



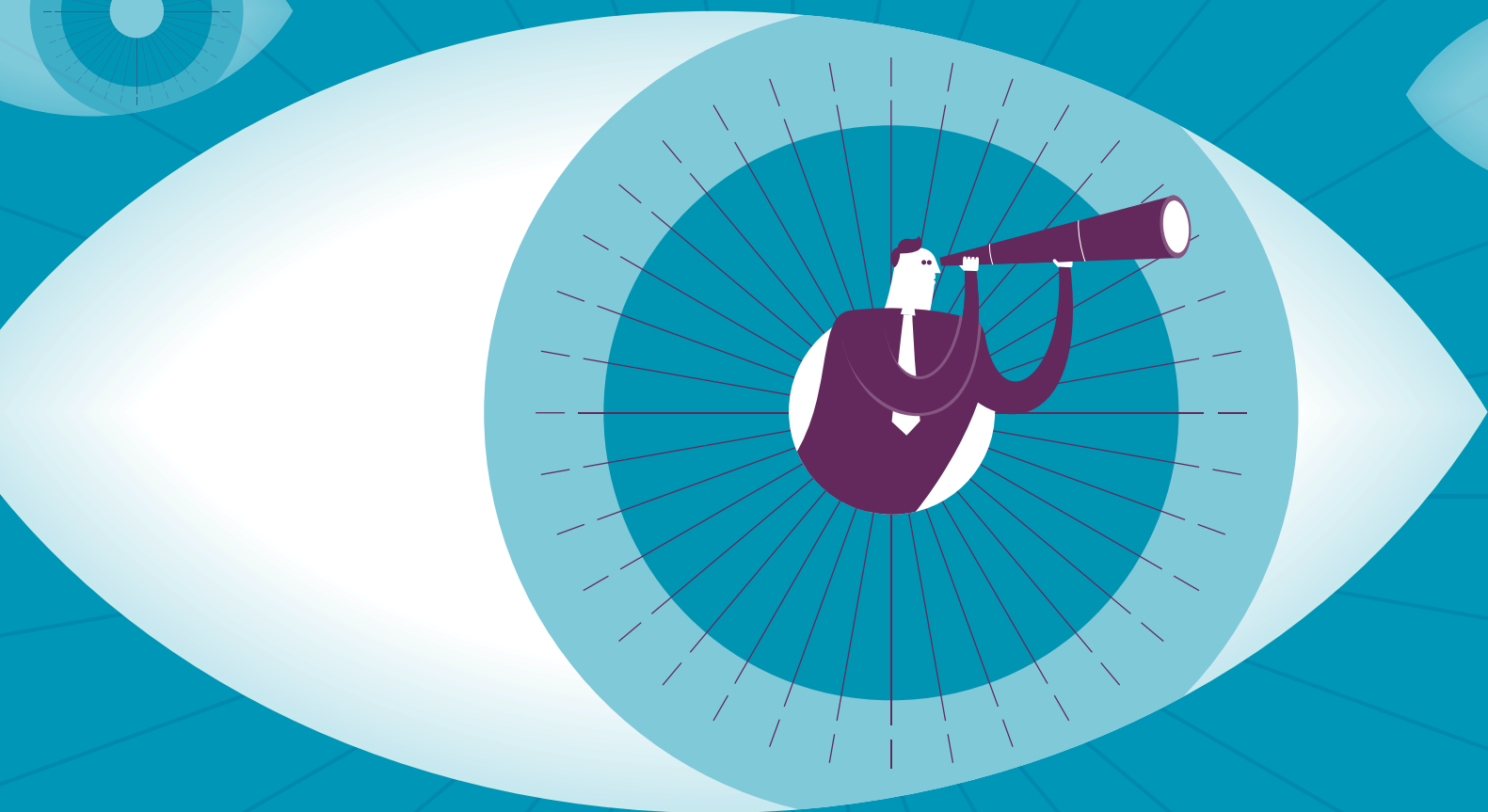
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הידועות

HaYidion

AUTUMN 2014 • סתיו תשע"ה



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RAVSAK's Board and Staff
wish you a sweet New Year

HaYidion: The RAVSAK Journal

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Design: Adam Shaw-Vardi

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254 West 54th Street, 11th floor, New York, NY 10019

p: 212-665-1320 • f: 212-665-1321 • e: info@ravsak.org • w: www.ravsak.org

The views expressed in this journal do not necessarily reflect the positions of RAVSAK.

RAVSAK would like to thank our associate members:



From the Editor

■ by **BARBARA DAVIS**

A man came up to me at a party recently and said, “Well, there are at least two families in this community who want their tuition back from the day school.” Taken aback, I asked, “Why?” “Their sons married non-Jewish girls,” he replied and walked away.

A 1993 essay by Mordechai Rimor and Elihu Katz published by the Guttman Institute in Israel set the stage for this exchange: “Jewish day schools,” they wrote, “are the best vehicle for implementing Jewish involvement and are the only type of Jewish education that stands against the very rapidly growing rate of intermarriage.”

It is very clear to all of us working in the field of Jewish education that matrimonial selection is not the standard against which we seek to be measured; it is nowhere listed in our mission, vision or values statements, nor do we offer money-back guarantees against intermarriage. But what is the mission of a Jewish community day school in the 21st century? What is our true purpose, our reason for being?

In an article entitled “Sex, Lies and Mission Statements,” Christopher Bart reported that the mission statement was the most popular management tool deployed in recent years by nine out of ten of the world’s leading corporations. However, he notes that while “most commentaries on mission statements imply that superior performance results follow shortly after inception, little evidence

exists that proves their true value.”

The foci of this issue of *HaYidion* are mission and vision. What are our ethics, culture and goals as supporters and sustainers of Jewish education? How do we justify our existence in this new century when, as Rabbi Daniel Lehmann, our conference keynote speaker and lead author, says, “Much of the thought and language that animates contemporary Jewish day schools does not sufficiently capture the imagination of 21st century North American Jews”? How do we make ourselves meaningful and relevant when the very underpinnings of our way of life are being called into question?

This issue of *HaYidion* is unique. Rabbi Lehmann’s essay, “Beyond Continuity, Identity

and Literacy: Making a Compelling Case for Jewish Day Schools to 21st Century American Jews,” forms the basis for a series of brilliant responses that both reinforce and challenge his assertions. Some of our most renowned thought leaders share their expertise and wisdom in thoughtful, thought-provoking and compelling essays that challenge us to reimagine our very core. We tackle the issues on a spectrum from the conceptual to the pragmatic perspectives, from the views of the Rebbe to the concerns of a head of school facing a challenge to the established order. We believe that you will find this issue fascinating, relevant and uplifting and we welcome you to join us in this existential conversation. ■

Matrimonial selection is not the standard against which we seek to be measured; we do not offer money-back guarantees against intermarriage.



Dr. Barbara Davis is the secretary of RAVSAK’s Board of Directors, executive editor of HaYidion and retired head of school at the Syracuse Hebrew Day School in Dewitt, New York. bdavis74@twcyn.rr.com

FROM THE BOARD

Keeping the Mission and Vision Current

■ By **MATT HEILICHER**

Now two full years into a five-year business plan, the lay and professional leadership of RAVSAK have realized that evaluation and reflection on progress to date is critical to keeping the mission and vision of the organization current. We note with pride many accomplishments and have learned much about timing, the slow nature of change, and the inherent challenges navigating through a very dynamic time for the field. Our conversations, both generative and strategic, have helped us see that organizational growth and environmental change require review of the mission statement and organizational vision on a regular basis, something we very much suggest our member schools engage in as well.

Not long ago it was possible to create five-year strategic plans and feel confident they would guide the organization through the ups and downs of organizational life. Today with the fast pace of change in technology, teaching methods, parent desires, competition and of course donors, we find ourselves constantly looking to adapt our plans without straying too far from our original path.

Even with this constant state of input overload, the paraphrase from *Alice in Wonderland* "If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there" still applies. We need to set five- and even ten-year plans so we know where we want to end up. However, we must be constantly working to adjust the tactics and where necessary to avoid rocks and shoals while taking advantage of opportunities as they present themselves.

The RAVSAK Board has created a committee specifically for this purpose, to review our vision and mission and make recommendations to ensure the road we are on is leading to the destination we desire. Our chair, Rebekah Farber, asked the committee to focus on big-picture issues such as, What does RAVSAK want to look like in 10 years? What are the ahead-of-the-curve educational issues we should be addressing? and, How can a network of schools really affect change? Rebekah chose

to form a Mission & Vision Committee in order to ensure that this ongoing review and evaluation becomes standard board practice. The committee will create a framework for the board to use in making decisions around our strategic mission in a clear and concise way.

The board, guided by the Mission and Vision Committee, will evaluate our four strategic priorities to ensure they have remained relevant and appropriate: weaving school professionals and lay leaders with their peers in networks to enhance their learning while building the leadership pipeline; representing community day schools interests nationally and equip school leaders to be advocates for their school locally; educating community day school professionals and lay leaders in ways that promote Jewish leadership and literacy; providing a focused portfolio of direct programs for students that enrich their Jewish literacy and leadership. Are our actions affirming these priorities? Do they still drive our initiatives and create the impact that our long term goals require? Can we gather up the required resources to accomplish these plans? When we dream big, do these priorities still fit in those dreams?

Our plans must address the long term goals that revolve around serving our members with the tools and support they need for success while recruiting enthusiasm and philanthropic interest in the field of Jewish day school education. These generative discussions will inform our marketing, development and programming efforts leading to, we hope, a great future of fieldwide, progressive thought leadership.

For boards of any size to be dynamic and responsive, they must revisit their plans on a regular basis, for several reasons. Certainly the fast moving pace of change is one, but just as important, periodic discussions keep the team of professionals and lay leaders engaged in the organization, energetic about the mission, and working together on the shared promise that Jewish community day school promotes: teaching the next generation of Jewish learners and leaders the knowledge, practice and critical thinking skills so they understand the world is larger than any one person and it is incumbent on them to do their part in the repair of the world. ■



Matt Heilicher is an entrepreneur, former investment banker and executive director of the American-Israel Chamber of Commerce and a past president of the Minneapolis Jewish Day School. matt@heilicher.com



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Good & Welfare

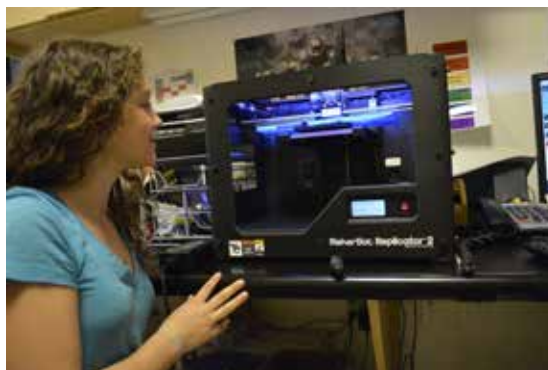
This summer was a time for building and rebuilding at several campuses! **HILLEL DAY SCHOOL OF METROPOLITAN DETROIT** enjoyed major construction for its new Innovation Hub, named the Audrey and William Farber Family IDEA Collaborative. The **N.E. MILES JEWISH DAY SCHOOL** in Birmingham, Alabama, has undergone a top to bottom renovation to better match the pedagogy which promotes critical thinking, creativity, communication and collaboration. NEMJDS has reconfigured the day school's interior into energized multiuse spaces, including a state-of-the-art Innovative Learning Center and outdoor learning patio/garden. The **ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL SCHOOL** in Northridge, California, is excited about this fall's debut of its Innovation Center, a lab with advanced tools such as 3-D printers, digital imaging equipment, a laser cutter, and an erasable wall where students can write and doodle to brainstorm ideas about the STEAM (Science/Technology/Engineering/Art/Math) curriculum. The **ADDLESTONE HEBREW ACADEMY** in Charleston, North Carolina, has begun work on construction of a new, 28,000 square foot building, to open in the fall of 2015.

US Secretary of State John Kerry will address an audience at the **JEWISH PRIMARY DAY SCHOOL OF THE NATION'S CAPITAL** in Washington, DC, this fall for part of the school's eighth annual Yitzhak Rabin Memorial Lecture Series.

The **HYMAN BRAND HEBREW ACADEMY** in Overland Park, Kansas, received \$6 million from the Herb Adler Trust Fund restricted to professional development guest speakers and staff projects.

HILLEL ACADEMY of Tampa, Florida, has become a partner school with the Patel Conservatory to Go. Each week Tampa Bay's premier performing arts school will be bringing their talent to the Hillel's campus. From Musical Theory and Theater to African drumming and strings, the students will be exposed to the top music instructors in Tampa.

Mazal tov to the newest heads of school: Gerri Chizeck, **LEVY DAY SCHOOL**, S. Portland, Maine; Lori Tenenbaum, **SYRACUSE HEBREW DAY SCHOOL**, DeWitt, New York; Mollie Aczel, **TEHIYAH DAY SCHOOL**, El Cerrito, California; Marlene Wolinsky, **OTTAWA JEWISH COMMUNITY SCHOOL**, Ottawa, Ontario; and Zvi Weiss, **YAVNEH DAY SCHOOL**, Los Gatos, California.



Abraham Joshua Heschel School

Mazal tov to all the new board presidents: Martin Sacksner, **AKIVA SCHOOL**, Westmount, QC; Uzi Yemin, **AKIVA SCHOOL**, Nashville, TN; Michael Legatt, **AUSTIN JEWISH ACADEMY**, Austin, TX; Allison Magat, **BETH TFILOH DAHAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL**, Baltimore, MD; Evan Levy, **CARMEL ACADEMY**, Greenwich, CT; Rich



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Does your school have news to share with the field? Send it to Hayidion@ravsak.org for inclusion in the next issue.

Dear Cooki

■ by **COOKI LEVY**

My board chair, supported by a small but very vocal group of parents, is insisting that the school reduce the number of hours per week that Jewish Studies are taught in order to allow more time for secular academic electives, fine art, and physical education. This flies in the face of the school's mission, which espouses commitment to serious study of Jewish texts, Jewish practice and Jewish history and a balanced curriculum of general and Jewish studies.

How can I respond to the demands of these parents without risking having them leave the school?

This is the ongoing dilemma of the community day school: how can we “do everything,” do it well, and satisfy all stakeholders, even as we allow for individual differences among students’ abilities and family needs? The short answer is, we cannot. What we can do is communicate clearly, build understanding, listen well, find compromises and offer alternatives.

Your first task must be to engage your board chair in a respectful conversation on this issue. Listen for what s/he is really asking for: is it less Jewish studies or more of something else? Often, this parental demand is not because they don’t want Jewish studies, but because they perceive it as taking the place of other important opportunities for their children. On the other hand, if you both conclude that regardless of other solutions, s/he just wants the students to learn less Hebrew, Tanakh, tefillah etc., then a careful review of the school’s mission and of the role as the school’s lay leader must be explored. Most often, that is not the case.

They want Jewish learning and... So let’s see how this might be possible.

Continue listening to the parental concerns; what do they want? Often you will hear things like, “The students need more time to learn critical thinking”; or, “They need more time to improve their literacy skills”; or, “In the 21st century classroom, students must learn to communicate, collaborate and be creative; we need more time for that.” Or, finally, “Kids must be comfortable with technology. They need more time for IT practice and exposure.”

There are numerous ways that the above concerns can be met using Jewish studies as the vehicle for learning. Your challenge is to educate the parents so that they see the ways in which using Judaic materials and subjects achieves the same basic educational goals as other disciplines, while grounding the student in his Jewish identity and his connection to his people. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Few disciplines anywhere model critical thinking and provide a myriad of opportunities to practice it than the study of Talmud. Demonstrate that

this is the case, and make sure it is happening in your classrooms.

- The study of Chumash and tefillah can be a learning laboratory for reading comprehension, text analysis and contextual understanding, all essential 21st century skills. The skilled teacher will utilize technology to compare texts (Find the differences in the same story recounted twice in a Biblical text; or, Compare the differences between the Amidah of weekdays and Shabbat.)
- What better resource is there to teach conflict resolution and other leadership skills than by studying the lives and experiences of the great heroes of the Jewish people, from biblical times to the present day?
- The vast tapestry of Jewish tradition provides almost unlimited opportunities for artistic renderings, in a broad variety of media, of concrete events and of abstract concepts. There is also a treasure trove of classic art: paintings of biblical stories and characters, handmade religious artifacts in materials ranging from clay to gold, and much more. No shortage of opportunities to provide arts education.
- Learning Hebrew not only strengthens overall literacy skills, it helps to build a bridge to 3000 years of the Jewish tradition, with Israel, and with the entire fiber of Jewish spiritual and intellectual existence.
- Graduates across North America agree that the self-discipline and time-man-

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 35]



Cooki Levy is the director of RAVSAK's Head of School Professional Excellence Project (PEP). Previously, she served as the longtime head of the Akiva School in Westmount, Quebec. Dear Cooki accepts questions from all school stakeholders. To submit a question, write to hayidion@ravsak.org, with "Dear Cooki" in the subject line.



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Beyond Continuity, Identity and Literacy

Making a Compelling Case for Jewish Day Schools to 21st Century American Jews

■ by **DANIEL L. LEHMANN**

This essay developed from Lehmann's keynote address at the 2014 RAVSAK/PARDES Jewish Day School Leadership Conference in Los Angeles. The response was so strong that we chose to feature it in print, with responses, and dedicate an issue to the theme of mission and vision. We thank Rabbi Lehmann and Hebrew College for permission to share his vision in *HaYidion*.

Contribute your thoughts and dialogue with fellow leaders about this and other essays on mission and vision. Visit RAVSAK.org to access our interactive web portal powered by Genius.com.

Twenty-five years ago as I took my first full-time job as a high school teacher of Jewish studies in a new Jewish day high school in Baltimore, the Commission on Jewish Education in North America was launching its multiyear study that culminated in

the 1990 report entitled "A Time to Act." During that same year, the 1990 Jewish Population Survey took place, and the findings from both of these studies about the rising percentage of intermarriages and the need for a more sophisticated Jewish edu-



Rabbi Daniel L. Lehmann is the president of Hebrew College in Newton Center, Massachusetts.
dlehmann@hebrewcollege.edu

cational infrastructure generated a surge of energy for Jewish education and day schools in particular, especially communities and liberal schools. In that decade, new Jewish day high schools began to spring up all over the country as more and more communities saw day schools as a compelling need.

Nearly 25 years later, we stand on the verge of a new era in Jewish life in North America with a new set of questions for Jewish education. The recent Pew survey of Jewish Americans has created a stir, not unlike that of the 1990 survey.

Much of the thought and language that animates contemporary Jewish day schools does not sufficiently capture the imagination of 21st century North American Jews. Jewish day school enrollment among liberal Jews has at best plateaued, and we are educating only a relatively small percentage of Jewish children. “In-marriage,” “Jewish literacy,” the “continuity of the Jewish people,” “Jewish identity” are terms and concepts that no longer resonate with a significant percentage of American Jews who identify as Jews. If we learn anything from the Pew study, it is that we need to recognize that many of our Jewish institutions, including day schools, must rethink how we construct and communicate our core missions.

We must think more boldly in response to the needs and aspirations of this generation of Jews. I would like to suggest a number of conceptual categories and terms that may help Jewish day schools connect to and engage a broader spectrum of the Jewish community. I will focus on **creativity in community, hybridity, transformative spirituality, textured particularity, and ethical audacity.**

Creativity in Community

Jewish day schools need to make the case that creativity is a core educational value with deep roots in our theological and cultural tradition. Mordechai Kaplan, the founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, in his book *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion* wrote that

Jewish mysticism caught the true spirit of the kind of religion man needs. The keynote is the truth that man shares with God the power to create.

Just seven years later, Joseph B. Soloveitchik, the philosophic and halakhic leader of Modern Orthodoxy, in his seminal essay “Halakhic Man” makes a radical claim about the goal of Jewish life. In the section “His Creativity” he writes that “the peak of religious ethical perfection to which Judaism aspires is man as creator,” and “the most fundamental principle of all is that man must create himself.”

If you stopped a Jewish day school student in the hall or a parent driving carpool to their Jewish day school and asked what core goals and values animate the educational experience, I am fairly confident that creativity would not be included on their list. This has to change. The message must be that

We need to recognize that many of our Jewish institutions, including day schools, must rethink how we construct and communicate our core missions.

commitment to creativity in our schools is crucial, both to enrich the individual’s human capacity and to contribute to the dynamism of Jewish communal life. And to accomplish that dual purpose, the creativity emerging from our day schools must be nurtured in a rich soil of Jewish knowledge that is deeply rooted in our interpretative tradition.

Torah should not just be an intellectual pastime...Torah should be an emotional experience as well; one should feel a tremor when engaged in it. The Torah should be seen not just as a book, but as a living personality, like the Sabbath Queen, with whom one can establish an I-Thou relationship...When you apprehend the Torah as a personality, not just a book, it infiltrates your emotional as well as your intellectual life. (Soloveitchik, “On the Love of Torah”)

Soloveitchik claims that the emotional connection to Torah study, indeed the person-

ification of Torah as a friend, is what generates the creativity that can emerge from the study of Jewish texts. Day schools need to foster that emotional tie to Torah, the joy of learning. We must demonstrate the genuine Jewish creativity that is unleashed when our schools nurture an intimate dialogue and feeling of friendship between our students and Torah in its broadest sense. Our schools can be places where Torah becomes a friend and source of creativity, joy and delight.

But our emphasis on creativity has to move expansively from Torah to human development more generally. For Kaplan and Soloveitchik, and I think for our contemporary constituencies, creativity as a foundational human aspiration that imbues all of life with divine energy is a compelling way to conceive of our common religious and moral quest.

Our students and parents should feel our schools empower them through education to leave distinct and constructive marks on the world. The impulse and desire for creativity is more robust and generative than the concern for Jewish continuity among our parents and students. If we can make the case that our schools view creativity as fundamental to our educational goals, and place creativity, Jewish and general, interpretative, artistic, scientific and cultural creativity at the center of our educational missions, we will have a powerful platform, a seductive stage upon which we can capture the imaginations of 21st century Jews.

In fact, we should develop a virtual stage for showcasing the creativity of our day school students. There should be a collaborative Jewish day school website with the best of our students’ chiddushei Torah, artistic expressions, scientific and technological inventions. We need to push our students’ creative content out into the global arena as a concrete demonstration of the value we place on the creative gesture.

As Jews, we are a part of a multimillennial community engaged in the creative process of interpretation of our texts and traditions, not solely as individuals but as a collective

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entity that stretches across the generations. This combination of creativity and community, the consciousness that our creativity is part of an unfolding communal process, and the value that creative interpretation and expression has within our community of learners should be compelling to the current generation for whom creativity is increasingly understood to be a group process.

The Google generation experiences creativity in the intentional interaction among individuals who are brought together in an environment conducive to creative output. From what I have heard from people who work at Apple and Google, and places like them that thrive on creativity, the aesthetically pleasing communal spaces, designed to promote teamwork, and the opportunities for playfulness that are built into the schedule are important ingredients for constructing communities devoted to creativity. We need to highlight the centrality of community to the creative process and the significance of expressing creativity in a communal context.

David Hartman, who founded day schools in Montreal and in Israel and served as an important mentor and teacher to me and many of us in the day school world, wrote in an essay on Jewish education (in *A Heart of Many Rooms*):

The first principle of Jewish education is that when you learn Torah you become part of an interpretive community. The interpretive community is not an independent notion added on to the core idea of Jewish religiosity but is constitutive of what we mean by Torah ... It always awaits the creative input of serious and committed students to add their voices to the unending discussion.

Torah, in a community that values creativity and develops a strong sense of student



adequacy, that encourages learners to take the risk of being creative, will appeal to our generation.

Underlying much of the Pew study findings is a deeply rooted sense of inadequacy in relationship to Judaism, and day schools need to engender an experience of adequacy that comes from being a part of a community which trusts the creativity drawn from collective knowledge and experience. Our students can take creative risks as Jews because the Judaism at the center of our day school communities is strong enough, old enough and flexible enough to hold, support and celebrate their creativity.

Jewish day schools are one of the few Jewish institutions in our North American context in which the value of general human knowledge, growth and development is very closely linked with Jewish learning and doing.

Hybridity

The communities and families that comprise our day schools are complex and multiple, not monolithic. They reflect the fluidity of identities that define our era.

In this context I would like to focus on hybridity, a concept that is gaining increasing influence in our culture. Jewish day schools, in my view, are hybrid institutions, bringing together contemporary Jewish education and the American independent school tradition. We need to leverage that hybridity and explain the ways that our schools, as hybrid institutions, can prepare students for the hybrid realities they will engage in the world in which we live.

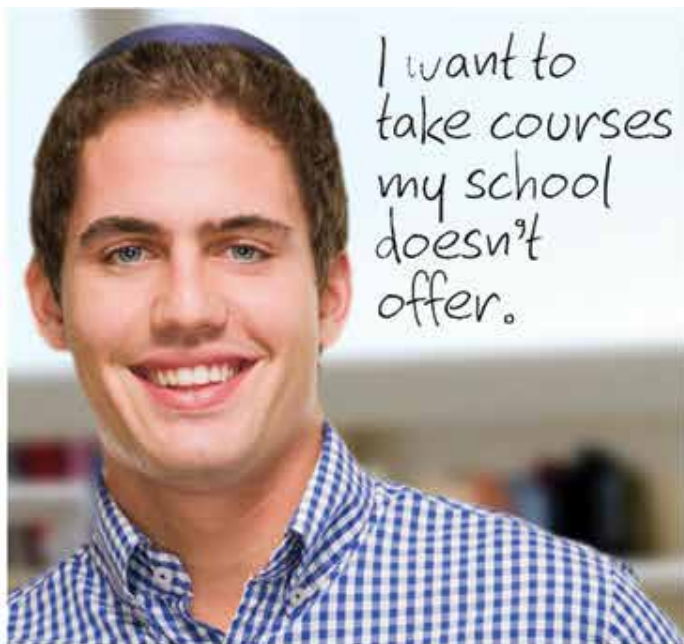
I now drive a hybrid car, made by an American car

company, by the way, that operates with two engines, one gas and one electric. It has a plug-in capacity that allows it to run purely on electricity for up to 21 miles. For my short, local commute I can drive using just the electric engine; for longer trips, the gas engine kicks in. In addition to using a combination of electricity and gas, it can also run using just the gas engine if I want to save the electric power for later. The metaphor of these two engines working sometimes in tandem and sometimes separately may be instructive for how we think of the hybridity of Jewish day schools.

The Jewish and general curricula of our schools, no matter what type of integrative approach we take, have different, sometimes dissonant, but often complementary orientations and purposes. It is the interaction of these Jewish and general educational elements that generates a very potent hybridity. Judaism and Jewish learning have a particular power and persuasiveness in the presence of the general

learning that occurs in our schools. Jewish day schools are one of the few Jewish institutions in our North American context in which the value of general human knowledge, growth and development is

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very closely linked with Jewish learning and doing.

