water to the soup.*

The SSDS partners with the JCC, which provides, among other amenities, after-school care for Schechter students. Jacob Haner, the JCC athletic director, directs Schechter’s physical education program.

Heading the school is Dr. Kathryn Weil, who recently retired after 25 years

as a teacher, principal and administrator in the city’s public schools and with the New Mexico Department of Education. Dr. Weil has encouraged general studies and Judaic studies teachers to work together to integrate the two programs as much as possible. In addition, the

teachers in both general and Judaic studies attend morning prayers with students “in part to assist in supervising students and in part to learn more about Judaism.” Weil finds this joint attendance an exciting element of the instructional approach.

Rabbi Joe Black of Congregation Albert, the community’s Reform synagogue, noted that the school is a dynamic institution that utilizes all the resources in the community. For example, one day the Orthodox rabbi may come to school to talk to the students about Sukkot, or the Conservative cantor may lead the students in song during prayers, or blow the shofar every school day during the month of Elul. Such synergy and interdenominational cooperation make Solomon Schechter Day School the bedrock of the Albuquerque Jewish community. ❀



# Learning and Teaching in the Digital World

by CAREN N. LEVINE



resources, ideas and professional development that broaden the classroom experience beyond the local school community.

## Technology in the Classroom

Software and the Internet can change and enhance the ways in which students incorporate learning into their lives. Email and the Internet help support rich exchanges among fellow students and foster a sense of *clal yisrael*. Educational Internet twinning projects between Israeli and Diaspora schools, such as those sponsored by Partnership 2000 and the Department

for Jewish Zionist Education Pedagogic Center, help facilitate stronger, more personal links among young Jews the world over. The Internet is used in class trips to Israel and student exchange programs to document student experiences and supplement face-to-face encounters.

Other technology-enhanced curricular initiatives integrate modern tools and capabilities in ways that support and often transform Jewish learning. RabLab, which originated at the Solomon Schechter Day School of Greater Boston, is one such model. The project combines the traditional values of text study and *chevruta* with new resources such as software and the Internet. With support from the Covenant Foundation, the program is being

piloted and adapted in three other Schechter middle schools: Essex and Union, Raritan Valley and Greater Hartford. JSkyway (see below) is creating an online training component for implementing the initiative in schools, and there are plans to pilot the project on the high school level.

Day schools are also exploring the use of laptops to provide seamless access to computers in school, at home and in other learning settings. In addition, distance learning allows schools to expand course offerings to their core populations and accommodate gifted students and students with special needs. The Pardes School in Cleveland, for example, adapted an online Talmud curriculum developed by the Jewish Theological Seminary for its high school students. Another model is the partnership of Cleveland College of Jewish Studies with the Columbus Jewish Day School and Kivunim to provide professional development, curriculum development, and creative school programming opportunities for Jewish day schools. The program will be delivered entirely by synchronous, fully-interactive video-conferencing in which the instructor and students see and hear each other in real time. Four day schools will participate in the program, including Columbus Jewish Day School, Austin Jewish Day School, Abraham Joshua Heschel School (NY) and Jacobson-Sinai Academy in Miami. Students and teachers will work on collaborative projects with participating schools throughout the world. In addition, teachers will participate in professional development offered by the College.

Jewish day schools have always used educational technology to support Jewish learning. However, new developments in computer technologies provide schools with unprecedented abilities to create, access and disseminate resources to enhance their vision. Used appropriately, these new technologies can be an asset to Jewish learning by assisting individual instruction, engaging students in complex projects and by providing access to

*Caren N. Levine is the Associate Vice President of Media and Technology at JESNA, Jewish Education Service of North America. She is also an adjunct instructor at Yeshiva University's Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration. Caren may be reached at [caren@jesna.org](mailto:caren@jesna.org).*

## 21ST CENTURY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In addition to enhancing the day school educational experience, new technologies also provide in-service professional development for teachers. Many Jewish institutions of higher learning in North America and Israel offer interactive, online courses, some leading to Master's degrees and professional development credits. Boston Hebrew College, Cleveland College of Jewish Studies, Gratz College and the Jewish Theological Seminary, among others, offer online courses that emphasize Judaic content and teaching skills. JSkyway is an example of an independent,

asynchronous online professional development program that was developed to improve general and Judaic education. Entering its second pilot year, the web-based initiative offers eight-week courses for middle school teachers in Jewish schools in pedagogy and content. Participating teachers learn from professional teacher educators, share resources and collaborate on projects. Courses include *Skills for Effective Teaching*, *Skills for Teaching Jewish Texts*, *New Technologies for Jewish Education*, and *Meeting Individual Needs*. JSkyway is a partnership of the Nash Family Foundation, Jewish Family & Life! and JESNA.

