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HaYidion

קיץ תש"ע • Summer 2010

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*Tzedakah*

*Zionism*

*Hebrew*

*Moth*

*Literacy*

*Community*

*Arts*

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## The Educated Jew

## HaYidion: The RAVSAK Journal

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# From the Editor

י by **BARBARA DAVIS**

**A**s Jews, we have always had dreams, and as Jewish educators, we believe, as did Herzl, that **אם תרצו אין זו אגדה**—If you will it, it is no dream. Thus it is fitting that this Shavuot issue of *HaYidion*—which will reach you during commencement season—examines the “Vision of the Graduate,” and asks the question, What does it mean to be an educated Jew?

But the articles in this issue appeared in my editorial inbox just as my school was celebrating Yom HaAtzmaut. This caused me to wonder what connection, beyond Herzl, might exist between our journal’s theme and our Jewish homeland. Googling “educated Jew,” I was surprised to discover a 1915 speech by Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis entitled “A Call to the Educated Jew.”

Addressing an audience of American Jews of German descent, Brandeis said: “Our intellectual capacity was developed by the almost continuous training of the mind throughout twenty-five centuries. The Torah led the ‘People of the Book’ to intellectual pursuits at times when most of the Aryan peoples were illiterate. Religion imposed the use of the mind upon the Jews, indirectly as well as directly. It demanded of the Jew not merely the love, but also the understanding of G-d. This necessarily involved a study of the Law.”

What further interested me was the linkage that Brandeis then established between Jewish education and Zionism: “[T]hough the Jew make his individual life the loftiest, that alone will not fulfill the obligations of his trust. We are bound not only to use worthily our great inheritance, but to preserve, and if possible, augment it; and then transmit it to coming generations. ... Jewish life cannot be preserved and developed, assimilation cannot be averted, unless there be reestablished in the fatherland a center from which

the Jewish spirit may radiate and give to the Jews scattered throughout the world that inspiration which springs from the memories of a great past and the hope of a great future.”



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Like the passionate and deeply felt words of Brandeis, the articles in this issue will resonate with readers. The perspectives, as always, are varied, even contradictory, but all have the underpinning of a deep commitment to Jewish learning, and accomplishment, and a Jewish future based on educational achievement. Strikingly, when taken together, they form a multicultural model which, as Paula Hyman, professor of modern Jewish history at Yale, has noted, “is particularly appropriate to the ambiguous position of Jews in Diaspora, who create Jewish culture in the space between being a part of the larger society and apart from it.” I am certain you will find them fascinating reading. י

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**RAVSAK** strengthens and sustains the life, leadership and learning of Jewish community day schools, ensuring a vibrant Jewish future.

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# From the Desk of Arnee Winshall, RAVSAK Chair

HEVRA,

It is hard to believe that more than three months have passed since the Leadership Conference. We have celebrated Purim, Pesach, Yom Hashoah, Yom Hazikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut and are counting the Omer until Shavuot. The counting of the Omer is intended to remind us of the link between Passover, which commemorates the Exodus, and Shavuot, which commemorates the giving of the Torah. This period of transition has also been an opportunity for the new RAVSAK board to benefit from the wisdom that comes with wandering and inquiry, study and learning and, ultimately, a focus on priorities.

I am in awe of the time and commitment the new board members are investing in this time of counting. We have weekly phone meetings, each devoted to a different aspect of the unfolding responsibilities, and also gathered for a one-day retreat hosted graciously by the Donna Klein Jewish Academy in Boca Raton. Our focus has been on identifying the strategic priorities of RAVSAK at the professional leadership level, the organizational level, and the board level.

One of the pressing priorities is that of building the board. Each board member has undertaken a leadership role. We are very fortunate to have Bruce Powell as chair of the Committee on Trustees, Paul Levitch acting as Treasurer and chair of the Finance Committee, Lesley Zafran chairing development and marketing, and Barbara Davis heading up the Executive Director Support and Evaluation Committee.

A key strategic priority, not surprisingly, is the expansion of the board. Each of the current board members is looking to involve RAVSAK professionals and lay

leaders in the committee work. And with Marc Kramer and RAVSAK's history of connecting and making a difference in so many community schools, we are continuing to attract wonderful board and



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committee member candidates.

As our priorities unfold, I look forward to sharing them with you and I very much welcome your thoughts and feedback as we continue to work together to ensure a vibrant and strong RAVSAK and, in turn, an exciting Jewish future.

*B'shalom uvrachah,*

Arnee

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RAVSAK's Board and Staff wish you a happy Shavuot

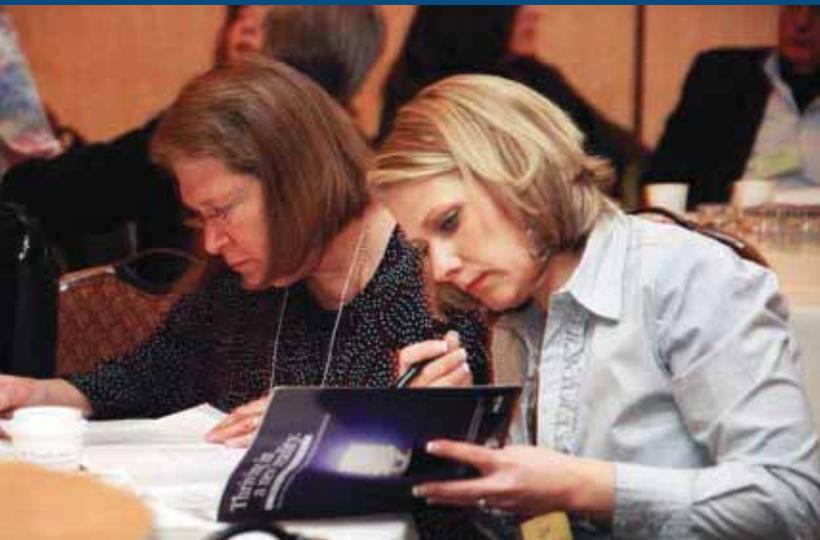


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# Visions: Past, Present, Future

י Interview with **DANIEL MAROM**

**Tell us about yourself. What inspired you to become a professor of Jewish education?**

Though I have a doctorate in Jewish education and I teach courses in academic institutions, I do not see myself as a “professor” and am I not based at a university. My professional identity is to be a broker between the larger world of ideas and the everyday work of educational practice in live settings of Jewish and Israeli education. I was inspired to take on this role by educators and philosophers whose profound ideas and compelling practices emerged from a systematic integration between these two areas. Having benefitted from the quality of their work, both as a learner and as a seeker, I wanted to contribute to the lives of others in much the same way and to try to encourage the fields of Jewish and Israeli education to move in this direction.



*Dr. Daniel Marom teaches at the Mandel Leadership Institute in Jerusalem and is co-editor of Visions of Jewish Education. He can be reached at [Marom@mandelinstitute.org.il](mailto:Marom@mandelinstitute.org.il).*

**Who were your role models starting out in the field?**

My role models were first and foremost my own teachers in my early years at day school. An example is my English teacher Merle Gould, who taught general and Jewish literature in a way that helped connect me with spiritual matters—things that were beyond the materialistic world in which I grew up. Years later, I had the privilege of serving as her apprentice as part of my teacher certificate program. The same applies to my history teacher, Zale Gutzin—a true pedagogical virtuoso if I ever saw one. He challenged me to think independently and to translate my deepest commitments into action. Years later, as part of a research project, I came knocking on his door in order to interview him about the work that he did “behind the curtains” in planning and implementing his teaching methods. Having been in the field for decades at that time, I thought I knew a lot about teaching and that nothing in the interview would surprise me. I was wrong. I sat there and took notes silently, as this master of education shared the genius of his work with me and shocked me about how virtually every detail in his class was the product of sophisticated planning and implementation. I could say similar things about a number of people from diverse areas, such as my first teacher in Jewish philosophy, Rabbi Abraham Feder, and Aubrey Zimmerman, my basketball coach.

**What gave rise to the Visions project? What needs of the field did the project address?**

The Visions Project was founded and launched by my teacher and mentor, the late Professor Seymour Fox of blessed memory, who, as I and many others see him, was the foremost Jewish educator of our generation. Fox believed that the perennial ills of Jewish education—i.e. the lack of resources, the dearth of high-quality personnel and curricula, its low priority on the community’s agenda—these were themselves symptoms of a deeper problem. The very image of the educated Jew that guided community leaders and practitioners in devising and implementing Jewish education was often tepid, obsolete, superficial, sentimental, ripe with contradictions, and often unsophisticated. Jewish education could not overcome its ills by focusing exclusively on practical solutions to the immediate and urgent problems on the ground.

It had to invest its energies and resources as well in rearticulating the very purposes of Jewish education and to redesign the realities on the ground accordingly. Anything less could actually contribute to the learner’s estrangement from and

critique of things Jewish. Fox first made this claim in the late 1950s. Since then, he devoted much of his career to building the infrastructure upon which Jewish education could be redesigned according to this view. As part of this effort, he established the Visions Project in the late 1990s under the auspices of the Mandel Foundation. The Visions Project’s major activity over the next decade was to work with leading thinkers and educators in the Jewish world to devise alternative conceptions of the educated Jew.

**What has been the project’s impact?**

The ensuing product of this ten year effort was the anthology that Fox and I edited together with Professor Israel Scheffler, who was then the director of Harvard University’s Philosophy of Education Research Center, *Visions of Jewish Education*. The dissemination of that anthology—including in its Hebrew edition and now in its forthcoming French edition—as well as its use in various training programs for leaders of Israeli and Jewish education worldwide has led to its initial impact all across the field. The case for vision has become part of the mainstream rhetoric in Jewish education; *Visions* has become required reading for people



making a career in the field; a number of significant field initiatives in developing vision guided Jewish and Israeli education have emerged and have been documented; and a whole series of books and articles have been published on the topic. A great example is Daniel Pekarsky's book *Vision at Work: The Theory and Practice of Beit Rabban*, which provides a vivid and detailed portrait of a non-denominational American Jewish day school that is systematically guided by a profound set of ideas about being Jewish. As well, some people have now focused their careers on serving as "vision facilitators" for institutions in the field. All in all, these amount to something of an infrastructure for deeper and broader impact, should communities and institutions want to invest their resources in this area.