But our day schools need to recognize the complexity of this interaction and draw people into the capacity for creative combustibility. Michael Zeldin of Hebrew Union College (“An Ideology for the Liberal Jewish Day School: A Philosophical-Sociological Investigation”) argues that interaction rather than integration is a more accurate way to think about the Jewish day school experience. He quotes David Ellenson, former chancellor of HUC, who wrote, “By creating schools, and providing a model of Judaism that is not identical, but interacts, with the larger world of values and culture of which we are a part, Judaism may make its greatest contribution to individual Jews and our larger society.” We can leverage the fact that Jewish day schools are a model of hybridity that represents our best opportunity for a creative approach to Jewish life in North America.

Our commitment to Hebrew language and the opportunity it provides for creative interaction with Israelis and Israeli culture represents another form of hybridity. The North American-Israel partnership is evolving, and day schools can be on the forefront of new forms of collaboration, generating hybrid programs and institutions that draw from the unique characteristics of both communities.

Hebrew College and The Shalom Hartman Institute, for example, just launched a new gap year program, Hevruta, which will model a true partnership by bringing together an equal number of Israelis and North Americans for a year of study, service and leadership development. Our day schools need to go beyond Israel trips and school twinnings and push to develop hybrid curricula, common websites and blogs, and collaborative communities of learning that more fully integrate our students and their Israeli peers.

The mutual impact of these different educational experiences—Jewish learning and general studies, North American Jews

learning with Israelis—can enable students to experience the power of hybridity at work. There is something remarkable about these different engines of learning interacting with one another constantly that generates exhilarating acceleration and Jewish global consciousness.

This notion of hybridity also leads to the broader concept of pluralism that describes the intersection and interaction of ideas, practices and values within our schools, Jewish community and American society. There are real differences in the ways we come to know and see the world that make for complex understanding. Pluralism is about the intentional interaction of these variegated modalities, not merely tolerance of difference or co-existence with others. Hagigah 3b teaches us that the student of Torah must develop the capacity to think pluralistically.

And God spoke all these words. Therefore make your ear like a grain hopper and ac-

An educational move from transmission to transformation could be a key factor in generating a new passion for Jewish day school education.

quire a heart that can understand the words of the scholars who declare a thing unclean as well as those who declare it clean; the words of those who declare a thing forbidden and those who declare it permitted; the words of those who disqualify an object as well as those who declare it fit.

For this text, the bottom line, the harmonious resolution, the decision to adopt a particular perspective, is not the goal. Rather, our task is to help our students live with complexity, contradiction and ambiguity. I would go so far as to say that for a certain stream within Jewish thought, we emulate God as we expand our capacity for complexity. People living in our world in which fluidity and multiplicity are hallmarks of society need to know how to live with a complexity that does not resolve or reduce to some easily digestible or actionable conclusion.

Our democracy needs people who are invigorated by respectful debate and by the constructive opposition of ideas, cultures and values. Yes we need the capacity for compromise and decision-making, but we also need to celebrate the pluralistic thinking that our Jewish day schools uniquely nurture.

Abraham Joshua Heschel expressed something of the theological imperative of pluralism and hybridity in his book *Israel: An Echo of Eternity*.

A central concern in Jewish thinking is to overcome the tendency to see the world in one dimension, from one perspective. ... The marvelous and the mundane, the sacred and the secular, are not mutually exclusive, nor are the natural and the supernatural, the temporal and the eternal, kept apart.

Transformative Spirituality

This brings me to the concept of spirituality as an educational focus of our schools. I choose to discuss spiritual education as distinct from religious education because I am convinced that we need a broad and appealing concept of spiritual education, one that is capable of cultivating spiritual virtues and creating compelling spiritual experiences that draw

from our Jewish and American traditions and speak to postmodern, postethnic, even postreligious culture. We need to foster a spirituality that appeals to and deepens the humanity of our students and their families. For many Jews in the Pew study who do not identify with Judaism as a religion, spirituality is still a source of blessing, enlightenment and curiosity.

For too many of our schools, the educational goal is articulated in terms of knowledge of religious practice or understanding of religious concepts or texts. But Heschel, in his poignant and oft-quoted essay on Jewish education, writes about the spiritual dimension. In fact, his essay was originally published with the title “The Spirit of Jewish Education.” In it, he contends,

Our goal must be to enable the pupil to participate and share in the spiritual experience

of Jewish living; to explain to him what it means to live like a likeness of God. For what is involved in being a Jew? Duties of the heart, not only external performance; the ability to experience the suffering of others, compassion and acts of kindness; sanctification of time, not the mere observance of customs and ceremonies; the joy of discipline, not the pleasures of conceit; sacrifice, not casual celebrations, contrition rather than national pride.

In many ways, Heschel is calling for a Jewish spiritual education that is counter-cultural, that challenges the learner to develop virtues that are not the values most esteemed by society, secular and even religious. In an age of reality TV in which all is exposed and there is virtually no modesty or privacy that is preserved, spiritual education seeks to shape an inner life that is rich and deep while igniting the desire to serve others and reach beyond the self.

In a provocative article on spiritual education that appeared in the *CCAR Journal Reform Jewish Quarterly*, “Sacred Teaching and Spiritual Learning,” Rami Shapiro defines spiritual learning as the internalization of the tools necessary to achieve the shift from *mochin dekatnut*, a narrow mind, to *mochin degadlut*, a spacious mind. From his perspective, spiritual education must be transformative and must expand consciousness. He bemoans the fact that much of contemporary Jewish education rarely achieves the transformation.

Instead, Jewish education, day schools included, focus too much time and energy on what he terms transmission, leaving little room for the arduous work of transformation that is, in his view, the bedrock of spiritual learning. It would require no less than a revolution in Jewish day schools to become centers of spiritual learning in this sense, and it would need, as Shapiro states, to start with deepening the spiritual lives of our teachers and leaders.

The result of such an educational move from transmission to transformation



could be a key factor in generating a new passion for Jewish day school education. People would more easily recognize the value proposition, since it would be clear that Jewish day schools provide not only a dual curriculum but an opportunity for a profoundly different education that speaks to the soul.

There is a great deal of talent and creativity

When people can see the powerful ways that commitments to Judaism can interact constructively with other religious traditions, the fear of parochialism that often accompanies a move toward the particular can be overcome.

devoted to spiritual growth in Jewish life. I see it every day in our rabbinical school and in cutting-edge synagogues, havurot and miyanim, in learning circles and on the web. Day schools should be laboratories of spiritual experimentation that can produce new approaches to combat our spiritual malaise and offer new hope for spiritual renewal.

The combination of intensive learning, regular prayer and opportunities for social responsibility make for an environment in which to create spiritual transformation. Using the insights, texts and practices from Chasidut, Mussar and other traditions, day schools should be leaders and agents of change. Perhaps we need a national

spirituality summit for Jewish day schools in which we put our heads and hearts together to spark this revolution in Jewish education.

A focus on spirituality, while appealing to broad human aspirations, should not undermine the distinctive spiritual pathways offered by Judaism. It requires an acute awareness of both our Jewish uniqueness and our common spiritual bonds with our brothers and sisters in the broader society.

Hanan Alexander of the University of Haifa wrote an important book in which this very tension is explicated: *Reclaiming Goodness: Education and the Spiritual Quest*. In the chapter “Educating Spirituality,” he writes,

Becoming spiritually educated, then, involves learning about a tradition as an insider and an outsider. Initiation into and renewal of a vision of goodness entail acquiring the perspective of two communities, that of the community of primary identity, and that of the community of communities we have called open society that shares a common commitment to the conditions of ethical discourse.

The dual lens Alexander requires, the inside and outside perspective, what he labels the primary identity and the identity that derives from participation in the community of communities, is not simple to acquire. This is not like bifocals with a clear distinction between the two lenses.

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It is more like progressive lenses that blur one into the other.

And a major concern we confront in Jewish day schools is the gap between what we assume to be the primary identity and the actual identity of many of our students and parents, whose identification with the broader community is often stronger and more compelling.

Jewish schools induct students into a particular Jewish culture and set of values including a commitment to the Jewish people and the State of Israel. But the particularity of Jewish schools can also serve the common good and contribute to the public discourse within American democratic culture.

Textured Particularity

Jewish particularity should also be a catalyst for the development of universal ideals and global consciousness.

We need to make a more cogent case that the particular values and pathways of Judaism can enrich the life of the individual in relationship to the global community and that through that particular we bring blessings to the universal: *Venivrchu becha kol mishpachot ha'adamah*, And through you, all families of the earth will be blessed.

In her book *Christian and Jews in Dialogue: Learning in the Presence of the Other* co-authored with Mary Boys, my friend and teacher Sara Lee distinguished between a textured particularism and an insular or parochial particularism. In their formulation, "Textured particularism is passionate and implies a deep, even visceral connection with one's religious tradition. It requires immersion in the community's life—in those symbol-rich moments in which the divine Presence and power of faith community are experienced." This form of textured particularism actually allows for an openness to others.

As Lee and Boys observe in their book, the requisite knowledge of one's tradition contributes to a profound humility about the tradition. They quote Jonathan Sacks,

who writes in his important book *The Dignity of Difference* that "the test of faith is whether I can make space for the other."

Jewish day schools can teach toward textured particularism and test Heschel's claim that "there is nothing in the universal that is not contained in the particular" (*The Insecurity of Freedom: Essays on Human Existence*). But I would go further and suggest that for our generation we have to demonstrate the capacity of textured particularism to contribute to an understanding and productive engagement with others in our society. This will involve a new commitment to interreligious learning for students and parents created by our day schools that will both deepen our understanding of our own spiritual tradition and provide an opportunity to listen, learn and lovingly critique the spiritual cultures of others.

When people can see the powerful ways the particular commitments to Judaism can interact constructively with other religious traditions and day schools become institutions educating toward interreligious leadership, the fear of parochialism that often accompanies a move toward the particular can be overcome. More Jews will come to realize what Heschel stated in that same essay about Jewish education:

The significance of Judaism, therefore, does not lie in its being conducive to the survival of this particular people but in its being a source of spiritual wealth, a source of meaning relevant to all peoples.

Ethical Audacity

In order to capture the imagination of 21st century Jews, our Jewish day schools must embody a particularism that connects to the concentric circles of people's lives. We must have the conviction that our schools have a spiritually compelling message that can help build individuals and communities aspiring to a vision of ethical excellence. Hanan Alexander puts it this way:

There can be no common democratic community other than through particular learning communities. ...This neutral society has clearly failed to foster a spiritually compelling conception of the good life in many of

its constituents. This having been said, the very commitment to transmit a moral vision calls upon each community to embrace a transcendent vision of goodness consistent with moral agency and ethical discourse.

Our schools should be centers of moral responsibility and ethical audacity. Jewish day schools can cultivate young people who will take responsibility for themselves, their Jewish community, the Jewish people including the State of Israel, American society and the broader world. The Jewish and general ethical discourse in our schools and the opportunities to act on the deep concern for others should foster not just *menshlichkeit*, but an ethical audacity that will propel them to become real change agents for the betterment of our world.

Ethics labs in which students can experiment with ethical ideas and problem solving, encounters with real social and economic challenges that demand from us a response, meeting real people who are models of moral courage can and should be an integral part of the Jewish day school experience. We need not only text-people, as Heschel claimed; we need people who will live out the texts that call us to be responsible for redemption.

Heschel, in another essay, put it this way (*The Insecurity of Freedom*, "Confusion of Good and Evil"):

Man's good deeds are single acts in the long drama of redemption, and every deed counts. One must live as if the redemption of all men depended upon the devotion of one's own life.

Jewish day schools have an enormous opportunity and an enormous challenge. Can we envision our schools as communities of creativity, hubs of hybridity, centers of spirituality, places of particularism that open out to the universal and epicenters of ethical audacity? I think we can, I think we must, and I am confident that we can communicate the value proposition of these educational ideas in a compelling way. We need to deliberate and analyze these concepts and keep our focus on the big ideas and values that can capture the imagination of our community. ■

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עם מציאות קצת מיוספת.

— Naama Gotesdyner
Yavneh Day School, Los Gatos, CA



We call upon these young Hebrew learners to manipulate what they have acquired, to mold their creations from this clay...I like to imagine these day school poets taking stock of their Hebrew assets and venturing into their act of creation, of self-expression. Along with the inevitable struggles, they may also experience the pleasure of the medium and get a glimpse of the gift of the Hebrew language."

Janice Silverman Rebibo
Israeli poet and past judge of
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The Creativity Imperative

■ By MIRIAM HELLER STERN

When I was growing up, “creativity” was usually a category for extra credit. You got an A for following instructions and for getting the “correct” answer. But if your work had a little extra original thought, some artistry or inspiration, that was an added plus to be rewarded, not a requirement. But I have found that in the curriculum of life, creativity *is* a requirement. Creativity is not just extra glitter, paint or time spent to perfect a project. It is the disposition, intuition and skill set that allows for having meaningful ideas and combining scientific knowledge and artistry to bring them to fruition. Creativity is the gateway to possibilities that only imagination and ingenuity can offer.

Thriving as Jews in today’s world, as opposed to merely surviving, demands creativity. “Creativity is a Jewish educational imperative,” Danny Lehmann asserts in his powerful challenge to the field. “Our students and parents should feel our schools empower them through education to leave distinct and constructive marks on the world. The impulse and desire for creativity is more robust and generative than the concern for Jewish continuity among our parents and students.”

What happens when creativity is an educational objective? This question is at the heart of debates about educational reform today. The global economy and social climate demand innovators who will devise creative solutions to problems, who will know how to think adaptively, experiment and “fail forward” until their experiments succeed. Yet mainstream school structures adhere to outdated standardized measures of success which inhibit risk-taking and reward product over creative process. Our mission statements often employ the term “excellence,” and too often we define excellence by proxies such as grades, test scores and higher education acceptances. As an alternative, we should adopt Ron Berger’s definition of excellence to describe the commitment to drafting, crafting and revising that truly embodies learning.

In the Jewish school, creativity can also be a tool for Jewish developmental and ex-

istential expression that sometimes gets sacrificed in conventional academic text courses where the objective is proficiency and mastery of skills and content. In *God in Search of Man*, Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote, “All creative thinking comes out of an encounter with the unknown.” If school is solely about mastering what is already known, as opposed to learning to encounter the unknown with curiosity and awe, not fear, we are missing the point.

Embracing “the creativity imperative” necessitates rethinking how we do school. Creativity is not easily cultivated during a “free period” on alternate Tuesdays when we have time for art class, or sequestered in an after-school drama club. Creativity is a way of thinking; it is a kind of constructivism that must be woven through one’s academic journey and applied in the world beyond school. Creativity is the process of creating new knowledge, expression and interpretation from the sources that have the potential to give structure and meaning to our lives.

In his book *Arts and the Creation of Mind*, the champion of arts education Elliot Eisner explained,

Education ... is the process of learning to create ourselves, and it is what the arts, both as a process and as the fruits of that process, promote. Work in the arts is not only a way of creating performances and products; it is a way of creating our lives by expanding our consciousness, shaping our dispositions, satisfying our quest for meaning, establishing contact with others, and sharing a culture.

Eisner suggests a vision of education in which learners actively create their lives rather than passively receive them. Moreover, that process of creation happens in contact with others, sharing culture, raising consciousness, all while forging the bonds of community. This process must be the heart of the Jewish educational enterprise.

What are the implications of such a vision for Jewish day schools? Consider these possibilities.

The Curriculum

Teachers and learners need opportunities to experiment in school, using all of the tools, materials, languages and forms of expression at their disposal. In a dual curriculum, the arts often get short-shrift. We need to integrate the arts in all of their forms—music, visual and digital art, drama, creative writing—to create a curriculum that nourishes not only the mind but the soul and the community. Unlike the ultimate Creator, we cannot expect our students to create something out of nothing. But what if they could learn to utilize the stories, images, symbols and language of Jewish tradition and history to create their own worlds?

The Teacher

Sometimes we fear empowering students because it challenges our authority as teachers and keepers of tradition. We worry: “What if we can’t answer their questions?” What we should really fear is: What if they stop asking? What if Judaism ceases to be the container that holds their wonder?

How might teaching and learning feel different if some of our co-teachers were teaching artists who could contribute additional metaphors, movement and lyrics to express the values of our sages, the struggles of our forbearers, and our search for the divine?

The Student

We mistakenly treat the arts as a programmatic break in the student’s academic routine rather than a set of sensibilities and dispositions developing in the child’s mind and heart. Creativity becomes the “fun” or less serious alternative to conventional assignments. But if we think about creation as the ultimate act of the Divine, then imagine what it could mean for a student to assume the role of “Creator” in the classroom? The student becomes a learner who seeks to make, apply, act. Creative educational tasks become daunting and humbling even while they are inspiring and edifying.

The students’ process is crucial: creativity



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blossoms in an environment that also encourages practicing, drafting and refining. Technology provides so many new tools for students to contribute their authentic voices to the adult world. Creating should evoke a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction and a yearning to create and refine more. Imagine the communities, workplaces and institutions they will create when they carry the intrinsic rewards of learning into the world with them.

Culture in Community

Lehmann argues, “We need to push our students’ creative content out into the global arena as a concrete demonstration of the value we place on the creative gesture.” What if we had traveling pop-up galleries of Jewish students’ art to connect Jewish communities in a chain of peoplehood across North America and the globe? Jewish student contests to design the next iteration of the synagogue and other communal spaces? Jewish arts festivals by and for kids, guided by artists-in-residence? A virtual space where Jewish kids could share their own original illuminated haggadot and siddurim, musical divrei Torah and

multimedia midrashim? How might these projects forge deep, meaningful connections between Jewish students sharing their work with one another? With teachers, students and parents as partners, the Jewish Day School can be a house of thriving Jewish knowledge and a communal center for creative Jewish student and family life.

There are schools where this is beginning to happen: where artists-in-residence integrate drama and visual art into Judaic studies; where students share their original work proudly and publicly through blogfolios or other technological means; and where individual teachers are embracing the power of creativity without fear. At American Jewish University, a Dream Lab of teaching artists and arts education advocates have been gathering regularly to develop a programmatic vision to truly infuse Jewish education with creativity through the arts. The field needs a more coordinated effort to evolve this agenda



Dr. Miriam Heller Stern is dean of the Graduate Center for Education at American Jewish University in Los Angeles, California, and project director of Dream Lab: A Think Tank for Artists and Educators. mstern@aju.edu

into a movement.

Replacing buzzwords is not just a game of semantics or rhetoric. The word “continuity” has defined the communal agenda for a long time, and offering substitutes to define our vision demands emotional and intellectual courage. As we envision Jewish schools that foster the Jewish communities of tomorrow, we must ask ourselves a hard question about our vision for continuity: is our purpose to transmit Jewish culture and tradition by handing our children the keys to the sources and institutions that comprise our community as it exists today? Or can our schools be playgrounds and laboratories where they can experiment with the building blocks, the raw materials and the tools of our tradition, to imagine and build their own communities? We may find that in fact, certain kinds of discontinuity, sparked by creativity in community, will actually provide new paths to the continuity which so many of us seek. ■



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A Compelling, Yet More Demanding, Vision for 21st Century Day Schools

■ By **MICHAEL S. BERGER**

I presumed from its title that Rabbi Daniel Lehmann's essay would offer new and persuasive ways to frame (market?) day school education to a wider Jewish audience—to the population we may call “Pew's Jews.” But as I read—and reread—this thoughtful and thought-provoking essay, I quickly saw that it was less an advocacy brief for what most day schools *currently* offer than a clarion call for our day schools to radically *reimagine* what they do and offer students and families, in the hope of connecting to “the needs and aspirations of this generation of Jews.” But as with any re-visioning, we have the responsibility to inspect its arguments and weigh its costs vs. its benefits in order to appreciate what this bold reshaping involves.

Given his aim of creating the kind of educational program that would “connect to and engage a broader spectrum of the Jewish community,” Rabbi Lehmann obviously looks to his target audience—Gen X and millennial parents—to identify what they would find attractive and compelling in a school they would choose for their children. As the Pew study confirmed, the old categories of “identity,” “continuity” and “literacy” no longer resonate with a majority of young Jews (did they ever?), and so an educational model based on them is doomed to reach only a small, and evidently shrinking, minority of Jewish families. Instead, Lehmann boldly articulates five values and concepts with which he believes this population relates, creativity in community, hybridity, transformative spirituality, textured particularity, and ethical audacity, and then highlights the deep Jewish dimensions of each, artfully weaving quotes by modern Jewish thinkers and educators who have reflected on these values and identified them as core to Judaism and/or Jewish education.

Lehmann's piece is the kind of generative essay that warrants methodical discussion by each school community of the many points it raises, both large and small. I have

no doubt that school leaders, both lay and professional, along with practitioners in the trenches, would benefit from hashing out the assumptions and implications of these five values. However, my main critique is that Lehmann under-appreciates the need for foundations to accomplish most of what he wants to see our day schools provide its students and families.

Let's look at creativity. Whether we're talking about creativity in science, the humanities or the arts, creativity in every field is undergirded by deep and detailed foundational knowledge. Thorough understanding of problems or situations, as well as of past approaches taken to address them, are preconditions to productive innovation. Take, for example, the Jewish thinkers Lehmann cited in this context: Soloveitchik, Kaplan and Hartman.

It is true that Joseph Soloveitchik prized the creative gesture within “Halachic Man,” but only after the latter was steeped in the traditional curriculum—and as an Orthodox thinker, Soloveitchik also expected such a person to be normatively bound to Jewish law—the “given categories” Halachic Man uses to interpret the world around him.

Mordechai Kaplan as well, operating within a liberal Jewish framework, nevertheless insisted that the creativity he called for in individual Jewish congregations be drawn from the deep reservoir of Jewish sources in all their diverse historical expressions—and in interaction with the cultures around them (witness The Reconstructionist Rabbinical College's thorough, chronological curriculum that has rabbinical students learn the various phases of Jewish civilization). Indeed, Kaplan wanted his students to be fluent in *two* cultures, *two* civilizations, not one.

And in the same vein, David Hartman, whose insight about Jewish learning is that one “become[s] part of an interpretive community,” would no doubt demand deep

familiarity with that community's historical conversation in order to legitimately participate in it and take it a step further.

In reality, I don't think this is any different from secular academic subjects. In history, we welcome a new explanation of an historical event or fact, but it must make sense of all the relevant facts and artifacts we currently have, and show the weaknesses of prior accounts. In literature, we train our students to develop new and interesting interpretations, but we expect such analyses to “fit” the work's vocabulary, language, literary conventions, cultural context and possibly the author's life. Even in more artistic endeavors, we recognize the difference between a budding artist with natural talent given a pencil or paint, and one who also has training in art theory, composition, and technique, as well as familiarity with prior artistic styles.

As Rabbi Lehmann knows well, creativity takes place not *ex nihilo*, from nothing, but within a particular context, against a specific backdrop, as a link in a particular conversation. The fact that he labels this value “creativity in community” shows that he does acknowledge and appreciate this need for foundations; after all, he calls for day schools to be communities that “develop a strong sense of student adequacy.” However, I know of no shortcuts to this “sense of adequacy,” which consists of a thorough knowledge of Hebrew, of classic and contemporary Jewish texts and of Jewish history. If highlighting or emphasizing literacy's *telos* will bring more people in the day school door, I am in total agreement. But literacy must remain the precursor and the springboard of creativity. Without due preparation, “creativity” can easily become a justification for casual study, loose thinking or self-validating expression, none of which will strengthen the future of Judaism in America.

“Transformative spirituality” is another value that, if taken seriously, demands

heavy investment in foundations. The history of religious spirituality, or even just Jewish spirituality, is too vast and diverse to be summed up in a few sentences. But what all historical approaches to spirituality have in common, from the pietists to the mystics to the leaders of Jewish Renewal, is that they require disciplined cultivation over many years to achieve even partial results, let alone the ultimate goal of genuine transformation. Individuals may have a momentary inspiration that is very uplifting and should not be belittled. But as our study of spirituality has taught us, lasting and profound change of this sort must be nurtured gradually, moving the trainee to ever deeper levels of self-understanding via diligent study, ongoing reflection and long-term mentorship.

Again, I believe Lehmann is sensitive to the demanding nature of spiritual development. When treating spirituality, he sees hope in the “combination of *intensive learning*, *regular prayer*, and opportunities for *social responsibility*” (emphasis added)—a “three stranded cord that will not be easily broken” (Eccl. 4:12) but which is also not easily constructed. He advocates use of “insights, texts and practices from Hasidut, mussar and other traditions,” as well as heeding Hanan Alexander’s call for the dual lens of insider and outsider perspectives, all of which are “not simple to acquire.” All in all, I believe Lehmann would agree that in contemporary America, only such sustained and serious engagement with spiritual matters and approaches will produce the kind of authentic and lasting results that have a chance of appealing to Pew’s Jews, and changing the face of 21st century American Judaism.

But will they come? I have two very practical reservations: one from the school’s side, the other from the client whom we all want to attract to our schools.

From the school’s perspective, to be practicable we need three things: teachers, time and partners.

Lehmann realizes that we literally need

a new species of Judaics teachers, those steeped in learning and contemporary culture, spiritually sensitive, pedagogically well-trained and professionally supported. As the 2007 McKinsey report on the best school systems in the world noted, two of the three things that matter most for a quality school is being in a culture that “gets the right people to become teachers,” and “develops them into effective instructors.” Currently, such teachers are rare, and the support they receive rarer still.

Secondly, as educators we know that for Lehmann’s vision to succeed, Jewish day

Will those Jews whom Lehmann wants to attract to day schools be able to commit to greater observance and maximal education as Lehmann’s vision implicitly demands?

schools must significantly increase the *time* in school dedicated to Judaic pursuits, requiring either a longer day or making hard choices between other subjects or extracurriculars and these crucial Jewish topics. To execute Lehmann’s plan, the investment of time must be measured not in hours, or days, or months, but in years; parents will need to see Jewish day school as a 12-year commitment for it to achieve such lofty, yet time-consuming, goals. The same is true of teachers’ investment: to develop the kind of curriculum and instructional materials that will help students, in all their diversity, move from literacy to creativity and through transformational spirituality will take time, research and revision, for which they should be compensated, and time made in their schedule to do. For all concerned, the creed is the same: no shortcuts.

Finally, we speak often of our families partnering with our schools to offer the best education for our

children. For the values Lehmann wants to see embodied in our day schools to take root, that partnership is even more vital. Thus, Jewish homes will need to not only tolerate but reinforce, if not model, levels of study and committed practice for creativity in community and transformational spirituality to take root in their children.

