JEWISH EDUCATION IN PHILADELPHIA

Historic Precedents and New Observations

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Philadelphia's Jewish community reflects the history of Jewish life in America. With the second oldest Jewish congregation in the United States and the country's oldest Askenazic congregation, both founded in the eighteenth century, Philadelphia has witnessed the unprecedented opportunities and the challenges of acceptance that America has embodied for Jews and other minorities who seek to preserve their heritage and transmit it to each new generation.

This article examines some key elements of Philadelphia's role in American Jewish education. It begins with an historical survey of Jewish education in Philadelphia, followed by a statistical picture of the student population in Jewish schools. New data are then presented regarding the backgrounds of supplementary and day school teachers. Analysis of the data, suggestions for action, and proposals for further research conclude the article.

JEWISH EDUCATION IN PHILADELPHIA IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

With a Jewish population estimated at 210,000 and its influential history as one of America's most innovative Jewish communities, Philadelphia represents a vital source for long-range studies of Jewish communal life. In the specific area of Jewish education, Philadelphia has set a series of precedents that have national significance. Challenges, solved or ongoing; trends in day or supplementary school education; the role of higher Jewish education at the undergraduate and graduate levels; successes in transmitting Jewish knowledge and commitment or failures to do so—all represent a useful model for further study.

Philadelphia's import in Jewish education is clearly linked to its long history. It is the only American city where two Jewish congregations were founded in the eighteenth century. Philadelphia's senior Jewish congregation, Mikveh Israel, is America's second oldest synagogue. Spanish-Portuguese since its inception, it traces its founding to the establishment of a communal cemetery in 1740, but it really blossomed in the 1770s (Marcus, 1989; Morais, 1893). In 1782, the congregation elected to build both a synagogue and a schoolhouse (King, 1983). While this acknowledgment of the need for Jewish education indicates an early sensitivity to an ongoing challenge, it did not lead to a successful solution. The chazan of Mikveh Israel was paid directly by parents to provide Jewish learning, a system that invariably left success in instilling both commitment and knowledge dependent on the pedagogic qualities of the individual occupying that role. No systematic curriculum, pedagogic infrastructure, or oversight existed. This lack resulted in a haphazard delivery of critical religious information and skills to early American Jews.

In 1838, the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society addressed this challenge by establishing the Hebrew Sunday School Society of Philadelphia. With the support of Isaac Lesser (1806–1868), the chazan of Mikveh Israel and one of the most influential Jewish leaders of nineteenth-century Jewry, Re-

becca Gratz (1781–1869) played a leading role in establishing the new school. Gratz, the scion of one of Philadelphia's founding Jewish families and an intellectual and cultural leader, was deeply involved in the social issues of her time, and thus the Hebrew Sunday School differed from the congregational school that Mikveh Israel had established in the late eighteenth century. The latter was dedicated exclusively to educating the children of members of the congregation; the Hebrew Sunday School was open to all. Yet, while biblical history and religion were important parts of its curriculum, Hebrew was rarely taught.

The challenge of providing Jewish learning also affected the Ashkenazic immigrants who arrived in large numbers from central Europe (mostly Germany) between 1840 and 1880. By 1860, many German-Jewish families had hired tutors to instruct their children in Hebrew. The families were largely members of Rodeph Shalom. In 1795, Rodeph Shalom was formed as the first Ashkenazic congregation in the Western Hemisphere and the second Jewish congregation established in Philadelphia. As the German Jews prospered, they utilized the Hebrew Sunday School Society of Philadelphia or private tutors.

With the East European immigration that began in 1881, the heder emerged. A well-known system of Jewish education immortalized in Henry Roth's 1935 novel, *Call It Sleep,* the heder provided classes for boys several times a week with a rabbi or *melamed* who focused on teaching rote reading of Hebrew and a limited introduction to the Pentateuch with Rashi's commentary.

The pivotal figure in many early innovations in Jewish education was Isaac Leeser (Sussman, 1995), a traditionalist but an innovator who wrote schoolbooks for children, prayer books for his congregation, and a loose translation of the Bible, all of which represented an important step forward at a time when Jewish education in America was limited (Sussman, 1995). Leeser was an early proponent of Jewish day schools (King, 1983). He used the pages of his Jewish intellectual periodical, *The Occident,* to emphasize the need for such intensive education. Under his encouragement, the Hebrew Education Society was founded in 1848 and chartered in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 1849 to teach "the elementary branches of education, together with the sciences, modern and ancient languages, always in combination with instruction in Hebrew language, literature and religion" (*Fifty Years Work,* 1899).

The Society's first purpose was to establish an elementary day school, which provided the full range of secular education as well as intensive Jewish learning. With communal support and a $20,000 gift from Judah Touro, the leading American Jewish philanthropist of the day, the school opened in 1851. At its height, it attracted as many as 170 students, but while its secular studies were strong enough to be accredited, enabling its students to gain admission to public high schools, its Jewish studies were weaker. By the 1870s the school, like other such early efforts at day schools in the United States, had closed (King, 1983).

In 1854, the Hebrew Sunday School Society of Philadelphia that Rebecca Gratz and the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society had founded was moved to the lower floor of the Hebrew Education Society (King, 1983). While the more intensive day school wobbled and eventually fallen, the Hebrew Sunday School Society prospered. Indeed, nationally, Jewish Sunday schools in the nineteenth century remained successful, despite or perhaps because of the extremely limited level of their curricula.

In contrast to the limited level of elementary Jewish education that typified most American communities, Philadelphia early established institutions of Jewish higher education. That enterprise first reached fruition briefly with the founding of Maimonides College in 1868. At the urging of Leeser, Moses Dropsie, and others, Maimonides College was founded to combine study of the classical languages, German and French,

belle lettres, homiletics, and comparative theology with Jewish studies. In the latter, students immersed themselves in Hebrew and Aramaic, Bible, Mishnah, and Gemara as well as Jewish history, literature, and philosophy. The faculty included Leeser, who died three months after Maimonides' opening in 1868, Marcus Jastrow, Rabbi Albert (Aaron) Siegfried Bettelheim, and Moses A. Dropsie as President. For all their efforts, the commitment of time that students had to make and the challenges of a linguistically intense curriculum led Maimonides to close in 1873.