### *What has changed over the years since the project was launched?*

Fox's sudden death in 2006 was a terrible blow to the whole field that he launched. That blow was compounded by the recession in the world economy too, since in that situation, funders saw areas such as the development of vision in Jewish edu-

cation as being less urgent than keeping institutions and programs afloat. Despite these setbacks, and with the stabilizing of the economy, the field continues to grow in various circles through initiatives and research carried out by scholars and educators. The Visions Project focused its energies on the crises of Israeli and Zionist education and developed a whole slew of field projects and new materials that both deepen and broaden the application of Fox's ideas in Israel. The challenge now is for the field to help community leaders and practitioners in systems of Jewish and Israeli education to go beyond being convinced by the case for vision and using its rhetoric to investing in large scale long-term initiatives in conscious re-articulation of their purposes and practices in terms of compelling and profound images of the educated Jew and the educated Israeli.

### *What have you learned in schools you've worked closely with putting vision into practice?*

My chapter in *Visions* summarizes my first attempt to serve as an on-site vision facilitator in a community Jewish day school in America. In that chapter, I suggested five

principles that ought to guide efforts to develop vision-guided Jewish education in schools and other settings. These principles relate to decoding the implicit vision in practice, creating readiness conditions for vision development, developing an everyday culture of practice that focuses on articulating and achieving clearly defined purposes in light of a larger philosophical view of the educated person, and much more. Since then, I continued this kind of work in a wide variety of settings in Israel, ranging from a single kindergarten class to a large-scale network of schools and colleges. I have also trained groups of Israeli and Jewish educators to undertake the same kind of work in their institutions. All of these efforts have been documented and summarized so as to produce further resources—both methodological and philosophical—for the benefit of others in the field.

These experiences have taught me that the five principles posited in the original chapter in *Visions* are very effective, but that it is difficult for institutions and professionals to understand and use them. It is not something that happens just by reading

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my chapter, or even by taking a year or two to study books and articles such as those produced by Fox's students and the Visions Project. That would be like training to be a surgeon without actually doing any surgery. To

way you would make a decision at a town hall meeting or develop a five year plan for your business or organization.

Another lesson that may result from this all this work is that vision cannot be developed only at the school level. Schools

infrastructure, leadership and work of the Mandel Leadership Institute in Jerusalem. In this capacity, the former staff of the Visions Project work closely together with MLI's other staff members, fellows and graduates in developing methods of training educational leaders to develop and work with visions of Jewish or Israeli education as well as in tackling topics on the Jewish and Israeli agenda that challenge such training.

Currently, work in the first area is in developing a pedagogy of long-term, one-on-one "tutorials" for educational leaders that focus on their development as vision-guided practitioners. In the second area, the focus is on confronting the challenges posed by the diversity of Jewish and Israeli society to their educational visions. While diversity is the reality in Israel and Jewish communities around the world, neither have developed visions of education that truly address that reality or build upon it as a positive and meaningful aspect of Jewish and Israeli life. It is much easier to emphasize solidarity based on an imagined lowest common denominator than it is to be equal to the complexities of Jews of different backgrounds getting to know each other and live together. How much more is this the case when we are speaking of relations between Jews and non-Jews. My

**“ This is one reason for my having somewhat retracted from the term “vision.” You cannot buy or plan substantive Jewish education the way you would make a decision at a town hall meeting or develop a five year plan for your business or organization.**

be capable of basing living institutions of Jewish education on a profound vision of the educated Jew, leaders must also have guided field opportunities in which they can learn how to implement all that they have studied in the seminar room while working on their feet. As well, they must maintain ongoing discourse with other professionals who are doing the same, so that they can learn from each other and together develop a growing field of expertise.

Moving in this direction necessitates a serious commitment to developing vision-guided practice both at the institutional and professional level. However much community and professional leaders are convinced by the case for vision, in order to act upon it, they must take the next step of committing time and resources to developing vision-guided practice. Beyond necessitating leadership, courage, foresight on their part, they must be concerned for the substance of Jewish education over and above all else. This is one reason for my having somewhat retracted from the term “vision.” For many people, that term signifies something that is much less demanding, like a “visioning process” in which a few people get together for a few meetings to articulate some common aspirations in terms that are either too high in the air or too close to the ground to generate Jewish education that can truly make an impact. As I see it, that's cheating. You cannot buy or plan substantive Jewish education the

are so busy trying to get through the day, the week, the month and the year that they do not really have the capacity to take on many of the challenges of articulating larger purposes and devising means and methods to attain them. Resources also need to be invested at the level of the central offices of larger networks and organizations. RAVSAK needs people whose job description it is to develop a profound portrait of “the educated community Jew,” pedagogies for the education of learners in light of such a portrait, and methods of helping local community schools work with these products. It takes a whole

**“ In order for parents to play this role, they themselves need to work through their own visions of Jewish life and education. Here is one domain where the school can play a critical role.**

community to produce Jewish education based on a vision of Jewish community.

*Tell us what's going on with the project today.*

The Mandel Foundation decided to refocus the work of the Visions Project on the central item on its agenda: the development of educational leadership for Israel and Jewish communities worldwide. The Foundation has consequently transformed the Visions Project from a separate and independent entity to one that has been fully integrated into the larger

aspiration is that this kind of work will enable MLI to emerge as a center and model of excellence in the field of educational leadership not only in the Jewish and Israeli contexts, but also in the world at large.

*Where can the field of vision in Jewish education go from here?*

The work that the Visions Project undertook in its prior framework has generated much interest and activity. New initiatives and collaborations emerge almost

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 48]

*Vision*



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# The “Jewish” in Jewish Day Schools: Aspirations for Our Graduates

by **SUSAN KARDOS**

[This article is based on the author’s response to Lee Shulman’s keynote address, “Where Novelty and Routine Collide: From the Formation of Understanding to the Formation of Identity in the Process of Education,” delivered at the North American Jewish Day School Leadership Conference, January 18, 2010.]

As many *HaYidion* readers know, The AVI CHAI Foundation is a private foundation which has, over the years, made tremendous investments in Jewish day schools and overnight summer camps. We invest in schools and camps because we believe that a vibrant Jewish future depends on a commitment to Jewish living, learning and Jewish peoplehood, and we subscribe to a research-based belief that the best hope for attaining this vision of the future is through a focused investment in educational experiences for Jewish youth which are Jewishly meaningful and full of joy. So programs and organizations that support schools and camps are the objects of our grant-making.

As we enter our final decade as a grant-making foundation, we are seizing the opportunity to clearly articulate our aspirations for Jewish day school students in North America and our dreams for the Jewish People in the 21st century. We articulate these aspirations in celebration of school leaders and teachers who share this vision and who do the hard work, every day, to realize this vision for their students and their parents. We express these ideas in celebration of great leaders and great teachers who clearly and unapologetically articulate their hopes and dreams for their students, even if they can’t all be reached. We write in celebration of those who lead their schools and teach their students toward the realization of those dreams of a Jewish future.

In his book *Growing Minds: On Becoming a Teacher*, Herbert Kohl tells a powerful story. He is tutoring a student, a black high school basketball player, who is struggling to learn to read. The boy tries. He stumbles. He is frustrated. He is ashamed. He is angry. He slams his book shut, and with a sweep of his long arm, he swats at Kohl’s latest manuscript. Pages fly everywhere, like a small tornado in the office. Kohl is furious, and he starts to shout. The boy is shaken by Kohl’s response, and moves to collect the papers. Kohl forbids him to touch the pages, telling him that he no longer trusts the boy. Kohl tells him that, next to his family, nothing means more to him than words on a page. Kohl writes of this incident, “Next to the people that I love, my manuscripts are the most important things in my life...Books and writing are not small school things for me but central to life and understanding. I told the

boy that it was no joke not to be able to read. That it was a form of poverty. And that he didn’t have a right to not read.”

Yes, Kohl meant that reading is an essential skill. But he meant more than that: he said reading is central to life and



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understanding and that learning to read was the boy’s obligation. He was bound to do so. It was a moral imperative. He would simply have to learn to read if he expected anything of meaning or consequence to follow. Illiteracy is poverty, and the boy did not have the right to pass that on.

This is an extraordinarily powerful story about an educator’s aspirations for his student and about teachers’ and learners’ obligations to the world. We asked ourselves: What is the analog in Jewish education?

We submit, and we assume that readers agree, that our students need a Jewish education that enables them to think about themselves, their people, and their G-d in a way that is uniquely and beautifully Jewish. They need an education that enables them to live the simple rhythms of their day and their year in a way that is, again, inimitably and magnificently Jewish. They need a Jewish education that is substantive and relevant to their modern lives in the Digital Age. They need an education that relies on the wisdom and grandeur of the texts that have guided

Vision



our people through centuries, and they need to be able to see these ancient texts as guides for their own lives. They need an education that illuminates the glorious and difficult Jewish past as a way to light the way in our present and for our future. They need an education that secures the continuity of our people so that we may continue to create our story and tell it to the world, and so that we can enrich the world through our participation. They need an education aimed at promoting the notion of *klal Yisrael*, where Jews around the world are connected to and care for each other across geographical, generational, class, race, and ideological differences.

But the hard question is, what does this really look like in schools? What does it look like when time, attention, and resources are being allocated to the many, many worthy activities that our schools sponsor? What does it take to place a stake in the ground regarding Jewish literacy, religious engagement, and Jewish Peoplehood, and the connection to the modern state of Israel?

Can school leaders, board chairs, and teachers declare their aspirations loudly, or must they remain secrets kept locked like precious jewels in our hearts?

We'd like to suggest the following specific and unapologetic aspirations for Jewish day schools and the graduates they produce. Much of this will

by educators and their students.

The aspirations to consider are the following:

- That Jewish day school graduates are knowledgeable about ancient and modern Jewish history and conversant in modern Hebrew.

- That they take responsibility for transmitting their Jewish heritage to future generations, engaging in or leading the Jewish community.

- That they bring a Jewish voice and Jewish values into the discourse of humankind.

We believe that all of these aspirations

## Can school leaders, board chairs, and teachers declare their aspirations loudly, or must they remain secrets kept locked like precious jewels in our hearts?

- That graduates appreciate the significance of the State of Israel and her centrality for Jews everywhere.

- That graduates feel themselves part of a distinctive People who share a common heritage, history, culture, religion, language and homeland. That these connections will create for them a unique bond to and inspire a sense of responsibility for Jews around the world.

- That Jewish day school graduates continue a tradition of independent study of biblical and rabbinic texts, ideally in Hebrew.