Which leads to my second pragmatic concern—the client, our families. As recently noted in an NPR presentation on a conference held this past March at Brandeis University on *Re-thinking Jewish Identity and Jewish Education*, “minimal observance, minimal education, maximal pride, is very much the de facto American Jewish identity today.” Will those Jews whom Lehmann wants to attract to day schools be able to commit to *greater observance* and *maximal education* as Lehmann’s vision implicitly demands? If “identity,” “continuity” and “literacy”

are not compelling on their own, will the typical college-educated, career-oriented middle- to upper-middle-class young Jewish family significantly back the values Lehmann articulated with their time, money and children? Will the community do so, especially for those with limited incomes?

Of course, Lehmann is hopeful that the outcome of a renewed, vibrant Judaism that resonates with contemporary personal and social values will persuade more of Pew’s Jews to forego a thin pride and commit to a thick, powerful Judaism that can only be termed “countercultural.” I share his hope; in fact, I’m inspired by it. But in the end, I find Rabbi Lehmann’s five values to be *additive* to the traditional day school mission, requiring such a serious investment in foundations (particularly with respect to literacy) that it might render day schools attractive to even fewer families among 21st century Jews. And that is no one’s goal. ■



Rabbi Dr. Michael Berger is associate professor of religion at Emory University and a program officer at The AVI CHAI Foundation.
michael.berger@emory.edu

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Enacting the Case: A Response from a Practitioner's Perspective

■ By **SUSIE TANCHEL**

Lehmann's call for creativity as a central goal of Jewish day schools is in line with current educational trends. Creativity is frequently listed as one of the core capacities we need to develop in our children so they are prepared to enter the workforce many years later. Some might contend that the demand for creativity, and the accompanying innovative thinking, flies in the face of our passionate and deep commitment to the values espoused in our ancient texts. However, I would concur with Lehmann that we are blessed with a long tradition of our people creatively reinterpreting our holy texts for their time. At JCDS, Boston's intentionally pluralistic K-8 community day school, we believe that it is our responsibility to encourage our children to add their voices to this conversation so that one day they might contribute their own original insights to this tradition. In practice, this means our students need to believe, as we do, that these texts are part of our sacred corpus and that they remain relevant for our time, and thus are worthy of careful study.

Given this, our teachers need to give students opportunities to develop the skills necessary to read the texts and the traditional commentaries closely, and the ability to construct original interpretations. Our educational program, including our curricular choices (for example, what texts our students learn) and our teachers' pedagogical strategies (one text can hold multiple relevant meanings) reflect these values, as does the fact that we dedicate much time to *limmudei kodesh* in our schedule (though these same literacy skills are of course developed in other parts of our program too). Moreover, we need to offer our children creative and innovative pathways to connect to *tefillah* and to celebrate and mark *chaggim*. For example, at JCDS, we have a diverse religious life team comprised of three skilled and knowledgeable Jewish ed-

ucators who together enrich and embody our community's diversity and individually offer our children a different way of living an engaged and meaningful Jewish life.

Nurturing and honoring children's original and creative interpretations from a young age is certainly very powerful in developing their own voices, but I would add a word of caution. We consistently strive for a balance at JCDS between the voice of the individual and the needs of the community. Thus, even as we begin our children's journeys of being change agents in the world, we need to be sure that they understand their voice is but one voice in the community.

Even as we begin our children's journeys of being change agents in the world, we need to be sure that they understand their voice is but one voice in the community.

In other words, we need to help them develop humility. This contradiction is beautifully expressed in the teaching of Rabbi Simcha Bunim of Peshyscha. It was said of Reb Simcha Bunim that he carried two slips of paper, one in each pocket. On one he wrote, *Bishvili nivra ha'olam* ("For my sake the world was created"). On the other he wrote, *V'anokhi afar v'efer* ("I am but dust and ashes"). He would take out each slip of paper as necessary, as a reminder to himself. How powerful a model this is for each individual in our community: each child learns that her or his ideas matter and so do those of their classmates, even when they contradict one another. Pluralism lived!

Because we value our children acquiring the skill of collaborating with those different from themselves, we have to think deeply about how our pedagogies, our policies, our structures and our facility offer our children opportunities to develop this ability.

Specifically, we need to ask questions like: Does our faculty use pedagogical strategies, like asking open-ended questions, to make that happen? Does our schedule give our teachers sufficient planning time to create lessons that reflect this kind of teaching? Do our kids have opportunities in class to talk together? Are there crevices and large spaces that are conducive to children collaborating on projects together?

Sometimes we want our children to collaborate with classmates, sometimes we want them to work with other kids in the school, and sometimes with peers living in Israel. I therefore concur with Lehmann that our commitment to the State, people and language of Israel provides a fertile opportunity for sharing of experiences and enlarging our children's world, as they can interact with Israelis and Jews from other countries. Lehmann gives an example of innovative programs for high school students and older adults; those of us working in K-8 schools need to determine ongoing collaborations that are authentic for our younger children.

At our school, we are in the beginning stages of a generative collaboration with Habonim, a school in Haifa, as part of the larger Boston-Haifa connection sponsored by CJP, our federation. Our fourth graders were in touch with Habonim fifth graders through written communication, Voice-thread and video conferencing. JCDS students shared their research about Boston in Hebrew and students from the Habonim School had the opportunity to ask questions in English. In turn, the students at the Habonim School completed research about Haifa in English and shared it with JCDS students. Students also had opportunities to ask one another questions about their cities, as well as share information/experiences about how each student leads a Jewish life, celebrates holidays, and what their community is like.

Our strong Hebrew program certainly makes this possible. As we think about a compelling case for day schools at the present time, I would add to Lehmann's arguments that it is essential for us to become more fluent in expressing the benefits of second language acquisition on early brain development. From current research, we know that learning a second language at an early age benefits the brain in significant ways, including enhancing executive control functions such as working memory and response selection.

I suspect response selection, the ability to choose between multiple alternatives, is but one critically important capacity in pluralistic educational settings, as Lehmann envisions them. Pluralism, in all its complexity, and with all its possibilities and challenges, is central to the *raison d'être* of JCDS. In our understanding, pluralism demands of us that we navigate complexity, embrace nuance, and live in the grey as we engage with others different from ourselves. The habits of mind and heart required for this endeavor, including perspective-taking, empathy, openness and curiosity, and capacity to hold contradictory opinions, do not develop by chance. Rather, we need to teach them explicitly and repeatedly in developmentally appropriate ways. At JCDS, we are currently working on how we can embed these curricular goals more fully into our academic program and are thinking deeply about the pedagogies of pluralism, or how does the teaching of Tanakh, math or social studies look different in a school that is educating toward a pluralism of engagement. We are working on ways to involve our parents in more of this dynamic work for their partnership is critical for our children's success.

It is out of this commitment to pluralism that I believe we could begin to engage in the spiritual revolution that Lehmann describes. He cogently argues for the need for our schools to emphasize transformation over transmission. But for younger children, these two paths for learning need to be in more of a dynamic partnership. Therefore, our work is to teach the tools for

transformation, even as we transmit knowledge, wisdom and tradition, for as our empowered agents of transformation re-vision the future, they need to be steeped in our people's past.

Perhaps Devarim, Deuteronomy, can offer us a blueprint for how a spiritual imagination can move a community forward. It presents some places of holding onto old laws and traditions, others of reinterpreting them for a new time (compare for example, the description of the establishment of the legal system [Shmot 18 and Devarim 1] and the slave laws [Shmot 21 and Devarim 15]), and still other places of complete innovation cast in familiar commitments and values (e.g., one place for God to establish God's name [chapter 12] and the establishment of the king [17:14-20]). Taken together, these three stages transform the spiritual life of their community.

I will be thinking about how to incorporate more of a spiritual practice into my leadership practice and into our faculty's professional development, for I know this is the precursor to our children developing their spiritual imagination.

Those of us in Jewish education know that it is a challenge to provide inspiring opportunities that do in fact develop children's internal lives. Perhaps we might begin developing this capacity by teaching yoga or mindfulness on a regular basis. But the place to begin, I concur with Lehmann, is with the adults in the school community, for their thoughts and behavior set the direction and tone of the school. Educational philosopher Parker Palmer (*Leading from Within*) expresses this so eloquently: "A leader must take special responsibility for what's going on inside his or her own self, inside his or her consciousness, lest the act of leadership create more



Dr. Susie Tanchel is head of school at JCDS, Boston's Jewish Community Day School. susiet@jcdsboston.org

harm than good." It is a challenge to think about how to do this in our complex jobs with our demanding schedules, but I will be thinking about how to incorporate more of a spiritual practice into my general leadership practice and into our faculty's professional development days, for I know this is the precursor to our children developing their spiritual imagination.

Deeply connected to this is an essential aspect of our educational enterprise: fostering our children's capacity to connect with something outside of themselves. In *Man Is Not Alone*, Abraham Joshua Heschel expressed this so beautifully when he wrote, "A man entirely unconcerned with his self is dead, but a man exclusively concerned with his self is a beast... Human is he who is concerned with other selves." According to Heschel, children's humanity depends on their commitment to serving others. Last year at JCDS, our lower school (K-4) students had opportunities to improve the experience of others by experimenting with eight tikkun olam days. Four times in the year (for two consecutive days), instead of going through their regular day, our students engaged in activities connected to the following themes: helping others in the school community, community service, race relations and the environment. It was a compelling start, but we are well aware that this is only the beginning.

Lehmann has proposed a set of intriguing ideas and an inspiring direction for Jewish day schools. Our schools would certainly be more compelling institutions were we to realize their potential. We need to continue to create the conditions for our children to not only learn skills like reading, solving equations and praying. Our children need to leave our schools equipped, engaged and empowered to contribute to the betterment of the world. Parents demand nothing less and the Jewish world requires this. This is our sacred work if we are to remain relevant for an ever-changing world. ■

Pluralism: An Inquiry

■ By STEVEN LORCH

Lehmann argues that pluralism, which he defines as “the intersection and interaction of ideas, practices and values within our schools, Jewish community and American society,” is a conceptual category that may help Jewish day schools make a compelling case to prospective parents. He adduces an additional rationale for pluralism, beyond the pragmatic goal of increasing enrollment, namely that it will “help our students live with complexity, contradiction and ambiguity,” seemingly implying that its effectiveness as a marketing strategy is insufficient in itself to justify its use. I agree. In this response, I will argue that pluralism is an appropriate educational approach at the high school level, but not in elementary school. In addition, I will propose a stronger defense of pluralism as an approach to knowledge than Lehmann does.

PLURALISM AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Erik Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development provides a framework for evaluating the appropriateness of pluralism for students of different ages. Erikson (*Childhood and Society*) identifies eight stages through which people pass during their lifespans. In each stage, they encounter an age-appropriate challenge, a tension between their psychological-biological nature and social-cultural forces, and, ideally, they successfully meet it. If they fail to resolve the challenge at a particular stage, they will tend to encounter problems in future developmental stages.

Of particular interest in connection with pluralism in Jewish day schools is Erikson’s fourth stage, Industry vs. Inferiority. At this stage, which coincides with elementary-school age (5-12), children learn “to love to learn as well as to play—and to learn most eagerly those techniques which are in line with the ethos of production” (*The Life Cycle Completed*). The challenge which they must resolve is, Can I become a competent

person who can succeed in the world? To this end, it is important for them to be given developmental challenges with clear rules that define success: telling time, playing sports, writing sentences and solving addition problems, for example.

In the realm of Jewish learning and living, success at this age is also characterized by competent performance: reading and speaking basic Hebrew, understanding biblical verses, knowing which brachah to recite over which food, giving tzedakah, performing acts of chesed, etc. If Jewish competence is clearly defined for children of this age, they have a strong likelihood of meeting those criteria and developing self-confidence as competent Jews. If, however, Judaism is presented pluralistically, as

If Judaism is presented pluralistically, pre-adolescent children are likely to be confused and frustrated as to how to achieve Jewish competence and, instead, will tend to develop feelings of inferiority about their abilities in this area.

a range of complex, contradictory, or ambiguous options among which children are told they can choose, pre-adolescent children are likely to be confused and frustrated as to how to achieve Jewish competence and, instead, will tend to develop feelings of inferiority about their abilities in this area. These feelings will be retained in later developmental stages and will tend to interfere with further Jewish development.

On the other hand, the next developmental stage in Erikson’s theory, Identity vs. Identity Confusion, is well matched to a pluralistic approach. This stage coincides with high school (ages 13-19) and entails explorations of political, religious, sexual and future occupational or educational possibilities. These explorations take the form of experimenting with a variety of behaviors and affiliations, distancing oneself from parental and other adult role models, and identifying with one or more peer

groups, and they ultimately resolve in “finding oneself,” emerging with a deep emotional awareness of personal identity (*Identity: Youth and Crisis*).

In Jewish terms, identity formation in adolescence is achieved by exposure to a variety of religious orientations, by having the time and space to freely explore, experiment and try on different identities for size, and by parents and teachers granting permission to young people to forge their own Jewish identities—under the big tent of Jewish identities, e.g., not Messianic Judaism, and not a rejection of every kind of Jewish identity—without the need to conform to preconceived notions or expectations. A pluralistic approach at this age is ideally suited to young people’s developmental needs.

To summarize thus far, Lehmann’s claim that pluralism will be helpful to students is true for adolescents. However, at least when considered in the light of Erikson’s stage-developmental theory, a pluralistic approach would appear to have an unsettling effect on younger students.

PLURALISM AND KNOWLEDGE

Pluralism, whether religious or otherwise, entails an engagement with a variety of views and understandings. The basis for Lehmann’s advocacy of pluralism as an approach to knowing is that people perceive reality in diverse and complex ways which do not lend themselves to a single, unified understanding: “There are real differences in the ways we come to know and see the world that make for complex understanding.” However, because he does not say that reality itself is complex (which would be a metaphysical claim), his position seems to be that the human mind by its nature tends to see diversity within a reality that is, in fact, singular (an epistemological claim). This interpretation of Lehmann’s intent is supported by his claim that “fluidity and multiplicity are hallmarks of society.” But in any event, he offers

no evidence in defense of this position.

Lehmann also seems to make a different and more modest argument for pluralism, based on the requirements of democratic intellectual discourse: “Our democracy needs people who are invigorated by respectful debate and by the constructive opposition of ideas, cultures and values.” However, this argument is superficial because it requires people only to allow others to express their views but not to consider those views as serious alternatives to their own. Lehmann claims to want more than this superficial pluralism (“Pluralism is...not merely tolerance of difference or co-existence with others”), but he doesn’t make the case for the pluralism that he wants.

I contend that there is a stronger case to be made for pluralism than Lehmann’s. Regarding others’ ideas as plausible, legitimate and even appealing alternatives to one’s own is closely associated with intellectual humility. In a 1998 presentation by Professor Neil Gillman at the Solomon Schechter School of Manhattan, he argued that intellectual humility is a logical consequence of metaphysical understanding, of an appreciation of the nature of reality and its implications for the nature of knowledge. He pointed out that reality, whether natural, historical or theological, is beyond comprehension, even by the greatest minds. Even the most significant breakthroughs in human understanding—for example, Einstein’s theory of relativity, or Darwin’s theory of evolution—are at best close approximations of reality, not accurate reflections or representations of reality itself.

Therefore, anyone who believes that his or her perspective captures the truth is both mistaken and arrogant. The best that human beings can do, in the face of profound unknowability, is to pool all of the imperfect perceptions of those who have carefully studied and pondered a phenomenon. The closest approximation of the truth is not the flash of brilliance of the greatest mind, but rather the gradual accretion of small insight upon small insight that comes from maintaining an openness to multiple perspectives. Pluralism, that is, an energetic

and committed engagement with diverse ideas, understandings and perspectives, is an imperative because it offers the best hope of achieving true knowledge. According to Gillman, intellectual humility is the most defensible stance in the face of the opacity of reality. And pluralism, in turn, is the heuristic, implicit in intellectual humility, by which people come closest to penetrating that opacity.

Rabbi Yitz Greenberg made a similar point more succinctly when he wrote the following in the context of interfaith dialogue with Christians: “Implicit in pluralism is the recognition that there are limits in my truth that leave room for others” (“Judaism & Christianity: Covenants of Redemption”).

The most compelling rationale for pluralism, then, is not its benefit to learners or its appeal to 21st-century families, but rather its unique capacity to reveal elusive truths.

An energetic and committed engagement with diverse ideas, understandings and perspectives is an imperative because it offers the best hope of achieving true knowledge.

CONCLUSION

Thirty years ago, I headed Akiba Hebrew Academy (now Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy) in suburban Philadelphia, a community school serving 6th-12th graders whose mission, in large measure, was to be a model pluralistic community. One of our central goals was to cultivate in students an appreciation and acceptance of approaches that differed from their own. Many strategies were developed consciously to promote pluralism: hiring faculty with diverse views; encouraging the expression of disparate viewpoints in the classroom while, at the same time, discouraging teachers from expressing their personal beliefs too quickly or assertively for fear of emptying or silencing other



Dr. Steven Lorch is the founding and current head of the Solomon Schechter School of Manhattan. stevenlorch@sssm.org

voices; enlisting students with established family practices to open themselves to different practices, such as helping Reform students make a minyan at a guitar service at a Shabbaton, or helping to read Torah at the mechitzah minyan; and training students to cope productively with several contrasting perspectives on a single issue or text and to appreciate the contribution each makes to a deep analysis and understanding, to mention just a few of the techniques that were widespread.

In my present school, a Solomon Schechter elementary and middle school, I have taken a different path, that of promoting tolerance and acceptance of students’ varied home practices within an in-school climate of denominational consistency, with allowance for some diversity based on families’ or students’ deeply held convictions. We use one siddur; girls and boys, women and men, participate equally in religious life; students learn about Jewish practices in a community in which faithful practice, thoughtful reflection, and personal example are highly valued. We are not privileged to shepherd our students through adolescence; therefore, as part of their transition to high school, we actively seek to link them to Jewish educators and role models at the next stage of their Jewish journeys who will afford them the opportunity to experiment with a wide variety of religious orientations and to discover the larger truth inherent in pluralism.

My experience at Akiba of stimulating Jewish identity exploration in adolescence through multiple models and diverse opportunities demonstrated to me the power of pluralism to inspire an engaged, sustained search for truth. My experience at Schechter of promoting Jewish competence in childhood through consistency of example and practice drove home to me the value of long-term exposure to uniformity. My familiarity with both settings has convinced me of the practical wisdom of Erikson’s theory and the limitations it places on pluralism in Jewish day school settings. ■

Pluralism, Ethnos, Creativity and Israel

■ By **SHAUL MAGID**

Lehmann's essay "Beyond Continuity, Identity, and Literacy" offers a rich, textured, and starkly honest appraisal of the state of Jewish education in America as we move more deeply into the twenty-first century. The essay correctly assumes that the "day school," largely a postwar American Jewish phenomenon, has now become a mainstay of American Jewish education but has not kept up with the changing fabric of American Jewry or American society. The project of "Americanization" in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that prevented the day school from emerging, and the rise of multiculturalism in the 1980s that provided a cultural foundation for the day school's success, are both things of the past. While the day school persists and continues to grow, Lehmann argues that it remains mired in an educational paradigm that no longer meets our students' experiences as they mature into young Jewish adults in what David Hollinger has called "postethnic America."

In some way, this is understandable. The challenges of postethnic America require more than tinkering with an existing system; they require a complete reappraisal of the educational goals of identity formation. This is because we live in an era where religion has ceased serving as the primary anchor of Jewish identity. Ethnicity, loosely defined, is now how many young American Jews identify as Jews. Religion serves more as a secondary, or tertiary, means of ethnic expression rather than a foundation of belief and practice upon which Jewish identity is forged.

Yet today that ethnic anchor has been destabilized by numerous factors including the reality that the American Jewish community, like Americans more generally, are increasingly multi- or post-ethnic. Being "ethnically Jewish" is now far more complex than it was even in the 1970s. And the acceptance of "Jewishness" as an integral part of the American landscape, in culture, literature, film and politics, makes "Jewishness" as something exclusive to Jews more complicated and nuanced. Ironically, Jewish success in America makes Jewish identity

formation more, not less, difficult. In what follows I would like to present a series of challenges to Lehmann on four points: pluralism, ethnicity, creativity and the role of Israel in Jewish education in America today. My point is less a critique than an attempt to sharpen the relevant issues and think about the price we may pay by addressing them in a systematic fashion.

I begin with a short comment on pluralism as it is presented in this essay. Lehmann stresses the importance of pluralism as an ideal that extends beyond acceptance, or tolerance, of the "other" to include the destabilization of truth and certainly as the center of the religious life. That is, pluralism as a theological and not only a social or cultural category. This is certainly courageous, and correct, in my view, but for it to have lasting effect I think it requires an entirely new theological framework, one that in many ways undermines the classical texts that serve as the basis of our educational program. Living with "complexity, contradiction, and ambiguity" as Lehmann states, is certainly something to be celebrated, but how can this model resist the more absolutist models that young Jews may confront as they enter the Jewish world? Cultivating roots to sustain this idea would require more than simply introducing a series of classical texts that can be read "strongly" to support our claims of theological relativism. As we know, these texts can be read otherwise, and often with far more consistent and convincing support.

Rather, this goal of celebrating complexity and ambiguity as theological foundations for human reaction would require a new, and arguably radical, theological subversion of much of what the Hebrew Bible and its tradition espouses. Subversions are not unprecedented in Jewish history; one might argue that Jewish subversive thinking has made some of the most important contributions of Judaism. We find them in works such as the early rabbinic corpus, a radical break from Temple-based Israelite religion (now normalized as "Judaism"), Maimonides' Aristotelian radically transcendent God, the Zohar's theory of the

fragmented godhead, Isaac Luria's notion of creation as rupture, Hasidism's idea of divine immanence bordering on pantheism, Mordecai Kaplan's notion of Judaism as a civilization and not a religion, and Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi's New Age "Paradigm Shift" Judaism.

Adaptation through re-interpretation, or the attempt to redeem the past without undermining it, is a more conservative attempt to move Judaism forward. It is a safer but in my mind a weaker model than open subversion, even as the former may better assure continuity than the latter. This is because open subversion honestly acknowledges that our values often stand in contradiction to the texts we read rather than suggesting a more seamless line between the values of the past and our present state of mind. In his call for theological as opposed to cultural pluralism, Lehmann is calling us to rethink the very roots of the Jewish theological project. The potential price for this, a price that may result in nothing less than the accusation of heresy, may be higher than he wants to pay. I fear, however, that anything less will not sufficiently achieve Lehmann's goals as set out in this essay.

On the question of ethnicity, it seems that Lehmann's model of Jewish education still assumes a stable ethnic anchor; that is, that Jewish education is largely about Jews teaching Jews about Judaism, although the "Jew" here is never defined. Increasingly, though, the Jewish community is becoming a more complex amalgam of "biological" Jews, non-Jews and various gradations in-between. Jewish education is thus now not only about the tolerance of the non-Jew "outside" the community but needs to think about ways of incorporating the non-Jew who lives "inside" the Jewish community. Jewish education in the next generation needs to consider ways the non-Jew can be incorporated as an integral part of the American Jewish collective, not as a convert (*ger tzedek*) but as a righteous gentile (*ger toshav*) who has a positive role to play in the Jewish community.

Lehmann introduces "creativity" as the

educational focus that he suggests should supersede the older model of transmission and the obsession with continuity. Fully cognizant of the dangers that “creativity” presents when faced with training a minority culture to survive in a society where they are not threatened from the outside, Lehmann writes, “Our students can take creative risks as Jews because the Judaism at the center of our day schools communicates is strong enough, old enough and flexible enough to hold, support and celebrate their creativity.” I wonder how much Lehmann is willing to enable this creativity to flourish when it resists, even undermines, basic tenets of Jewish life. What are the parameters of creative control?

A good place to look for advice here is Rav Kook’s 1908 letter to the Bezalel Art School, where Kook both encourages and warns budding art students in Mandate Palestine that the Jews need them to open the wellsprings of the Jewish heart though creative expression. Kooks knows that creativity potentially undermines the tradition, and he warns against this, but also knows that without the freedom that give rise to that possibility, the artist cannot succeed in his work. Creativity is a form of rebellion, and thus the call for creativity as a centerpiece of Jewish education must consider the price of that call. I am not suggesting we choose conformity over creativity. I only ask that we as educators be fully aware of

the danger creativity wields.

The question of Israel is indeed a vexing one. Many of us who remember Israel before 1967 and who were raised on Leon Uris’ *Exodus* and Otto Preminger’s film version of that mythic novel must remember that our students only know a much complex Israel, more Western, economically stable, and also mired in managing a 45 year occupation. Many students may ask why Israel should be important at all, or why they should learn about Israel when Israelis learn almost nothing about the contemporary diaspora. Many will argue that Israel does not embody the democratic values they learned were sacred in America.

I think the question “why Israel?” should be an operative one in Jewish education today. We may take that for granted but they may not. Their experience is very different than ours. Assuming Israel is or should be a central part of American Jewish identity formation is more indoctrination than education, at least along the lines Lehmann suggests. Can Jewish education in American today have room for Jewish non-Zion-

ism or even anti-Zionism? If not, why not? I think the Israel curriculum in American Jewish education is in dire need of reformation. It rests on a foundation that is simply outdated and does not speak to the reality of Israel today. The question “How do we teach Israel as a centerpiece of Jewish identity?” should include, in my view, the question “Why teach Israel as a centerpiece of Jewish identity?” allowing for contesting viewpoints and arguments.

In sum, Lehmann’s essay is a forceful prolegomenon for thinking about Jewish education for the next generation. Replacing rote transmission and an obsession with continuity with creativity and experimentation should be encouraged. I think, though that this transition is more precarious than Lehmann thinks and could easily result in a radical break with the past as a consequence. As I mentioned above, this would not be unprecedented but does require the willingness to stake a claim against the mainstream that may place us very much on the margins. I, for one, am in favor of paying that price. In fact, I think it is necessary. I wonder how Lehmann would respond. ■



Shaul Magid, the Jay and Jeannie Schottenstein Professor of Jewish Studies at Indiana University in Bloomington, is the author most recently of American Post-Judaism: Identity and Renewal in Postethnic America and the forthcoming Hasidism Incarnate: Hasidism, Christianity, and the Construction of Modern Judaism, and is also the rabbi of the Fire Island Synagogue in Sea View, New York. smagid@indiana.edu



RAVSAK Welcomes Yael Steiner

Yael Steiner is RAVSAK’s Student Programs Coordinator, developing and implementing RAVSAK’s growing catalog of programs for students, including Moot Beit Din, JCAT, the Judaic Art Contest and the Hebrew Poetry Contest. She has worked as a Jewish studies classroom teacher at SAR Academy in Riverdale, NY, the head of educational programming at Camp Stone in Sugar Grove, PA, a research intern at JESNA, and most recently as the Jewish studies coordinator at Beit Rabban in Manhattan.