Nonetheless, the ideal of Jewish higher education in Philadelphia continued. Well before Leeser's passing, Hyman Gratz, one of his most eminent congregants at Mikveh Israel, had laid the foundation. In 1856, Gratz established a deed of trust that stipulated his three heirs who were to receive funds from the estate. A month later, he died, and by 1893 his three heirs had all died without issue. According to the terms of the trust, in that case Mikveh Israel was to use the remaining funds to establish "a college for the education of Jews residing in city and county of Philadelphia" (King, 1983; Kutnick, 1998). Limited funds led Mikveh Israel to establish Gratz College for a more specific mission: to educate Jewish teachers. Gratz's establishment in 1895 made it the oldest non-denominational college of Jewish learning in the Western Hemisphere. In 1928, the boards of Gratz and the Hebrew Education Society united both institutions.

In the postwar era, Gratz came to grant formal, fully accredited degrees at both the undergraduate and graduate level and currently offers a wide variety of programs in Jewish studies, education, music, and communal service. Today, most students pursue graduate degrees with Gratz's respected faculty and utilize the vast resources of its Tuttleman Library. They originate from communities throughout the United States, as well as from Israel, Europe, and even a few from the Pacific Rim. Increasingly, Gratz offers courses online, through video conferences, and through intensive immersion courses offered on its campus during the summer or at other American venues as needed. (For a full description of Gratz's offerings, see http://www.gratzcollege.edu.) While many Gratz graduates choose to remain in Philadelphia, they can be found in roles of educational and communal leadership throughout the Jewish world. Thus, Gratz's purpose remains as the Trustees of Mikveh Israel intended, primarily to train Jewish teachers and other communal leaders rather than traditional academicians.

The latter responsibility was taken up by Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning, named for Moses Aaron Dropsie and founded two years after his death in 1907. By the time it became the Annenberg Research Institute in 1986, Dropsie College had awarded more than 200 Ph.D. degrees and had become a primary educator for the country's Judaic scholars. As Judaic studies became part of the curriculum of mainstream American academic institutions in the 1960s and thereafter, Dropsie's raison d'être was absorbed by other institutions with greater resources.

Hebrew was first taught at the University of Pennsylvania in approximately 1780, at a time when the institution had only seven full-time members of the faculty. However, this early commitment to teaching Hebrew addressed the interests of Christian rather than Jewish students. A century later, increasing interest in the ancient Near East led Penn to establish a comprehensive program in Judaic and ancient Near Eastern studies in conjunction with the founding of the University Museum and the Department of Semitic Languages, now the Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies. The University Museum houses one of the largest collection of objects from ancient Israel outside of Israel itself. Jewish Studies formally became a program at Penn in 1982, which some ten professors in five different departments now coordinate. Undergraduate and graduate degrees in various areas of Judaic Studies include an undergraduate minor in Jewish

education. Like other major academic communities, Philadelphia's college and universities offer many courses in general Jewish studies.

Nevertheless, Dropsie's legacy continues today as the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Judaic Studies, an internationally renowned post-doctoral fellowship program that attracts preeminent scholars from around the world to shape a new scholarly discourse on a wide range of themes critical to the study of Jewish culture. Unique in North America, the Center's research effort is a supported by a vast library that houses over 150,000 titles on Judaica, and a collection of manuscripts, rare early prints, and Genizah fragments. A sophisticated computer system offers instant access to the latest scholarly tools of contemporary Judaic research.

Philadelphia's role in higher Jewish education extended to the movement-oriented institutions for training rabbis. In 1887, Sabato Morais, the chazan of Mikveh Israel, was the prime mover in the establishment of the Jewish Theological Seminary. He saw the seminary as a response to the Reform movement's 1885 adoption of the Pittsburgh Platform. Until that time, Morais had first thought it possible to support Hebrew Union College, which Isaac Mayer Wise had founded in 1875 as a seminary for training all of America's rabbis. With the Pittsburgh Platform's emphasis on radical Reform, Morais felt that such cooperation was no longer possible and espoused the need for a seminary that would train traditional rabbis and teachers. Though opened in New York, the Jewish Theological Seminary received its initial impetus from Philadelphia (Wertheimer, 1997), but it would not be the last such institution to do so.

Eight decades later, the nascent Reconstructionist movement consciously chose to avoid New York as it established its own seminary. It embraced Philadelphia, but not before its leaders also considered Boston as its new center. Those leaders decided that their rabbis needed advanced credentials in both Judaism and the general study of religion. In 1968, with that goal in mind, the founders of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC) announced the alliance between their new institution and Temple University's distinguished Department of Religion. Through this partnership, all RRC-trained rabbis would receive not only rabbinical training but also a Ph.D. in religion. Though the latter requirement was later dropped, the Reconstructionist movement's commitment to Philadelphia only grew in later years. In addition to the seminary, the congregational and rabbinic arms of Reconstructionism also reside in Philadelphia. In the case of the former, the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation, the movement actually transferred its home from New York to Philadelphia in 1987 (Hirsh, 2002).

Philadelphia's role in higher Jewish education has thus set precedents that have been followed in other North American communities. However, in terms of primary and secondary Jewish education, Philadelphia has faced the same challenges as other major American Jewish communities.

In 1892, the first Talmud Torah in Philadelphia was organized. Between the end of the nineteenth century and the 1940s, a series of such schools emerged in Philadelphia, generally independent of synagogues. Different from the traditional rabbi-led heder or the Sunday schools, the Talmud Torah included classrooms and graded classes. In 1919, the Talmud Torahs were united, and Philadelphia's Jewish federation recognized the Associated Talmud Torahs as a constituent agency. By the 1930s, ten schools—eight elementary and two secondary institutions—were a part of Philadelphia's Associated Talmud Torahs.