- That they appreciate the sacredness of those texts and the texts' role in

ought to be pursued in Jewish educational contexts that include, quite explicitly, joyful participation, physical enactment, positive socialization, and leadership development. If the task is too great to accomplish in the space of a school day or school year, students ought to be encouraged to participate in other programs such as summer camp, youth group, Israel trips, or synagogue life that will help them reach these aspirations.

We stress that these intensive and immersive educational experiences are aspirations for Jewish students of all types and ideologies—for community schools and schools of all denominational affiliations—so that a literate and committed core can exist within all Jewish denominations and trans-denominationally.

Since schools are unique organizations with particular missions, cultures, and structures, and since schools are comprised of unique students, teachers, leaders, and parents, it is both useful and fascinating to formally explore your school's specific and unapologetic aspirations for your graduates. Are these aspirations, as Kohl said of reading, "not small school things, but central to life and understanding"? What does a serious commitment to these aspirations mean for leadership, teaching, and curriculum?

We invite you to join us in sharpening our focus on the articulation and enactment of these aspirations and to journey with us into our glorious Jewish future. *י*

## We believe that all of these aspirations ought to be pursued in Jewish educational contexts that include, quite explicitly, joyful participation, physical enactment, positive socialization, and leadership development.

sound quite familiar to many of you, because, in fact, it is what you aspire to everyday. School contexts and cultures are different, so, in different schools, embracing these aspirations has varying implications for school structures, schedules, teaching practice, curriculum development, and leadership. And what does it look like to meet each of these aspirations? That, too, will have to be defined, on site,

our People's timeless grappling with theological, spiritual, existential and practical questions.

- That graduates are guided by Jewish values and *mitzvot* that are integrated into all aspects of their 21st century lives, and that they become adults committed to lifelong Jewish intellectual and spiritual growth.

# Should Jewish Day Schools Aspire to Create Educated Jews?

by **JON A. LEVISOHN**

**T**HE title of this article—should Jewish schools aspire to create educated Jews?—is obviously intended to be provocative. In one sense, the answer to the question is surely yes. When we set up systems and institutions for educating people, our goal is to educate those people. Jewish day schools educate Jews. So it seems as if we are asking, “Do we want to achieve our goals?” Why else would we do whatever we decide to do, if not to achieve whatever we aspire to achieve?

But let’s look more closely. The idea of the “educated person”—or, the “educated man”—has a long history in general philosophy of education. In the field of Jewish education, the idea of the “educated Jew” is associated with a project of the Mandel Foundation in Israel that came to be known as the Visions of Jewish Education Project and that produced, among other things, an important edited volume, *Visions of Jewish Education*, in 2003. Led by Seymour Fox, z”l, the project began in 1991 by asking questions about the educated Jew.

In other words, the project assumed from the outset that the way to construct a vision of Jewish education would be to articulate what we mean by the educated Jew—what we imagine that a graduate of an aspirational institution knows and is able to do, or perhaps, what that person values and believes. We want vision-guided practice; we want institutions that are energized by compelling visions that focus the attention of their faculty, their students, and their supporters. To generate these visions, we then assume, we ought to start by painting a picture of the ideal graduate. This assumption, however, deserves closer examination.

## THE DANGER OF PLANNING

First, we might notice that any effort to focus on the future runs the risk of avoiding the present reality—especially the reality of children. In the mid-18th century, Jean-Jacques Rousseau sounded one of the keynotes of progressive educational theory when he warned against thinking about children as pre-adults. “People sometimes speak about a complete man,” he writes in Book 2 of *Emile*. “Let us think rather of a complete child.” When we think about the educated Jew, are we focusing on the “complete man” rather than a healthy, grounded, flourishing child? Rousseau writes in his preface, “[People] are always seeking the man in the child without thinking of what he is before being a man... Begin, then, by studying your pupils better.” In some respects, the critique is as true now as it was in Rousseau’s day; schooling is often implicitly designed as a race to see how fast we can make children into adults. Think about the common assumption that enrichment means moving ahead in the material. Ahead towards what? Or think about

the all-too-common outcome of exercises to determine what students ought to know, in which it turns out that few if any adults in the building meet those broad and deep expectations. If we are not careful, the bold vision of the educated Jew—everything we aspire for children to achieve as adults—will blind us to the reality of the Jewish child.



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In fact, the dangers of planning for the future adult are not just that we will lose sight of the child. There is a second, related danger that we can point to. In Franz Rosenzweig’s famous essay “Towards a Renaissance of Jewish Learning” in 1920, he calls for learning without organization, without planning. “All recipes,” he warns, “produce caricatures of men, that become more ridiculous the more closely the recipes are followed.” What begins as a principled effort to define the educated Jew may quickly disintegrate into just such an exercise in recipe concoction, and we can easily imagine the caricatures that result from slavish efforts to produce such a person. Start with 12 years of rigorous Jewish studies, mix in several summers of a total immersive Jewish experience, add in one dose of Israel, and stir. But people are not products to be produced, and they are certainly not produced by recipes. Instead, the only way to proceed is to rely on what he calls “the empty forms of preparedness,” the creation of appropriate times and spaces for apparently spontaneous interactions.



Of course, simply setting up a time and a space for interaction is no way to run an innovative new center for adult Jewish learning, which is what Rosenzweig was proposing in that essay. For that matter, it's no way to run a Jewish day school either. The interactions that take place in those settings are not spontaneous; at their best, they are the result of the careful design of learning environments and the thoughtful creation of learning materials. Just as Rousseau, for all his professed commitment to an education through spontaneous natural experiences, has clear ideas about what he wants Emile to learn, so too Rosenzweig, for all his commitment to "the empty forms of preparedness," actually spent his days lining up lecturers and seminar leaders to create a distinctive set of educational experiences for the adults Jews of Frankfurt.

So we can set aside some of the rhetorical excess in both Rousseau and Rosenzweig. But both of them, in different but related ways, remind us that our attention to the idea of the educated Jew carries with it a danger that is associated with all planning, all preparation for the future. John Dewey famously argued that "Education is not a preparation for life; education is life it-

self." When we focus on the idea of the educated Jew, we ought to be aware of the risk of turning education into a preparation for some future life.

### IDEOLOGY IS OVERESTIMATED

The Visions of Jewish Education Project was committed, from the outset, to nurturing multiple visions rather than a single consensual vision. Fox and his colleagues believed that they had a responsibility to develop multiple articulations that would enrich and renew Jewish educational discourse, articulations as diverse as the range of compelling alternatives in modern Jewish life. In other words, pluralism at the level of ultimate questions of meaning and purpose would inevitably lead to pluralism at the level of educational theories.

For pluralistic Jewish day schools, this may seem attractive, and indeed, it is a virtue of the project that it successfully resisted any effort to achieve artificial and superficial consensus. But any intentionally pluralistic institution faces a particular challenge in articulating a vision, which must be appropriately flexible and inclusive without giving up on a rich, textured, compelling articulation of goals. *Visions of Jewish Ed-*

*ucation* includes four such rich and textured visions—but none of them would be appropriate for a pluralistic school. At the same time, a vision has to offer ideas that enable choices, ideas that guide decision-making in matters of educational policy. As Devorah Steinmetz recently argued in these pages, "I would not want pluralism ... to end up being *the* criterion by which the program is measured or that shapes the direction of the school." Answering "all of the above" to every choice is no vision.

But the problem is actually deeper than that. In fact, we ought to question assumptions about the role of ideology in the development of educational vision. This is not to suggest that ideology is altogether unimportant, but rather, to challenge the implication that ideology determines pedagogy. We sometimes pretend that, once we figure out the biggest ideas, the day-to-day decisions will flow from that process. As I have recently argued elsewhere in discussing the teaching of classical Jewish texts, we sometimes seem to assume that the most significant pedagogical fault line lies between those who treat classical texts as sacred (in some

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sense) and those who do not. But such an abstract conception, while theologically meaningful, may be pedagogically inert. The affirmation that one is encountering the word of G-d (in some sense) provides little pedagogic guidance. Likewise, the idea that one is encountering a text that is *not* the word of G-d is also compatible with a very wide range of pedagogic practices. When we focus

ateness for any particular school. Depending on one's priorities, they may well be of paramount importance. But they are not helpful for creating compelling lessons in Tanakh. They do not allow educators to select certain appropriate texts, rather than others. They do not generate instructional approaches or guide one towards the design of compelling learning opportunities. They are ideas about Tanakh, to be sure, but they are so far removed from the

more than we actually have. Pedagogic guidance emerges less from ultimate stances, and more from finer-grained conceptions of what kinds of questions and answers are important within a particular subject, and what good teaching looks like, and what it means to learn.

**If a teacher were to tell us that her goal in teaching Exodus 19 is to promote the idea that “the Torah is the record of G-d’s revelation,” we would be justifiably concerned, for she has flattened a rich and nuanced text into mere cliché.**

on the big ideas of the educated Jew, we may delude ourselves into thinking that we are constructing a vision that can provide guidance for our teachers and our curriculum, when in fact we are doing nothing of the kind.

Let me make the point a bit more concrete. I recently encountered an attempt to articulate enduring understandings and essential questions in Tanakh. As many day school educators know, those terms are borrowed from *Understanding by Design*, a popular and useful approach to curriculum development that emphasizes the responsibility of the instructor to articulate ambitious learning goals and then to plan backwards to the learning activities that support those goals. So what are appropriate enduring understandings and essential questions in the subject of Tanakh? If you are immersed in conceptions of the educated Jew—if you’ve been thinking about the ideological stances that the educated Jew ought to embrace—then you may well end up, like the author of the example that I encountered, imagining that enduring understandings in Tanakh include ideas like “the Torah is the record of G-d’s revelation” or “The historical fate of the Jewish people is a function of its relationship with G-d, which is defined by its observance of Torah and mitzvot.”

These are certainly big ideas, and my intention is not to question their appropri-

nuances of actual biblical texts that one would be hard-pressed to explain how any particular lesson ought to promote those ideas. If a teacher were to tell us that her goal in teaching, say, Exodus 19 (about the Sinaitic theophany) is to promote the idea that “the Torah is the record of G-d’s revelation,” we would not be pleased. Instead, we would be justifiably concerned, for she has flattened a rich and nuanced text, full of soaring imagery, complicated choreography, and interpretive difficulties, into mere cliché. We might sit down with the teacher and say, “Let’s think harder about what, specifically, you want to accomplish here, so that your pedagogy can match your desired outcomes.” We might even go so far as to refer to the concern, articulated by Dan Pekarsky and others, that vision discourse always runs the risk of promoting slogans instead of content-rich conceptions. Whatever enduring understandings of Exodus 19 might be (and of course there will be many compelling candidates), they surely ought to be more robust than a slogan about the Torah as the record of G-d’s revelation.