Yael holds a BA from the University of Michigan and a certificate in experiential Jewish education from Yeshiva University, and is currently working towards a dual MA in education and Jewish studies at NYU, as a Wexner-Davidson graduate fellow. She is also an alum of a community day school, the Frankel Jewish Academy in Michigan, and is thrilled to have the opportunity to combine her passions for experiential and day school education through her role at RAVSAK. Yael can be reached at yael@ravsak.org. ■



A Mission and Vision of the Present

■ By RIVY POUPKO KLETENIK

Lehmann makes many compelling points in his inspiring and richly ideational piece, but I would like to offer a response to some of his core underpinnings.

First, enough with communal responses to surveys that decry our community's commitment to "continuity" and allege that all indicators predict a dire Jewish future. We cannot forecast the future; Jewish history is filled with examples of false prophets and failed messiahs. Instead, I would like to propose an alternate approach to this fixation with the future. I would challenge us to embrace the *present*, the here and the now, for ourselves and for our children.

Jewish parents and grandparents, and in fact the Jewish community from time immemorial, are enamored with the future. At a baby's birth we proclaim, *Zeh bakatan gadol yehiyeh*. This little one? He will one day be big. Agreed, we all work towards our children's future. We plan. We hope. We dream. But we cannot dare to plan and hope and dream to the exclusion of attention to the very real present.

Here is what I mean and from where I draw this idea of reorienting ourselves to the importance of the present for its own sake. As the youth Yishmael, son of Avraham and Hagar, languishes in the desert about to die of thirst after being banished by the command of Sarah, God sees him and then decides to save him. In Midrash Bereshith Rabbah, Rabbi Simon tells us that that the angels

hastened to indict Him, exclaiming, "Sovereign of the Universe! Will You bring up a well for one who will one day slay Your children with thirst?" "What is he now?" God demanded. "Righteous," was the answer. "I judge man only as he is at the moment," He said.

If God is able to suppress the temptation to judge into the future, so must we. This is the doctrine of the present. We are not to be

judged on the future, only on the present.

Here is my prescription for the Jewish community: let us give our children a Jewish present. Let us not be consumed and intoxicated by the future. Let us be sober about our present. To what kind of life do we aspire? What do we want for our children? A materially centered life of dogged hard work and days taken up with the majority of hours of their day employed in the service of breadwinning? No.

How about this new idea for day school recruitment. Most of us would wish for our children to lead meaningful, inspired lives. Why not then give them that right now in the present? Give them days that are taste of the ideal of *chatzi laShem ve-chatzi*

Let's stop selling Jewish day schools as the places that will buy children an Ivy League education, a future high earning job, a Jewish future.

lakh—half for you and half for the pursuit of the holy, days that are messianic-like with hours devoted to Torah study.

As adults we must necessarily give up this ideal in order to provide support for our families. But this childhood of our children, these are the good old days. Let's give them the present of the present. Let's talk about a Jewish education whose value is the right now: the glory of days with time for prayer, introspection and study—not for the sake of the future only, not only to guarantee dividends, but for the pleasure of a "right now" existence.

Practically speaking, let's stop selling Jewish day schools as the places that will buy children an Ivy League education, a future high earn-

ing job, a Jewish future. Let's start telling it like it is. Give your child a Jewish day school experience because every one of us deserves one slice of our life to be led idealistically, in pursuit of spirituality, immersion in Jewish ideas and envelopment in Jewish life. This is their one chance in their lifetime. Will it lead to a rich Jewish future? Let's hope so. But why not give it to them now for the sake of now?

A second point: in his dramatic mandate Lehmann says that what is needed is "creativity in community, hybridity, transformative spirituality, textured particularity, and ethical audacity." These are lofty, high minded goals and we need to be reminded of them. But they *already* exist. They exist in all of our schools. Perhaps not every period and not every teacher and not every course, but those noble values are alive and well in all of our schools, and to believe otherwise is to sell ourselves short and to commit a tremendous disservice to our current teachers—who are devoted, insightful and honorable.

A third point that I offer with hesitancy: What is missing from our schools is not quality in our program but quantity of student body. This is new and it will not change—such is the nature of the commitment of our people. This is not new either. This is the way it was and is; the commitment to higher ideals is rarely that of the majority in any group.

Finally, what do we need? We need confidence. We need pride. And we need to set our standards high and our expectations demanding. Stop dumbing down and stop giving over the impression the Judaism is fun and entertaining. It can be at times but mostly it is hard work, commitment and sacrifice. And just like most things in life, that which we are ready to sacrifice for is what usually is the most worthwhile. ■



Rivy Poupko Kletenik is head of school at the Seattle Hebrew Academy. rkletenik@sha613.org

A New Theory of Vision

■ By JON A. LEVISOHN

The world of Jewish education has been thinking about “the vision thing” for a decade or more. Of course, that phrase reminds us that the concern for vision has a long history. Back in 1987, then-Vice President Bush was criticized for lacking a vision at the outset of his presidential campaign. His unscripted and exasperated use of that memorable phrase—“the vision thing”—at once affirmed the importance of vision while also betraying some confusion as to what the critique was all about.

In my experience with Jewish educators, that confusion about vision is familiar. We are much better at criticizing the absence of vision than we are at articulating exactly what a vision is. Our colleague Danny Lehmann has proposed a set of intriguing, generative ideas. Do these ideas amount to a vision of Jewish education? Do they do the work that a vision is supposed to do?

My purpose here is not to engage with his specific proposals. Instead, I want to work out what we mean by vision, how visions work, and why they’re important. And I will do so by offering a critique of the dominant theory of vision in Jewish education as expressed by my teacher and the teacher of so many of us in this field, Seymour Fox.

Many readers of *HaYidion* will recall Seymour Fox as the head of the Mandel Foundation-Israel, and before that a leader at the Melton Centre at Hebrew University, the Melton Center at JTS, and Camp Ramah—and for his role in creating the Visions of Jewish Education Project at the Mandel Foundation, which produced the edited volume *Visions of Jewish Education* in 2003. That project focused on the voices of the scholars whose learning Fox revered and on whom he relied to produce the creative, diverse visions encompassed in the book. In other words, the specific visions produced by the project were those of Twersky, Brinker and the others. However, the *theory* of vision in the project was Fox’s own.

So what is Fox’s theory of vision?

To begin to answer this question, we can go back all the way to 1959, when Fox—thirty years old, working as an assistant to Chancellor of JTS Louis Finkelstein with oversight over the Camp Ramah system—published a paper titled “A Prolegomenon to a Philosophy of Jewish Education.” In that paper, he argues that, traditionally, philosophies of education “first developed their principles ... [and then] adumbrate[d] the kind of societies [and] men ... which would exhibit these principles.” These “embodiments ... then served as guides to determine the educational approach.”

In other words, we must start by determining our most foundational commitments. These commitments will then be encompassed or embodied in specific forms as ideal

Confusion about vision is familiar: we are much better at criticizing the absence of vision than we are at articulating exactly what a vision is.

societies or ideal people. Then, once we have these in mind, the rest of our educational decisions will flow from or will be determined by them.

Alas, “Jewish education and Jewish educators have forgotten the problem of ends or goals.” As a result, he says, Jewish education has become, quite literally, “aimless.” The efforts of Jewish educators have no articulated aims. “And when education is aimless then the practical, the means of education ... becomes a matter of taste.” Rather than being guided by principles, our educational efforts are instead characterized by idiosyncrasy. “The problem for a philosophy of Jewish education is to disclose the principles that will lead to a coherent structure of ends and means.” Instead of idiosyncrasy, he wants coherence, a fully-worked out system in which the means lead to ends and the ends are embodiments of our principles.

Interestingly, in 1959, Fox uses the language

of “aims” and “purposes,” rather than “vision.” But this diagnosis is consistent with his later critique of the absence of vision, in *Visions of Jewish Education* (p. 8):

Why do we emphasize vision? Without a guiding purpose, an educational system is bound to be scattered and incoherent, incapable of consecutive effort, unable either to grasp the possibilities of effective action or to avoid the obstacles in its path. Lacking a directive guide to the future, the system becomes repetitive and uninspired, prey to past habit, incapable of justifying itself to new generations of our youth in the world they will inhabit.

The last element in particular, the notion that our educational systems must be continually reinvigorated with new ideas appropriate to a new generation, finds an echo in Lehmann’s article as well: “We must think more boldly in response to the needs and aspirations of this generation of Jews.”

But back to the 1959 paper. Fox is not content to offer a critique; he also proposes a solution that should sound strikingly familiar. He writes about the need to cultivate

a number of schemes, differing as different scholars give different weights to different sources of Jewish tradition and organize them according to their lights. ... Each scheme will be a valid theory for education and an authentic image of Judaism.

We need to call on our best scholars to develop “schemes,” informed by their own deeply informed interpretations of the Jewish tradition. There will be multiple schemes—Fox was a pluralist long before anybody used the language of pluralism—but each one will be “authentic,” and each one will be an “image of Judaism.” A bit later on in the paper, he lays out a comprehensive map of the fundamental, existential questions that a philosophy of Jewish education should consider. And then he says, “When we answer such questions as these ... then I believe we will

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discover the image of the ideal or educated Jew.”

Thus, a philosophy of Jewish education ought to pursue the question of purposes or goals. And it must be comprehensive and systematic, encompassing the answers to all of life’s important questions. But what is especially striking is his proposal about the way to pursue those questions, namely, by developing robust images of the ideal educated Jew, images that are excavated out of the Jewish tradition. Each of these robust images will encompass or embody a set of answers to fundamental, existential questions. This is nothing less than a roadmap for the Visions project that he launched over 30 years later.

But there’s a problem with this proposal. It’s not a problem to call for greater attention to purposes. It’s not a problem to expect that the Jewish tradition will yield the images of the ideal educated Jew that you’re seeking. What is problematic, however, is to expect that images, visions, will do that work *systematically* and *comprehensively*. This notion, it seems to me, is unjustified. And indeed, when the reader of *Visions of Jewish Education* encounters Greenberg’s essay, or Twersky’s, she finds moments of insight and some genuinely powerful ideas. But she does not encounter a comprehensive system of Jewish educational purposes.

Turning to Lehmann, we can say the same about his vision as well. The difference, however, is that Lehmann does not aspire to comprehensiveness. In his introduction, he explains that his task is “to suggest a number of conceptual categories and terms that may help Jewish day schools connect to and engage a broader spectrum of the Jewish community.”

All he wants to do is to “suggest a number of [concepts] and terms.” That’s it. He’s not trying to put forward a comprehensive vision of the ideal educated Jew that embodies answers to all of important questions. And indeed, his specific proposals—creativity, hybridity, and the rest of his lexicon—are generative concepts that may well help us to think in new ways.

Let us call Fox’s theory of vision, the theory that focuses on the development of a comprehensive image of the ideal educated Jew, “Vision-with-a-capital-V.” Why, we might wonder, does Fox expect a Vision to be comprehensive? What’s wrong with just offering a few good ideas to guide practice? The answer is that, when it comes to the pursuit of purposes, Fox was as scared of superficial and incoherent ideas as he was of the absence of ideas. He often denounced “slogans,” meaningless phrases or phrases in conflict with each other. When we offer slogans, we believe that we are operating with a compelling Vision when in fact we are doing nothing of the kind. In order to avoid adopting slogans, we need serious and sustained deliberation.

Deliberation is not simply thinking. By the 1990s, Fox develops a hierarchical conception of the relationship of theory to practice, according to which questions

We do not want educators to be satisfied with doing things simply because this is how they’ve always been done. We want them to ask why and keep asking why.

about practice are nested within (what he calls) “theories of practice,” and theories of practice are nested within bigger questions about “philosophy of education,” which are in turn nested within the biggest and broadest existential and religious questions (“philosophy”). To link back to the 1959 essay, these are the kinds of questions the answers to which are embedded or embodied in images of the ideal educated Jew. And this comprehensive and coherent image, with all of its nested answers, is an educational Vision.

There is something right about this. What Fox’s hierarchy captures, I think, is our sense that our practices ought to be grounded in something bigger, something more fundamental. We share Fox’s worry about aimless practice. We worry about idiosyncrasy and lack of coherence. We do believe that big ideas are important. We do not want educators to be satisfied with doing things simply because this is how they’ve al-

ways been done. We want them to ask why. And we want them to keep asking why, like a bunch of unruly two-year-olds, pushing and probing, not accepting superficial answers, getting to the bottom of things.

So there’s something attractive about the notion that each of our decisions about practice—decisions about what to teach (curriculum) and how to teach (pedagogy), as well as other important considerations such as whom to admit and serve, and whom to hire and how to train them, and how to govern our institutions—should be justified by reasons. And not just with stand-alone reasons but reasons that cohere with the reasons for the rest of the decisions we make, reasons that are, themselves, justified by bigger ideas, more abstract and philosophical ideas. All of these reasons, we hope, will flow seamlessly and elegantly from our most fundamental existential commitments, our most basic beliefs about how to live and what to value, our Vision.

But do they? Or is it perhaps the case that this hierarchical conception—the notion that our decisions about practice ought to be governed by our most fundamental existential commitments—misrepresents the way that vision actually works to guide practice?

Consider, for example, the case of Hebrew language instruction, which Fox himself uses as an example in a paper titled “Towards a General Theory of Jewish Education” in 1973 (p. 264). He notes that the results of Hebrew instruction have been “disappointing, and consequently the study of Hebrew is usually a source of tension among parents, rabbis, and educators.” Indeed, what was true forty years ago remains largely true today. Fox argues that the problem seems to arise from a confusion about the purpose of Hebrew instruction. “We have here,” he writes, “a striking example of a major school subject whose purpose for inclusion in the curriculum is unclear; the result is a series of inappropriate and dated compromises.”

Now, insofar as Hebrew language instruction would benefit from greater coherence, Fox was correct then and remains correct

today. There may be a dearth of trained teachers, appropriate curricula, and well developed methodologies, but underneath all that is a confusion about the purposes of teaching Hebrew. If we could get clear about what we want students to know and be able to do, we would be well on our way to improving the situation.

So when it comes to Hebrew, we may well agree with Fox's diagnosis. But notice: there's nothing here about ultimate questions of human existence. You do not need to have a grand conception of human flourishing to fix the problem with Hebrew. You don't need a Vision. You just need to get clear about your goals *in this subject area*.

I do not mean to suggest that the question of the goals of Hebrew language instruction are entirely disconnected with bigger questions. One person might understand Hebrew as a vital link between generations. Another person might articulate a conception of human flourishing in which the connection to one's *contemporary* ethnic and religious community plays a central role, and would argue for immersion in modern spoken Hebrew for that purpose. A third person might focus on the spiritual resources that are present to the individual when she becomes fluent in Hebrew. If we are probing each of these conceptions, we might well find ourselves asking "why," pushing on each conception to uncover a more fundamental sets of commitments. The presence of these questions are what makes Fox's hierarchical conception of vision initially attractive and even plausible.

But as a solution to the problem of Hebrew language instruction, we do not need to operate at the level of philosophy. We do not need to put our planning on hold while we come up with a comprehensive Vision. We just need to get clear about our subject-specific goals. That's what will make a difference in our practice. That's what will alleviate the problem of aimlessness.

So I am suggesting that we do not need Vision-with-a-capital-V. But we do need "vision-with-a-lower-case-v." We do need to ask questions about our practice and its purposes, relentlessly questioning why we do what we do and whether there are other ways of doing things. If we want to solve the problem of aimless or uninspired practice,

we need to think about a variety of different kinds of ideas about a variety of different aspects of practice.

My preferred term for these elements of vision-with-a-lower-case-v is "animating ideas." The modifier "animating" indicates that these ideas provide the motivation and guidance for practice. And the plural "ideas" indicates that there are several of these operating at the same time, not in a hierarchical nested fashion, where the "low-level" ideas are governed or determined by the more abstract and more philosophical "higher-level" ideas, but in a non-hierarchical fashion.

After all, when I am trying to figure out what to do in my classroom, I am not only asking about what kind of person I am trying to produce, but also asking about what kind of community I am trying to build in this space, and what I believe about how students learn, and (as in the example of Hebrew instruction) what the purposes of this particular subject area are, and more. All of these questions about practice are on the table. Ideally, each of these animating ideas contributes to my practice.

These reflections lead me to an alternative way of displaying the relationship of theory and practice, or equally, an alternative theory of vision.



In this picture, vision-guided practice sits within a robust intellectual context, what I have called the "sphere of animating ideas." These are ideas about multiple different topics, arranged in a circle rather than a hierarchy. There are always multiple theories in

play, in any practice, because practice is inevitably complex. There are always multiple reasons for what we say and do, even when we are at our most reflective. But notice that the arrows go both ways, because ideas are also embodied in practice and are sometimes worked out in practice. We actually refine our ideas through practice. We get smarter, not just smarter about implementing or translating ideas, but actually smarter about the ideas themselves. So practice—intentional practice, thoughtful practice—affects the sphere of ideas as well.

When we are trying to promote vision in education—when we are trying to solve the problem of either overly habitual or overly idiosyncratic teaching—we want to promote greater curiosity about and attention to all of these. What we want is maximum intentionality. So we do not want to get stuck on the biggest ideas about human flourishing, as powerful as those ideas might be. As I've tried to emphasize, the biggest ideas can be both powerful in one sense and, when it comes to practice, surprisingly inert.

The virtues of this new theory, then, are that it maintains a focus on ideas and purposes without narrowing that focus to only the biggest ideas; that it appreciates the range of ideas that do and should animate practice; that it captures the way in which Jewish ideas

comfortably coexist alongside other ideas in vision-guided practice; and most importantly, that it may help practitioners understand the way in which animating ideas are inevitably abstract (because they are ideas) but also

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Today's Models and Tomorrow's

■ by JONATHAN WOOCHEER

It's no secret that these are challenging times for many day schools. Keeping the seats filled, dealing with growing needs for financial assistance, incorporating new pedagogical approaches and technologies, recruiting and retaining talented teachers, satisfying parental desires for the highest quality general education while staying true to a Jewish mission—all these are now part of the daily work and worries of day school leaders, volunteer and professional.

These challenges are not, to be sure, insurmountable. Many day schools are thriving and others are finding ways to reasonable stability. Day school support organizations, a number of committed major funders, a few communities, and countless individual supporters and parents have stepped up to provide not only additional financial resources, but also sophisticated educational and management tools and guidance to help day schools sustain themselves in a less than rosy environment. The day school movement is decidedly not in crisis, even if the optimistic hopes for growth of a decade or two ago no longer seem realistic.

Still, this is perhaps a good time to step back and ask some searching questions about the future of Jewish day schools and particularly of the model that has developed as the norm for day schools in North America. Organizational models typically develop in response to a set of conditions and within the framework of a set of assumptions that seem nearly immutable. However, conditions change, and assumptions bear regular retesting. So at a time when day schools face significant challenges, it may be wise to consider whether the day school model we know today

represents the only conceivable approach to doing what day schools do so well.

What are the key elements of today's day school model (understanding that there are exceptions to each generalization)?

1. Each day school operates independently, with its own governance, administration, educational staff and program, facilities and finances.
2. Day schools educate students in some grade span from pre-kindergarten to grade 12.
3. These students are enrolled full time in the day school.
4. These students are Jewish by some accepted definition.
5. Day schools provide both the general and the Jewish education for these students.
6. Parents pay the bulk of the cost for this education, with Jewish donors (communal and private) paying most of the rest.

These elements of the day school model have proven their viability and value over time. Yet each, I would suggest, is worth further scrutiny in light of the challenges that day schools are facing today. At worst, playing a little "what if?" can stretch our thinking about how to meet some of these challenges; at best, it may lead us toward new models for a new time.

1. Operating each day school as a world unto itself is strikingly inefficient. As important as

autonomy may be in maintaining educational integrity and a sense of school community, there are surely middle grounds between total independence and being part of a top-down system in the way that public schools are. All day schools have much in common, not only with other day schools, but with other schools generally. There are a host of opportunities to experiment with sharing resources and responsibilities on multiple levels. This kind of collaboration already happens on a small scale, and there have been efforts to incentivize more of it. But with day schools facing huge financial burdens, perhaps it is time to dramatically expand our willingness to treat day schools as a collective enterprise, not merely the accidental sum of a host of independent endeavors.

2. The primary mission of day schools will almost surely remain the education of primary, elementary, and secondary age students. Yet in an era when lifelong Jewish learning is increasingly not just a pious slogan, but a concrete aspiration being pursued actively in many settings, should not day schools seek to extend their reach at least to populations to whom they have unique access, such as the parents of their students, or who we know are often seeking high quality learning opportunities and may even be willing to pay for them, such as families with young children and senior adults? Day schools have resources—facilities, faculties—that could make them attractive community learning centers, as a few schools are already finding.

3. Perhaps the greatest, though certainly controversial, opportunity for day schools to engage new constituencies lies in joining the ranks of those offering less than full-day Jew-



Dr. Jonathan Woocher works in a senior capacity with the Lippman Kanfer family on its philanthropic and educational initiatives. jon@lippmankanfer.org

ish educational programs. This is a dynamic area in Jewish education today, no longer monopolized by synagogues. Day schools could play multiple roles here, from offering specialized programs in Hebrew language that many synagogues and other providers are incapable of mounting, to providing the kind of multi-day after-school programming that combines Jewish learning with other activities (e.g., assisted homework) that is spreading around the continent, to offering short-term vacation-time immersive programs that might combine Jewish and general learning. Nor do day schools have to go it alone in these efforts; rather, they might position themselves as partners to local synagogues and other providers, offering options that they cannot.

4. A growing number of day schools, especially in smaller communities, are opening their doors to non-Jewish students. Although financial exigencies may be driving this development, there are also educational reasons for considering whether day school should be for Jewish students only. In today's world, ethno-religious insularity is increasingly problematic, both empirically and ideologically. Many parents will not consider day school for their children precisely because they want them to experience religious, ethnic and racial diversity. And if we truly believe that Judaism is a wis-

dom tradition with much to teach the world as a whole (and only this conviction, not a commitment to "Jewish continuity," is likely to impress young people that what they are learning is worth doing so), then we should be delighted when others want to be exposed to this tradition in our institutions.

5. Unquestionably, the opportunity day schools provide to connect Jewish and general learning is one of their great strengths (even if some day schools do this far better than others). But, does this mean that day schools

If we truly believe that Judaism is a wisdom tradition with much to teach the world as a whole, then we should be delighted when others want to be exposed to this tradition in our institutions.

must themselves provide all of this learning? Already, a growing number of schools are turning to technology to "outsource" some of their curriculum. There are other options as well that may be even better, e.g., partnering with other private or even public schools in areas like STEM that are high on parents' and students' educational agendas, but often difficult for smaller schools in particular to do well. Day schools need not abandon their

integrative role even if others are involved in providing some of the coursework.

6. Short of a major sea change in how education is funded in the United States, there is little prospect that the costs of day school education can be shifted in any dramatic way away from parents and donors. However, altering the day school model in some of the other ways suggested above—making it more efficient, more expansive in who it engages, more open to wider populations—might bring in new sources of revenue. At the least, it may help to alter the perception that day schools serve a narrow slice of the Jewish population and hence do not merit broadened support.

There are no magic bullets here, and there are good arguments against, as well as for, each of the possible changes I have suggested. Certainly, no one (including me) could responsibly urge that

day school leaders embrace radical, and potentially de-stabilizing, changes without due deliberation and experimentation. However, this is not a time for timidity. As we look at the challenges facing day schools today, the question is: Do we have the courage to build on what has already been achieved to create new models and new relationships so that our schools and our children can continue to thrive in the 21st century? ■

Dear Cooki

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agement skills needed to succeed in a challenging dual curriculum prepares them for the challenges of post-secondary study in even the most competitive universities.

In addition to teaching parents about the educational value of teaching Jewish studies (beyond the religious/cultural reasons), and its role in fulfilling the mission, i.e., the *raison d'être*, of your school, try to find creative ways to meet some of their stated needs and desires. For example:

- Show them that you agree that exposure to a broad range of subjects is good and that the desire for additional physical ac-

tivity is important to you, too.

- Involve parents in the search for solutions by forming a small committee to explore options such as lunch-hour clubs and activities and increased extracurricular programming.
- Investigate communitywide resources. See if there are sports leagues that can accommodate your students, book clubs or IT activities at the local library, clubs and activities at the Jewish community center or similar institution. Form a partnership with them that will benefit them as well as your students.

These are some ways in which you are vali-

dating their concerns, acting to address them, yet preserving the core value of serious Jewish study.

We know that you will never convince every parent, and, especially in schools where retaining enrollment is a key issue, pressure to meet parental demands is intense. But a greater danger lies in overlooking, even abrogating, your school's mission to meet demands of a current group, whose composition and outlook will surely change from year to year. Most often, parental concerns will be abated from the joint approach of listening well and trying to provide solutions, and educating parents about the far-reaching benefits of Jewish studies. ■

Mission Statements from Our

The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it. Michelangelo

Mission statements aim to boil down the diversity of goals, beliefs, aspirations and activities found in a day school into a memorable expression that can inform, guide and inspire both those within the school community and others who may consider joining. We asked schools to share their statements and to explain what they accomplish. Here are six, representing great diversity in student age, school location, emphasis and even length, that present some of the spectrum of possibilities inherent in a school mission statement.

Bialik College, Melbourne, Australia

— Mission —

Bialik is committed to the pursuit of excellence in an enriching, innovative and nurturing environment and is dedicated to empowering students with the knowledge, skills,

dispositions and values necessary to achieve their potential and to contribute meaningfully to the Jewish, Australian and global communities.

Comments

Bialik College teaches and celebrates the richness of Jewish life and provides an experience of Judaism that is embracing and outward-looking, whilst traditional at base. Students develop skills, dispositions, knowledge and values that are essential for them to become active members across our Jewish community. As students mature, their engagement with Judaism becomes increasingly expansive, equipping them to make informed choices about their Jewish practice and identity.

B'nai Israel Community Day School, Gainesville, Florida

— Mission —

B'nai Israel Community Day School's mission is to provide a community of safe and secure learning where children and families can flourish, experiencing the beginning of a lifelong love of both Jewish and secular learning.

Comments

Our mission statement was redesigned after I participated in RAVSAK's Project Sulam program. Our committee spent a lot of time thinking about what was important to us and where we wanted to focus our energy. As a preschool, we all strongly agreed that our program was not just about children but parents as well. We decided educating families on their Jewish journey was a driving force in our mission and thus reflected in our mission statement.

Hillel Academy, Tampa, Florida

— Mission —

Hillel Academy is a community Jewish day school. Its mission is to provide a superior education that encourages a love of learning and a strong Jewish identity.