The false starts that characterized late nineteenth-century efforts to establish Jewish day schools did not ultimately doom the effort. By 1943, the Orthodox community of East European origin had established two yeshivot, Ohel Moshe and Mishkan Israel, in Philadelphia, each using an associated elementary Talmud Torah as a preparatory feeder.

Ideological movements also sponsored Jewish education in Philadelphia. Founded in 1900 to provide mutual aid for its members and to promote labor and socialist movements in an atmosphere of Yiddish culture, by 1916 the Workman's Circle had also embraced the furtherance of Jewish identity and participation in Jewish life. Schools sponsored by the Workman's Circle emphasized Yiddish language and literature and Jewish history as well as the movement's social ideology, but avoided religious education. By the 1940s, the Workman's Circle sponsored 12 schools in Philadelphia with almost 400 students, one of which was a high school. A similarly ideological school system emerged in Philadelphia in the 1940s. The Folkshulen, motivated by labor ideology and Zionism, had some 240 students in that period and offered classes on such topics as Jewish history, Hebrew, Yiddish, Zionism, and Bible in Hebrew (Drachler, 1996; King, 1983).

Between 1946 and 1980, at least seven day schools opened in Philadelphia. Although most were movement oriented, one established a national standard for transdenominational Jewish education. In 1946, 20 boys and girls, a principal, and five teachers assembled in a room at the YMHA at Broad and Pine Streets, and thus began Akiba Hebrew Academy. Within two years, the space and equipment had become inadequate, and the school moved to larger quarters at B'nai Jeshurun Synagogue in Strawberry Mansion. By the time the first class of 13 students was graduated from Akiba in 1951, the student body had grown to 100. In 1954, when still larger facilities were needed, a third home was found for the school at Har Zion Temple in Wynnefield, in northwestern Philadelphia. In 1956, Akiba moved to its present site in Merion Station on the Main Line in Philadelphia's western suburbs. Like Gratz College, Akiba's transdenominational approach has attracted students from all movements. Its academic program encompasses both middle and high schools, and its graduates play major roles on the Jewish and general scene, both in Philadelphia and nationally.

During the postwar period, movement-oriented day schools emerged as well. In addition to the two yeshivot established in the early 1940s, five Orthodox day schools were founded in this period (Beth Jacob, 1946; the Talmudical Academy, 1952; Torah Academy, 1964; Abrams Hebrew Academy, 1981[1]; Politz Academy, 1982). With one exception, these schools continue their growth. The Talmudical Academy has gained national renown as a center for advanced rabbinic studies.

Nevertheless, Philadelphia was rare if not unique among major American Jewish communities in the willingness of significant numbers of Orthodox parents to send their children to other communities, particularly Baltimore, Northern New Jersey, and New York, for intensive Jewish secondary learning. This trend can be explained in part by the relatively small percentage of Orthodox Jews in the Greater Philadelphia community and the small number of yeshivot and day schools compared to cities like Cleveland and Baltimore. A significant response to this tendency emerged in 2000 with the establishment of the Stern Hebrew High School, a Centrist Orthodox institution that grew from 15 in that initial year to 37 in 2001. Projections for its third year, beginning in the fall of 2002, suggest a student body of 65 or more.

Conservative day schools also took hold in Philadelphia. The movement's Solomon Schechter school first emerged in Philadelphia in 1956. With strong rabbinic and lay leadership from Har Zion Temple on Philadelphia's Main Line, the Solomon Schechter School grew and prospered. Because Philadelphia's Jewish community resides in disparate neighborhoods separated by significant distances, the need for additional

[1]Founded in a Trenton synagogue in 1903, the Abrams Hebrew Academy moved to Yardley, PA, a Philadelphia suburb in Bucks County north of the city, in 1981. See http://www.abramsonline.org/about/history/history.html.

Schechter schools arose. In the northern suburb of Elkins Park, under the impetus of Beth Sholom Congregation, the Forman Hebrew Day School was established in 1973. It merged with the Northeast branch of the Solomon Schechter School in 1985. These schools received dramatic advancement in the 1990s through the vision of philanthropists devoted to Jewish education. Major charitable initiatives led to the Raymond and Ruth Perelman Jewish Day School, the renamed Solomon Schechter-affiliated day school in Greater Philadelphia. By 2002, the Perelman Jewish Day School comprised four branches—three elementary (on the Main Line, Melrose Park, and Bucks County) and a new middle branch that opened in a wing of Gratz College in 2001 with 95 students, a national record for a Jewish middle school.

In 1997, the Reform movement sought to establish its own Jewish day school, Rimon. Though well run with a solid administration and highly qualified teachers, the effort only lasted for several years, closing due to insufficient support in 2000.

In addition to day schools, Philadelphia has substantial systems of supplementary education, both communal and congregational. Despite the community's strong tradition of communal or non-congregational supplementary education that continues to this day, that system has faced an ongoing decline for decades. In 1942–43, some 7,600 students, more than half of the 14,000 enrolled in Jewish schools, were in community schools. By 1982–83, fewer than 1,300 students remained in the communal system, and of those, over half were attending the one-day classes of the Hebrew Sunday School Society (King et al., 1983). The major Hebrew school system, the United Hebrew Schools and Yeshivos, had declined to 360 students by the early 1980s. The curricular commitments had dropped from ten hours in the Talmud Torahs and 17 hours in the yeshivot to 6 hours in both. By 2002, those requirements had been further reduced.

Before 1992 there were three community-funded elementary, supplementary schools: the Folkshul, the United Hebrew Schools, and the Hebrew Sunday School Society. In the fall of 1992, the United Hebrew Schools and the Hebrew Sunday School Society merged (after an intensive study and recommendation by the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia) to become the Community Hebrew Schools. Later, in June, 1999, the schools became known as the Jewish Outreach Partnership (JOP). JOP provides the Community Hebrew Schools as a Jewish educational opportunity to families unaffiliated with a synagogue. However, it does so as a bridge to synagogue affiliation through a program called STEP (Synagogue Education Transition Program). JOP also offers home study and programs of consultation for synagogues.