Another way to put the point is this. The idea of the educated Jew encourages us to think, at least in part, about ideological stances on issues of ultimate importance. There is surely much value in this, and great need for it. But we may be misled, in promoting the importance of ideology, into thinking that we have accomplished

This is not an argument against the importance of vision. As Fox, Pekarsky and others have argued, we cannot afford to perpetuate educational practices that are devoid of powerful and compelling visions. Instead, it is an argument—or at least, the outline of an argument—for the importance of a particular conception of vision, a more complicated conception. That conception of vision is not limited to the idea of the educated Jew, and does not assume that everything else will smoothly follow. Instead, it emphasizes the multiple contributing sources of vision-guided practice: ideas about human nature and human flourishing; ideas about the divine and about kedushah; ideas about good teaching and learning; ideas about particular subjects of study and what meaningful accomplishment looks like in those subjects; and ideas about the ideal community, Jewish and general. All of these ideas should contribute, in fundamental ways, to a vision of Jewish education.

## THE IDEAL COMMUNITY

This last sphere of thought—about the ideal community—generates the third and final concern about the idea of the educated Jew. The focus on the individual, the single educated Jew, to the exclusion of the community or the society, is hardly unique in educational theory. After all, the idea of the educated Jew builds on the tradition of philosophical inquiry into the idea of the “educated person” to which I referred above. (See Israel Scheffler’s chapter in *Visions of Jewish Education* for some of these links.)

But what if this way of considering the purposes of education is too narrow? What if the focus on the educated person, or the educated Jew, overlooks a function of education that is more communal? I do not mean only that individuals ought to be members of communities, that they

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Vision





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# Bridging Vision, Curriculum, and Student Learning

by **CHARLOTTE ABRAMSON** and **ALEX SINCLAIR**

**T**HE Jewish Day School Standards and Benchmarks Project, funded by AVI CHAI and run under the auspices of the Melton Research Center for Jewish Education of the Jewish Theological Seminary, has worked with more than thirty-five schools since its establishment in 2003. The Project is rooted in two core beliefs about vision. The first core belief is that vision is critical and the second, vision alone is insufficient.

## VISION IS CRITICAL

The Jewish educational world has been enriched by discourse about “vision” since the publication in 2003 of *Visions of Jewish Education* (Fox, Scheffler and Marom). We are certainly persuaded by the importance of vision in education, and are inspired by Fox’s statement (in *Vision at the Heart*, 1997) that “education that is essentially pareve—that’s neutral and doesn’t take a strong stand—has little chance of succeeding.” At Jewish day schools, where the teaching of Bible and other ancient Jewish texts is core to their school’s curriculum, students need to fully understand why we ask them to spend so much time studying them. Too often, they see the study of these texts as irrelevant where meaningful connections between the text and their lives are not made.

Our first challenge to a school that wishes to participate in the Project is think about your school’s vision, and how the teaching of Tanakh is related to that vision. What should your graduates know and be able to do? Why is Tanakh important to you, as teachers, as a community, as a school? Why should it be important to your students? Why are you studying this text? Schools that have clear and compelling answers to those questions will be in a position to develop a well articulated and coherent curriculum where its goals for teaching Tanakh are transparent to teachers, students and parents. Students at schools that have clear and compelling answers to those questions will thence be more likely to have greater mastery of and connection to the study of Tanakh.

## VISION ALONE IS INSUFFICIENT

The problem with vision, though, is that it often remains just vision. Without being enacted, without being translated into curriculum, without curricular manifestation, visions end up in documents gathering dust on bookshelves, or in the “about us” sections of websites, clicked-on occasionally but seldom put into practice. It might be argued that one of the reasons that the Visions of Jewish Education Project, while recognized as immensely valuable and significant by members of the research

community, has not gained as much traction on the ground as might have been hoped, is because it did not focus on the crucial questions of how vision becomes embodied in curriculum. The Jewish Day School Standards and Benchmarks Project makes precisely that move.



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## STANDARDS AND BENCHMARKS ARE THE INSTRUCTIONAL MANIFESTATION OF VISION

The formal definition of a standard is “an overarching learning outcome exhibiting a synthesis of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.” Benchmarks are more specific learning outcomes within the standards; what students will be able to know and do. If you look at the list of Tanakh standards (see sidebar; benchmarks can be found online at <http://www.jtsa.edu/standardsbenchmarks.xml>), you’ll see that not only do they fit this definition, but, crucially, the different standards are rooted in different visions of

Vision



the study of the Tanakh and its place in Jewish identity and life.

Imagine, for example, a school whose vision understands contemporary Jews as being modern-day links in a 3,000-year-old interpretive chain. For such a school, immersion in the interpretive act is the defining characteristic of Jewishness. With apologies to iPhone fans: there's a standard for that! Standard 2, and the benchmarks within it, describe learning outcomes that learners might be expected to achieve at different points in their school career. In the early grades, students will demonstrate mastery of a benchmark such as "Understands that some questions have more than one answer." Later on in this school's curriculum, students will progress to other benchmarks, which include "Articulates elements of Rashi's commentary on the Torah text." And in high school, students will be able to "Analyze various art media as biblical interpretation" or "Apply inner-biblical interpretation to texts." These and other benchmarks are the learning outcomes in which students will be asked to demonstrate mastery or excellence.



**The problem with vision, though, is that it often remains just vision. Without being enacted, without being translated into curriculum, without curricular manifestation, visions end up in documents gathering dust on bookshelves, or in the "about us" sections of websites, clicked-on occasionally but seldom put into practice.**

Consider, on the other hand, a different school, which sees the study of Jewish texts as presenting continual opportunities for existential and philosophical grappling with the ultimate questions of human life. Again, there's a standard for that: Standard 6. A student at a school which takes its Jewish educational vision seriously and translates it into curricular manifestation would be asked to demonstrate mastery of the following benchmarks: in his or her early years, "Appreciates that all people are created b'tzelem Elohim"; in middle school, "Discusses

kedushah in its various contexts"; and in high school, "Views the Tanakh as a source for developing and articulating a personal theology."

The school's vision informs its selection of standards; conversely, discussion about standards can help a school articulate its vision. By focusing a school's Tanakh curriculum on its selected standards, and by having students explore biblical texts in depth through the lens of those standards during the course of their careers at the school, it is much more likely that deep learning and critical thinking will occur.

## STANDARDS AND BENCHMARKS AS THE FOUNDATIONS FOR CURRICULUM-WRITING

Once teachers and school leaders have made decisions about which standards and benchmarks to focus on, these standards and benchmarks become the foundations of curriculum design: the development of assessments and learning activities that are also rooted in the

school's vision. This curriculum-writing process is the work that teachers do collaboratively in order to ensure that there is alignment between the vision and what students are learning. Teachers develop big ideas and enduring understandings—aligned with the standards—that help students make meaningful connections between the study of Tanakh and their own lives; standards-aligned essential questions that provide curiosity and motivation for students to engage in learning; and standards-aligned authen-

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## TANAKH STANDARDS

### Standard 1:

Students will become independent and literarily astute readers of the biblical text in Hebrew.

### Standard 2:

Students will be engaged in the learning of ancient, rabbinic, and modern modes of interpretation of the biblical text and will see themselves as a link in this ongoing chain of interpretation.

### Standard 3:

Students will appreciate *TaNakH* as a multi-vocal text with a complex history of development.

### Standard 4:

Students will view the *TaNakH* as the formative narrative of the Jewish People—past, present, and future.

### Standard 5:

Students will, through the study of *TaNakH*, understand and value that the Land of Israel informs and shapes the historical, theological, and sociological experiences of the Jewish People.

### Standard 6:

Students will develop an appreciation for the sacredness of *TaNakH* as the primary record of the meeting between God and the people of Israel and as an essential text through which Jews continue to grapple with theological, spiritual, and existential questions.

### Standard 7:

Students will understand, through the study of *TaNakH* and its interpretations, the role of *mitzvot* in the shaping of the ethical character and religious practices of the individual and the Jewish People.

### Standard 8:

Students will develop a love of Torah study for its own sake and embrace it as an inspiring resource, informing their values, moral commitments, and ways of experiencing the world.

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# Talmud Torah Keneged Kulam: Martin Buber's Secular Vision of the Educated Jew

by JUDAH LEVINE

**P**RE-MODERN Jews had at their disposal a fairly self-evident response to the question: What does it mean to be an educated Jew? Most basically, the “organic” Jewish community recognized only one source of knowledge and values: the Torah and the rabbinic tradition of its interpretation. As such, one was educated if he had a familiarity with the canon, some ability to study it on his own, an abiding dedication to Torah study as a value, and a knowledge of the beliefs and practices that bound one to the community and linked one generation to the next.

Most contemporary Jews, including many observant Jews, are secularized. They are secular in that they are open to and consider themselves part of the broad world in which they live, and recognize its myriad and diverse influences on what they consider knowledge and what they accept as values. Yet—to borrow Paul Mendes-Flohr’s distinction—in that they still exist in cognizance of and in a certain, even be it tenuous, relationship to their Jewish heritage and tradition, they are not entirely secular, but *secularized*. Thus, secularized Jews do not recognize the Torah as the *exclusive* realm of knowledge and values, and may not view the Torah as an ultimate authority on beliefs and practices, but nonetheless still look to the tradition for some sort of influence on their identity and lives. The response of the secularized Jew to the above question is therefore less forthcoming.

What, then, will constitute and sustain Judaism in a secular age? What is secularized Jewish education to provide? A sense of Jewish history? Familiarity with the Bible and the major texts of the Jewish canon? Knowledge of the “essential” teachings or message of Judaism, its ethics and distinct values? The means to contribute to Jewish culture? Positive social experiences with other Jews?

Martin Buber (1878-1965), the eminent and strongly anti-traditionalist Jewish philosopher, in addressing the question of modern Jewish identity, recognized all the above—knowledge of the tradition, social cohesion and the ability to make new contributions to Jewish culture—as basic to Jewish education and continuity. Most essentially, however, he defined the educated secularized Jew as someone with the tools and desire to make Jewish learning, the study of Jewish texts, an enduring fixture of his or her life, independent of beliefs and practices. He held that Jewish education must therefore inspire and prepare the student to be a life-long student.