Comments

The Board of Trustees took time to write a statement that reflects the needs of the Tampa Jewish community, taking into account the importance of our students leaving our school to enter a very secular society, while maintaining our goal of helping students reach a strong level of identification within the Jewish community and within themselves.

Schools

Bialik Hebrew Day School, Toronto, Ontario

— Mission —

Bialik Hebrew Day is committed to providing an exemplary Jewish and General education to children in Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8 from diverse Jewish backgrounds. Bialik fosters a strong Jewish identity that embraces the values of our Labour Zionist roots—inclusivity, social justice and equality—in a warm and

nurturing environment. Hebrew fluency, Yiddish language & culture and a strong connection to Israel and the Jewish people are paramount. Our commitment to Jewish values, academic excellence and innovation inspires our students to become future Canadian and Jewish community leaders.

Comments

Our graduates are well-prepared for high school and beyond. They are recognized for their standards of excellence in Jewish and general studies and their commitment to Jewish values, mentschlichkeit and ahavat Yisrael. They assume respected leadership positions in their high schools, universities and communities. Many of our graduates return to Bialik as parents.

New Community Jewish High School, West Hills, California

— Mission —

The mission of New Community Jewish High School is to raise up a generation of Jewish leaders for whom Jewish values and tradition shape and guide their vision, and for whom knowledge creates possibilities for moral action, good character, and shalom.

Comments

The one sentence mission for New Community Jewish High School encapsulates the macro-vision for what we hope to accomplish in partnership with our faculty, board, students and parents. The mission is our core reference point at every board, faculty, parent and student meeting. The following questions always arise in some form: "Does any given program develop Jewish leadership?" "Do our board's actions support the transmission of Jewish values and deep knowledge?" "Do student activities involve the application of Jewish vision and the implementation of moral action?" Our mission is powerful and effective because we teach it, we self-consciously allude to it at every opportunity, and it becomes the standard by which we measure our impact upon our community.

Abraham Joshua Heschel Day School, Northridge, California

— Mission —

Abraham Joshua Heschel Day School, a community Jewish day school, provides a rich dual-curricular education that encourages independent and critical thinking, lifelong learning, self-awareness, and compassion. In partnership with our families, we inspire our students to become active, dedicated, ethical, and informed citizens and leaders who are committed to Israel and the vitality of the Jewish people.

Comments

The power of our mission statement lies in the partnership that we create with our families to build young people who will ensure the sustainability of Jewish education and the vitality of the Jewish people. Our mission statement goes far beyond providing children with a rich content-centric education, as it focuses on building individuals of strong character who will use critical thinking, lifelong learning, self-awareness, and compassion to lead lives of purpose and meaning.

HoS PEP Workshop Launches a New Cohort

On the heels of a successful conclusion to the inaugural cohort of the RAVSAK Head of School Professional Excellence Project, we were excited to launch Cohort 2 in early July. Our orientation workshop in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, welcomed a new group of highly talented and committed heads of Jewish day schools, who are just beginning or are in their early years of leadership (fellows), and the cadre of seasoned and successful heads who serve as our coaches (deans). Joining us was Peter Sturup, headmaster of Pickering College in Ontario and an experienced coach-trainer.

Our group had the opportunity to spend time together exploring issues common to day school headship, bonding as a group of like-minded individuals with similar goals, challenges and aspirations. We delved into the question of what is unique about Jewish leadership and learned about the power of asking questions to promote reflection and growth.

Most importantly, each dean-fellow pair met face-to-face, got to know each other on a personal and a professional level, and prepared to work together to strengthen leadership in the year to come. As the year unfolds, deans and fellows will speak on a weekly basis, and the cohort will continue to be strengthened through video conferences, a second gathering at the NAJDS Conference, and through our Reshet.

The members of Cohort 2 are most appreciative of the support they are receiving to ensure their success as school leaders. We are certain that, like those in Cohort 1, they will emerge from the HOS PEP experience with an increased ability to articulate their visions, effect significant change where needed, and lead their schools with confidence.

On behalf of all the program participants and the schools from which they come, RAVSAK thanks our generous funders who have made this program possible.

Mazal tov to this year's fellows!

Greg Beiles, Toronto Heschel School, Toronto, Ontario

Tracie Glazer, Hillel Community Day School, Rochester, New York

Rabbi Shaye Guttenberg, South Peninsula Hebrew Day School, Sunnyvale, California

Rabbi Ezra Levey, Scheck Hillel Community School, North Miami Beach, Florida

Helena Levine, Donna Klein Jewish Academy, Boca Raton, Florida

Rabbi Jonathan Kroll, Weinbaum Yeshiva High School, Boca Raton, Florida

Allison Oakes, Lerner School, Durham, North Carolina

Nancy Posner, Jacobson Sinai Academy, North Miami Beach, Florida

Erica Rothblum, Pressman Academy, Los Angeles, California

Einav Symons, Kadimah School, Buffalo, New York

Adam Tilove, Jewish Community Day School, Providence, Rhode Island



Our gratitude to the returning deans:

Karen Feller, HoS, Donna Klein Jewish Academy, Boca Raton, Florida

Dr. Bruce Powell, HoS, New Community Jewish High School, West Hills, California

Lynn Raviv, former HoS, N.E. Miles Jewish Day School, Birmingham, Alabama

Dr. Elliot Spiegel, former HoS, Solomon Schechter School of Westchester, Hartsdale, New York

Betty Winn, former HoS, Abraham Joshua Heschel Day School, Northridge, California ■





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The Power and Practice of Visioning

■ by **ROBERT LEVENTHAL**

A seasoned consultant to Jewish nonprofits, Leventhal draws on his extensive experience to offer guidance to schools on the procedures and successful practices of writing mission and vision statements.

For twenty years in business and fifteen years in congregational consulting at the Alban Institute, I have experienced the power of visioning. I have been asked hundreds of times to help congregations create a vision (noun). I have made it my focus to help them develop the practice of visioning (verb). Visioning is an active practice.

While not an expert on day schools, I have dealt with issues of religious school strategy as a congregational consultant. In surveying community day school websites, I found a range of communications approaches. Some schools focus on telling “about” themselves. Some have “mission statements” that explain their purpose. Some have “core values or principles” that seek to explain how they do their work. There is a wide range in the scope and sophistication of these communications, and all these elements are important in what I call a “strategic framework” of shared assumptions, visions, strategies and goals.

The Power of Visioning

A vision is a *picture about the community you aspire to be*. While a mission tells the outside world what you do, a vision needs first and foremost to inspire the leadership and stakeholders of a community. The best PR is positive “word of mouth” by satisfied clients and customers. If your customers can’t get excited and promote your vision, it will not be very compelling to others. It has to have energy and passion that will motivate people to try to make the dream a reality. The primary goal is not to come up

with a short catchy phrase to go on your website. It is creating a visioning process that helps shift the organization’s focus from the next 35 days or even the next 3-5 months and stretch it to look out to the next 3-5 years.

Let’s look at an example of school vision. The Heschel School in New York has several vision statements. One of their visions is “to create an environment that encourages the professional and personal growth of teachers and administrators.”

The goal of visioning is to provide a desired future that helps leaders stretch to their potential but not to reach beyond their capacities and become overwhelmed and break.

This vision challenges leaders to create opportunities for growth in their day to day efforts and to provide resources for teacher training. It also likely imagines partnership with other organizations. Peer learning and collegial networks

such as RAVSAK take time to build and energy to maintain. Without a vision it would be easy to cut corners on teacher development when the budget needs trimming.

The school also strives to create a meaningful experience for students; it seeks to develop the “understanding that the discovery of personal meaning and the growth of individual identity can emerge from the rigors of study.”

Parker Palmer (*The Courage to Teach*) argues that good teachers are able to make connections. When students experience how teachers make the connection they are better able to make their own connections. My guess is that Heschel’s leadership is able to sustain teacher development because their vision suggests a connection between these two visions. Heschel needs teachers



Robert Leventhal is the leadership specialist at the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism in New York City. leventhal@uscj.org

who continue to grow in order to help students gain knowledge, skills and capacity to grow.

Strategic Leadership

Mission statements, core values and visions are all part of a strategic planning toolkit. The word strategy comes from the word *strategos*, meaning “the art of the general.” Strategies work to focus your efforts so you can increase their chance for success. If you try to operate in every market and to be all things to all people, you may be spread too thin to make an impact. There is a rabbinic saying, *Tefasta merubah lo tefasta, tefasta me’uta tefasta*. If you seize too much you have seized nothing, if you seize a little you have seized something. The goal of visioning is to provide a desired future that helps leaders stretch to their potential (and gain something) but not to reach beyond their capacities and become overwhelmed and break.

What’s in a Vision?

It will be helpful to consider some key vision elements.

Categories to Frame the Vision Work

Your vision should include categories you want to explore in developing future plans, such as financial sustainability, teacher development, family engagement, inclusivity, etc. Schools should create statements that can be given to a committee or a task force as a guide to future work rather than just a short pithy phrase for your letterhead.

Values to Carry with You

School visionaries should do some study about the values that will shape their work. As they dream about the future, what values will they carry with them? The Solomon Schechter School of Westchester lists values that “create an implicit contract among the members of our community”:

Ahavat Yisrael—Love of Israel. Showing our love for and commitment to the Jewish people and the land and state of Israel as central to Jewish identity and continuity.

We infuse our students with love for Israel and its people, a sense of responsibility for its welfare, knowledge of its history, and a commitment

to all Jews worldwide.

Gemilut Chasadim—Social Action. Establishing a better world through exemplary behavior, leadership, and acts of kindness.

Our students embrace Jewish moral values by caring for others, honesty, hospitality, care of animals and nature, and active participation in a range of projects that reflect our values.

Kavod—Respect. Embracing diversity and respecting ourselves and others as we are created in God’s image. We teach respect for both Amer-



The visioning process will be ongoing. These documents in the gallery walk represent vision 1.0. There will be many revisions as leaders follow up.

ican and Jewish values and promote understanding and goodwill toward those of other faiths and beliefs.

Kehillah—Community. Taking part in and responsibility for our community as the context for meaningful Jewish lives.

The Schechter Westchester community extends far beyond our walls. Parents, teachers, and students share the responsibility of supporting each individual as well as the kehillah as a whole.

Talmud Torah—Lifelong Learning and Study. Instilling a love for continual learning through balanced study of Torah and general studies.

We study Judaism from its historical perspective and embrace our religious and cultural heritage. We provide intensive experiences in all secular subjects, including English, mathematics, social studies, science, physical education, and the arts. At Schechter Westchester, the Jewish

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 42]

and general aspects of our students education represent a unified whole.

These visions in hand, the stakeholders preparing the vision statement are better prepared to paint a picture of the life of a values-based community.

Pictures in the Minds of Visionaries

We want to tap the life experience and intuition of the participants in the visioning exercise. Steven Covey (*Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*) argues that effective people “begin with the end in mind.” Visioning is about our aspirations 3-5 or even 10 years down the road. We ask participants to avoid trying to “problem solve” today’s problems using yesterday’s solutions. Rather ask, “If we were successful in the next three to five years, what would our school look like?”

Specific Ideas that Come from Community Life

Planning leaders need to connect the vision to enduring Jewish values and to the community context: its people, its times and its capacities. Beth Am Synagogue in Baltimore takes traditional values and locates them in their urban Baltimore setting: “We aspire to ... reinvigorate urban Jewish life in Baltimore. Beth Am belongs to the Reservoir Hill Coalition ... helping to purchase and rehabilitate abandoned homes and resell them to homeowners.”

Who should be Involved?

Some people argue that the staff leaders should write the vision and tell others since they may have the most training and knowledge. Others argue that the board should write it because it is their responsibility to ensure a mission and vision. I suggest that there should be broad consultation with parents, teachers, students and other community stakeholders.

Ideally, there should be a vision-writing team that facilitates the process. School leadership needs to delegate the writing to a team of staff and volunteer leaders with knowledge of the life of the school community and vision-writing skills. Visioning is an iterative process. There needs to be several rounds of visioning and various drafts of the vision.

- Round one: the school leadership and the board
- Round two: invite the commentary of the teachers
- Round three: invite the commentary of parents, students and other stakeholders

At each round, the most recent vision draft is presented and questions and commentary are welcomed.

How To Conduct the Initial Vision Exercise

Set Up Room

I like to put 3M Post-it paper (the writing won’t leak) on a wall. I use four sheets for each vision category (family engagement, teacher development, academic proficiency etc.). Participants are gathered in front of the wall in a semicircle as a whole group. Over the years I have had groups from 10 to 75 do this type of exercise.

Explain the Rules

The facilitator poses the following question: “If our planning process was successful and you came back and visited the school in 3-5 years, what would we experience?” Here are a few of the kinds of questions that might be posed.

- What would students be doing?
- What would students be feeling?
- What would students be learning?
- What would the relationship be like between parents, students and teachers?
- What would parents be learning?
- How would teachers be growing?
- What would people in the community be saying?

Facilitation of the Whole Group

The facilitator then welcomes participation and waits for it to “bubble up and out.” The facilitator repeats the vision statement that come forward in truncated form. A scribe writes the statement down on the wall.

Brainstorming techniques encourage conversations. Participants speak for themselves rather than debate others. Facilitators demonstrate active listening by repeating statements as they are written down. Visionaries start anywhere. A vision can come up by thinking of

current concrete specific practices that are appreciated and building on them. Vision may come from a Jewish value that someone brought into the exercise and dreams to see in action. Some visions need to be coaxed out. Introverted people may appreciate the chance to write their vision on 3 x 5 cards and submit them.

Small Group Work

Each category can take 15-20 minutes. I always take one category and do it together with the whole group. I then go category by category. If I have a very large group I may delegate the other categories to smaller groups and empower other facilitators to manage these.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 70]

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Crafting Effective Mission and Vision Statements

■ by **RAY LEVI**

Finding just the right words that convey what makes your school special and unique, different from other schools while similar enough to have broad appeal, is a tall order. Levi offers suggestions for this essential work.

When we evaluate or market one of our programs, how do we identify its value? Given a myriad of new curricular options, how do we decide which are right for our school? In a period of tight finances, what guides our commitment to socioeconomic diversity? In seeking answers to these questions, we have long been guided by our mission and vision statements. Pondered and carefully crafted by our boards, they reflect the collective wisdom of multiple constituencies and are designed to position us uniquely in our markets. Our budget can be a reflection of the values articulated. Our admission office can seek “mission-appropriate” families. Our tefillah practices can be guided by our definitions of community.

I continue to see mission—the fundamental statement of who we are—and vision—the aspirational expression of our goals for our graduates—as the genuine foundation and grounding for each aspect of school life. But increasingly I wonder how much guidance our mission and vision offer.

Ten years ago, day school mission statements were often long and complex. School communities have since become diligent editors. Our process to be concise and precise has been honorable, often informed by data we’ve gathered from surveys. After all that editing and data-collecting, however, many of our mission statements became indistinguishable from one another. How many of our mission statements articulate our desire for academic excellence? Or speak of preparing our students to be

leaders in the Jewish and American communities?

Nearby independent and public schools seek to achieve high levels of academic performance, and thus we embraced many of the phrases that would remind our community that we are indeed competitive. In Minnesota, where open-enrollment policies allow parents to sign up their children in public school districts outside their communities of residence, prestigious districts have actively recruited students, launching campaigns that mirror the language of the most selective independent schools. It is not hard for us to imagine how appealing those schools are to potential Jewish day school families, particularly if so many of their words and ours are indistinguishable.

How do we find the balance between appearing mainstream and articulating unique qualities? How do we reflect contemporary trends while embracing enduring values?

I invite you engage in a bit of informal research. Visit the websites of some Jewish day schools and look at their mission and vision statements. If you substituted the name of your own school, might these be used in your school? You might even find considerable overlap with area independent schools. How do we find the balance between appearing mainstream and articulating unique qualities? How do we reflect contemporary trends while embracing enduring values?

There are resources available to us to capture the particularity of day schools more effectively. I have been intrigued by work that marketing firm writers who have assisted our schools’ marketing efforts have undertaken:



Dr. Ray Levi is the director of the Day School Leadership Training Institute (DSLTI). rlevi@jtsa.edu

Establishing an Integrated Community and School in Israel A Continuing Challenge

■ by **AYELET LEHMAN**

What is the mission and vision for a Jewish day school that can unite a population with a wide variety of Jewish beliefs, affiliations and practices? This article provides perspective by describing how this challenge has played out at an intentionally pluralistic school in Israel.

As a child growing up in the 1920s, my grandfather studied in a cheder and was originally destined to become a rabbi in his hometown Zawiercie, Poland. The winds of change peeled off his religious clothes and my grandfather, like many young Jews across Europe at that time, immigrated to Israel alone. He joined a training program at a kibbutz in northern Israel. I grew up in a secular Israeli Zionist family. My home was filled with Israeli literature and world culture, science and love of Israel; but following my grandfather's way, it lacked any Jewish feature. I did not know how a synagogue looked like from the inside; we did not light Shabbat candles. I did not know what the siddur, the Talmud, or the Mishnah was. In the secular social environment in which I grew up, there was no room for it.

With this cultural baggage, I arrived at the Keshet community at Mazkeret Batya. It was a double baggage: the past deeply rooted in Jewish wisdom and the Diaspora and the Jewish way of life, and the secular Israeli present, connected to the culture, the language and the land, while consciously disconnected from any of the religious aspects of Judaism. I arrived at Keshet wondering how I could help my children to establish a Jewish-Israeli identity that will be less divided. How can one combine these parts of their identity so they won't feel dichotomous or in opposition? And in a parallel process, how can two identity groups, religious and secular, learn together, without constant confrontation and without erasing one another?

Establishing a community

The public education system in Israel is composed of several educational tracks: state secular education, state religious education, and a variety of independent Orthodox systems. The religious and secular education frameworks are separated from kindergarten. This separation reduces the chance of these two groups meeting and getting to know each other. The Keshet

project consists of a group of parents who joined together around the idea of integrated education, challenged the existing reality and proposed the creation of a new alternative.

The motivation to live together stems not only from ideological motives but also from the emotional needs of the two identity groups.

What does the secular group lack that it seeks to find in the religious group? What does the religious group wish for by bonding with the secular group? The secular lack the cohesive togetherness, the rituals that are an occasion for gatherings and festivity, the connection to the collective past. They lack the melody and the liturgical hymns that strum the heartstrings through faith and spirituality. The religious group, it seems, lack the internal permission to be egocentric, to engage in personal development and self-fulfillment. They seek the freedom to ask questions, to resist, to challenge and criticize.

The central task during the initial stage was to create a commu-

**How can two identity groups,
religious and secular, learn together,
without constant confrontation and
without erasing one another?**



Ayelet Lehman is a mother of three children who study at Mazkeret Batya's integrated school, as well as an organizational consultant and group facilitator, and a consultant at Tzav Pius, an organization that fosters dialogue and co-existence between religious and secular Jews in Israel. lehman7@bezeqint.net

nity, a group in which individuals will feel a sense of belonging, in which they will feel themselves to be significant participants. This desire to establish a community around the school was manifested in the planning of many community-wide events: social gatherings for children and adults, holiday events and festivals, lectures, study and discussion groups.

At the same time, plans for the development of the kindergartens and schools were established. The school's vision was formulated, inspired by the communal vision.



The underlying assumption was that both identity groups arrive with great cultural wealth. The goal of the partnership is not to change the other or convince the other to switch sides. The goal is to respect, accept and enjoy the added value that the other brings. At the beginning of the process it was evident that each side wanted to reveal its strengths. Like two peacocks dancing a mating dance, each side presented its colorful tail: one arrived with Maimonides, Rashi and the Mishnah, the other bringing Israeli writers such as Yehuda Amichai, Bialik and Alterman. At this point another issue emerged. The religious group felt that Hebrew culture

and world culture belonged to it also; hence, how does one define a distinct secular identity for the community and for the school?

A Joint Dance

The integrated model that was chosen is called Keshet ("rainbow"), based upon the first Keshet school founded in Jerusalem. The model takes into consideration the dichotomy that exists in Israeli society between the two identity groups, the religious and the secular, and softens it through their encounters and shared activities. For prayer and Jewish study, the students are divided into two groups: a meeting group for the secular and group prayer for the religious. When a student enters Keshet's educational institutions, his or her parents choose the student's identity group. During Jewish studies the class is again divided in two: the prayer group studies Judaism with an emphasis on Jewish law and the sacred, whereas the meeting group emphasizes the cultural aspects of Judaism.

The educational framework that was established included many issues that required guidance and direction. Who will lead the class, a secular or a religious figure? What type of collaboration will there be between the two teachers, and what is the model for successful collaboration? How will Judaism be taught in a way that gives equal room for both groups—the group that "knows" and the group assumed to have no knowledge? How will the school celebrate events and holidays in the Jewish calendar in a way that reflects the two identity groups? Additional questions arose, concerning the different lifestyles and how those can co-exist. Should food be kosher? Should there be a dress code? What about the various blessings? Can events be scheduled on Saturday?

Like two peacocks dancing a mating dance, each side presented its colorful tail.

Debates over the school's ideological foundation occurred also in the pages of the community newspaper, published weekly for the past eight years. Arguments and disagreements arose there. Is the organizing theme of each issue the weekly Torah portion? What is the place of secular content? What is appropriate and permitted for publication and what is inappropriate and hurtful towards others?

A pause to think

The initial stage was frenetic, requiring the establishment of organizational and pedagogical infrastructure for the school, consolidation of the community through activities and meetings, and the development of an organizational infrastructure for the new venture. The atmosphere was of cohesion, blurring of the differences and dilemmas in an effort to succeed in the new venture.

As the initiative developed, the gaps, conflicts and disagreements regarding the nature of the community and its educational frameworks emerged. This required taking time away from logistical concerns and returning to the basic questions, the conceptual basis. Why do we wish to live together and educate together? What is the purpose of integrated education? What is the nature of a joint community com-

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 48]



posed of both religious and secular? What do we fear and what do we hope for, both as individuals and as members of one of the identity groups?

As a result, a forum was established for community members who wished to discuss these questions. The forum was moderated by an external facilitator who specializes in issues surrounding Jewish identity. About 20 members of the community attended the forum, which provided them with an opportunity to give voice to their personal Jewish-Israeli identities, as well as a clarifying the directions and principles of the initiative at Mazkeret Batya.

Intriguing questions emerged regarding the joint community:

What is the role and importance of Judaism in my personal identity?

To what extent am I interested, as a secular adult, in developing my Jewish identity?

Does the religious party of the community have a responsibility to "teach" the secular party and bring them closer to the Jewish sources?

What is the purpose of the partnership between the religious and secular groups? Is it being good neighbors, creating personal acquaintance, or perhaps even a mutual influence on the perception of Judaism—expanding one's perception through the other?

Is Judaism the organizing theme of the community?

The forum was named "thinking—dreaming." It enabled us to

get to know each other, communicate and bring up dilemmas. It turned out that the dreams of the group were diverse and sometimes contradictory. Discussing the difficulties helped us abandon the utopian concept of a shared community and embark towards a more realistic perception.

Some of us are satisfied with being good neighbors: we have someone to call when our child needs a ride to school. Some of us think that Judaism is nice, but there are important cultural resources and values from other, universal, sources. Others expect nothing less than identity transformation.

We needed to find teachers who are familiar with the material, whose worldview is pluralistic, who are able to accept feelings, attitudes and behaviors different from their own, and who will protect every child's right to express his or her opinion.

Back to school

It is important to understand that unlike other schools in Israel, which are established through the education system and the local authority, the Keshet School in Mazkeret Batya was established by a group of parents in order to realize their social-educational goals. Even so, some of the teachers who joined

the school were not familiar with the vision of Keshet, its teaching philosophy and educational practices. For this reason, two years after the establishment of the school, various stakeholders undertook a structured process of forming a school vision. The process was led by the school administration, with staff and parents participating.

The vision document details the key values on which the community is founded: mutual respect, tolerance, pluralism, multiple perspectives, development of individual identity and group

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 68]



October is National Gaucher Awareness Month

Gaucher disease can affect anyone - Even you!

Join us in commemorating Awareness Month
and learn how you can help others.



Gaucher disease is an inborn error of metabolism. Inborn metabolic disorders are those conditions resulting from a specific malfunction in one or more of the body's many individual chemical processes. It can be debilitating, painful and even fatal. Early evaluation, diagnosis and treatment are vital to saving the lives of those with Gaucher disease and helping them to lead a better quality of life. Although Gaucher disease can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender or ethnicity, those in the Ashkenazi Jewish population are disproportionately affected. Approximately 1 in 450 have Gaucher which is passed on by genes from both parents. Approximately 1 in 10 are carriers as compared to 1 in 200 within the general population.

Some of the warning signs of Gaucher include: fatigue, anemia, easily fractured and broken bones and bone pain, easy bruising and bleeding, distended stomach due to enlarged liver or spleen and more. Currently there is no cure but there are treatments for some forms of Gaucher. Your physician will be able to determine a course of treatment, as some mild cases do not require medication.

Unfortunately, all too often people who have Gaucher disease or are carriers are misdiagnosed and undiagnosed due to the lack of education within the medical and lay community. For this reason the National Gaucher Foundation, Inc. (NGF) has spent many years promoting education through marketing, events, conferences and meetings. But we need your help. If you, a family member, friend or co-worker has symptoms of Gaucher, please help by telling them what you have learned, giving them educational materials about the disease, or sending them to the NGF's website at www.gaucherdisease.org. Printable brochures are available at our website and you can email the NGF at ngf@gaucherdisease.org for additional materials.

**The National Gaucher Foundation, Inc. invites you to help commemorate
Gaucher disease Awareness Month October 1 to 31, 2014.**

The National Gaucher Foundation, Inc. (NGF) is hosting an online awareness event as part of its activities during the month of October. Gaucher Awareness Month is a great opportunity for each of us to help promote Awareness of Gaucher disease, as outreach plays an essential role in helping to locate those who are undiagnosed or misdiagnosed. The event will feature a Gaucher video contest for submissions of videos created by those who have Gaucher or are connected with it in some way, such as family, treatment centers, friends and coworkers. The deadline for submission of Gaucher videos is September 15. The winner will receive \$500 and there will be prizes for second and third place. See further details at www.gaucherdisease.org.

Prior to and throughout the event website visitors will be able to submit "selfies" showing their support of Gaucher Awareness Month. The theatre inside of our "virtual building" will house the winning Gaucher videos, a game room featuring a Wheel of Fortune which awards prizes, Awareness projects submitted by the public, a music room featuring original piano music and arrangements performed by John Ripley (johnripleymusic.com) and much more. We invite everyone to submit *their* Gaucher awareness projects for posting at the NGF website. Pass it on and submit your own projects, videos and selfies to help others and commemorate Gaucher Awareness Month. Sponsorships and donations are welcome. Visit our website for details.

For more information go to www.gaucherdisease.org.