A key reason for early reductions in the enrollment of community schools was the rise of synagogue schools affiliated with movements. As schools represented an ongoing appeal that attracted new members, the synagogues superseded the communal school system. In 1937, the local region of Conservative Judaism's United Synagogue established the Board of Jewish Education, a semi-autonomous division that oversaw such schools. This Board set a precedent for the Conservative movement's national Commission of Jewish Education of United Synagogue by providing in-service programs for teachers and principals and helping guide the establishment of sophisticated synagogue schools. It also established a regional Hebrew high-school system.

Long known as a bastion of the Conservative movement, Philadelphia benefited from the community's Conservative congregations, which established intensive afternoon and Sunday programs with a minimum of six hours of study per week. In addition, these congregations saw Jewish education as a centerpiece of their mission, and several gained national recognition. Some were particularly acknowledged for their capacity to keep students long beyond the age of Bar or Bat Mitzvah through the high school years.

The Reform movement did much the same thing. Its individual synagogues established curricula utilizing standards set by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. In 1942–43, the Reform movement established the Council of Reform Synagogues. This institution paralleled the Board of Jewish Education of the Conservative movement and assisted Reform congregations. In 1969, in cooperation with Gratz College, the Reform movement in the region established a secondary education program with a teacher training component that eventually became an integral part of the Jewish Community High School of Gratz College.

In Philadelphia as in other communities, the decision of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations in the 1980s to require all its member synagogues to have *mechitsot* (separate seating for men and women) led to the establishment of a new category of religiously orthodox synagogues that lacked this defining requirement. Under the rubric of "Traditional," one congregation, Shaare Shamayim-Beth Jacob, in Philadelphia's Northeast section, has remained a center for observant families who wish to sit together during services. Shaare Shamayim has also continued to sponsor a supplementary school, though the preference of its rabbinic and most lay leaders is to encourage day school attendance. Shaare Shamayim is also exceptional in Philadelphia where Orthodox congregations tend to be at the "right" wing of that community.

Reconstructionist Judaism's previously noted commitment to Philadelphia as its spiritual center has also spawned a number of vibrant congregations that in turn sponsor growing supplementary schools. In the area covered by the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia, ten Reconstructionist congregations of varying sizes have emerged. Their supplementary schools have attracted growing numbers of families.

Like other American cities, Philadelphia understood the need to provide in-service training to teachers in Jewish schools. Though New York's Board of Jewish Education had been founded in 1910, Philadelphia resisted such a city-wide institution. In fact, it was in response to that possibility that the community's Conservative movement established its Board of Jewish Education in 1937. In 1943, a loosely organized Council on Jewish Education was organized to oversee cooperative programs among supplementary schools. However, its role as a consultative body was firmly resisted, and it lacked both authority and sufficient funding (King et al., 1983). Finally, in 1958, the Jewish Federation transferred the functions of the Council on Jewish Education to Gratz College as the latter's Division of Community Services (DCS). The DCS was Philadelphia's first true central agency for Jewish education. However, it was not until 1987 that the Jewish Federation established an independent Central Agency for Jewish Education (now the Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education or ACAJE), and the Conservative Board of Jewish Education was finally subsumed in the communal agency.

Since its founding ACAJE has provided many in-service programs to teachers, mainly in supplementary and early childhood schools. Its offerings include programs of professional development; grants for continuing teacher education; consultation and licensure for teachers in those institutions; the Seidman Educational Resource Center, a major center for pedagogic materials; a program on family education emphasizing holiday observances; specialized resources in Hebrew, Holocaust, Israel, and moral education; teen education; and a sophisticated consultative structure for organizational development and special education. It also sponsors teacher conferences, surveys community teachers, and offers Gibborim, a program to recruit new teachers for supplementary schools.

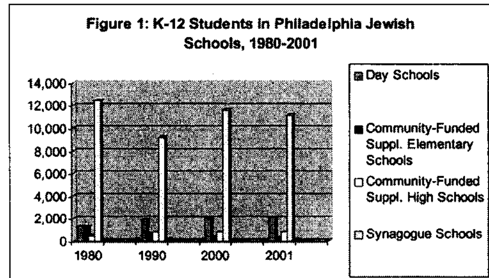
Greater Philadelphia has had a long history of day care of infants and preschool children (see article by Finkel in this issue). However, in the last 30 years its

synagogues have individually established preschools for the early Jewish training of children. These synagogue-sponsored early childhood programs play an important role in advancing synagogue membership at a critical period in a family's religious life. Because many American Jewish young adults do not affiliate formally with synagogues until they have children, a synagogue's strong preschool can serve to commence a relationship that may last decades. More scholarly surveys of this phenomenon and its quality are needed (Jacoby, 1988; Livingston, 1989), but preliminary data in Philadelphia suggest a growing trend of a consistent commitment to high quality and well-trained teachers.

Some Philadelphia supplementary schools guided by other than communal breadth or ideologies of movement remain active in Philadelphia. In the 1940s the Workman's Circle had a dozen schools with some 390 students, 328 of whom were elementary students, and the Folkshul system attracted 320 students. These institutions remain small but active and stable.

The Jewish Community High School of Gratz College is now the largest supplementary secondary institution in the United States. It takes students from all movements, although the vast majority come from non-Orthodox institutions. Its I. M. Wise Program continues to educate Reform students to be teachers in synagogue schools. High-school seniors can receive college credit in the high-school program.

Supplementary elementary education in Philadelphia is thus substantial and is overseen increasingly by individual synagogues. Supplementary secondary education, however, remains a communal enterprise with some larger synagogues sponsoring their own high schools. In the sections that follow, specific data regarding the size and populations of synagogue schools are cited to note this ongoing trend toward synagogue and movement-affiliated elementary religious schools.