The Jewish Technology Collaborative is a new fellowship project developed by the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York and the New York Institute of Technology (NYIT), with support from the Covenant Foundation.

The Collaborative is designed to promote the use of technology as a teaching and learning tool for Jewish education and to build a cadre of teacher leaders. It targets in-service educators teaching in formal or informal Jewish educational settings. Fellows enroll in a two-year Master's Degree in Instructional Technology at NYIT that emphasizes the use of educational technology for core Jewish and secular subjects. In addition to regular course work, participants are provided with academic stipends toward their studies, leading-edge technology and access to expert mentors in Jewish educational technology. In return, graduates of the program are expected to further develop the field by serving as mentors to future participants and by assuming leadership roles in their educational communities.

— CAREN N. LEVINE



## Online Resource Centers and Curriculum

Another way in which technology is impacting Jewish studies is through the growing wealth of resources and tools available to teachers and students online. These resources include lesson plans and teacher-made materials for Hebrew and Judaic learning as well as sites that offer online templates to help teachers design technology-enriched learning in the form of projects, worksheets, puzzles and sustained student activities such as WebQuests.

Referenced below are examples of the many websites with resources for day schools:

The Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education website ([www.peje.org](http://www.peje.org)) includes resources and publications for Jewish day schools and information about its grant and expertise delivery programs.

Jewish Education Service of North America's Jewish Educators' Electronic Toolkit ([www.jesna.org](http://www.jesna.org)) brings together on one website a broad range of information, materials and curricular guides to help Jewish educators use media and technology more extensively and effectively in their work. It includes an online database of Judaic software, suggested websites categorized by curricular area, resources for technology planning and links to other educational sites. The forthcoming Sosland Online Jewish Education Resource Centers will provide educational decision-makers with relevant knowledge to guide their planning and program development. JESNA and PEJE are also working together to coordinate resources for Jewish day schools that will be made available online.

The Lookstein Virtual Resource Center for Jewish Education ([www.lookstein.org](http://www.lookstein.org)) provides curricular materials and ideas and facilitates interaction between Jewish educators worldwide. The Center includes a Virtual Resource Library with materials on various curricular areas, an Interactive Educators' Forum and a section on Educational Enrichment/Professional Development. It is a project of The Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein Center for Jewish Education in the Diaspora at Bar Ilan University.

The Pedagogic Center of the Jewish Agency for Israel, Department of Jewish Zionist Education ([www.jajz-ed.org.il/index1.html](http://www.jajz-ed.org.il/index1.html))

includes lesson plans and other curricular materials on Zionism, Israel and Jewish holidays, as well as ongoing educational initiatives such as the Virtual Zionist Congress and Let's Twin. The site also includes links to the DataJEM database of Jewish educational materials and to JUICE, Jewish University in Cyberspace.

The Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education ([www.caje.org](http://www.caje.org)) offers information about its annual conference, articles from Jewish Education News and access to CyberCAJE's curriculum bank for CAJE members, including resources for special needs and early childhood education.

The Jewish Education Center of Cleveland ([www.jecc.org](http://www.jecc.org)) develops original, web-based curricula such as online tutorials, Jewish-based WebQuests and curricula related to current events. JECC also provides links to lesson plans and resources such as "virtual field trips" with Jewish themes.

E-Chinuch.org: Pinchas Hochberger Creative Learning Pavilion ([www.echinuch.org](http://www.echinuch.org)) is an online resource center based on Torah Umesorah's Creative Learning Pavilion. The site houses and collects downloadable materials and curricular resources for Judaic studies teachers and administrators, including early childhood education, special needs, classroom and school management, weekly "parsha pages" and a "Bais Midrash" of resources for Jewish text study. It also includes teaching tips, lesson plans, worksheets, crafts, digital slideshows and multimedia, clip art, program banks, moderated message boards and more.