National Gaucher Foundation, Inc., 2227 Idlewood Road, Suite 6, Tucker, GA 30084, Ph: 877-649-2742

Leadership Lessons from the Rebbe

■ Interview with **JOSEPH TELUSHKIN**

Author of the recently released biography *Rebbe: The Life and Teachings of Menachem M. Schneerson, the Most Influential Rabbi in Modern History*, Telushkin draws lessons that day school leaders can learn from the Rebbe.

Tell us what the Rebbe's vision was and how he came to it. Did he ever speak or write of it explicitly?

The Rebbe made it clear that his goal was to reach and empower every Jewish community and every Jew in the world. Jonathan Sacks once said that the Nazis wanted to hunt down every Jew in hate; the Rebbe wanted to reach every Jew in love. His message also was that we always needed to find a starting point with which to reach Jews; this became a cornerstone of Chabad practice. This is why Chabad became associated in people's minds with questions such as, "Have you put on tefillin today?" "Do you light Shabbat candles?"

When astronaut John Glenn circled the globe and advanced the American space program, President John Kennedy quoted a Chinese proverb, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." The Rebbe intuited and taught that the Jewish journey could start with a single mitzvah. He felt that the performance of one mitzvah could transform a person's life. His goal was to help Jews incorporate Jewish practices into their lives, to inspire in Jews a pride in their Jewishness, and most importantly to help each Jew develop a personal connection to God.

When the Rebbe started the campaign to influence people to put on tefillin, it upset some people in the most traditional part of the Jewish world, Jews who are known as haredim. The Satmar Rebbe was upset that a person might put on tefillin and then eat nonkosher food, or a woman might light Shabbat candles and then violate the numerous Shabbat laws. The Rebbe thought otherwise. Each commandment had a value in and of itself. So if you put on tefillin and then ate something unkosher, you still had fulfilled one mitzvah, far better than having fulfilled neither.

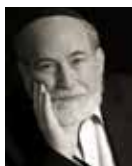
The moment you say that every mitzvah has significance, you appreciate the efforts of every person, as opposed to focusing on what people are not doing. Obviously the Rebbe was committed to a more complete observance, but he genuinely had respect and affection for Jews no matter what their level of religious practice.

How did the Rebbe succeed in taking a branch of chasidism, which we tend to think of as insular and opposed to engagement with the outside world, and transforming it into an outward-looking missionary movement? I'm thinking especially of his own personal qualities, and characteristics of Chabad as well. Did the Rebbe himself invent this mission, or did he actualize what was already latent in Chabad's philosophy previously?

The belief of Chabad shluchim that each Jewish person has a holy neshama inspires many of those Jews to live lives of greater meaning and observance.

The belief in the great sanctity of the Jewish soul is a cornerstone of Chabad's philosophy. This gave an inherently optimistic orientation to the movement—the belief that each Jew has a spark within them, a pintele Yid, a yiddishe neshama. He therefore approached each person with enthusiasm about their potential for that which he regarded as innately theirs. There was an educational experiment once conducted in a number of schools; in some classes teachers were told that some of their students had higher IQs than they actually had. Those students wound up doing better in their classes and earning higher grades. All this because the teachers believed in them and therefore worked harder with them. Something similar happens with so many Chabad shluchim: their belief that each Jewish person has a holy neshama inspires many of those Jews to live lives of greater meaning and observance.

The Rebbe took this belief and actualized it on an international scale. In 1958, he announced the U'faratzta campaign, modeled



Rabbi Joseph Telushkin is the bestselling author of Jewish Literacy, Words that Hurts, Words that Heal, The Book of Jewish Values, and more than a dozen other volumes. joseph.telushkin@josephhtelushkin.com

on God's promise to Abraham that "You shall spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south" (Genesis 28:14). The Rebbe started sending shluchim, emissaries, all over the world to find Jews and bring them closer to Judaism (there are Chabad houses today in Cambodia and the Congo).

In truth, he did encounter a measure of resistance from some whom he wanted to serve in far-flung communities. Orthodox Jews traditionally put great emphasis on living within the Orthodox world; living among non-Orthodox Jews, they fear, will dilute their religious life or the religious behavior of their children. In this regard, the Rebbe was fearless. He wanted his chasidim to go out into the world and not be stymied by the fear that their religious lives or the religiosity of their children would decline. He kept preaching this idea over and over until it became a part of the ideology of the movement.

What kinds of challenges or struggles did he face within Chabad as he made this radical change?

Simply put, there was no institutional resistance, nor could there be. The Rebbe was head of every major institution of Chabad. There is no instance of organized resistance to his leadership or initiative. Acceptance of the rebbe is a central part of chasidic life. Resistance, for example, to going out on shlichut occurred only in individual cases, from chasidim who did not want to leave an established community and had no idea how they would successfully conduct this mission. Eventually though such resistance melted away.

At the annual gatherings of Chabad shluchim from around the world (the men's gathering draws about 5,000 people, and the women's about 3,500), you sense the tremendous pride and enthusiasm of shluchim. There is a roll call, and they announce new states and new countries that boast a Chabad presence. Currently Chabad houses are found in 49 American states and 80 countries—a remarkable legacy of the Rebbe.

What made his mission so compelling to so many outside of the circle of Lubavitch?

I think there are a lot of Jews who are anxious to see Judaism survive but who on their own would not become observant. One memorable example epitomizes the sense of the endurance of Jewish tradition that Chabad inspires in others. The New York Times used to run a weekly ad from Lubavitch near the bottom of the front page every Friday: "Jewish women and girls, candle lighting time today is ..." On January 1, 2000, in honor of the new millennium, the Times ran a mock front page that purported to show the news from January 1, 2100; they included Chabad's Shabbat candle lighting ad (January 1, 2100 really is a Friday), with the appropriate time for that date.

That story reflects why Chabad gets so much support among non-Or-

thodox Jews: they are confident that however much Judaism in America faces the perils of assimilation and other problems, this group will be around to preserve and perpetuate it. Besides, they exude genuine joy, exuberance and caring in fulfilling their duties. These qualities are contagious and can be hard to resist.

One striking aspect of the Rebbe's leadership is that he saw himself as working on behalf of the Jewish people as a whole, not just for his Lubavitch Chasidim. Should leaders of Jewish day schools think of themselves as organizational heads? Leaders of the Jewish people? Both?

Let me start with an example: the Rebbe encouraged a certain one of his chasidim to make a contribution to a denominationally Conservative-leaning and financially struggling Jewish newspaper, because every Friday that paper would list the right time to light candles, and he feared that if the paper stopped publishing, there would be Jews who might no longer know the right time to light candles. The Rebbe had a sense of a broader responsibility to the Jewish people, a sense that far transcended his role within his particular community.

Jewish leaders need to think in grander terms. Other Orthodox leaders might not see it as important that Reform rabbis stay in their community or that Conservative newspapers survive. To the Rebbe, anything that hurt a Jewish organization was bad for the Jews. As I interpret it: I've known some Orthodox rabbis who would prefer that there be only Orthodoxy or nothing, as they regard alternative movements as of little or no value. But if that were the case, if other movements disappeared, obviously there would be many Jews lost to Judaism. The Rebbe preferred that people become Orthodox and follow a fully traditional way of Jewish life, but short of that he encouraged people to adopt one mitzvah, and then another, and then another, and to strengthen the Jewish practices in the movements in which they were.

The Rebbe had a disagreement with Rabbi Joseph Glaser of the CCAR, the Reform rabbinical organization. Rabbi Glaser was opposed, as a matter of principle, to lighting public menorahs, believing that doing so infringed the separation between church and state. The Rebbe was willing to go into the public sphere and light menorahs on public grounds, because he knew that many Jews who would attend such gatherings would otherwise not light menorahs at all. The public display now might serve to inspire Jewish pride—to show people that they don't have to be afraid or shy about being Jewish in the larger society—and lead more people to fulfill the mitzvah at home. And, as he pointed out to Rabbi Glaser, if Congress, which should model separation of church and state, opened each session with a prayer offered by a clergyman, there should be no problem with the public lighting of menorahs, a position that was ultimately validated by the Supreme Court.

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**President John Kennedy
quoted a Chinese proverb, "A
journey of a thousand miles
begins with a single step."**

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The Rebbe also favored nondenominational prayer in school. Based on his experience under Communist Russia and on what had happened in Nazi Germany, he believed that such prayer would be good for Jews and non-Jews. He did not favor reading Scriptures from any particular faith. Nevertheless, he stood at odds with the rest of the Jewish community by affirming that the acknowledgment of God in public schools would help create in young people a sense of personal responsibility before God. Mind you, this was not a position that earned him many friends, nor was it for his own chasidim who did not, in any case, attend public schools. It was a principled position which he took out of a concern for all Jewish children, as well as for non-Jewish children. This position, unlike the menorah issue, was rejected by the Supreme Court, though the Rebbe long hoped that it would be overturned.

As regards Jewish educators and Jewish education, he regarded this as an exalted profession, one that devoted itself to raising and teaching the next generation. He also saw it as both a huge responsibility and a huge merit, the sort of job that could engulf its practitioners 24/7. What he most wanted was to see educators convey to students a real connection to the divine, as well as *simchah shel mitzvah*, the joy and excitement of carrying out the mitzvot. Also, and this is very important for educators, the Rebbe taught and showed by example—and I spend a lot of time on this in my book—that each person, each student, must be shown personal care. As Rabbi Yehuda Krinsky once told me, “The Rebbe was not a cookie-cutter type”; he didn’t have one answer for everybody but treated each person at the level appropriate for him or for her.

What kinds of lessons do you think Jews today, and day schools in particular, can draw from the Rebbe’s example, in...

Forming a Jewish vision: He wanted to communicate to children that there is a God and that one should have a personal relationship with God (e.g., through prayer and the performance of mitzvot). Also a Jew should have a sense of mission, of caring for something

beyond him- or herself. And that Jews should take pride in their heritage and try to perpetuate it.

The philanthropist George Rohr, who was a member of a prominent Modern Orthodox synagogue in New York, once proudly told the Rebbe of a beginner’s service he had just conducted that had drawn 180 people with “no Jewish background.” The Rebbe challenged him: the participants, he told Rohr, had the background of “Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.” He wanted to make every Jew feel a part of the Jewish community, to give each Jew a sense of dignity by virtue of their Jewish inheritance.

Leading mission-driven change:

The Rebbe tried to create a sense of fearlessness among his adherents. He wanted to empower everyone to become leaders on their own, and often he refused to tell people what to do but encouraged them to come up with their own answers. He continually confronted the challenges facing the Jewish world.

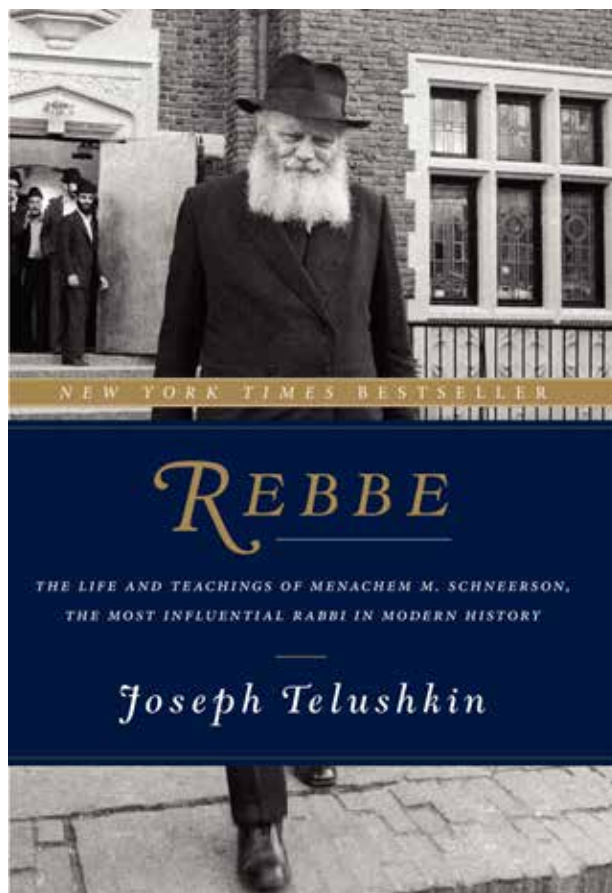
Working with different kinds of

Jews: Chabad obviously works in an Orthodox way. They are not going to claim that all denominations are equally valid, but they are open to working with other communities and with all Jews, even if they are not necessarily interested in becoming Orthodox. When Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, Israel’s former chief rabbi, told the Rebbe he was involved in kiruv rechokim, bringing those far from Judaism closer, the Rebbe asked him, “How do we know who’s near and who’s

far? They are all precious in God’s eyes.” Chabad is capable of working with a wide spectrum of Jews and also with a wide spectrum of rabbis.

Leading by example: For those rabbis who serve in the pulpit, it’s assumed that their first job will be as an assistant to a rabbi in a large congregation or as the rabbi in a small city, with the understanding that as they grow in experience they will move to a larger, more prestigious pulpit in a larger city. Jews in small towns are aware that these young rabbis won’t stay long. By contrast, Chabad rabbis come to a commu-

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 75]



The Rebbe taught and showed by example that each person, each student, must be shown personal care. As Rabbi Yehuda Krinsky once told me, “The Rebbe was not a cookie-cutter type.”

Join the 2015 RAVSAK Judaic Art Contest

The Judaic Art Contest is the fruit of collaboration between RAVSAK and the Global Day of Jewish Learning. The program, for elementary, middle and high schoolers, offers students the chance to relate their creative expression to rich Jewish content and to reflect deeply on the meaning and possibilities of Jewish art.



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Karen Feller
Head of School
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Mission Driven Teachers: Veshinantam Lemorekha!

■ by **TZIVIA GARFINKEL**

Articles in this section illustrate ways that mission statements can play a concrete role in the life of various school stakeholders. Here, Garfinkel describes a new initiative to ensure that her school's Jewish mission informs the learning in all classrooms.

Recently, members of our leadership team began to ask some simple yet critical questions about our mission statement. Are we introducing the document effectively to faculty members who are tasked with realizing it? Do faculty members make personal meaning of it and consciously work to actualize it in their everyday life at school? Should we be providing teachers with feedback about their support of the mission; should their performance in this area be assessed?

We asked these questions because it had become clear over time that the Jewish mission of the school was seen to be the exclusive domain of the Jewish studies faculty members. While all members of the school community know that they are responsible for the overarching, general mission and vision statements of the school, we recognized that the particular statements that include the words "Israel," "Jewish" and "Torah" are not seen as "mine" for those teachers and administrators who are not part of the Jewish studies department.

This recognition was a long time coming, and may be a familiar phenomenon at other schools as well. Along with the sometimes differentiated status of Jewish and general studies teachers in our schools, this allocation of the Jewish tasks to the Judaic studies staff is frequently tolerated although not talked about.

What to do? At the heart of a successful process that focuses on a school's mission and vision is a shared understanding by the leadership, who are the vigilant caretakers of the words that drive the school. Therefore, it seemed that the necessary first step was for the administrators to examine the mission and vision statements and to articulate what they mean to each of us. Without this first step, we knew that our expectation for teach-

ers to own these statements would lack integrity.

In this way, we began a process that raised questions concerning our own support of the mission and we began to explore our own understandings. The approach we developed was very Jewish. We created a classic "blatt Gemara," a traditionally formatted page of Talmud, designed with the mission statement at the center of the page with room all around the margins of the text for questions, comments and exchanges between the commentators, i.e., the administrative leadership of the school. Using this unique protocol, we gave written voice to our interpretations of the mission statement that reflected the varied perspectives of each reader. And we discovered that there are multiple ways to read and understand this text.

At the very same time that we began this exploration of the mission of the school, the administrators were concurrently engaged in a process focusing on teacher evaluation rubrics. On the one hand, the administration was examining its own sense of the mission and each member's support of same. On the other hand, we were examining how we evaluate teacher performance. Some unidentified force seemed to be guiding us to merge these two processes. A teacher evaluation committee composed of teachers and administrators had been formed to determine how to best guide teachers to excellence in the domains of knowledge of content, delivery of instruction, creation of positive classroom environment, demonstration of school spirit, etc. And in the process of developing newly articulated standards for teacher performance in these domains, the question of how to guide teachers to similar excellence in support of the school mission came to the fore. We came to appreciate that it must be within

The statements that include the words "Israel," "Jewish" and "Torah" are not seen as "mine" for those teachers and administrators who are not part of the Jewish studies department.



Tzivia Garfinkel is the head of Jewish studies at Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School in Chicago. tgarfinkel@bzaeds.org

the framework of the school mission and core visions that everything else should take place.

Beyond the work of the evaluation committee, a leadership team consisting of the curriculum coordinator, academic heads, and an evaluation consultant began to work through what excellence would look like in each domain. For the first time, we added and examined the domain of “realizing the mission” along with other more traditional aspects of teacher evaluation. So in addition to items like “teaches to a variety of learning needs” we now have added “cultivates a positive Jewish identity” and “strengthens connections to Jewish communities in Israel, America and the world.” As with every single item in the rubric, there is a continuum regarding teacher performance that moves from “does not meet standards” through “improvement necessary” to “effective” and finally “highly effective.” And we articulated explicit descriptions for each stage of the continuum.

The new teacher evaluation document is ready to be rolled out for the beginning of the 2014-15 school year. However, prior to encountering the new evaluation document, all general and Jewish studies teachers in early childhood, lower school and middle school will be presented with the opportunity to learn the mission statement and to make meaning of it for themselves. Following some paired reading and learning time, teachers will be invited to take part in a “chalk talk.” A chalk talk is a silent way to do reflection, generate ideas, check on understanding. This is a protocol from the National School Reform Faculty Resource Book that encourages thoughtful contemplation and that allows participants to freely express themselves without the risk of exposure. This particular chalk talk will take place on large sheets of paper which will look like giant pages of Talmud on which the mission statement will be posted in the center with room surrounding it for written comments. We hope that this learning activity will provide the academic leadership with an appreciation for how teachers currently understand the mission, and will guide us so we know what work needs to be done to deepen their understanding as well as their sense of responsibility for actualizing all parts of the mission.

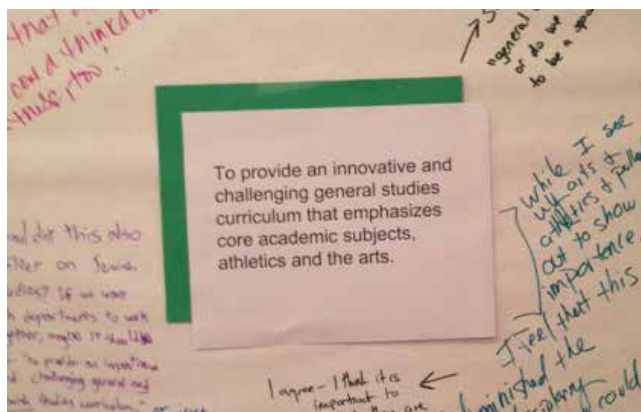
This initiative has brought us back to the ultimate question of “Who am I?” or, in our case, “Who is Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School?” Beginning the process in the leadership team and only then moving it out to the faculty and staff, we can feel confident that we do know who we are, and that we are prepared to guide our teachers to develop their own answers to this question.

As Seymour Fox wrote in *Visions of Jewish Education*:

Both research and experience demonstrate that visions can be mere pronouncements or can have the most intense impact on a school. ... If the principal is not encouraging, supporting and leading the school in the translation of the vision's ideas into day-to-day practice, the school will drift, its teachers will lose their focus, and students and parents will be denied the excitement of an education whose details are designed to offer them both discernment and meaning. ... Despite the unrelenting pressures of the day, they must refuse to separate the vision from its ongoing implementation and review.

With the new school year upon us, we have dedicated ourselves to a renewed focus on the mission. It will be a year in which for the first time, teachers will receive feedback

for their demonstrated understanding and support of the mission. It will be a year of *Veshinantam lemorekha*, of teaching our teachers diligently, designed to strengthen their commitment to the educational vision of our school and to yield students who embody the BZAEDS vision of young educated Jews. ■



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From Mission Statement to Disciplinary Policy

■ by **MARK H. SHPALL**

Shpall argues that a school's discipline policy provides a platform for putting its mission statement into practice, thus connecting both student and administrator to the school's values.

The mission statements of Jewish day schools have consistent themes: love of Judaism, connection to the Jewish people, excellent education, biblical values, ethical treatment of others and tikkun olam. In short, the mission of all Jewish day schools is helping to create the next generation of Jewishly involved and connected mentsches. But how does a school react and respond when a student violates these tenets? How does a school discipline its students in keeping with its mission statement? All of our JDS leadership teams (board, head, principal, etc.) rightly spend many hours arguing over each word of the mission statement, yet how much time does the school spend discussing and understanding the implementation of the mission statement through their disciplinary approach, ensuring that the approach is in sync with the mission statement?

Similar to Jewish day schools around the nation, the mission of the New Community Jewish High School (NCJHS), located in West Hills, California, is to “raise up a new generation of Jewish leaders for whom Jewish values and tradition shape and guide their vision, and for whom knowledge creates possibilities for moral action, good character, and shalom.” Using the Talmud (Shabbat 31a) as a guide, this mission has been translated into six qualities that comprise our “ideal” graduate, including the ability to make “wise decisions” and knowing a “big thing from a small thing.”

We have a deep-seated commitment to the idea that when a student makes a mistake that requires disciplinary action, it is a moment to teach and educate, not a moment to simply punish and penalize. In these moments, when students are at their most vulnerable, we can have the deepest impact on their future ability to make “wise decisions” and know the difference between a “big thing and a small thing.”

Through the following approaches, discipline can be moved out of the penalty/retribution sphere and into the educational realm, where it will have a much longer and more profound impact.

What is Discipline?

“Train a child in the way he [should] go; and, even when old, he will not swerve from it.” Proverbs 22:6

Although the word “discipline” comes from the Latin word *disciplina*, which means “instruction given, teaching, learning, and knowledge,” discipline has evolved to be understood more for the punishment than for the learning. That then begs the question, does punishment work? Our prisons are overflowing with a clear answer in the negative. Punishment for the sake of vengeance only leads to high degrees of recidivism and does not result in an understanding of why the original actions were wrong and why not to repeat those actions in the future.

Instead, a strategy that incorporates the mission of teaching knowledge (not information) for the sake of moral action is a key component of our approach. When a student is brought to us, the first question is never “What did you do wrong?” or “Why are you in trouble?” Instead, we begin with the simple prompt, “Tell me why we are talking.” By putting the onus on students and allowing them to verbalize the situation, what they did, and why they did it, the student can internalize their role much more than if a teacher or administrator is telling them the exact same thing. This conversation is followed up with the next logical question: “Tell me why your actions are a problem,” or “How did your actions contradict the values of our school?”



Mark H. Shpall JD is the dean of students, AP Government teacher and director of community programming at the New Community Jewish High School in West Hills, California. mshpall@faculty.ncjhs.org

The final part of the conversation is, “What do you think would be the appropriate response to your actions?” Most of the time, students will select a consequence that naturally flows from their transgression. This may be the most important part of the entire sequence. What is a reasonable and a natural consequence will help solidify the lesson that the student clearly needs to learn. Imposing a harsh penalty that satisfies the natural desire to punish and “hurt” the student so they never make the same mistake always feels good at the moment and may temporarily teach the student a lesson, but if the consequence flows directly from the transgression, and the student is part of the process of determining the consequence, the lesson can be much longer lasting.

A Calm and Reasoned Approach

The Talmud teaches us not to discipline when angry, because at that moment we are not being objective and our actions at that time should only be for the sake of the child (Moed Katan 17a).

As Dov Seidman in his book *How* beautifully puts it, how we approach any situation is as, if not more, important than what we do in that situation. Students know that they have transgressed when they are sitting in the dean of student/principal/head of school’s office. They know they have disappointed. They are probably already upset and embarrassed and, as children, may not know how to react properly in that situation. It is always much easier to teach the student what they did wrong, why it is wrong, and explore ways for them to make teshuvah if the adult approaches the student with a calm demeanor. Anger is the only enemy in this situation and is in opposition to our Jewish texts and the educational approach those texts require. As educators, we would never teach a class through anger and tyranny; we know that is counterproductive. Why should the disciplinary arena be any different?

Betzelem Elohim

“In the image of God was humanity made. (Genesis 9:6) Beloved is Israel for they are called God’s children.” Pirkei Avot 3:14

How we approach and talk to each student will also have a major impact on the outcome of this process. We approach every disciplinary situation with the belief that the student is a worthy, valuable member of our community. In this way, we have truly internalized the quote from the *Torah* which allows us to look at every student we deal with as a good person, someone who may have made a mistake but who is made in the image of God. This approach completely changes the tone and tenor of the conversation and lets the child know that we believe in them and their potential instead of always “looking” for our students to trip up and make a mistake.

Central to this approach is the belief that there is no “us” and “them” in this discussion; we are all on the same side of the equation. “We” were made all made in the image of God; removing the “us” and “them” from the conversation makes everyone part of the solution.

Students know that they have transgressed when they are sitting in the dean of student/principal/head of school’s office.



This includes bringing the parents into the conversation. Some independent entity called “us” is not punishing “them”; instead, our team (administrators, teachers, occasionally the school counselor, the student and the parent[s]) work together to understand what happened, why it happened, and most importantly, how to teach the student the important lessons from this incident. An important component of this approach is a deliberate effort to avoid embarrassing the student. While humiliation may feel good and public shaming may be a lesson to other students, it is akin to murder (Bava Metzia 58b-59a) and should always be avoided.

Context Matters

“Reality is not a function of the event as event, but of the relationship of that event to past, and future, events,” Robert Penn Warren wrote in *All the King’s Men*. Because context matters, the consequence for

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 74]

Partnering with Parents: It's All About Mission

■ by **ALLI DEBROW**

Debrow illuminates the some of the ways that a school's mission guides the relationship between parents and the school, starting with the recruitment process and continuing throughout the years that their children attend the school.

The relationship between a school's families and its mission is the foundation for a successful, unified program. Day schools need to present their programs to prospective families with clear and compelling statements. A school's mission statement should frame the organization's purpose throughout a parent's experience at a chosen school. A Jewish day school setting needs to create a strong definition of the educational objectives, both secular and Judaic, for families to envision goals and aspirations for their children. Day schools thrive on visions that convey the aspiration of building a central gath-

ering place of Jewish values. They build a keshet, or connection, between parents and staff, thereby providing opportunities for future generations to take an important role in the school's endeavors.

In Jewish tradition, parents play a significant spiritual role. Parents are obligated to teach their children through mitzvot and derech eretz, or how to behave in the world. Parents are the first to show their child a code of behavior which connects all people. The Torah reminds us that passing Jewish knowledge to our children is part of God's holy plan:

You shall teach them diligently unto your children, and you shall speak of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way and when you lay down and when you rise up.