STATISTICS AND TRENDS IN PHILADELPHIA'S JEWISH SCHOOLS

Numbers of K–12 Students in Jewish Schools

It is instructive to note the distribution of K–12 students in Philadelphia's Jewish schools, including day schools, community-funded supplementary elementary schools, community-funded supplementary high schools, and synagogue schools (see Figure 1). These statistics are compiled annually by the Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education.

Trends

The *total number of K–12 students* has declined since 1980. The decline, however, has not been steady. The total number of students decreased by 19% (2,954 students) between 1980 and 1990. The number of students increased by 18% (2,268 students) between 1990 and 2001, partly reflecting an increase in the population of the United States under 18 years of age between 1990–2000 of 13.6%. The larger increase in the Jewish population may be due to the increase in national attention and expressed commitment to Jewish education. The total number of students again decreased by 3% (459 students) between 2000 and 2001.

The number of *day school students* has risen since 1980 by 62% (800 students); between 1990 and 2000 that number rose further by 10% (190 students). The percentage of day school students increased from 8.4% of the total number of students in 1980 to 14.6% in 2001.

The number of *synagogue school students* between 1980 and 2001 declined by 10% (from 12,459 to 11,173 students). This statistic reflects a decline from 1980 to 1990 of 26.1%. However, as in the case of day schools, there was an increase between 1990 and 2000: the number of synagogue school students rose by 21% (1,972 students). Since 2000, the number of synagogue school students has decreased by 4% (442 students). Within the category of supplementary schools, the percentage of *synagogue school students* has decreased from 80.4% of the total number of students in 1980 to 77.8% in 2001.

The number of *community-funded supplementary, elementary school students* declined precipitously by 68% (869) between 1980 and 2000. This number decreased further between 2000 and 2001, by 25% (163 students). Of the two community-funded schools, the enrollment in the Folkshul increased, whereas that of the Community Hebrew Schools dropped significantly. This decrease has been attributed, in part, to the 10% of students who leave annually to join synagogues and their associated schools. *The percentage of community-funded supplementary school students* has decreased from 8.3% of the total number of students in 1980 to 2.2% in 2001. (Within this drop, however, the Folkshul numbers have remained constant.)

The number of *community-funded supplementary high school students,* (i.e., the Jewish Community High School of Gratz College) has increased dramatically by 69% (315 students) since 1980. The percentage of *community-funded supplementary high-school students* has increased from 2.9% of the total number of students to 5.4% in 2001.

Day Schools versus Supplementary Schools

As of 2000, Philadelphia's percentage of students attending day schools was significantly lower than the national statistics: 15% compared to 27% ("Central Agencies Count," 2000). There are a variety of reasons for this lower percentage. One reason is the large numbers of excellent public and private schools in the area. Further, since, 4 to 5% of Philadelphia's population is Orthodox, as compared to the 10% that the Orthodox population comprises in comparably sized American cities, there are fewer Orthodox day schools and yeshivot. Additionally, Philadelphia is atypical in that a significant number of Orthodox families send their children to yeshivot outside the city. The Talmudical Yeshiva High School in Philadelphia, recognized nationally for its intensive course of study as well as its highly selective entrance requirements, has a student body of 100, only 15% of whom are Philadelphians. The Torah Academy Boys High School (in the Western suburbs) announced its closure in 2002, maintaining a final graduating class through the 2002–2003 academic year; a number of those students attend and will attend yeshivot outside Philadelphia. However, the new Orthodox day high school, the Stern Hebrew High School in Northeast Philadelphia, established in 2000–01, has grown significantly, from 15 students in 2000 to 65 or more students in 2002.

Philadelphia's first Conservative day school was founded in 1956, later than in many other cities. Since then, the number of Conservative day school campuses has increased from one to four, and the student body continues to grow. This progress is due in great measure to the recent involvement of leading philanthropists. Their gifts substantially increase the dollars available for scholarships and, assumedly, will result in the continued expansion of the student body. These major gifts have begun to move Philadelphia to a position comparable or even superior to other large American cities.

As noted above, an elementary Reform Jewish day school, Rimon, was established in 1997 but closed in 2000 due to lack of financial support.

Supplementary Schools by Movements

The number of students in supplementary schools in every movement, except for Traditional, increased from 1993 to 2001. The

total number of students grew from 9,952 to 11,173.

The number of students in *Conservative* supplementary schools increased significantly, 28.19%, between 1993 and 2000; however, this number dropped 7.61% from 2000 to 2001.

The number of students in *Reform* supplementary schools increased by 10.3% between 1993 and 2000; however, it dropped by 3.8% between 2000–01.

The number of students in *Reconstructionist* supplementary schools increased by 29.3% between 1993 and 2000 and continued to increase by 4.2% in 2001.

The number of students in the one *Traditional* supplementary school decreased by 67.3% from 1993 to 2000; however, the number increased by 93% from 2000–01. This represents a net decrease of 133 students.

Jewish Preschools

There was an 8% reduction (315) in the numbers of students attending preschool between 1991–2001 (4,009 versus 3,694). This is in contrast to the national statistics for the general population for religious preschools, which saw a 26% increase during the same period (Neugebauer, 2000).

The *Conservative* movement has, by far, the greatest percentage (46.1%) of preschool children. The *Reform* movement has approximately the same percentage (26.6% of students) as that of community preschools/child care institutions (23.3% of students, which includes the Jewish Community Centers and Federation Day Care Services). Only one *Reconstructionist* synagogue had established a preschool by September, 2001.

Allocations from the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia to Formal Jewish Education

From 1996–97 to 2001–02, the allocation to formal Jewish education provided by the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia increased by 21.2%, an average of 3.54% over six years. The percentage of the Federation's budget allocated to formal Jewish education increased from 26% in 1996–97 to 30% in 2001–02.

2002 SURVEY OF TEACHERS IN PHILADELPHIA SUPPLEMENTARY AND DAY SCHOOLS

The purpose of this survey was to learn about the backgrounds of the teachers in Philadelphia Jewish schools so that communal leaders could better plan for their professional development and that of their schools. This survey yielded meaningful results in many areas. Of the 893 supplementary school teachers from K–12, 24.5% (219) responded. Of the 108 Jewish studies day school teachers, 51% (55) responded.