Websites of the Jewish religious movements and central agencies for Jewish education, as well as curricular sites in Israel that focus on Hebrew-language resources are further sources of important teaching materials and tools.

The digital age has ushered in exciting possibilities to the world of Jewish day school education. New technologies such as Judaic software, video-conferencing and the Internet are creating diverse opportunities for Jewish schools to enhance the work in which they are already engaged. These new resources can also potentially transform the meaning of what it is to learn and teach for Jewish education. ❁

# The Power of Promotion

Avi Chai is a private foundation that promotes commitment to Jewish tradition and understanding among Jews of different religious backgrounds and commitments to observance in North America and Israel. In 1993, after reviewing the results of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey, Avi Chai concluded that at least nine years of Jewish day school education mark the most significant upward jump in Jewish involvement and affiliation as an adult. Avi Chai then began focusing on intense investment in day school education in North America, becoming a leader in enhancing the quality of day school education, expanding the number of students enrolled in day schools, and promoting the value of an intensive Jewish education throughout North America.

Avi Chai is widely known for its provocative advertisements extolling the virtue and necessity of day school education. Avi Chai employs a two-pronged approach to marketing: it creates ad templates that can be customized by specific day schools throughout North America, and it creates more general advertisements to bring the cause of Jewish day schools to the forefront of the community agenda.

In 1999, Avi Chai launched a bold ad campaign on the Op-Ed page of the New York Times. It was considered a major step to advertise not only in Jewish newspapers, but also in the secular media. According to Avi Chai trustee Mem Bernstein, it was a logical step. "The New York Times has the largest Jewish circulation of any publication," she said.

"Advertising there engenders greater credibility for the cause."

To this day, the ads are memorable for their candor and the effect they had in stimulating a growing community interest in Jewish education. Mrs. Bernstein explained that although the ads were slightly flip, "the body of the text speaks directly about what we're interested in: parents' responsibility to educate their children, and Jewish philanthropy's responsibility to provide for the education of the next generation."

**Is the New York Times really the best way for your kids to learn about Israel?**

It's more alarming and critical. As time-critical analysis.

Today, on Israeli Independence Day, how did the celebration your children are celebrating about Israel? Maybe their only source has been a newspaper, TV show or radio program. In America, how do young Jewish people make their educational connection with the Jewish homeland? Where can they learn about its history, politics, culture, customs and traditions? When is Israel prepared to claim to all the world and connected? To Israeli Day Schools.

Across the country, Day Schools are transforming the Jewish future. They are providing critical thinking, identity, spirituality and deep knowledge of the core values of our heritage. As well as an outstanding and rigorous general education that is allowing generations to be equipped to live successfully.

However, only a small percentage of Jewish youth are receiving this education. We need to make Day Schools available to more children. Schools must exist wherever there is a Jewish population. They must be affordable. And they must maintain standards of excellence.

To see the benefits, you will see the first and best illustration of Day Schools closer to you. Bring your children to an Intensive Day School, you can ensure the best of Israel to a whole new generation. Learn how by calling 1-800-343-0989.

AVI CHAI  
THE JEWISH EDUCATION FOUNDATION

**Will future generations see this as more than just a crack-cr?**

The thought of an absent, the children or grandchildren may not know the difference between the nations remain until a single nation.

As meaningful as it is, today's right is not enough to pass down the values of Jewish heritage from generation to generation.

Israeli Day Schools are transforming the Jewish future. They are providing critical thinking, identity, spirituality and deep knowledge of the core values of our heritage. As well as an outstanding and rigorous general education that is allowing generations to be equipped to live successfully.

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AVI CHAI  
THE JEWISH EDUCATION FOUNDATION



# What About Israel?

## The Kivunim Approach to Israel Education for Educators

by PETER A. GEFFEN

**F**ar too many teachers in Jewish Day Schools have a narrow and limited Jewish education themselves. In order for Judaism to come alive in our classrooms, our teachers in Jewish and general studies must not only raise their level of Jewish literacy, but they must also experience Jewish life on the highest and most intellectually challenging plane.