Early teaching at home becomes the daily routine; using manners, keeping traditions, and celebrating holidays all can be part of an enriched Jewish childhood. Tradition's role in a familial experience is to build and strengthen a Jew-

ish foundation that children then bring to their first days of their formal Jewish education. Recognizing family tradition in the day school setting helps maintain respect for the child's background while expanding their educational horizons.

Parents who see that the school can embrace the values that have been so carefully nurtured at home can then choose a program which parallels that familial image. Through the years children will develop a love for learning and understand that Judaism in the home has strong ties to the greater community of learning. The role of Jewish schools is to support the parents to fulfill their obligation. Parents seek schools with mission statements and visions that align with their own vision for their children's lives.

The parents' connection with the school and its mission begins well before the student crosses the school threshold and is welcomed onto the campus. By discussing expectations and concerns with parents during the admissions stage, a healthy relationship and standard of communication can be built between the parents and the staff. It is at this time that the mission of the program should be conveyed clearly and that inclusion of parents in the educational process should be emphasized.

It is important to develop an awareness among the staff of the school of the admissions process as a means to inspire future parents to see the whole program and to build strong relationships between the school and home. The initial meeting



Alli Debrow is early childhood and kindergarten Jewish studies lead teacher at the Addlestone Hebrew Academy in Charleston, South Carolina. alli.debrow@addlestone.org

at school allows the opportunity to develop a meaningful relationship addressing the goals of both the parents and the Jewish day school. A welcoming tour where parents are greeted by early childhood, lower, middle and high school staff, depending on the age range at the school, can give parents a powerful sense of the school's ethos and forge a sense of understanding and connection that can help parents feel right at home.

Once a family has enrolled in a school, it is then the school's responsibility to actively engage parents in a way that their child's education follows them out of the classroom and into their home. The connection between parents and educators should be one of deliberate collaboration to instill integrity and Jewish values while focusing on the uniqueness of each child. Parents attracted to programs that are engaging for the whole family energize the school community. The creation of programs that allow parents to learn about and take a leadership role in their child's education paves a new path toward renewed parent-educator relationships. With the use of Torah passages and other Jewish resources, community leaders, families and school leaders can strengthen their commitment to educational environments that both respect previously established Jewish identities and pushes the boundaries of learning. These programs strive to build a community of learners where success can be measured in non-traditional ways. Engaging parents in the process of learning can mirror the same objectives set forth in the mission of the school and broaden the vision of an active Jewish day school.

Parents should be encouraged to take a dynamic part in their child's education. Simply reaching out to parents to help plan holiday-related activities, such as making hamentashen, allows parents to learn more about rules of kashrut and how to alter recipes to accommodate food concerns; parents may begin to ask about observances, sparking further learning and connection with the



school. Educators may nurture commitment to Jewish values by cultivating the spiritual lives of their students, a process where parents must also be involved. A school's Israel trip provides a chance for Torah study and learning about Israel in way parents may have not considered. The parents are aware

much an additional benefit for the parent as it is for the student. The school should set standards of communication that can be fostered and augmented by sending notes home, social events, and meetings with par-

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 60]

that the curriculum has engaged the students in speaking Hebrew as a living language and that students have participated in projects which showcase the land they will now visit.

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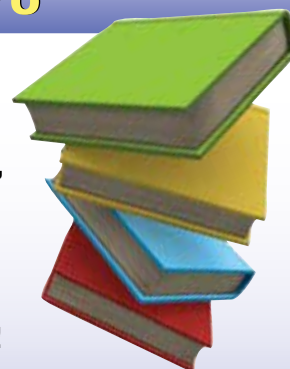
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Earlier this year, RAVSAK distributed a fieldwide survey to the heads of RAVSAK network schools. The survey was designed to give us a comprehensive picture of the state of the field of headship at community day schools and to help identify areas where we can support the field and learn from it. We asked these leaders to share information anonymously about their personal experiences as heads including details of their education, career paths, compensation packages, skills and areas for growth. We also asked them to share with us their motivations to become school leaders and what they have learned along the way.

With a 98% response rate, these professional and personal assessments confirmed some long held truths even as they offered new perspectives and shed light on new issues. The survey results indicate patterns of generational representation and allow us to probe correlations (or lack thereof) between headship tenure and other factors such as gender, longevity in position, salary and skill assessment. In asking heads to evaluate their own skills, we learned that

most heads are generally more confident in their interpersonal abilities than they are in their operational skills, even as we know that the operational side of headship is critically important to the success of a school.

Overall, the study demonstrates that the Jewish day school field is led by educated, dedicated leaders who approach their positions with humility and a willingness to learn and who find tremendous satisfaction in leading Jewish day school. In fact, 79% of heads indicated that commitment to a school's mission is among the top three most influential factors in accepting a new job—far more than salary or benefits.

The survey also shows that the day school field is in flux, with longevity of tenure for some heads but many more that have held multiple positions over their careers. At the same time, the field is experiencing a generational change in leadership as younger professionals take the helms of schools. The data from the survey will allow us to determine what areas to focus on in serving new heads while capitalizing on

the skills and talents of others in the field.

RAVSAK has just begun to analyze the survey and understand the implications of our findings. We intend to share the results broadly in meaningful ways that will add value to how the day school field recruits, trains and supports heads of school. In addition, each head of school will receive detailed individual reports that will show how their answers compare to others who filled out the survey.

In conducting the survey, our goal was to provide data to inform and encourage a fieldwide conversation around headship. Armed with data, RAVSAK can better undertake new programs and approaches to support heads in ways that they indicate they need and want. It is our intent that the survey results will provide fodder for the field as a whole to reflect on what each of us can do as school advocates and leaders to ensure consistent, effective leadership for our day schools. ■

Partnering with Parents: It's All About Mission

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 59]

ents, educators, and school leaders to address the continuation of the school's mission and vision in the classroom. This gathering of leaders and learners who seek understanding in an informal setting creates a comfortable space to share Jewish information.

As students move into middle and high school, parents may not feel as immersed in the school environment as they once were. Their children's ideas, beliefs and values continue to evolve, and parents often seek a role in this development. This is a vital time for schools to remind parents that the program's mission is centered around mitzvot and derech erez, that every facet of students' lives can impact the school community in bigger

and better ways. Schools need to recognize that parents might plateau with their comfort level of participation, which may see peaks and valleys, and that they need encouragement to persevere in the relationship. The joys that parents found in early childhood participation need to be continually nurtured in differing ways as their children mature. Just as parents were welcomed and courted during the admissions process, they need to continue to receive attention, guidance and learning opportunities throughout their children's career in the school. Every grade presents fresh opportunities for parental engagement. By continuing this vital relationship, schools both overtly and subconsciously continue to remind parents of the school's mission and preserve the parents' embrace of it.

A school that values communication and connection is a program which recognizes the need to maintain open and honest relationships. Schools can provide a safe space to challenge the ever-changing world children are encouraged to partake in and change. Students of these programs understand mitzvot and derech erez; they seek the opportunities to become active members of their local communities and the Jewish community throughout the world. Even the most controversial topics need to be addressed to support parents who seek comfort; staff need to be well prepared, well informed and consistent in their mission as they listen to parental concerns and suggestions. Reinforcing the vision of the school through the eyes of parents will only deepen the Jewish experience for their children. ■

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Giving Our Missions a *Why*

A Cognitive Approach

■ by **JEFFREY SCHRAGER**

In this concluding section, articles explore ways that a school's mission can serve to catalyze the people and community of a day school. Schrager asks us to consider whether the school's mission engages stakeholders' needs for purpose and meaning.

Try this exercise at your next staff meeting: ask the teachers to state, even in general terms, the mission of your school. Even better, present your students with the same challenge in the course of a lesson. I would venture to guess that several faculty members and students will paint, in broad strokes, the mission or vision of your school. Our school, like many, has posted our mission in every classroom, but I have yet to observe that ever present reminder tangibly impacting the students' awareness of our stated values. When the individuals, both students and teachers, most intimately connected with the day-to-day operations of our schools struggle to articulate our stated mission, a flaw in either the mission's communication or formulation would seem to be exposed.

Now, take our experiment to the next level. Ask your subjects the simplest of questions: *Why?* Why have we chosen a specific mission? Why is it important? Why is what we're learning and doing at school important? Why is Jewish education and Jewish continuity important? Frequently, students flounder, many understanding such a prompt as some sort of trick question while searching for an absolute correct response. Teachers, staff or lay leaders will often need a moment to collect their thoughts, but usually offer a reason behind the school's mission.

Simon Sinek, the popular TED speaker and lecturer, coined a concept he labels "The Golden Circle." Simply put, he identifies three modes of explaining any activity in which we choose to

engage (see figure). Communicating in the outermost level of the circle, we explain *what* we do. Moving inwards, we explain *how* we do it, and finally *why* we do it. Sinek points out that most people or groups communicate from the outside in, that is, they first explain *what* they do and only eventually, if ever, arrive at *why* they do it.

Great leaders, however, start with *why* they are acting and only afterwards discuss *what* they do. In his book *Start With Why*, Sinek brings examples as diverse as Apple, the Wright Brothers, and Martin Luther King Jr., explaining how each of them succeeded where others with greater resources or potential failed

because they were working "from the inside out" of the Golden Circle. They articulated *why* their vision was important, not just *what* they were trying to accomplish.

The underpinnings of Sinek's assertions lie in how our brains make decisions. Though we like to think of ourselves as rational and our decisions as well thought-out, many of our choices rest on beliefs and loyalties that have little correlation to strict rationality. To simplify, our brains have two distinct systems functioning simultaneously. Our outer brain, the neocortex, manages our perceptions, language, judgment, and the like. Much of our humanity derives from this area, and many of its features are uniquely human.

But below the surface lies our more primitive brain, a diverse range of structures labeled the limbic system. Among other

Do the details of our mission statements articulate why we are so passionate about Jewish education or why our school is special?



Rabbi Jeffrey Schrager is the middle school Judaic studies coordinator at the Akiba Academy of Dallas, Texas. jschrager@ldor-vador.org

things, the limbic system determines our loyalties, beliefs and ultimate actions. Moral psychologist Jonathan Haidt explains the relationship between our rational thought and our beliefs as analogous to a rider and an elephant. Though the rider may offer small recommendations to its vehicle, ultimately the elephant decides where the duo venture. According to Haidt, we are far more likely to first make a “gut” decision and only then rationally explain to ourselves and others how we arrived at that particular decision. Our perceptions certainly play a role in decision making, but they rarely drive our final decision-making apparatus.

Additionally, our upper brain bears the responsibility for language while our limbic system wholly lacks language capabilities. Hence, as in our mission statement experiment, people often struggle when they are challenged to put their reasons, their *why*, into words. We cannot find some magic formula of words that will affect each person’s limbic system in the same manner. Think for a moment about a person you care for deeply; a spouse, child or friend. Now write down the reasons you have such a close feeling for them. Like most people, you probably had a difficult time articulating your reasons and, as a result, each reason leaves something to be desired. The inadequacy of words to fully express our most profound beliefs is a problem as old as time, or, I should say, as old as our brains.

Statements that describe *what* an institution does speak to the neocortex. It assimilates and evaluates the information as it attempts a rational decision. *Why* statements, however, go directly to the emotional part of our brains, our limbic system.

And critically, the limbic system inescapably determines our ultimate behaviors and actions. Explaining our mission, whether institutional or personal, in terms of *what* we do helps people make an educated decision. But phrasing our vision as a *why* shapes their final actions. Returning to Haidt’s terminology, speaking directly to the elephant, symbolizing our limbic system, greatly improves the chances of our words affecting other people’s actions.

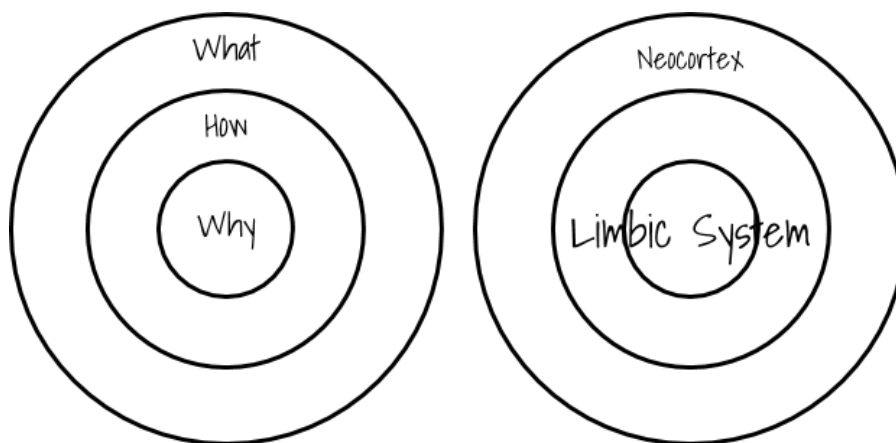
Of course, the challenges inherent in the inadequacy of language also present barriers when an institution discusses its mission. This problem presents itself in at least two ways: in its formulation and dissemination. Most schools can craft the *what* of their institution’s mission or vision statement with relative ease: supportive of Israel, excellence in Jewish and general studies, instilling character and community service, and so forth. But do these details, important as they may be, articulate why we are so passionate about Jewish education or why our school is special?

An informal perusal of mission statements from a variety of schools will show that some already do a good job of explaining their *why*, if not always with absolute clarity. Most schools arrive at their philosophy during a long period of conversation, collaboration and consultation among shareholders. In many cases, schools seem to stop short

of explicitly stating why they have certain beliefs, possibly because a clear statement could actually alienate some families or individuals. The second, far more challenging, issue in articulating our mission lies in ensuring continued awareness among the staff, parents and students of our schools. Finding our *why* is one thing. Rallying others around it, while more difficult, is also of greater importance. School leaders bear the responsibility of ensuring each staff member understands *why* their school has a given mission, and teachers must constantly evaluate *how* they are fulfilling that mission.

Of all the shareholders in a day school, though, our students most urgently demand the clear articulation of *why* we commit to a specific mission. In my experience, we as teachers assume our students know or have been told so much that we rarely, if ever, take time to discuss *why* their studies matter.

But the stakes couldn’t be higher. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, in his



Simon Sinek's Golden Circle

response to the Pew Report, focused on our collective imperative to transmit the *whys* of Judaism to our children. Interestingly, children of middle school age and younger actually have greater receptiveness to *why* statements than their older peers. Developmentally, their limbic system plays a more prominent role in their brains’ function. Loyalties and beliefs generally “lock in” to a greater extent once they hit adolescence. Clarifying a phenomenal *why*-based mission, or posting it on walls, will do little if we fail to imprint our mission on the hearts and minds of our students. On the first day of school we should discuss our *why* with students. This initial conversation must be reinforced and continued throughout the year. However we choose to frame the discussion, we must discuss why Jewish education, and Judaism in general, should be important to them.

Successfully articulating the *why* behind our mission can change our schools. All parties interested in the school will attach themselves to a unified vision and work constantly in the service of that vision. Teachers and parents alike will clearly articulate why the school’s mission matters. Most importantly, students will come to see every activity in which they take part as building towards a meaningful and inspiring larger goal. We will create inspired communities, reaching beyond our physical walls and lighting the hearts and minds of the Jewish future. ■

The Pluralistic Mission in Everyday Practice

■ by **ELIANA LIPSKY**

Often one of the pillars of community day school mission statements, pluralism is an elusive value that can be hard to translate into practice. Lipsky presents ideas for schools take pluralism from the mission statement into the classroom.

We are falling short in assisting our students to comprehend fully the mission and vision of pluralism. Too often students leave the community day school environs without clearly understanding their own religious beliefs and identity in addition to the cultural and religious identity of the community or communities to which they belong. Community day school curriculum scopes and sequences do not engage students in enough explorative and reflective study about differing Jewish religious philosophies and values as well as the students' individual religious beliefs, values and practices. Instead, students are left on their own to make sense of these sometimes competing value structures.

If we want our students to graduate from our community schools with a clear idea of what it means to affiliate with a particular type of Judaism (denominational, cultural, etc.) and know what it is to believe in pluralism, then we must provide students with a clear framework of pluralism's beliefs and tenets within which they learn and dialogue. Accomplishing this means overtly incorporating the school's pluralistic mission and vision into the everyday practice of teachers and students through curriculum development and implementation.

Intentional pluralism requires intentional conversations about pluralistic tenets and beliefs at and across all levels in the Jewish community day school. Community day schools promote respect and tolerance of different Jews, social justice and ethical and moral conduct while acculturating students in Jewish customs, traditions, ritual practices, literacies and norms. Our school community members come from different backgrounds and beliefs, and to fully engage in the tenets of respect and tolerance we have to engage in conversations around differing Jewish

religious philosophies and practices. Even when the religious philosophy of the school remains purposefully undefined, the academic and experiential curricular choices made by the administration and faculty establish an institutional definition of pluralism.

Setting pluralism as a goal is in itself a value statement. And how the stated tenets of pluralistic philosophy are interpreted and even implemented through a curriculum is colored by the religious affiliation of each administrator, parent, teacher and student involved in the conversation. Thus, curriculum development—academic, social-emotional, physical and experiential—must be guided by questions directly relating to what plural-

Students should infuse their own meaning into the school's mission and vision statements through conversations about a school's cultural, religious, and political beliefs and values.

ism might look like in action at the individual, institutional and communal levels. Creating guiding questions for curriculum development that draw directly from a school's mission and vision can also lead to a deeper level of integration across the curriculum and content areas. These guiding questions should serve as articulation points for all content areas, making meta-themes and bigger concepts related to the school's mission and vision explicitly part of a student's schooling.

Crafting a school's mission and vision requires a team of thinkers and visionaries. Bringing the mission and vision to the student level requires teachers and students to participate in the implementation process. Teachers should be working daily with students to help them understand the tenets to which the students as individuals and the school as a community subscribe. Teachers play a crucial role in implementing a school's mission and vision through the curricular and instructional choices they make for academic and experiential learning.



Eliana Lipsky is an EdD candidate in curriculum and instruction at Loyola University Chicago, researching authentic student inquiry in the Modern Orthodox Tanakh classroom. etlipsky@gmail.com

To do this requires school administrators to engage with teachers in ongoing conversations about the school's mission and vision. These conversations help school leaders understand what the mission and vision might look like in the classroom setting, thereby lending much needed specificity to the statements. Such conversations would better enable teachers to use a school's mission and vision to guide his or her curriculum development and instructional implementation. These theoretical and philosophical conversations should also be integrated into classroom discussions in ways that allow students to participate thoughtfully and honestly.

Students should participate in infusing their own meaning into the general words and phrases of a school's mission and vision statements through honest and thoughtful conversations about a school's and its community's cultural, religious, and political beliefs and values. Presented are a few thoughts on what it can look like to create a curriculum framework that allows teachers to explicitly engage students in critical thinking and reflection around the components of a school's mission and vision.

PUTTING THE MISSION AND VISION INTO PRACTICE

As someone who has worked in three different community day schools around the US, I have experienced a disconnect between a school's mission and vision of pluralism and what is actually happening on the ground, particularly when it comes to the experiential and Judaic studies curricula. At the schools of which I have had the good fortune to be a part, the community school's experiential activities seem most similar in characteristic, tone and feeling to Conservative practice and outlook. For example, daily tefillah (if there is daily tefillah) regularly defaults to traditional egalitarian tefillah. Currently, the experiential activities do not provide the spectrum of Jewish students in a pluralistic school with equal opportunities to see and experience their personal religious beliefs, values and practice in the curriculum.

The guiding curriculum framework might include big ideas such as, "Engaging with diversity is a tenet of pluralism" and "It is important to be knowledgeable of and understand my own religious beliefs and values as well as seek understanding of my peers' religious beliefs and values." Essential questions might be, "What are the key tenets

of pluralism?", "How does being a _____ Jew influence my understanding of pluralism?" and "How does believing in pluralism affect me as a _____ Jew?" Of course, conversations among a school's stakeholders about the school's understanding of pluralism must occur to determine if the big ideas I pose here are indeed the tenets of that particular school's pluralistic philosophy.



Students will be able to identify reasons for dissensus and/or consensus among textual commentaries about a given topic or idea.

Following these essential questions are stated student objectives. Some student objectives might be specific to a content area but encompass the tone of pluralism, such as when learning Torah, "Students will be able to identify reasons for dissensus and/or consensus among textual commentaries about a given topic or idea," or when working on a math project, "Students will be able to solve real world mathematical challenges in multiple ways using creative

problem solving and perspective taking skills."

Regardless of the content or subject area, teachers should be engaging students in ways that help the students answer questions such as these, and students should be journaling about

and reflecting on these questions throughout their community day school experience. When teachers develop their specific curricula, they can look for topic areas that lend themselves to fostering meaningful conversations in which students critically consider aspects of pluralism as they relate to the content areas. Teachers can then help students make connections between what they are learning and their own lives using the lens of pluralism. This naturally leads to students having opportunities to research their particular style of Judaism and put it into conversation with that of their peers. Moreover, it forces the school community to reflect on whether the curricular choices school leaders and teachers are making truly echo the pluralistic mission and vision of the school.

As school leaders reflect on the construction and implementation of the school's mission and vision, teachers should be engaged in ongoing conversations about the school's pluralistic mission and vision and reflect on how the mission and vision guide their curricular and instructional choices. Students should reflect on how their thinking about their personal beliefs and the school's philosophy are interacting, growing and shifting. Only then will a school's mission and vision truly find its place in the curriculum, and only then will students comprehend better how they may choose a particular Jewish path while continuing to believe in and belong to a pluralistic community. ■

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A New Theory of Vision

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 33]

remain grounded in and relevant for practice.

So when we are concerned about the intentionality of our practice, we should not start with our most fundamental commitments. We should ask, about any particular practice, “What are the ideas that animate this practice?” And as we’re thinking about those animating ideas, we should ask ourselves, “What are these ideas about?” Is this an idea about learning? About community? About Judaism? These are the kinds of questions that will help us become more clear about the ideas and more intentional in our practice. Conversely, when we encounter a compelling idea, we should again ask, “What is this idea about?” And then we should ask further, “What would it look like if we took this idea

seriously in practice?” If we have trouble answering that question, it may well be that the idea under consideration, while elegant in its abstraction, is not actually as important as we initially supposed.

So what, then, of Lehmann’s vision? As mentioned above, Lehmann fails to live up to Fox’s criterion for an educational Vision. But that should not concern us. What Lehmann does offer, on the other hand, is a set of rich ideas that might—if we find them sufficiently com-

PELLING—animate our practice. As we evaluate these proposals, I suggest that we think about how they fit within the “Sphere of Animating Ideas.” This means that we need to consider not merely how “creativity” or “hybridity” operate as philosophical abstractions. Nor do we need to focus on how each of Lehmann’s ideas can be synthesized into one image of the ideal educated Jew. Instead, we should think through what these ideas are about, and what it would look like to take these ideas seriously in practice. ■



Jon A. Levisohn holds the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Chair in Jewish Educational Thought at Brandeis University, where he also directs the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education. The ideas in this article are developed more fully in a longer paper currently under review. levisohn@brandeis.edu

Establishing an Integrated Community and School in Israel

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affiliation as well as encouragement of social and communal involvement. In addition, it includes a commitment to promote academic achievement among all students, based on the assumption that a successful school is one which provides quality pedagogy and strives for continuous improvement.

The implementation of the Keshet School vision was led by staff members together with the parents. The challenge now was to translate the vision into a practical program for all ages. For example, the meeting group (secular) discussed the definition of secular identity that is a mix of Jewish, Israeli and universal components. If so, what is the ratio we expect between those components? To what cultural legacy do we want to expose our children? To what extent will the school focus on Jewish laws and customs? What principles will guide the teaching and learning in this group? During the discussion diverse voices emerged, some focusing on social values, others putting emphasis on experiential learning, some emphasizing critical thinking, learning through asking questions, and examining dilemmas.

Who will teach the complex subjects? It be-

came necessary to find teachers who are familiar with the material, whose worldview is pluralistic, who consider the two identity groups as equals, who are able to accept feelings, attitudes and behaviors different from their own, and who will protect every child’s right to express his or her opinion, even if it contradicts the worldview of another.

Again, the discussions were charged and heated. The pattern of splitting into subgroups when an inner group conflict emerged repeated itself within each identity group. The attempt to establish a common ideological basis, at least within the identity group, dissolved. We were divided into those who were traditionalists, those who were secular with a tendency to emphasize the universality, those who preferred strengthening the Israeli-Zionist aspects, and those who wanted to strengthen traditional Jewish aspects. The need to listen and show tolerance became relevant to the parents as much as it was relevant to the children.

As mentioned, this is an ongoing process and not all dilemmas can be solved. Among the remaining topics is the issue of the management of the school. Should it be led by a sin-

gle figure or two figures having different identities? Other questions that remained open include, how can the school best respect the interests of the two identity groups? What about the needs of those who believe that the current definitions do not meet their own identities—for example, couples who consider themselves “traditional” and “mixed”?

After eight years of community-educational development, one cannot ignore the fact that the encounter between the two groups leads to a frequent engagement—assertion, questioning, negotiation—of personal and group identity, the boundaries between the personal and the collective, and the relationship among subgroups within the whole. My starting wish that the integration would manifest itself in a balanced and harmonious system has given way to the understanding that this is an ongoing process of discontent and self-challenge, one that enables personal growth, expansion of awareness about the identities, lifestyles and interests of others, and an introduction to many interesting people who, despite their differences, all care deeply about Jewish-Israeli society and identity in this country. ■

Nevatim – Sprouts Conference Plants Knowledge and Inspiration

■ by **Yael Steiner**, RAVSAK's Student Programs Coordinator

This summer I spent four inspiring days at Nevatim, a professional development conference for educators on Jewish garden and environmental education, run by the Pearlstone Center near Baltimore. RAVSAK serves as a partner organization on the conference, connecting schools that are interested in developing educational gardens with this unique opportunity. Over the past two years, educators from eight RAVSAK schools have attended the conference, participating in hands-on activities, field trips and curriculum workshops.

As I reflect on my experience at Nevatim, while there was much to be inspired by at Pearlstone's beautiful farm, I was most impressed by the thoughtful way in which the Nevatim facilitators modeled activities that wove together Jewish content and farming practices in a highly experiential way.

In a hands-on session on wheat grinding, we began with an activity in which we had to guess the correct order of the eleven types of labor involved in transforming wheat into bread, which are also categories of activities that are prohibited on the Sabbath. As we debated over the correct ordering of winnowing and selecting, and puzzled over what winnowing actually was, we recognized the complexity of the process of making bread, and the ways in which Jewish law has evolved through these categories of work.