Profile of Supplementary School Teachers in Greater Philadelphia

Three other surveys that provide comparable recent or historical data receive reference in this section. In the mid-1990s, the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education surveyed the backgrounds and professional training of teachers from Atlanta, Baltimore, and Milwaukee. This survey (*Policy Brief,* 1994), hereafter the CIJE Study, is a useful source for comparing trends nationally. Two other studies of Philadelphia supplementary school teachers provide comparisons and historical context: (1) a 1986 survey of both day school and supplementary school teachers, hereafter the 1986 Philadelphia Study (Lakritz, 1986) and (2) a 2000 study of supplemental school teachers conducted by the Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education, hereafter SST2000 (Messinger, 2000).

Correlation between Teachers' Affiliations and the Affiliations of Their Schools

One of the telling facts that emerged from this survey regards the correspondence between the affiliation of the schools in which the teachers teach and their personal movement affiliations. As would be expected,

66% of teachers who profess Conservative affiliation teach in Conservative schools, 68% of those who identify themself as Reform teach in Reform supplementary schools, and 66.7% of teachers who identify themselves as Reconstructionists teach in Reconstructionist schools. However, 16.5% of those teaching in Conservative schools are Orthodox, and 26% of teachers in Reform supplementary schools are Conservative. Statistically insignificant data exist for Reconstructionist teachers.

Number of Years in the Jewish Teaching Profession

Some 23.4% of all teachers surveyed in supplementary schools have been teaching for just one to three years, 13.8% have been teaching 4 to 6 years, and 13.8% have been teaching 6 to 10 years. Most interesting, the greatest number of teachers, 49.1%, have been teaching 10 years or longer. Similarly SST2000 found that 62% of teachers have been teaching 6 or more years. Thus, Philadelphia's supplementary school teachers remain at their posts for significant periods of time.

Licensure and Teaching Permits

Licensure is a means of certifying academic preparation, pedagogic, and other related experience in the field. Twenty-six (26%) of those supplemental school teachers who were surveyed have some form of licensure (as compared to 40.8% of those supplementary school teachers surveyed in the 1986 Philadelphia Study and 20% of the teachers in SST2000). Of the licensed teachers, 28% have the lowest level (Permit E) and 24.6% have the highest levels of licensure (A and B). By movement, 26.6% of those who teach in Reform-affiliated supplementary schools have either permits or licenses as compared to 28% in the 1986 Philadelphia Study; 26.6% in Conservative schools as compared to 41% of teachers in Conservative and Traditional schools in the 1986 Philadelphia Study; and 34.6% in Community schools as compared to 36% in the 1986 Philadelphia Study.

Full-Time and Part-Time Work in Addition to Supplementary School Teaching

Less than a fifth (17.4%) of teachers surveyed teach in a public or private school in addition to their supplemental school teaching as compared to 35% according to SST2000[2]; 38.8% have a full-time job other than teaching as compared to 38% in the SST2000. Thus, 56% of surveyed teachers work full time (either as teachers or in some other profession/occupation as compared to 38% according to SST2000). In addition, 21.5% have a part-time position in addition to their supplementary school teaching (as compared to 17% in the SST2000). Thus, 77.5% of surveyed teachers work full or part time in addition to their supplementary school teaching. These statistics have implications for professional development, such as in-service training and those who seek to pursue formal course work.

Supplementary School Teachers as Professionals

Slightly less than two thirds (62.6%) of the surveyed teachers consider themselves to be professional educators as compared to 66% according to SST2000. The remaining 32.9% consider themselves to be avocational educators. This may be the case because those teachers who work full time most probably apply the model of professionalism to their part-time supplementary work as well.

Jewish Education Background

Approximately half (52.1%) of the surveyed teachers have taken college courses in Judaica (as compared to 43% according to SST2000). According to the SST2000, 40% of

[2]This substantial variance is unexplained and exceptional. Most comparisons between the current survey and earlier studies generally coincide.

surveyed teachers attended supplementary Jewish high schools, 23% attended Jewish elementary day schools, and 19% attended Jewish day high schools. A total of 11.4% of the surveyed supplementary school teachers have earned master's degrees in either Jewish studies (6.8%) or Jewish education (4.6%).

Secular Academic Background

Regarding secular academic training in general education, 79% of the surveyed teachers reported having taken at least some courses in general education, whereas 21% lacked any formal training in general education. Of those who did have training, 19.6% have a bachelor's degree in general education (as compared to 32% according to SST2000), 31.1% have a master's degree (as compared to 38% according to SST2000), and 1% have a doctorate. Almost all of the respondents (94.1%) plan to continue teaching in a supplementary school. For purposes of comparison, the CIJE Study showed that 46% of supplementary school teachers have degrees in education from either a university (41%) or teachers institute (5%).

Interest in Continuing Formal Academic Training

A significant number of the surveyed teachers are interested in continuing their formal academic training. More than two-thirds expressed interest in taking college courses, and 13.7% expressed an interest in pursuing an advanced degree in Jewish studies or Jewish education. Thus, only 18.7% were uninterested in further study. In a separate survey conducted in January 2001 by the ACAJE, 31 of 105 new recruits to the field of Jewish education expressed an interest in or have taken a workshop to provide them with an introduction to Jewish supplementary school teaching and have demonstrated interest in pursuing further formal academic courses.

Financial support is a significant factor in allowing teachers to continue their academic education: 69.9% stated that a stipend would encourage them to pursue graduate studies in Jewish education.

Israel Experience

Over two-thirds (68.9%) of the respondents have taken a trip to Israel. Of those, 49.7% have studied formally in Israel, either for a semester, year, or summer. Thus, 34% of surveyed supplementary school teachers have studied formally in Israel. It is interesting to note that in the 1986 Philadelphia study, 15.1% of supplementary school teachers had spent a year of study in Israel. These statistics suggest a strong connection between those who travel and study in Israel and those who teach in supplementary schools.