As a young man, Buber beheld, on one side, traditional Judaism that, in his opinion, was at odds with modernity and celebrated ritual and submission to the authority of the past at the expense of one’s autonomy and spiritual creativity. On the other

side, he found modernized, acculturated Jews ignorant of their own heritage, indifferent to Jewishness of substance and spiritually superficial. The failure of both of these types of Judaism was reflected in their respective relationships to Jewish



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texts: the traditionalist looked exclusively to the text, the past and to the authority of the Torah to dictate beliefs and norms in the present. The acculturated Jew, meanwhile, did not engage the text at all. An educated acculturated Jew was one who studied (minimally) *about* Judaism in textbooks and in translation but did not study *as* a Jew, or directly study the Torah at all. That was the task of the expert rabbi or scholar.

Buber sought a return to Judaism as a living reality (though not as an institutional religion) that would address the needs of the modern Jew: community, spiritual vitality, and a substantive connection to Judaism that would not compromise one’s undeniable modern, even secular, sensibilities. Secularization thus did not mean atheism, agnosticism or the denial of spirituality. On the contrary, Buber sought a renewal of “primal” Jewish spirituality “unencumbered” by the accumulations of generations of organized Jewish religion. At first he posited a nearly mystical faith in the power of each Jew’s innate Jewish spirit to be the basis for new creativity and community. He soon

Vision



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realized, though, that without a connection to the existing tradition this type of effort would be but one more example of secular, humanistic spiritual renewal. It would be Jewish only by the descent of its membership, while, from the perspective of Jewish religious continuity, it would be merely arbitrary.

Thus, he proposed that to be unapologetically modern, unapologetically Jewish, free, creative and spiritually dynamic, the modern Jew, irrespective and independent of belief or practice, must be in contact and dialogue with the texts of tradition. Jewish learning is the key to *both* one's relationship to the tradition as a secular person, and to one's relationship to the secular world as a Jew. The ability to live in reference to and conversation with the text will then guarantee the authentic Jewishness of whatever form secularized Jewish life may take. If Jewish learning becomes central to our lives then "no matter how far removed from all tradition we may seem to an insensible glance, we will have committed ourselves to the great course of Judaism" (*Herut: On Youth and Religion*, in *On Judaism*, 174).

The specifics of Buber's new Jewish learning comprise his own philosophy of Jewish education and address directly what it means to be an educated modern Jew. This philosophy speaks to the tensions between particularism and universalism, religion and reason, traditionalism and secularism, and between traditional authority and modern autonomy that are still familiar to Jewish educators. A brief sketch of these specifics must precede our consideration of some of his theory's ramifications for contemporary day school education and beyond.

Building on the rabbinic notion of the Torah's endless meaning, on the tradition of creative interpretation, and the value of Torah study as a spiritual process and experience, Buber formulated a new model of Jewish learning: study of the text provides the student the context and vocabulary to explore and articulate his or her *own* spiritual journey. Here "mankind's wordless dialogue with God is condensed for him into the language of the soul...to which he himself can add *new expressions*, as yet unspoken. Without this language, he could do no more than stammer and

falter." (*Herut*, 155) Studying canonical texts is not aimed at submission to the viewpoint of the tradition, but at the contribution of the student to the age-old discussion. Through familiarity and contact with the text, the student is to discover a vocabulary—the words, images and symbols—with which to express the contours of his or her own personal experience.

This renewal is, in fact, a Jewish tradition. In Judaism, it is impossible "to draw a line between preserving and producing...Everyone is convinced that he is doing no more than further advancing that which has advanced him to this point, and he may, nonetheless, be the originator of a new movement" ("Teaching and Deed," in *Israel and the World: Essays in a Time of Crisis*, 139). The diversity within the canon, e.g., the rabbinic revision of aspects of biblical ethics, the inclusion of kabbalists and philosophers alongside mainstream Judaism, attests to the tradition of innovation as long as that innovation is in reference to the text. Furthermore, Buber's notion of the text as providing context for each new perspective means that nothing

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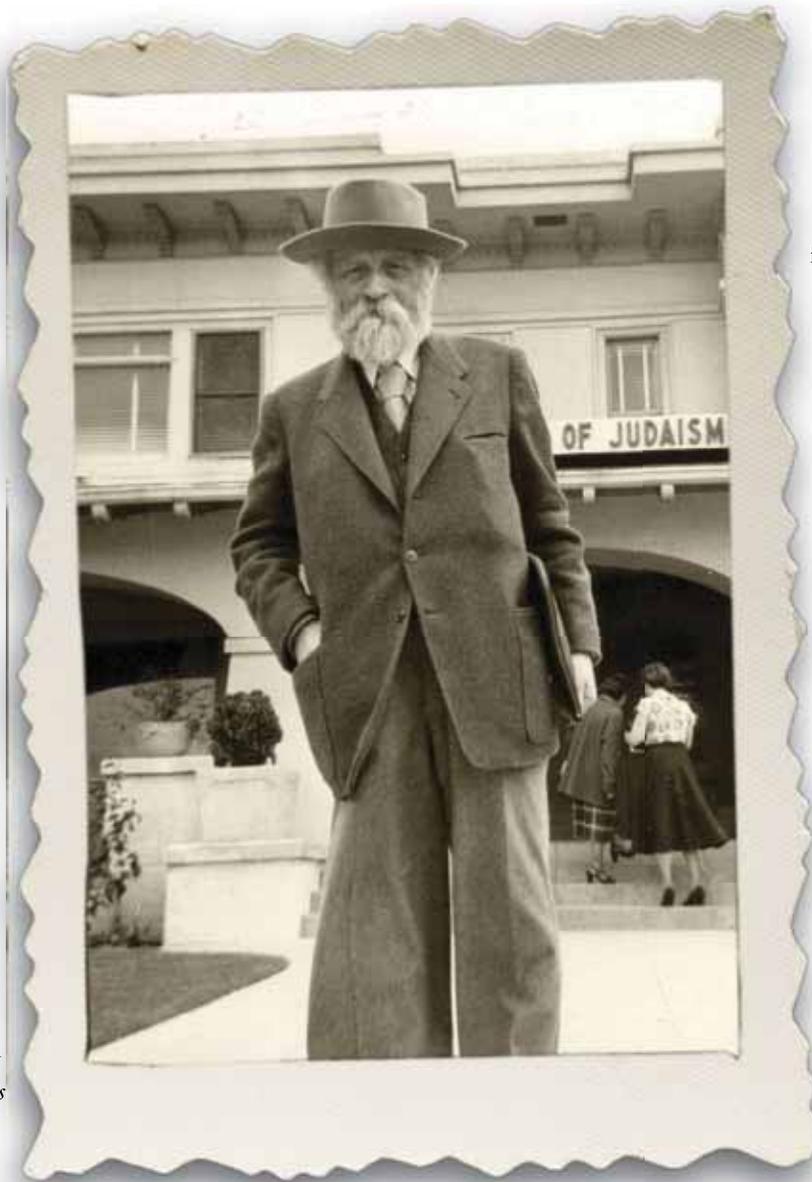
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ing of oneself or one's modernness is to be denied through study. Buber envisioned Jewish learning that was open to the contributions of academic scholarship, and viewed criticism as an additional tool with which to understand and appreciate the development of the particularly Jewish discussion.

Now, Jewish spirit is neither innate nor renewed simply through will. Rather, Jewish spirit is "activated" through the student's own discovery of the text. When teacher and student of Torah truly meet, "the holy spark leaps across the gap. Transmitted *content and form are subordinate* to the tradition of existence as such and become valid only because of it." One becomes spiritually Jewish through the *process* of dedicating oneself to Jewish study, while the content of that study becomes the means for innovation and renewal.

The notion of responsibility is central to Buber's pedagogy. The true teacher does not look to dictate or interfere, but to facilitate and influence. The teacher guides the student toward his or her own *choice* to take personal responsibility for his or her relationship to Judaism. Buber argues that Jewish texts must be central to this endeavor and must be presented in a manner by which students "may acquire the power to make the original choice, that—listening to the voice [of the text] with that power—they may hear the message it has for their hour and their work" ("On National Education," in *Israel and the World*, 162-3). Education via the text must be "philosophical training for spiritual resistance in the conditions of freedom and personal responsibility."



A life of learning, he argues, assures that despite one's distance from the Halakhah or any other form of affiliation, one's life, values and deeds will become distinctly Jewish because of the inevitable place the text will play in one's thought process and worldview. As Emmanuel Levinas articulated it: the text becomes the intellectual "living space (*Lebensraum*)" of the modern Jew. Thus, Buber believed learning would lead to a secularized form of *midrash u-ma'aseh*.

It is surprising perhaps to expect the modern Jew who is not seeking dogma or law from Judaism to center one's Jewishness around study, to be concerned with broad and continued contact with the text and not "essences." It is likewise surprising to base the education of secularized, post-traditional and perhaps

non-observant Jewish youth primarily on text-study. But Buber believed that the secularized Jew educated in this way would by default be living a dedicated and substantive Jewish life. Moreover, he or she would have the tools to create new modes of belief, practice or self-perception to bridge the gap between the secular and traditional, in both directions.

The emphases of text study, student empowerment and intellectual and spiritual creativity that are so central to Buber's notion of what it means to be an educated modern Jew can provide a vision for community day schools. He argues that social, historical and cultural ties to Judaism will not endure the pull of assimilation and secularism without the

added existential and spiritual investment in Judaism that will only be legitimate for the secularized Jew through an ongoing, open exploration of and relationship with the texts. The ultimate goal, then, is the cultivation of independent learners, which in childhood must begin with the development of language skills, textual skills and the continued exposure to the texts that will make the literary tradition a familiar and comfortable domain. This is no small task. But Buber further requires that these skills be acquired in an environment that conveys the diversity, dynamic nature and relevance of the canon through which one might find one's own voice. As such, Buber demands a balance be struck between mastery of textual skills and material, and an emphasis on study as a spiritual process and experience; between an openness to



scholarship and criticism, and the message that the Torah is the unique record of the Jewish spiritual discussion; and between the demands of formal education and the desire for students to remain autonomous and ultimately choose responsibility for the perpetuation and renewal of Judaism.