Created in 1999, the Kivunim Summer Institute is an intensive two-week program aimed at dramatically enhancing the intellectual, aesthetic, and creative discourse in Jewish day schools across North America. Kivunim, the Hebrew word for “directions,” contains within it the deeper meaning of *Kavanah*, “intention.” Israel is a laboratory; its scholars, artists and social activists are teachers. Kivunim has brought a new and dynamic level to the professional development of day school faculties. With more than 180 participants from 1999-2001 and 120 expected for 2002, the program has become the largest in-service training program that brings teachers from North America to Israel.

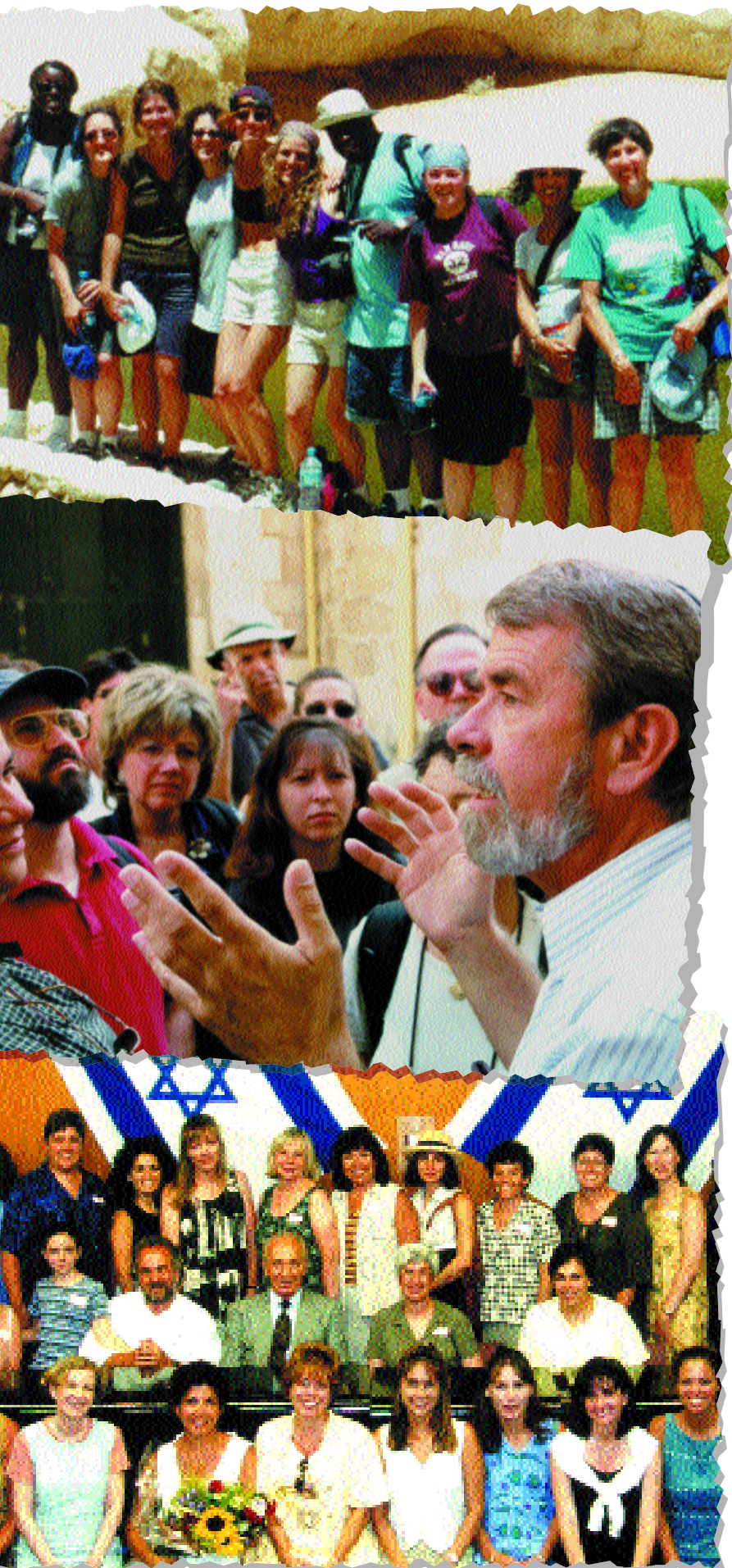
Kivunim is not a guided tour, but an experience in curricular integration, modeling the very approach that it seeks to inculcate in its participants. Every presentation is given by experts in the field. Kivunim moves from the ancient to the modern, from politics to the arts, from controversy to spirituality. Teachers who have been to Israel many times, even Israeli-Americans who visit Israel annually, report having understood Israel in entirely new ways. Kivunim provides a new direction in teacher training for the Jewish day school of the 21st Century. Teachers must be models of inquisitiveness and expansiveness. In order for Jewish education to be truly effective, Jewish schools must become places where the great ideas of Judaism and civilization are explored and debated.