Hebrew Language Fluency and Comprehension

Of all the surveyed supplementary school teachers, 19.7% describe themselves as beginners in Hebrew comprehension, 33.8% describe themselves as intermediate in comprehension, 14.2% describe themselves as advanced in comprehension, and 18.7% describe themselves as fluent. Regarding spoken Hebrew fluency, the statistics are virtually the same as those for Hebrew comprehension.

A Profile of Jewish Studies *Day School* Teachers in Greater Philadelphia

Of the 55 surveyed day school teachers almost half are Conservative, 20% are Orthodox, 2% are Reconstructionist, and 5% are "Other."[3] Nine percent have been teaching between 1–3 years, 13% between 4–6 years, 11% between 6 and 10 years, and the majority (66.7%) have 10 or more years of experience. Nine percent had a supplementary high-school background, 40% had a day high school background, and 18% were

[3]Statistics for Orthodox schools are incomplete. One large Orthodox day school did not respond to this survey. The remaining data reflect all other day schools in Philadelphia, though not all teachers responded in every school.

graduates of elementary day school and supplementary high schools.

For the sake of comparison, the CIJE study reports that 62% of day school teachers had an elementary day school education, 33% had a supplementary school education, and 6% had none. In terms of secondary education, 67% attended day high schools and 19% attended supplementary high schools.

Of the responding day school teachers, 12 had taken some college courses in Jewish studies, 7 had earned a teacher's certificate, 12 had a B.A. in Jewish studies, 6 had a B.A. in Jewish education, and 7 had a B.A. in both Jewish studies and Jewish education. Thus 32 (58.2%) have certification or undergraduate degrees in Jewish studies and/or Jewish education.

In addition, 6 had a master's degree in Jewish studies, 3 had a master's degree in Jewish education, 4 had master's degree in Jewish studies and Jewish education, 2 had a doctorate in Jewish studies. Eight of the 55 teachers had rabbinical ordination and 2 had rabbinical ordination and doctorates. Thus, 25 (45.4%) of the 55 have graduate degrees in fields related to their work as Jewish educators.

Seventeen of the day school teachers were interested in pursuing additional college courses, and 24 expressed interest in pursuing an advanced degree. Financial considerations are pertinent here. Of the 55 surveyed, 38 reported that financial aid would facilitate their studies.

Regarding secular academic training in general education, 20 of the surveyed teachers reported having taken at least some courses in general education, and 10 lacked any formal training in general education. Of those who did have training, 29% of day school teachers surveyed have a bachelor's degree in general education, and 16% have a master's degree. Five are studying for a degree in a field other than Jewish education. For purposes of comparison, the CIJE Study showed that 43% of day school teachers received a degree in education from a university and 17% from a teachers seminary.

Almost all (53 of 55) of the day school teachers who responded stated that they intended to continue teaching.

In addition, almost all (49 of 55) have taken a trip to Israel. Of those, 69% (34) have studied formally in Israel. Of those who studied formally, 3 studied for a summer, 3 for a semester, 13 for a year, 14 received an undergraduate degree, and 4 earned a graduate degree.

The native language of 23 of the 55 teachers is English, 27 is Hebrew, and 5 is neither. This implies that a substantial number of day school teachers of Jewish studies are Israeli.

Of those surveyed day school teachers whose native language is not Hebrew, 3 report an intermediate level of comprehension, 11 an advanced level, and 12 fluency. For these same teachers, one reports a beginning level of speaking fluency, 4 an intermediate level, 9 an advanced level, and 13 reported fluency in speaking.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Supplementary Schools

In Philadelphia, 85% of Jewish students receive their religious education via supplementary schools. The obvious import of such institutions for the present and future life of Philadelphia Jewry requires the following.

- There is a need for intensified recruitment and training of teachers. The Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education has inaugurated Gibborim, a program sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia and the Covenant Foundation of New York, to attract and provide an introduction to Jewish education for people who are interested in teaching in synagogue schools. By design, none of the prospective teachers was included in the current survey.
- Since a large percentage of teachers work full or part time in addition to their supplementary school assignments, professional development must be made avail-

able at times that fit their schedules. Further, teachers must be reimbursed and formally recognized for the time which would otherwise be devoted to competing personal or professional responsibilities. Such training, however, is insufficient without accompanying supervision that will make it more likely that the strategies and subject matter learned will be implemented properly.

- Only 21% of the surveyed supplementary school teachers have no formal academic training in general education. Indeed, some 40% have degrees in that area. However, their formal training in Jewish studies or Jewish education is far more limited. Given the formal pedagogic backgrounds of these teachers, one would expect supplementary schools to be successful in the eyes of students. However, according to a recent study (see Ravitch 2002 in this issue), students often do not perceive the schools in this way. Since supplementary schools are different by their very nature from full-time public or private schools, in that they are voluntary, take place after a long school day, and do not always receive the respect due them, teachers need significant training specifically in Jewish studies and Jewish pedagogy to deal with these unique challenges.
- There is a dearth of fully qualified teachers of Jewish studies throughout the United States. According to the present study, over 60% of Philadelphia's Jewish supplementary teachers consider themselves professionals. However, only 26% have some form of Jewish pedagogic licensure, and only 11.4% have master's degrees in Jewish studies or Jewish education. In contrast, over half of the supplementary teachers surveyed have either bachelor's or master's degrees in general education.

Jewishly, a significant number attended day schools or supplementary high schools, and over half have taken college courses in Judaica. This Jewish training, though perhaps greater than might be expected, stands in contrast to the general backgrounds in teaching that many possess and represents a level of Jewish knowledge that is less than ideal. However, given financial support, more than two thirds would like to continue their formal Jewish education with specific college courses, and an additional 13.7% would like to complete graduate degrees in Jewish education or a related field.

Clearly, additional funds are needed to facilitate this increase in qualifications. Gratz College has recently received some additional scholarship funds for this purpose for Philadelphia teachers. Further, in December 2001 the Covenant Foundation awarded a major grant to the Minneapolis Jewish Federation in association with Gratz to provide needed financial support for that city's teachers as part of a new program meant to serve as a national model for increasing the credentials of supplementary as well as day school teachers with graduate certificates in Jewish education.