We then took wheat that had been harvested from the farm, and began working through four of the middle steps in the process: threshing, winnowing, selecting and grinding. We separated the wheat from the chaff by blowing on the bowls of wheat berries and letting the chaff fly off in all directions. We experimented with different types of grinders: a mortar and pestle, bricks, a hand grinder, and the crowd favorite, a coffee grinder. With twelve of

us working diligently for almost an hour, our result was an earthy smelling cup of whole wheat flour.

While feeling accomplished that we had transformed wheat into flour, we also felt humbled that with all of that work, we had only produced enough flour to make a couple of rolls. We recognized

that before the invention of machinery, the work involved in making bread must have been a highly communal one. There was just no way that one person on their own could have harvested, gathered, threshed, winnowed, selected, ground and sifted enough flour to make their efforts worthwhile.

We related the process of making flour together to the idea of communal eating or "breaking bread" together. With the amount of work and number of people involved in the process of making the



bread, it makes sense that the eating of bread has become a communal act, with the communal blessing of HaMotzi preceding a meal, and the communal Birkat HaMazon at the conclusion. Experiencing the labor of grinding wheat firsthand allowed to us appreciate these elements of our tradition in a new light.

Through participating in workshops on topics including wheat grinding, grape-pressing, and shmittah, I left the Nevatim conference with a deep understanding of how to design garden and environmentally based activities, with Jewish values and content at the core. I learned that Jewish garden education is not just about integrating Jewish content, or tying in a piece of text or a song that relates to a gardening activity, but using Jewish values and texts as starting points in the design of inspiring and experiential Jewish education. ■

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The Power and Practice of Visioning

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 42]

Again, they will have 15-20 minutes to generate some vision statements. All groups have the benefit of having just completed one vision. The same instructions are given and they begin.

Gallery Walk

When groups have completed their statements, I invite the whole group of participants to do a gallery walk with me as we look at the visions on the wall and listen to each facilitator share the group's visions. I welcome a few people to add their visions to remind everyone that the visioning process will be ongoing. These documents represent vision 1.0. There will be many revisions as leaders follow up.

Following Up: From Vision to Action

Allow Some Sacred Messiness

I advise vision-writing teams not to worry about making the vision statement elegant at the beginning. People are encouraged to remain informal

and relaxed. Use bullet phrases to start. Avoid wordsmithing. Don't rush. The vision-writing team should help keep the vision conversation going through several rounds of visioning.

Get Grounded: Connect the Vision to Reality

Planners are encouraged to dream, but most leaders and planners are not by nature dreamers; they are practical, concrete problem solvers. That said, it is important to help visionaries see what their vision might look like if these visions were turned into actions. We suggest that the vision-writing team invite participants to create one supporting goal that brings the vision into action. The primary purpose of this goal exercise is to clarify the vision. The secondary benefit is to generate helpful action items.

Be Mindful of your Capacities

Your vision needs to be connected to your strengths and community possibilities. For example, a small congregation with an aging membership in a community that is not attracting young families should not have a vision to be a center for young families. If you are running large deficits and thinking of cutting or combining key positions, a vision that describes the work of a large influx of new staff people will be seen as fanciful. Don't wear yourself out by trying to "seize too much." Statements well beyond your school's realistic capacity may frustrate members of the team who have had disappointing experiences with visioning or strategic planning that was not grounded.

Keep It off the Shelf

Vision statements must be used. If leaders don't refer to them, they just sit on the shelf. The school leadership needs to model this attention to vision by referring to it in developing strategies, providing strategic direction to committees and task forces, and in developing priorities. When initiatives are launched they need to take this "teachable moment" and show how the vision is shaping the work to be done.

Conclusion

The world of American Jews and their Jewish institutions is going through a period of major change. In times of change, we can't just continue to use the same old strategies and hope for different results. Visioning is a powerful way to welcome the knowledge, life experience and intuition of a broad group of people. It quiets, for a time, the voices who say "we tried this already." Yes, some people may remember failed efforts from the past, but the visioning exercise welcomes different participants for a different moment. The practice of visioning is a critical core competency for today's leaders that will allow new approaches to a challenging but potentially blessed future. ■



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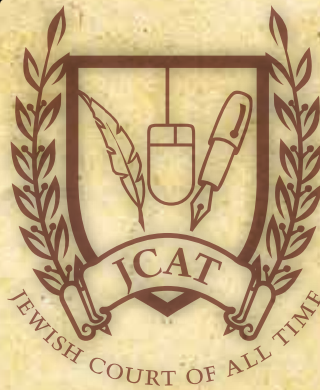
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“JCAT provided an opportunity for rich discussion around Israel- her purpose, her future, her security, her neighborhood. The skills that the students gain through their research, our learning together on the topic, and their interactions online will all be used in future learning. The deep thinking and writing skills are major.”

**Jodi Lasker, Heschel Day School,
Los Angeles, CA**

“My students are engaged in Jewish history learning in a fun, dynamic and interactive learning space. Students develop research skills, hear different voices of significant Jewish historical figures and are excited about their learning.”

Nance Adler, Jewish Day School of Seattle

WHAT ARE STUDENTS SAYING?

“I really had to think during the JCAT lessons. I had to make the right choices during the times when I was running for justice of what my character might think. I really had to stretch my band of thinking.”

6th grade student

“I liked that I was able to speak to other seventh graders, and in a group. I think that because of this my writing became much better and I was able to give my opinions for my character, as I shared the same ideas as her. I think that acting as another person made the JCAT experience much more meaningful and more creative. Having to learn about another person and be them makes JCAT fun and challenging.”

7th grade student

“It was amazing to play a Jewish historical figure with a strong opinion. I thought it was interesting to play someone else and speak in their voice.”

7th grade student

Building Community Using Mission Statements

■ by **MENACHEM HECHT** and **PINCHOS HECHT**

Beneath the surface, mission statements often give voice to competing values that exist within the school community. The authors describe two main strategies for school leaders to preserve productive relations among the school's diverse elements.

Problems and Dilemmas

In its ideal form, on paper and in the minds of educational leaders, Jewish day school education works as a whole greater than the sum of its parts, an emergent network that results from the integration of its multiple core elements into a stable and coherent organization. Schools lay out their core aims—including for example commitment to college preparatory academics, a focus on STEM, cultivation of the individual through humanities, arts, and extracurricular programming, Jewish identity development, and commitment to Jewish community—in mission statements. Rather than serve as lightposts or roadmaps, mission statements easily devolve into lists of things schools aim to do all at the same time. More perniciously, particular mission elements easily slip into competition and conflict with other elements and with any sense of broader school mission.

Larry Cuban, a school reform scholar, suggests the term “enduring dilemma” to capture the way in which some schools organize themselves around values and goals that may prove to be at cross purposes. A dilemma is not a problem to be solved. Problems, in Cuban’s words, are “fairly routine, structured situations that produce some level of conflict because a desired goal is blocked.” Dilemmas, though, are “conflict-filled situations that require choices because competing, highly prized values cannot be fully satisfied.” Dilemmas reveal fundamental fissures that result from the multiple, conflicting and even contradictory organizational characteristics, conditions and purposes that make up schools.

Enduring dilemmas in organizations point to a deep commitment to multiple core values which at times may compete or conflict with each other. They are recurrent and pervasive and ultimately unsolvable and irresolvable. School leaders may resolve particular problems and achieve degrees of relative equanimity at particular points in time. But shifts in resources, demograph-

ics, competition, faculty makeup, and lay and professional leadership inevitably resurface tension and conflict resulting from the underlying fissures of the enduring dilemmas—the multiple sets of values and goals—in a school’s makeup.

Integrative Strategies Can Help School Leaders Manage Dilemmas

A recent direction in academic research on organizational culture focuses attention on organizations that manage to maintain multiple sets of goals, values and processes for the long term. In this research, “integration” (a term often used in various ways in Jewish day schools) serves as a central mechanism for maintaining organizational coherence. Scholars distinguish between two models of integrative strategies that work in different ways towards the same goal: ensuring that organizational elements do not compete with each other or come into conflict. They term these two models *expansive integration* and *pragmatic collaboration*.

Expansive integration establishes a set of values, goals, and ways of operating for the organization and all its members intending to form a new common identity among constituents and goals that otherwise might conflict or compete. It leads school members to think of each other: we may have thought we were on different pages, but this new broad set of values that we both adhere to subsumes both of us. Pragmatic collaboration works by granting individual actors or subgroups the space to maintain separate identities while developing and sharing a common purpose for collaborating. It provides the structure for school members with disparate aims, values and ways of working to coexist alongside each other. Stakeholders and constituents can think of each other: I may not share the same values as you, but I value the organization that houses us both.



Menachem Hecht is executive director of Bnei Akiva of Los Angeles. menachem@bneiakiva.org



Rabbi Pinchos Hecht is head of school at Atlanta Jewish Academy. hechtp@ghacademy.org

In Jewish day schools, as in other complex organizations, integrative strategies can help manage dilemmas but cannot solve them. Often, even as they quiet conflict and limit tension, integrative strategies introduce new challenges to the organization. Efforts at expansive integration work well in small groups but struggle to scale up. Some school members may not absorb the nuance of the new common identity; others may genuinely commit to some individual school purposes more than others. Efforts at pragmatic collaboration leave space for intermittent and occasionally intense conflict among subgroups, and open schools to the unhappy possibility of developing into what sociologist W. Richard Scott calls “opportunistic collections of divergent interests.”

To mitigate the limitations of each strategic model, school leaders may profitably employ simultaneous strategies of expansive integration and pragmatic collaboration. The key is to balance fostering strong group identity with allowing subgroups breathing room to work relatively unencumbered by the specific aims and processes of other school members. Expansive integration strategies involve developing a set of shared values, goals and processes to hold together school constituents. School leaders should look to develop a framework specific enough to be meaningful while remaining broad enough to be inclusive of multiple individual school subgroups. A school leader might build such an orienting framework around “putting students first,” for example, or “achieving excellence,” “fostering *menshlichkeit*” or

“building a learning community.”

Simultaneously, school leaders can employ strategies of pragmatic collaboration to defuse potential tension and conflict among subgroups with differing specific aims and values, such as between Judaic studies, and humanities or sciences faculty; between faculty focused on extra- and co-curricular programming and those focused on academic disciplines; between college guidance staff and other faculty members; between groups of parents, or between specific groups of parents and faculty members. Pragmatic collaboration works passively by allowing subgroups the space to work in relative isolation—for instance, in curricular, budgetary or programmatic decision making. Subgroups need not engage in or even fully approve of the work of other subgroups. By having these subgroups work apart from each other, pragmatic collaboration

ensures that different stakeholders remain comfortable in the school and committed to its broader purpose. School leaders enable such an environment by fostering a sense of professional respect across groups—for example, through limited collaboration on specific projects—as well as by fostering friendships and informal relationships across groups.

While these strategies will not resolve underlying dilemmas, they can help school constituents orient themselves within the organization.

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Mission statement development is an opportunity to establish buy-in from all school members around a limited though broad set of values, aims and ways of operating.

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Together, the two integrative strategies can serve both to limit tension among multiple school constituents and to fold multiple purposes into a cohesive logic of Jewish day school education.

Mission Statement as Integrative Strategy

School leaders may benefit from looking at mission statement development not as an opportunity to “solve the problem” of their schools’ multiplicity, an impossible task. Rather, as a central element of a set of integrative strategies, a mission statement can present a framework through which multiple potentially competing school elements and constituents can situate themselves within the organization. Mission statement development

is an opportunity to establish the gentle glue of expansive integration—to establish buy-in from all school members around a limited though broad set of values, aims and ways of operating to which all school members connect and commit.

Simultaneously, the mission statement itself—or other forms of communication or work parallel to the development and dissemination of the mission statement—can establish a framework of pragmatic collaboration, making space for school subgroups with differing aims and perspectives to work alongside each other in the organization. As part of a broader set of integrative strategies, mission statements can offer a framework through which schools can maintain a sense of integrity that is resilient even if tentative and a sense of organizational coherence that endures through the dynamic challenges that environmental shifts and pressures continually surface in schools. ■

Betzelem Elohim, From Mission Statement to Disciplinary Policy

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 57]

one child who might have committed the same act may be different in each situation. Our text is replete with instructive examples. When Moshe struck the rock at Mount Horeb, he was treated more harshly for ignoring God’s instructions than others in the Torah who similarly ignored God’s instructions. This consequence was contextual due to Moshe’s position and the reasons he hit the rock (displaying anger in front of the people he was leading). Similarly, two students sent to the office for throwing food in the lobby and causing a mess might not warrant the same level of consequence.

In life, there is no such thing as “fair,” and trying to apply the same consequence for the same or similar transgression is not always the right approach. A plus B does not always equal C. While having a clear set of black and white rules and consequences makes the disciplinary process quicker, cleaner, and easier, it is not the best way to teach children. High school is the perfect time to start teaching young adults of the complexities of the concept of fairness, teaching them the difference between equality of results to equality of the process. Every student who may

have transgressed is dealt with an equal manner. The procedures and substance of the process are fair and equal; the results, however, may be different.

If the approaches laid out above are followed, the administrator might find out that in one circumstance the student acted out because he was mad at a fellow classmate and lashed out in anger at that person. The other student might have just learned that his grandparent had passed away and reacted, poorly, but in a moment of extreme sadness. If bright-line rules and consequences were applied, the two students would have the same consequence. We believe this would not be the correct educational response. To be clear, we are not advocating for less or even the lack of consequences; instead this approach is trying to fit the most meaningful consequence to the child, their mistake, and their individual circumstances. And, in general, the greater the misbehavior affects the community as a whole, the greater the consequence.

This disciplinary policy is not easy, quick or clean, but the results of the last 13 years have validated our methodology. A more traditional approach is definitely quicker.

With this tactic, the investigation and punishment phase usually happen at the same time, the student walks away chastised and punished while the administrator feels better for having imposed punishment on the student. In our approach, there are usually multiple conversations with the student and parents trying to understand what happened and why it happened. We look at the individual and weigh the impact of the transgression on the individual against the impact the transgression may have had on our community. We then work collaboratively to explore what the natural and appropriate consequences should be.

The time we have invested in this process has proven to be extremely valuable. Through this we have helped created, *leshem shamayim* (in the name of heaven), a culture of trust among the school, students and parents when disciplinary situations arise. Working together, we strive to use this disciplinary process to create a meaningful, educational and long-term lesson for the student and our community as a whole—and, in the end, fulfill our core mission of “raising up a new generation of Jewish leaders whose vision is shaped by Jewish values.” ■

■ By **DEBRA SHAFFER SEEMAN**, RAVSAK's Network Weaver

What's coming down the pike for Reshet RAVSAK, our system of networked learning which offers our varied constituent groups access to a web of decentralized information production and peer-to-peer learning, collaboration and creativity? As the school year begins, keep your eyes open for extensive professional development opportunities in many of our reshet groups. Volunteers within Reshet Head of School have organized an ongoing learning group focusing on the theoretical and practical implications of pluralism, a subject at the core of each of their school's missions.

Creative facilitators of Reshet Tefillah are launching a series of innovative prayer education initiatives, including exploring various pedagogies which have been successful in teaching prayer, sharing tefillah resources and ceremonies, and positioning

the reshet as a network of shared learning for educational experimentation.

The Small School Reshet, a network for schools with fewer than 150 students, will continue to serve as a place for ongoing information sharing and organic collegial conversation. In addition, five main areas of focus will be explored this coming year: recruitment and retention challenges; board of directors-head of school relationship; maximizing Jewish potential; support systems for the head of school, and educational questions specific to small schools.

This September, we will also welcome a new reshet onto the scene. Gussie Singer of the Agnon School and Yael Krieger from Jewish Community High School of the Bay stepped forward to invest in the creation of a new network for directors of educational support and learning spe-

cialists. Foci include the identification of students with learning needs, service plans and documentation, curricular accommodations and assessments, transitioning students out of receiving services, teacher and parent involvement in the process, the unique situations of Jewish day schools, and discussions of behavioral and academic interventions.

In addition, Reshet participants can look forward to the creation of a virtual space where educators can access colleagues' school policies, curricula, lesson plans, videos, webinars and other resources which are currently shared in our reshet listservs.

If you are interested in joining the new reshet for learning specialists or registering for any of the professional development opportunities described above, please reach out to me at debra@ravsak.org. ■

Leadership Lessons from the Rebbe

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 52]

nity, even a small one, to stay. Some Chabad rabbis have even bought cemetery plots—a powerful statement that they will be there for the long haul. In a different context, Ariel Sharon said to the Rebbe that the commander's job is to lead; if the Rebbe would move to Israel, many others, particularly from among his chasidim, will follow. The Rebbe replied with another model: the captain of a ship leaves last. The Rebbe believed that a Jewish leader was to dedicate him- or herself to the Jewish people wherever divine providence took them, and that a leader must never abandon his community.

As you discuss, Chabad has more than doubled in size and reach since the Rebbe's passing. What ingredients lead to success after a person's leadership ends?

The book, *Rebbe*, identifies seven types of be-

havior the Rebbe modeled for his followers and for all Jews. Among them are non-judgmental love, and a focus on love for each individual; the notion anything worth doing is worth doing now; how to disagree without being disagreeable (by focusing on commonalities, not differences); the importance of using optimistic language (the Rebbe never used the word "deadline"—since working on the book, I have stopped using the word "deadline" as well, and speak rather of "due date," the one connoting death, the other birth). Also, a consciousness of the Jewish mission to the world. In short, to help bring Jews to God and Judaism, and help bring the world to a God Whose primary demand of human beings is to treat each person whom they meet with the understanding that every human being is created "in God's image."

A final point. Since the conversation we are

conducting is for a high-level educational and leadership group, I want to tell you of another thought I have arising from having spent a half-decade studying this remarkable man. Even if you and I may disagree with some of the Rebbe's opinions (I note several in my book), the Jewish people, and each of us, were enormously enriched to live in his generation. There is a lot to be learned from the Rebbe by all Jews of all denominations. Hence, Rabbi Eric Yoffie's statement at the convention of the Union of Reform Judaism, "It is hard for me to say this but I will say it nonetheless. We must follow the example of Chabad." Based on this, I believe it would be very wise to develop curricula for our children and for the next generation to study his extraordinary life and distinctive teachings, and how these teachings enriched and empowered people. ■

Complexity Leadership for Complex Day Schools

■ by **SHARON POLLIN**

Pollin, the head of the day school in New Orleans, offers a model of how a complex, dynamic system that often confronts disruptive forces, such as a day school, can garner its stakeholders and resources for innovative change.

Leading Jewish day schools in 21st century America is a complex task. Our world is rapidly changing and complicated. Recessions. Hurricanes. Charter schools. The sovereign Jewish self. Special needs. Affordability. Staffing droughts. The manner in which we address our challenges is shaped by the lens through which we view them and grounded in the context of our mission and vision. A theory known as complexity leadership offers a particularly germane frame through which we may consider our work.

Jewish Day School as Complex Adaptive System

Each Jewish day school is an animated and holistic system greater than, and a unique expression of, the sum of its parts. Each day school, as a system, is uniquely bonded as an expression of its mission and vision. Comprised of these myriad dynamic, interacting and interrelated elements, such systems are described as complex adaptive systems (CAS), a term taken from science and mathematics. Complex adaptive systems feature many moving variables that shift between and amongst one another, and in response to environmental variations. They are organized around their shared purpose. An air traffic control system is a good example of a CAS that is guided by its mission and vision, to ensure safe air travel. Successful system function depends on many constantly shifting variables that must be continually monitored in order to achieve this mission. Weather, aircraft downtime, traffic conditions, pilot quality, mechanical issues and others are uniquely interdependent in an ever-shifting array in which each dynamic variable impacts the other.

Complex adaptive systems are different from those that are complicated. A jet engine, unlike air traffic control, is complicated. Jet engines have hundreds of moving parts; however, the number of parts is finite. Once it is designed, built and assembled the jet engine will perform in a highly predictable way. Not so

the complex air traffic control system, and not so the individual Jewish day school system. The many diverse, interdependent and fluid elements that comprise each unique Jewish day school may be usefully viewed as a CAS, a particularly germane lens to orient our perspective as we consider our mission, our opportunities and our challenges.

The Edge of Chaos

A system that is complex is nonlinear and adaptive. Organizations viewed through the lens of complexity leadership theory are responsive to feedback from the system. Such a system is sensitive: large and small changes in the environment are disruptive to distinct parts and to the system as a whole. Disequilibrium results.

Consider the myriad elements that comprise a particular Jewish day school. Some are obvious, such as students, parents, teachers, budget and schedule. Others are less visible, and include community, historical culture, agency relationships, legacy endowments and Jewish birthrates. Each of these is one of many dynamic, fluid agents of our system. A disruption to any individual agent shifts multiple elements of our system. In our complex adaptive system, the resulting disequilibrium leads to what is known in scientific terms as “the edge of chaos,” a state that serves to push the system beyond its current boundaries or capacities.

Through a traditional leadership lens, disruptors would not be allowed to shift the system’s agents: a budget gap would be quickly filled with a special fundraiser; a teacher who leaves is immediately replaced with one who is similarly qualified. The essential role of each agent remains unchanged. A troublesome bump might be momentarily felt, but its impact will be absorbed, and the system continues as before. Current boundaries and capacities are maintained. When viewed through the lens of complexity leadership theory, however,



Sharon Pollin is head of the Jewish Community Day School in New Orleans, Louisiana; she is a doctoral candidate in educational leadership. spollin@communitynola.org

disruptions are seen as opportunities to push beyond our traditional frames, to inspire a response that includes collaborative problem solving, creativity, innovation, adaptation and learning. When we are anchored by our mission and vision, the resultant outcome of our disruption—which really felt like the “edge of chaos”—is often one that we would not have predicted, that may not have previously existed, but could help facilitate our mission even better than before.

We Jewish educators have experienced many disruptors. We have all felt pushed to the brink, even to the very “edge of chaos.” I have been brought close to this edge frequently, and recently. Just three days before the end of the year the only Hebrew teacher in my small, unique Jewish day school announced she would not return in the fall. With my traditional leadership lenses firmly in place, and considering my responsibility to our mission to provide excellent Hebrew language instruction, I tried to replace her. I advertised locally. I advertised nationally. I contacted the Jewish Agency. I had a structure in place, but things were getting bumpy. I felt the disruption. I experienced the dis-equilibrium.

Then, I changed my glasses. I put on the lens of complexity leadership theory. Considering other elements (teachers, staff and community members) of our system and their commitment to our mission, I alerted various individuals who are part of my school system. None of them was a Hebrew teacher, but we were bound by our desire to provide the very best for our learners, to provide our students with an excellent Hebrew language learning experience, one in alignment with our educational philosophy and within budget. We were ready to adapt, to recombine our resources in new ways. We considered our resources, within and beyond the walls of our school. We researched options.

And something completely unpredicted has emerged as a result: our upper elementary students will learn Hebrew from a native speaker teaching live and online from Israel. We ensured that the program’s philosophy aligns with our understanding of how children learn best. Our IT professional will monitor the efficacy of the digital tools. A beloved teaching assistant will serve as the adult “on the ground.” As the recombination of the elements of our system emerged to this unpredicted outcome, we realized that we will facilitate our mission in an exciting new way, one we could not have imagined.

Elements of Complexity Leadership

Complexity leadership theory recognizes three essential functions of leadership: *administrative*, *adaptive* and *enabling*. Each is valuable and necessary within the context of complexity leadership theory. The administrative function concerns itself with traditional managerial tasks, such as scheduling, handling the budget, registration and the ordering of textbooks. Administrative leadership is often what is most familiar: the efficient management of routine tasks and the coordination of typical resources that grease the working of the day to day functions of the organization.



Successful system function depends on many constantly shifting variables that must be continually monitored in order to achieve this mission.

Adaptive leadership recognizes and responds to shifts in the environment. This function comes into play when what used to work is no longer working. Adaptive problems usually have no ready solutions. Rather than an administrative leadership fix, solutions to adaptive problems are often found

within the collaborative efforts of many different agents of the system as creativity and resource sharing encourage new uses for familiar tools. The adaptive function calls leadership to “get off the dance floor” (in the words of Ronald Heifetz and Donald Laurie) and onto the balcony to gain an overarching view. It is the adaptive leadership function that creates an ambience and a structure that is nimble and open to the systemic disequilibrium that arises from a shifting environment.

Into this “chaotic” space between the administrative and the adaptive appears the enabling leadership function. The role of enabling leadership is to directly foster the conditions that allow for something

Complexity Leadership for Complex Day Schools

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new to emerge. The sense that a system is on the “edge of chaos” fosters emergence, the sometimes sudden, unanticipated outcome of a collaborative, creative, innovative, solution-oriented process. Returning to the earlier example of our Hebrew teacher problem, the outcome of emergence is our use of digital tools, long-distance resources, and capable staff to meet the challenge of providing excellent Hebrew language instruction for our students. Enabling leadership utilizes disequilibrium, even the chaotic edge, to energize and motivate the system toward the creativity and innovation of emergence.

Understanding that shifts in the environment of our complex adaptive system may have unforeseen benefits, it may behoove us to occasionally, intentionally disrupt the system that is our own Jewish day school. What are some of the administrative and adaptive functions that can be put in place to foster an environment of emergence? The adaptive leadership role requires the consistent monitoring of alignment between innovation and mission. Fostering an ambience that values inclusivity, transparency, communication,

creative problem solving and a dynamic collaborative process is essential. Administrative functions include setting aside time for open dialogue, sharing the perspective from the balcony, encouraging various agents of the school to identify the gaps they’ve noticed, or providing time to transparently share achievements and challenges.

Systemic protocols may be intentionally disrupted to accelerate disequilibrium. Encouraging peer to peer observations, or a long-term administrator to get back to the classroom, are examples of energizing disruptions, as is constructive conflict between various agents. I recently achieved a new level of positive community connection, one of the aspects of our mission, due to a conflict with another agency over the placement of a sign! The number of individuals involved with the solution to the adaptive sign-placement challenge helped us to realign our habitual behaviors toward our shared mission and vision of community cooperation.

In the midst of disequilibrium, recombination and unanticipated emergent outcomes, positive and negative feedback loops provide

the assessment to determine whether or not the innovation is grounded in the mission and vision of our system. Through the lens of complexity leadership theory, the measure of a successful emergence must come from its alignment to the mission and vision of the system: our Jewish day school.

Viewing Jewish day schools as complex adaptive systems through the lens of complexity leadership theory encourages us to keep in mind that each school is a unique combination of its myriad agents. This perspective inspires creativity, grounds us in our purpose, and helps us to realize the powerful potential of our schools. Complexity leadership theory is a useful lens through which to view our organizations as ever-shifting systems, improving by remaining grounded to mission and vision. In my community, Hurricane Katrina was a profound disrupter which led an entire city to the very edge of chaos. What has emerged was unpredictable, and various agents of this complex adaptive system recombined to push my unique Jewish day school to surprising outcomes and mission-grounded innovations. ■

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