### *Understanding the Need*

Kivunim reveals a troubling underside of Jewish educational staffing. A full 35-40 percent of 1999-2001

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*Peter A. Geffen* is the founder of The Abraham Joshua Heschel School in New York City, a consultant to many schools across the continent, and creator and director of Kivunim. He may be reached at [PG1946@aol.com](mailto:PG1946@aol.com).





***Israel cannot be taught from a distance. Moreover, it is not possible for a Jewish school to teach about Israel if its entire faculty, Jewish and general studies teachers alike, have not walked the streets of Jerusalem...***

participants, both Jews and non-Jews alike — and even one Jewish studies teacher — had never been to Israel before this program. It is hard to believe, but imperative to confront, that individuals who have never been to Israel are teaching our children in Jewish day schools across the United States and Canada. Kivunim schools are either established schools of recognized excellence or Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education (PEJE) Grantees selected for their potential future development. A broader sample would likely reveal more distressing statistics.

In the first two years of Kivunim, both The Columbus Jewish Day School and The Austin Jewish Community Day School set a new standard by committing funds to bring virtually their entire staffs to the Kivunim program. Other participating schools witnessed the power of building personal relationships between teachers. By working with the entire faculty (Jews and non-Jews, general studies and Jewish studies teachers, specialists and classroom teachers), and by encouraging the participation of school administrators, the program has already succeeded in reshaping the culture of the schools with respect to their relationship to Israel.

### ***Why Israel?***

A meaningful and comprehensive Jewish education is not possible without Israel. Both the intellectual and emotional encounter with Jewish history in relationship to Israel, and the literal experience of traveling in Israel must be central to the day school experience. Currently, this is not the case.

For a Jewish child to be moved by the power of Jewish history, he/she must comprehend the enormity of the creation, in our own times, of a Jewish State. I do not refer to an idealized Israel, free of blemishes and imperfections. Quite the contrary, the Israel needed in our classrooms is the real one, filled with challenges and unrealized promises, yet basking in the achievement of a dream fulfilled.

Israel cannot be taught from a distance. Moreover, it is not possible for a

Jewish school to teach about Israel if its entire faculty, Jewish and general studies teachers alike, have not walked the streets of Jerusalem, gazed at Israel's desert vistas, spoken with its opinion-makers, listened to its music, prayed in its synagogues, appreciated its artists and craftsmen.

Hence Kivunim. Kivunim is the experience of Israel for teachers. An intensive two-week excursion into history, culture, sociology, religion, arts and more, Kivunim brings teachers to an Israel of ideas and inspiration. From that experience flows creative and imaginative teaching.

### ***Beyond Israel***

Making Israel a vivid part of the school's culture is about far more than Israel itself. Kivunim awakens teachers and inspires them to reconsider important ideas and concepts. For the Jewish studies teacher, Kivunim's Israel-based experience may offer obvious opportunities. Less obviously, Kivunim provides the general studies teacher with an appreciation and integration of the higher goals of Jewish education. It creates a team. Many teachers report feeling as "outsiders" in schools where they have taught for decades. Kivunim provides a way in.

In addition, teachers need to feel respected, honored and appreciated for their remarkable role in nurturing the next generation. Using Israel as the laboratory, Kivunim provides teachers with two weeks of thinking, of honing their senses, and of expanding their view of what constitutes "Jewish." This is the foundation upon which authentic and serious curricular integration can be built. And Israel, as a multi-cultural, multi-generational and multi-sensory land, forms the core of that foundation.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel captured the profound potential Israel represents: "We were carried away by an awakening of the soul, overwhelmed by a vision of the profound seriousness of Jewish history. Suddenly, we sensed the link between the Jews of this generation and the people of the time of the prophets." (Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Israel, An Echo of Eternity*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1967) ✿

# STARTING EARLY

**I**t is often assumed that a Jewish education begins in kindergarten. Many experts, however, emphasize the importance of providing Jewish educational experiences as early in the lifespan as possible. Unfortunately, the larger Jewish community has generally overlooked the benefits of Jewish education at such an early age.