How can this balance be achieved? Firstly, the basic foundational texts through which skills are developed should be supplemented with other texts that reflect the diverse and even competing opinions and viewpoints that comprise the canon in its different eras so that even in the technical realm, the message of diversity and interpretation is already being conveyed. Further, the curriculum should include courses aimed at exploring this diversity through surveys of the varied biblical, rabbinic, philosophic, kabbalistic and other approaches to the same basic elements of the Jewish narrative (e.g., topics in ethics, theology, different interpretations of biblical texts and concepts etc.).

Buber's vision promotes the notion that sacred texts must also be understood within their historical and cultural context, that there is no contradiction between secular,

objective, critical studies and Jewish dedication to the texts. As such, Buber would support an integrated curriculum in which one studied about the ancient Near East alongside the Bible, and about Hellenistic and Persian culture alongside the Talmud. However, in both skill development and historical studies, Buber would demand that the text nonetheless be conveyed as transcending the context of each: biblical Hebrew is not studied for the same reasons one might elect to study any other language, and historical studies do not exhaust the meaning and reach of traditional texts. In each realm, the students should be reminded that through these tools and this knowledge they can be empowered to shape their own understanding of Judaism and its place in their lives. Exposure to the far-flung descriptions of the power and creativity of study in rabbinic literature, for example, could serve as a model to consider Jewish studies as a separate realm from general studies. As such, though benchmarks for achievement and standard forms of evaluation cannot be discarded, perhaps Jewish studies should also encourage and value demonstrations of independent efforts to grapple with the ideas encountered in the texts.

Promoting life-long Jewish learning as a value must start by dispelling the attitude that the text is irrelevant to contemporary Jewish life that does not accept dogma or far-reaching Jewish law. Most basically, the realization of this vision of the educated secular Jew begins by convincing youth that they are entitled to "see for themselves" what Judaism comprises, and that this can only be done through encountering the text for themselves. Finally, Jewish education of this sort must inspire students to *choose responsibility* for the perpetuation of Judaism by appealing both to their spirit and intellect. As such educators must seek to strike a balance between presenting an authoritative approach to the text and serving as a guide to students' own explorations. In that community day schools do not seek to promote specific agendas, they are an optimal setting for this type of pedagogy. Education of this sort that integrates this message from early education on can produce young adults with the skills and perspective to set Jewish learning apart and view it as an indispensable tool to one's self-understanding and connection to Judaism in a largely secular world. ❧



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# The Vision of a Jewish Educational Leader

by DANIEL PEKARSKY

RECENT discussions about the importance of educational leadership and the way to strengthen it in order to improve American education have left me both pleased and very troubled. I am pleased because I strongly identify with the idea that success in education depends on high quality leadership, but troubled because the directions emphasized in the materials I have come across exhibit an understanding of leadership that is superficial in some fundamental ways. I would like to offer, not an alternative set of ideas, but a complementary perspective on the challenges of leadership and the cultivation of leaders for education. Though my concern encompasses the challenges of general education, my more immediate worry is that the outlook I will investigate might come to dominate the Jewish community as it seeks to cultivate leaders for our educating institutions. I hope that our field will engage seriously with the complementary set of ideas that I am proposing.

## SOME CURRENT EMPHASES IN LEADERSHIP-EDUCATION: SYMPTOMS OF THE PROBLEM

I begin by exemplifying the problem. In a recent article (“Learning to Lead: What Gets Taught in Principal-Preparation Program”), Frederick M. Hess and Andrew P. Kelly carefully survey the state of leadership preparation in “a new era of accountability, where leaders are expected to demonstrate bottom-line results and use data to drive directions.” Their survey of the syllabi featured in 56 programs around the country, including the most prestigious, represent 2,424 course weeks of instruction, and their analysis leads them to conclude that

“just 2 percent of 2,424 course weeks addressed accountability in the context of school management or school improvement, and less than 5 percent include instruction on managing school improvement via data, technology, or empirical research. Of 360 course weeks devoted to personnel management, just 12 weeks mentioned teacher dismissal and nine mentioned teacher compensation.”

Moving on to another matter, the authors conclude:

“Critics often assert that education schools are ideological. In fact, just 12 percent of all course weeks focused upon norms and values. In the norms-and-values

lessons, however, there was strong evidence of normative bias in the topic descriptions and assigned readings.”

Elaborating on this last point, the authors note that 65% of the course content



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they survey has a “progressive tilt” which emphasizes and appears to advocate for ideas like “social justice” and “multiculturalism,” focusing on matters like “race-based discrimination,” “child-centered instruction” and “silenced voices.” Though they find the imbalance between progressive and conservative ideological orientations worrisome indications that leadership preparation programs tend to promote a particular ideological point of view, the authors conclude, in what seems like a reassuring tone, by re-emphasizing that “principal-preparation programs only devote slightly more than 10 percent of instructional time to norms and values.”

Based on their various findings, the authors conclude that “the evidence raises questions about whether preparation of educational leaders is well-matched to the contemporary world of schooling.” While the authors stay clear of making strong recommendations for practice based on their limited research, they do approach this matter in the following passage:

“Ultimately, the question of instructional content is pivotal; yet we find that principals currently receive limited training in the use of data, research,

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technology, the hiring or termination of personnel, or evaluating personnel in a systematic way. The reading lists suggest that aspir-

(an observation that sounds designed to be reassuring to those troubled by the liberal tilt in existing programs that the authors identified).

integrally bound up with the domain of norms and values. And what is true in this instance for general education is equally—for not even more important—for the practice of educational leadership in Jewish settings. Here I want to identify different dimensions of this domain that are not clearly distinguished from one another in the authors' discussion.

First, and most fundamentally, “norms and values” concerns the kind of person the educational leader is: is this a person of character who can be counted on to approach his/her professional life and encounters with youngsters, faculty, parents, and other constituencies and audiences with integrity, honesty, respect, and generosity? While not sufficient as a condition of success,

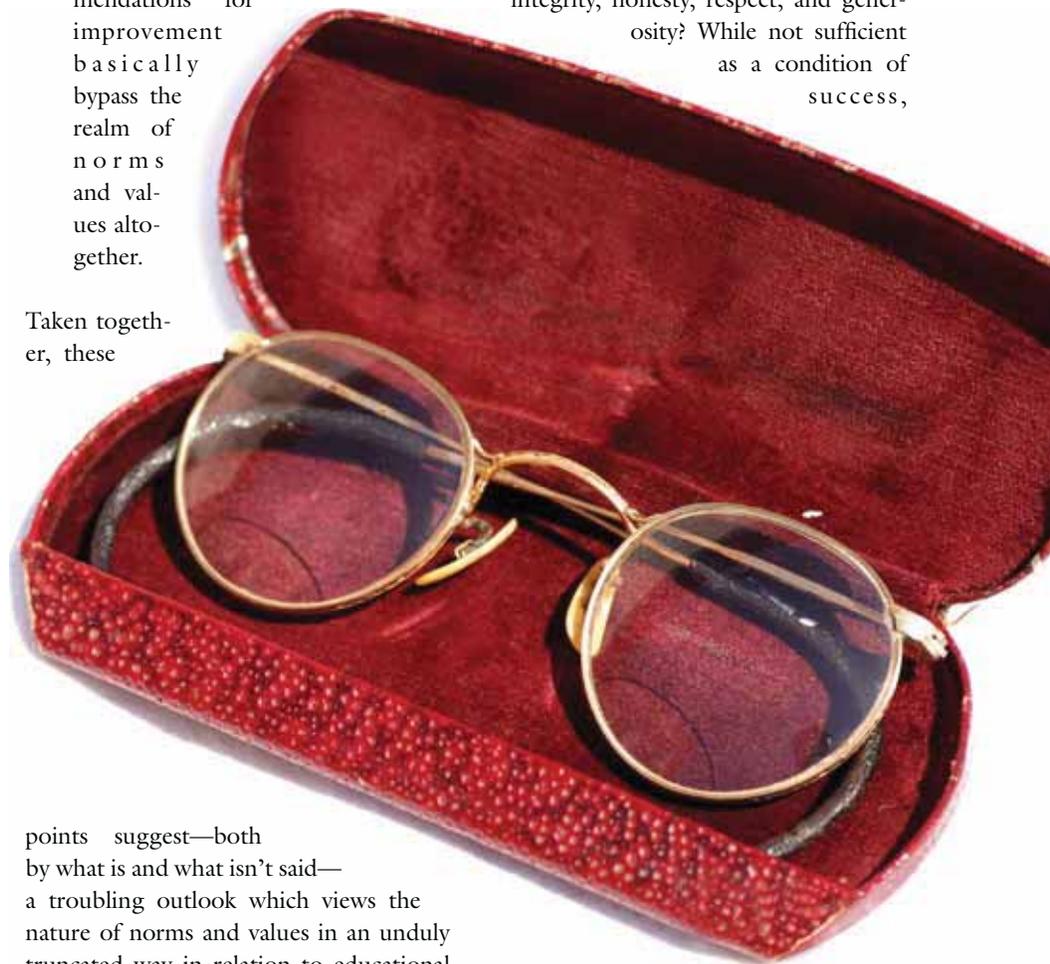


**Although the authors and others recognize that the effectiveness of educational leaders depends heavily on their capacity to motivate and inspire the communities for which they are responsible, they fail to recognize that the ability to do so is integrally bound up with the domain of norms and values.**

ing principals receive limited exposure to important management scholarship or sophisticated inquiry on educational productivity and governance. The vital question is whether the lack of attention to certain schools of thought regarding management may leave aspiring principals prepared for the traditional world of educational leadership but not for the challenges they will face in the 21st century. Principal-preparation programs that pay little attention to data, productivity, accountability, or working with parents may leave their graduates unprepared for their responsibilities.”

3. The authors' recommendations for improvement basically bypass the realm of norms and values altogether.

Taken together, these



## ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

Of the many things worthy of note in this discussion, I want to draw attention to a single dimension of the issue at hand—to what the authors of the article describe as “norms and values.” Here’s what is striking:

1. “Norms and values” is understood as a relatively narrow domain and with an equally narrow (if not unimportant) set of concerns. The authors seem principally to be concerned with the relative balance—or the tilt—in any given program among competing ideological orientations associated with catchphrases like “progressivism,” “conservatism,” “multiculturalism,” “choice,” and “equality.”
2. It was emphasized that in contemporary leadership-development programs overall, only 12% of the curriculum is concerned with this realm

points suggest—both by what is and what isn’t said—a troubling outlook which views the nature of norms and values in an unduly truncated way in relation to educational leadership and as at best of secondary importance in the selection of leaders, assessment, and training of educational leaders. Although the authors and others recognize that the effectiveness of educational leaders depends heavily on their capacity to motivate and inspire the communities for which they are responsible, they fail to recognize that the ability to do so is

core values would appear to be important preconditions, contributing to effectiveness in numerous ways. Not the least of these contributions is that over time the presence of these qualities is unlikely to go unrecognized and unappreciated and

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is perhaps among the best predictors of whether these qualities will suffuse the overall culture of the school. The absence of these qualities in leadership, on the other hand, enhances the likelihood that the school's culture will be

the importance of core values by being the kinds of people who embody them than through exhortation or reference to scholarly literature.