Whether or not they are earning a formal degree, almost all supplementary school teachers in Greater Philadelphia receive in-service training in Jewish pedagogy through the Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education. The Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia has provided stipends for this in-service training as well as for graduate studies at Gratz College and other institutions.

- Philadelphia has not been particularly successful at keeping students involved in formal Jewish education after Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Elementary curricula need to be more engaging to attract those students and encourage them to continue Jewish learning in their secondary school years. Such continuation of learning will not only enhance the Jewish identity of individual students but will also provide preliminary background for future Jewish teachers and can encourage high-school students to share their knowledge in Jewish schools, youth groups, and camps.

The combination of Philadelphia's independent synagogue high schools that draw students from a number of Conservative and Reform congregations and community-sponsored programs like Gratz College's Jewish Community High School, the largest of its kind in the nation, have already attracted the more motivated students and begun to address these issues for those on the periphery. Further study is clearly necessary to determine the most effective means of attracting and retaining the Jewish students at the secondary level in both formal and informal programs.

Day Schools

As the number of Philadelphia's Jewish day schools and the availability of scholarships have increased and as their good reputations have become better publicized, more families have opted to send their children to day schools rather than to synagogue schools. The ongoing increase in the number of day school students (62% since 1980) suggests opportunities and challenges.

- There is an ongoing need to provide scholarship resources so that the trend toward such intense but inherently expensive education can be maintained. Despite the significant increase in Philadelphia's rate of day school participation, it is still below the national average (15% to the national 27%).
- While day school teachers are generally well trained, they need to receive continuing professional education that will enhance their skills and keep them attuned to key developments in their profession. Further, assessments of deficiencies in pedagogic and Judaic preparation should be made to allow teachers to fill in gaps in necessary knowledge. Cooperative programs between day schools and institutions of higher learning or those engaged in-service training may address this need systematically.
- With four campuses, the Raymond and Ruth Perelman Jewish Day School, Philadelphia's Conservative day school, has already set national precedents. Its middle school began in 2001 with the largest opening student body for such an institution in American Jewish history. Its recent receipt of a gift of $1,000,000 per year, together with a commitment of $20,000,000 in testamentary endowment from Sidney Kimmel, is allowing the school to provide scholarships that are permitting students who could not otherwise attend to do so. This use of funds constitutes an innovation that can apply to Jewish federations and private donors nationally.
- Orthodox day schools continue to grow, but until 2000 at a lower rate than typical nationally. The establishment of the Stern Hebrew High School has begun to stem the tendency for some Orthodox parents to send their children to yeshivot and day high schools in other cities. This trend suggests that Centrist Orthodox schools are meeting the needs of a broad spectrum of traditional families.
- The current survey suggests an especially high level of professional preparation and commitment among Jewish day school teachers in Greater Philadelphia. In addition, well over 90% (53 of 55) intend to continue teaching, and a majority hope to enhance their formal academic training subject to the availability of stipends and fellowships. Such support is vital to maintaining the demonstrated quality of the current cohort of day school teachers.

Early Childhood Education

Given the importance of preschools in encouraging synagogue membership, involving families in Jewish learning, and increasing the number of students who continue on in the synagogue afternoon school, and day schools, the Jewish community must study the recent reduction in the number of Jewish preschool students. One factor that could have a significant negative impact of Jewish preschool enrollment is the trend for private schools to give entrance preference to those

families that enroll their youngsters in the schools' preschools. Many of the private schools in Philadelphia remain affiliated with Christian denominations, and their early childhood programs will deprive Jewish preschoolers and their families of a structure for Jewish learning and living. Communities should respond to this trend by encouraging and supporting the proliferation of Jewish preschools and the Jewish professional training of preschool teachers.

The Israel Experience

A key factor connecting both supplementary and day school teachers has been substantive learning experiences in Israel. Almost half of the surveyed supplementary school teachers and some 70% of the day school teachers have studied formally in Israel. Further, two-thirds of the surveyed supplementary teachers and 90% of the day school teachers have visited Israel. While not surprising, these facts seem significant for answering the shortage of fully qualified teachers that exists both in Philadelphia and nationally. Those who study in Israel constitute an obvious cohort of potential teachers. In addition, those who are traveling there, including the thousands who have participated in *birthright israel* since the late 1990s, represent a potential source of supplementary and day school teachers.

In a related vein, the current survey shows that more than half the day school Jewish studies teachers are native speakers of Hebrew and, thus, presumably Israelis by background. This finding suggests the need for special components of academic programs that meet the needs of this population.

CONCLUSION

Philadelphia has played a critical role as an innovator in Jewish education from the inception of the American Jewish community in the late eighteenth century through the twentieth century. The last quarter century has seen a major strengthening of day school enrollment and supplementary high school participation. Philadelphia's historic program for formally training teachers has grown, and the community has sponsored initiatives for recruiting new teachers. The overall quality and experience of day school teachers has been shown to be extensive, but they themselves report a strong interest in pursuing further academic training. As might be expected, supplementary school teachers clearly require extensive additional academic and in-service training in Jewish topics.

The Philadelphia Jewish community thus needs to acknowledge and celebrate the demonstrated achievements and commitments of its Jewish educators and institutions, both historically and in recent years. Simultaneously, it must increase support to the Jewish educational enterprise to meet the significant challenges and opportunities that now face Jewish life.

Philadelphia's experience in Jewish education can be used to inform other North American communities. Its long and continuing record of pedagogic innovation, its wide variety of Jewish schools of all types, and its active institutions of secondary Jewish education and college-level and in-service teacher training have provided useful approaches to the ongoing challenges that the contemporary American Jewish community faces in its efforts to transmit Jewish learning and culture to future generations. More work and resources are necessary, but Philadelphia can serve as one source for further study and a successful model for improving Jewish schools nationally.

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