Recognizing this, the Jewish Early Childhood Education Partnership (JECEP) was recently initiated by six foundations, including Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation, to advocate for Jewish early childhood education. JECEP seeks to ensure that every young Jewish child has an opportunity to participate in quality, innovative and meaningful Jewish educational experiences that will foster permanent connections to Judaism.

One of the main challenges is that there does not currently exist a central database of information on the state of Jewish early childhood education. One of the partnership's first projects is a national survey designed to obtain descriptive data about Jewish early childhood education programs in the United States. The survey was sent to over 300 randomly selected sites that represent the denominations as well as Jewish Community Centers and programs with no affiliation. Its goal is to better understand the background of Jewish preschool personnel, to record typical salaries and benefits, as well as to gain an overview of the types of programs and numbers of students enrolled.

The first five years of life are a time of enormous growth of linguistic, conceptual, spiritual and social competence. Experiences during these early years have been shown to lay the foundation for a committed Jewish life. It is the goal of JECEP to bring such educational experiences to Jewish children throughout North America. For more information on the work of JECEP, go to its website at [www.jecp.org](http://www.jecp.org).



# A Judaic Curriculum for Jewish Day Schools: The Time Is NOW

by NAAVA FRANK

Jewish day schools strive for excellence in the fields of both general studies and Judaic studies. Although they can share excellent curriculum resources in general studies with public and private schools, far less is available in the areas of Hebrew language, Jewish texts, Jewish history and culture, Israel studies and prayer.

The factors that may account for the lack of a Judaic curriculum are varied, including the economic problems of a relatively small market that inhibits investment by professional publishers, and the high expense of testing materials, training to use them, and professional development. There are many experienced and dedicated teachers who have significant knowledge of Judaic curricula. However, they lack systematic support to create and review curricula.

Curriculum is the totality of learning experiences that educators structure and students experience in schools. An ideal curriculum flows from the vision of the school and a portrait of its ideal graduate. It embodies the values and goals of the school, is tailored to meet the diverse learning needs of its student body and is based on the latest in research about how children learn. A successful curriculum development process includes opportunities for teachers to shape the curriculum, as

well as teacher guides and teacher training. Rather than the bits-and-pieces, year-by-year approach that many schools have been forced to use for curricula, Jewish day schools would benefit from a comprehensive, spiraled curriculum across grades that takes into account developmental milestones, the connections between different areas of study, the use of educational technology and teacher input and training. An excellent Judaic curriculum would pay careful attention to helping students make personal meaning of Judaic sources, as opposed to a rote approach to learning. Such a curriculum would succeed in engaging both teachers and students.

As the number of day schools grows and day schools receive increased investment, one hopes that resources will become available for curriculum development. There is a lack of sufficient comprehensive curricula, especially in Hebrew, for teaching Prayer, Israel, Ethics and Laws in non-Orthodox schools. In the Modern Orthodox community, the greatest needs are for curricula that have been designed in-house by teachers, reflecting the principles of Modern Orthodoxy including the perspective of religious Zionism. It is important that newly-designed curricula be sensitive to the social trends of complex Jewish families and to the development of personal Jewish meaning in the context of interaction with the secular world.

Curriculum development should be combined with training in pedagogy.

## **New Developments**

Having pointed to the obstacles and deficiencies in Judaic curricular development, there are a number of positive developments worth noting.

At this point, the largest and most well-developed independent Judaic curriculum development program comes from Montreal and receives Canadian government support. Tal Sela is an integrated program and has been on the market for a number of years. Tal Am, the newly revised and highly successful integrated program, is now available for grades 1-2. It is being used in schools across the denominational spectrum throughout North America. Because of its magnitude and scope, this program is hard to change and adapt.