Second, as applied to leadership and leadership development, "norms and values"

norms and values turns out to be essential to leadership, and it is deeply disturbing that discussions of leadership and leadership education can proceed without attention to the importance of these matters.<sup>1</sup>

“Far from being peripheral to the work of leaders, the presence of heartfelt norms and values turns out to be essential to leadership, and it is deeply disturbing that discussions of leadership and leadership education can proceed without attention to the importance of these matters.”

dysfunctional, featuring mistrust, cynicism, and alienation among the school's staff.

This is not to suggest that educational leadership programs are capable of cultivating these qualities in individuals who don't have them. But it is to suggest that in articulating a conception of optimal leadership that will guide leadership development, those (like the authors) who are discussing these matters emphasize the importance of these qualities. This could mean noting that the presence of such qualities is, *of course*, to be selected for at the point of evaluating candidates for leadership development programs, and/or it could mean noting the need to offer opportunities in leadership development curricula for emphasizing the importance of possessing, exhibiting, and not compromising these core qualities of character in their work. Since the demands of practice in the stressful, economically troubled, politically complicated world inhabited by contemporary educational leaders may in fact have a tendency to have a corrosive impact on these qualities, such an emphasis may be profoundly important. It supports leaders' desires to be certain kinds of people without fail, as well as to take these concerns seriously when they are faced with staffing decisions. Equally important, an appreciation for this concern might be relevant to the selection of faculty for leadership-development programs—since they, too, are more likely to communicate

points—at least it ought to point!—to concerns that have to do with leaders' *personal stance*: what they stand for, what inspires them, what educational agenda they are dedicated to achieving in their leadership activities. Put differently, it is imperative that the leader is guided by a *clear and inspiring* vision of what the educational process should be striving to achieve. If the vision isn't *clear*, it won't be able to full its core role of guiding educational planning and program evaluation; and if it isn't *inspiring* to key stakeholders, it will be incapable of eliciting continuing and robust motivation to achieve the school's educational challenges at the highest level of quality under the actual conditions of daily life. The critical point to emphasize here is that whether or not a vision that identifies the school's core aspirations will elicit inspiration and foster motivation among key stakeholders will have much to do with whether its leader is perceived as strongly and visibly believing in this vision—100% committed to it. And, over time, this perception is unlikely to emerge or survive if it doesn't reflect the leader's genuine convictions.

More generally, it goes without saying (or so I used to think) that convictions concerning what the enterprise of educating is fundamentally about—what's "most important" and worthy of achieving—are to be found in the world of "norms and values." Far from being peripheral to the work of leaders, the presence of heartfelt

Lest I be misunderstood, I want to add immediately that I am not suggesting that educational leadership development programs must be organized around a particular conception of the aims of education, viewing themselves as either selecting candidates based on their pre-existing identification with these aims or embracing the challenge of "converting to the cause" those who are admitted to the program who don't yet identify with these aims. Though one could well imagine programs—and perhaps there are some—that exhibit these characteristics, the view I am proposing need not carry such implications. But, at a minimum, the view I am suggesting would heavily emphasize the need for personal stance/vision in the activities and preparation of educational leaders. This could involve some combination of the following:

- Selecting from among candidates for leadership development programs those who already appreciate the need to develop a substantive personal/stance vis-à-vis the most important educational challenges we should address and who are prepared to invest thought and energy in the effort to develop such a view. Selection-processes might also seek to identify candidates who already have such a personal stance/vision and are primed to investigate it critically with an eye towards clarifying it

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to there being empirical support for this view, it is also at the heart of the wisdom found in no less a figure than Plato in *The Republic*: it's not just that the philosopher-king's activities need to be grounded in a vision of the Good (i.e., his/her understanding of the most important values to be secured by education), but that only people of strong character (e.g., people who can hold on to elementary human values under the circumstances when most of us lose perspective and behave very badly!) will be selected to undertake the journey that leads to becoming the leaders of tomorrow.

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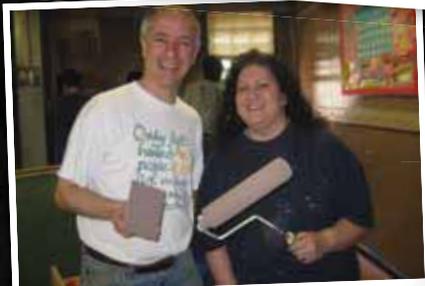
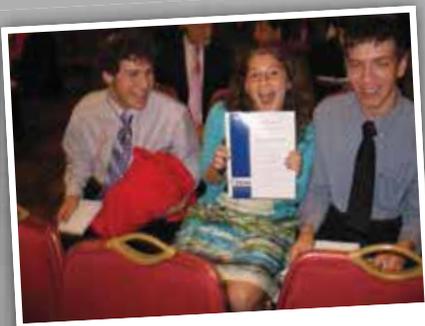
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# Moot Beit Din 2010



“

This was my first year at the RAVSAK Moot Beit Din and I was very impressed with the level of scholarship, enthusiasm and camaraderie all the participants brought. This event is the culmination of months of preparation by each team. Like past years, this year's topic regarding the permissibility of torture guided students to delve deeply into our tradition and show how extremely relevant Jewish sources are today and the sensitivities our Sages brought to past rulings.”

Rabbi Greg Harris, judge, Moot Beit Din 2010

The Moot Beit Din Shabbaton took place in Washington, DC, April 22nd – 25th. This year a record twenty-one teams, comprising eighty students and twenty-one advisors, gathered for this celebration of Talmud Torah in RAVSAK high schools. The students demonstrated great gifts and extraordi-

nary passion for Jewish study. They issued a “psak Halachah,” a legal decision, on a complex case involving the question of a government’s permissibility of using torture to stop terrorism. They heard a talk by Rabbi Saul Koss, a longtime Army chaplain who served in Vietnam, on the challenges and rewards of being an observant Jew in the US military. They performed chesed by painting the walls of a Boys and Girls Club in downtown Washington, after which they explored the monuments and exhibits of the US capital. They davened, sang and danced on Shabbat, sometimes all at once. They studied new texts and topics with the learned teachers at the Shabbaton. And on Sunday morning, they presented their cases with poise and Powerpoint, and responded to challenging questions from the judges with thoughtfulness and aplomb.

## RAVSAK congratulates the winners of the 2010 Moot Beit Din:

### GROUP A

- 1 First Place: Jewish Community High School of the Bay (San Francisco, CA)
- 2 Second Place: Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy (Bryn Mawr, PA)
- 3 Judges’ Choice: Tanenbaum CHAT Kimel Centre (Vaughan, ON)

### GROUP B

- 1 First Place: The Weber School (Atlanta, GA)
- 2 Second Place: Kehillah Jewish High School (Palo Alto, CA)
- 3 Judges’ Choice: San Diego Jewish Academy (San Diego, CA)

Mazel tov to all the teams participating in this year’s competition.

“RAVSAK’s Moot Beit Din program offered me the opportunity to delve into relevant legal cases that reflect Judaism through Talmudic analysis. The Shabbaton enabled me to learn and network with Jewish teens and scholars from across the country in an interactive, enriching environment. Overall, the Moot Beit Din gave me the experience of a lifetime.”

Emily Goldberg, student,  
David Posnack Hebrew Day School, Plantation, FL



# Jewish Day Schools as Incubators of Kavannah

by SAUL P. WACHS

## Kavannah in Worship: The Challenge

**K**AVANNAH can mean intention, attention, purpose, devotion, meaning, significance. Kavannah is often the subject of intensive discussion in the context of prayer, specifically, formal worship. There is a tension between the value of praying with kavannah and the value of Keva. Keva refers to that which is fixed and in the context of prayer, it would include all of the elements that are mandated by Halakhah (Jewish law) or Minhag (local custom). The Jewish service is, in many ways predictable. On Shabbat morning in the synagogue, one can expect to hear the weekly Torah portion as well as a reading from the Prophets. The Shema and the Amidah will be included in the service as well. Adults can appreciate revisiting the familiar and the comfortable, particularly if their lives are constantly bombarded by change and challenge. Young people are more likely to be emotionally moved by that which is new and unexpected.

## Iyyun Tefillah

The Jewish prayer experience is essentially built on words. What happens in the synagogue is about the interpretation of words, sung or spoken. Because traditional Jewish prayer is so connected to words and because these words were carefully chosen, intellectual engagement with the texts of prayer is an essential element in the preparation necessary for achieving kavannah in the prayer experience. Where this is lacking, pupils, particularly those in the middle and upper grades are much less likely to find formal worship to be interesting or valuable. This point has been reinforced in numerous questionnaires administered to pupils of day schools over the past twenty years. Lacking an intellectual connection to the words of the siddur, many pupils see little point in formal worship. Since the vast majority of those Jews who are active in the community have some connection to the synagogue, it is vital that the Jewish school provide the opportunity to gain understanding of the major themes of the liturgy.

Iyyun tefillah is one of two methods employed by teachers to help pupils make meaning out of the words of the siddur. The other method is known as bei'ur

tefillah. In bei'ur tefillah, the teacher explains *the meaning* of the prayer. In Iyyun tefillah, the instructor and the pupils jointly seek to understand the prayer as literature, poetry, rhetoric and personal statement. While there is value



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in bei'ur tefillah, my experience teaches me that the active participation of pupils in exploring possible meanings (including personal meaning) through the process of inquiry is a more powerful strategy for involving them in the study of prayer.

Here are some examples of questions that I have found to be useful in doing iyyun tefillah:

- What does the prayer say? What does it mean?
- Can it be divided into units of thought or structure?
- Are there any striking grammatical forms?
- What do you think happened to the author?
- Has that ever happened to you?
- How do you feel about what is written here?
- What questions would you ask the author if you could?

- Who is the Bible might have wanted to say this prayer?
- Have you ever been in a situation where you might have wanted to say this prayer?
- If you took the words of this prayer seriously, at this moment in your life, what difference would it make?