The Association of Modern Orthodox Schools and Yeshiva High Schools (affiliated with Yeshiva University) has recently embarked upon a number of new curriculum development projects based on individual schools' mission statements as reflected in their portrait of an ideal graduate. The projects utilize the model of empowering teachers to develop curricula tailored for the school. Six elementary schools are developing their own in-house Tanach curricula for grades K-8, which will be available for distribution and adaptation in the future. In

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*Naava Frank is Senior Project Director at the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education (PEJE).*



***It is important that newly-designed curricula be sensitive to the social trends of complex Jewish families and to the development of personal Jewish meaning in the context of interaction with the secular world.***

In addition, the Association is developing a curriculum for the Study of Israel. The Association has contracted with the Lookstein Center for Jewish Education in the Diaspora at Bar-Ilan University to provide education support for this project.

Torah Umesorah supports teacher development of Judaic curricula with its Creative Learning Pavilion, which contains over 10,000 catalogued and digitized teacher-prepared Judaic materials available on CD-Rom or at [e-chinuch.org](http://e-chinuch.org).

An example of a centralized curriculum development project, with a well-developed approach to teacher training, is the MaTok Bible curriculum developed by the Solomon Schechter Day School movement with a grant from the Jim Joseph Foundation. The movement has developed a plan to deploy trainers across the United States to keep up with the turnover of Judaica teachers. They are writing both Hebrew and English teacher guides for Israeli-born and North American-born teachers.

A Hebrew language curriculum development project, sponsored by Union of American Hebrew Congregations and funded by the Jim Joseph Foundation, incorporates a significant advocacy component that aims to raise the bar for Hebrew language study throughout Reform movement day schools. It includes opportunities to bring heads of schools, lay leaders and Judaica

coordinators together to examine the goals for Hebrew language acquisition in all aspects of school life. The curriculum emphasizes active language production and its connection to children's own worlds. It is content-rich, emphasizes Jewish values and is intended to compliment, not replace, a Judaic curriculum.

Project 2001: Flexible Scheduling and Staff Development - Models for Jewish Day Schools, funded by the Jim Joseph Foundation, supports eight Jewish day schools (and more in the future) in designing schedules with longer blocks of instructional time to allow for the incorporation of powerful instructional strategies based on the latest research from cognitive science.

Another promising development in recent years is the use of Israeli resources, such as selections from attractive Israeli children's literature. The difficulty with Israeli material is the need to adjust the Hebrew vocabulary for non-native speakers. However, organizations such as MATACH (the Center for Educational Technology) are producing materials for new immigrants to Israel, some of which are immediately adaptable for use in North America. Other Israeli agencies, such as the Jewish Agency and the Melton Center for Jewish Education in the Diaspora of Hebrew University, produce Judaic curriculum for supplementary schools and have a growing interest in day school material. A

new Hebrew language program for high schools, funded by Avi Chai, is currently under development at Hebrew University. It is an example of a productive Israel-North American partnership.

Judaic curriculum development in North America could move forward with a number of targeted initiatives. Schools should cultivate lay interest and support so that they can allocate appropriate resources to curriculum development. The rich resources of Jewish day school teachers' knowledge should be mined to produce curricula. Collaboration between schools should be encouraged. Israeli resources should be systematically reviewed and partnerships developed to produce new materials. Since much curricular work has been starved for vision, an increased dialogue should raise the discourse about "who is an educated Jew?" and identify a "vision of the ideal graduate" so that it can inform the overall structure of new curricula. Individual schools should take on systematic curriculum review and development.

Schools with the ability to fund teachers to develop curricula have been very well rewarded by their efforts. It is essential to the future of North American Jewry that our day schools develop the ongoing capacity to offer students a high quality Judaic curriculum that is rigorous, engaging, compelling and personally meaningful. ❀

In September 2002, the Abraham Joshua Heschel School (AJHS) will celebrate the beginning of its twentieth year with the opening of a high school program. This accomplishment is the culmination of years of rewarding educational experiences and the readiness to embark on a new challenge for our community.

AJHS is a community day school on the Upper West Side of Manhattan with 492 students from nursery through eighth grade. The education we provide is progressive and enables students to learn in a variety of modalities in Jewish and general curricula. Whether it's lessons on animal anatomy and the laws of kashrut, or an eighth grade Israel trip that synthesizes geography and literature, our students learn the art and analysis of interdisciplinary learning.

Our growth pattern has been dramatic. Starting with only a few young grades, we added one grade per year until we reached the eighth grade. As of 1996, the entire school had two classes per grade and a second building to house our Middle School.

At that point the school was stable in terms of its finances, facilities, enrollment and staff. This allowed the Board to consider an idea that had, for so many

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*Virginia Bayer is a former president of the Heschel School and continues to serve on the Board and Executive Committee.*

# Reflections on Building a Jewish High School

by VIRGINIA BAYER

years, seemed unreachable — extending the school throughout the high school years. Not everyone on the Board agreed. Some felt we should expand solely as an N-8 school, whose graduates would choose from the wide variety of options in New York for public, private and Jewish high schools. Others felt that a high school was the natural outgrowth of the demand for this type of education. In the words of our Director, Roanna Shorofsky, “The teenage years provide opportunities for more in-depth exploration of the big ideas that are already a part of the Heschel mission.”

The Board decided to invest a great deal of time and thought to better understand how to articulate the essence of the current school within a high school framework. At the same time we surveyed our school population and studied the demographics of the broader community. The results of both were promising. We created strategic planning committees to lay out the curricular and philosophical agendas, and an Educational Advisory Committee of professionals from our parent body and the broader community to

give advice on areas such as science, history and Talmud. The committees produced documents outlining fresh approaches to both the traditional and innovative areas of study. The articulation of the vision allowed for discussion, but perhaps more importantly, it gave shape and form to what had previously been only an idea.

We spent close to a year looking at potential sites until we found one that met our needs. We had spoken to potential donors

throughout this process, but no one was willing to make a financial commitment until there was a concrete site. When we found a site with two buildings, a great location near Lincoln Center and a full block front, the necessary enthusiasm and support followed, which enabled us to make the purchase. We continue to raise additional funds to create a state-of-the-art facility. Our overall campaign goal is \$55 million, of which \$44.5 million has been raised as of October 2001.

We formed additional committees, one of which was responsible for communication with our families and the broader community. We created a newsletter, *The Blueprint*, and included updates in our weekly *Heschel News*. With the help of an outside search firm, a search committee was created to outline the position of Head of the High School and to find a person who was eminently qualified in both Judaic and secular studies. We were very fortunate to have hired Ahuva Halberstam, who has expertise not only in both areas but also in teaching and administration. She also brings experience in building a new Jewish high school from her last position as a principal on the West Coast. Ahuva assumed her position in August 2001, which gave her a year to supervise the necessary planning, recruitment and hiring before we open in 2002.

Various staff and parents put together materials for prospective students detailing the philosophy and goals of the high school program. The materials are an expansion of core Heschel School educational principles. To quote from the statement on educational philosophy:

*“The Heschel High School is grounded in a strong curriculum which requires each student to seek personal meaning in that curriculum.”*

*“By stressing integrity as well as academic achievement, the school will encourage academic resourcefulness, intellectual rigor and social responsibility.”*

*“Rather than expecting our students to seek one right answer we will teach them to ask questions and become learners together*



Heschel School



*with their classmates and teachers. We will encourage students to have a voice both in the classroom and outside it.”*

*“General and Judaic knowledge and culture will be integrated throughout the day, and Jewish life will inform and enrich every aspect of the school.”*

The statement on student life has yet to be prepared because we believe that students should have a voice in such areas as clubs, teams, co-curricular activities, student government and an honor code. Leadership opportunities abound while a new culture is developed and nurtured in conjunction with a highly-trained and caring faculty.

The lay and professional leaders of the Heschel School would not

***We are a school that is devoted to Jewish learning and experience, respectful of the diversity that exists within the Jewish community and aware of the social realities and challenges our students face.***

have undertaken this enormous task if we did not feel a responsibility to our community and to the Jewish people. We are a school that is devoted to Jewish learning and experience, respectful of the diversity that exists within the Jewish community and aware of the social realities and challenges our students face. We are a school that teaches the skills of inquiry and expression, critical thinking and respect for multiple perspectives.

Dr. Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote: “Each human being has something to say, to think, or to do which is unprecedented. ... A person has the capacity to create events.” The Heschel School, founded as an elementary school, is now expanding to prepare and inspire high school students to create communities of shared humanity and mutual respect, to repair and fashion a better world. 🌸





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*n the context of the serious attention now  
being paid to day schools, we can step  
back and reflect on some of the challenges  
that lie ahead. If day schools are to  
maximize their potential to help foster a  
new generation of literate and engaged  
Jews, what are some of the priorities that  
must be successfully addressed?*

—RABBI JOSHUA ELKIN