Some teachers prefer to have pupils work on these questions in writing and then have them discussed afterwards; others approach the *iyun* as a discussion activity from the beginning.

## Creating Experiences of Kavannah-Infused Worship

How does one create the kind of prayer experience that is rooted in tradition yet supportive of kavannah?

This is a challenge to any Jewish school, but it is particularly challenging to a school in which the concept of being *metzuveh* (commanded) is not an essential part of the ethos of the institution. Any school that stresses personal autonomy above traditional norms has to work harder to “make the case” for liturgical prayer.

### The Trap

The following pattern has been observed over the years more times than I can count. Young children seem to enjoy prayer in school. As they grow older, some children seem to begin to “shut down” and then “act out” during prayer services. Upon analysis, it becomes clear that the prayer experience is essentially an exercise in skills. Since skills do not automatically reinforce themselves, there comes a point where for many pupils, there is little or no point to formal prayer. Because, on the surface, the prayer experience seemed to be successful, the teachers of the younger pupils are lulled into a false sense of accomplishment. The negative behaviors that make organized prayer experiences problematic in the older grades are rooted on what was *not* done in the younger

grades—the lack of the element of depth into the prayer experience along with skill-learning.

### Omek-Depth 1: Kedushah and Yofi

A Key element that is typically missing in school-based services, particularly those conducted in classrooms and multi-purpose rooms, is the creation of

**The following pattern has been observed over the years more times than I can count. Young children seem to enjoy prayer in school. As they grow older, some children seem to begin to “shut down” and then “act out” during prayer services.**

moments of depth. Ideally, the prayer experience should be the deepest time of the day. How can this be accomplished? First, by paying attention to the aesthetics of the prayer space. I am convinced that there is a connection between kedushah and yofi (holiness and aesthetics). The Book of Exodus reveals the extent to which the construction of the Mishkan, the Tabernacle in the desert, was based upon a careful attention to its aesthetic quality. We are moved by beauty and the visual environment helps to shape our mood. Involving the pupils (and their parents) in planning and creating prayer spaces of beauty not only affects the mood of prayer but also helps to give the pupils a sense of ownership over the prayer experience.

### Omek-Depth 2: Set-Inductions

The Mishnah (Berakhot 4:1) tells us that the great masters of prayer would pause “for an hour” before reciting the Amidah. Leaving aside the question of the literal meaning of “an hour,” it is clear that these pious individuals understood that one cannot just push a button and move from the ordinary (*chol*) to the holy (*kodesh*). Many of them had the advantage of praying in close proximity to nature and also praying at sunrise; nonetheless, they felt

the need to transition into the mood of prayer with kavannah. What happens before the service starts affects the quality of the service. I now see teachers applying this principle in many different creative ways:

1. Silence
2. Guided or unguided meditation
3. Walking meditation
4. Singing
5. A personal statement
6. A creative prayer
7. Listening to restful, lovely music
8. A poem

In these and other ways, teachers help pupils enter into the spirit of prayer through respecting pupils’ need to make a transition from their mood preceding the service into a set of readiness to pray.

### Omek-Depth 3: Connecting Prayer to the Rest of the Day

A prayer service can serve the function of helping pupils and teachers prepare themselves for the school day and its joys and stresses. It can be the time to make pupils aware of important events in the lives of pupils and teachers. It can be the setting for people to react to, vent, celebrate, grieve as reactions to what is happening around them. A prayer service at the end of the day can serve the func-

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tion of healing the bruises that inevitably emerge in the give and take of formal and informal interaction among the pupils, faculty and administration. Examples of questions that might strengthen the sense of community within the school include the following:

- Does anyone have something good that happened today that can be shared with us?
- So and so is sick, please include him/her in your prayer for healing (part of the Amidah).
- X happened in our school today; we have to think about what can be done.
- Many people are out of work right now. Their children can benefit from some signs of support. Ask yourself what you can do to offer support.
- Something wonderful happened today in the X grade.

All of this is more likely to happen when there are clear lines of communication and a common agreement that the prayer service is an appropriate time and place to offer mutual support and strengthen the sense of community within the school.

### Omek 4: Plausibility Structures

When prayer is limited to the school, it can seem disconnected from life. It is valuable to seek opportunities to demonstrate how prayer can enrich life-cycle situations. One powerful example of this is participation by pupils and teachers in the shivah held at the home of mourners. When pupils come to offer support to fellow classmates or teachers who have suffered loss and participate in a prayer service, they experience first-hand the power of ritual to provide comfort. Another example takes place when people travel to a foreign country in which they do not speak the native language; when they visit the synagogue, they experience a sense of being at home. Where schools have trips to Israel, of course, this experience can be particularly powerful.

## Staff Development

I take it as axiomatic that one cannot come to terms with something as a professional until one comes to terms with it as a human being. One of the blunders encountered too often is that of a teacher defining his/her task at service as policing. What is appropriate is for staff to try to model experiencing the prayer setting through the prism of kavannah. In order for this to happen, staff development opportunities can help to make the adults in the school community more comfortable with prayer. I have found that teachers who are given the opportunity to study prayers together are impressed with the

“Now Hannah was praying in her heart” (1 Samuel 1:13)—from this we learn that prayer requires intention. —Talmud Berachot 31a

וחנה היא מדברת על לבה - מכאן למתפלל צריך שיכוין לבו.

depth of discussion that can emerge from a consideration of the ideas, values and beliefs that inform the text of the siddur. In my work, I have stressed the idea that teachers are not expected to “know the answer” to the great questions that human beings struggle with. When faced with such questions, It is not inappropriate for teachers to say to pupils, “I don’t know; let’s search together.” Because prayers are written in response to the challenges and joys of living, they typically raise questions that are of value in every generation.

### A Role for General Studies Teachers

General studies teachers can also work to strengthen kavannah; here are four examples. English teachers can encourage the writing of creative prayers, which can find a place in the service. They can teach pupils to recognize literary and rhetorical devices such as assonance, alliteration, rhyme and acrostic. They can also teach pupils the skills of literary and rhetorical

analysis. Science teachers can explore the concept of “contingency,” which deals with how small changes in nature would make life as we know it very difficult if not impossible (no rotation of the Earth, a change in the distance between the Sun and the Earth, etc.). Art and music teachers can help pupils improve the aesthetic quality of prayer spaces and introduce new music into the service. In Philadelphia, the non-Jewish principal of one of the branches of the Perelman Jewish Day School, trained as a physical education teacher, was intrigued by *Birkat asher yatzar*, a benediction that expresses gratitude for the wonder of the human body. She taught a series of lessons on the bera-

khah. There is no limit to the possibilities for inter-disciplinary units that combine prayer texts and other topics that already have a place in the general studies curriculum.

### Lamah: A Rationale for Prayer

Finally, I would suggest that many pupils do not understand *why* the school has prayer. They understand *madua* there is prayer but don’t understand *lamah*. Of course both words, *madua* and *lamah*, are translated as “why,” but they mean different things. *Madua* seeks a cause; “Why does ice float” (a magnificent example of contingency) is a *madua* question. It can be answered through science. *Lamah* is a teleological question; it seeks meaning (“Why did this have to happen to me?”). The pupils know *madua* there is prayer (if it is a school requirement); they often don’t understand *lamah*, there is prayer—What is the rationale for formal prayer?

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 51]



# Seeking New High Schools for Project ROPE, RAVSAK's Youth Philanthropy Program

RAVSAK is recruiting high schools for Project ROPE, a yearlong, prestigious program fully designed and administered by RAVSAK for RAVSAK high schools. Project ROPE: Roots of Philanthropy Education is the only youth philanthropy program structured to be run in Jewish high schools. It is unprecedented in the scope of activities and the depth of education in both Jewish sources and social research. Students immerse themselves in issues and organizations in their local communities and in Israel, thus deepening their knowledge of and connection with the people of Israel. ROPE comes with a teacher's manual, describing the stages of the program in detail and providing multiple options for implementation in your school. Participating schools also receive specially crafted sourcebooks on tzedakah and on the annual

topic, supporting rich Jewish learning.

It gives us great pleasure at RAVSAK to bring you a free program of extraordinary quality at a time when many schools are forced to make drastic cuts in staffing and curricular offerings. ROPE can be run as a club or within a class, allowing schools flexibility in fitting the program into existing curricula. ROPE helps schools take their existing programs of chesed and tzedakah to a higher level of responsibility, enabling students to become knowledgeable about social issues and organizations that address them, and to become lifelong leaders driven by Jewish values.

Join other RAVSAK schools in this venture in Jewish education and interschool collaboration!

To apply, or receive more information, contact Dr. Elliott Rabin at [erabin@ravsak.org](mailto:erabin@ravsak.org).



Project ROPE has made a tremendous impact in the lives of a select group of students at The Shoshana S. Cardin School. The Project ROPE committee is a group comprised of students selected by faculty nomination who have fully embraced the mission statement they wrote to “help make a difference in Baltimore and Israel... (by) financially supporting organizations that assist disadvantaged youth using the Jewish values of *tzedakah*, *chesed* and *tikkun olam*.” The committee learned Jewish texts with different faculty members as well as visiting rabbis with the goal of learning the sources for our own roots of philanthropy. The committee researched local organizations that support disadvantaged youth and developed a priority list of criteria when deciding whom to fund. Together, they wrote an RFP (request for proposal) and developed group and individual fundraising projects and techniques. They invited local professional and lay fund raisers to explain the “ask.” The students chose a local organization to support, became experts on the organization and are currently meeting with individual donors in order to solicit funds. Project ROPE has provided a unique opportunity for students at The Shoshana S. Cardin School to grow.

Barbie Prince, Head of School,  
Shoshana S. Cardin School (Baltimore, MD)

# ROPE

## Roots Of Philanthropy Education

RAVSAK bids farewell to our program intern, Alex Tisman. Alex has been accepted to the New York City Teaching Fellows Program and will begin his intensive training this summer. We hope your experiences at RAVSAK serve you well in the future.



# Creating Jewish Citizens

by JILL JACOBS

THE “Goldberg Jewish Community Day School” prides itself on involving students and faculty in social justice. Faculty and administrators point to the twice-a-year service days in which students serve meals at soup kitchens, sing at a nearby retirement community, and clean up the park across the street. They boast that the annual eighth grade bake sale raised more than \$3000 for disaster relief, and that the Tikkun Olam Club collected 300 cans for the local food pantry.

But the educators also express worries. Some students view the service days as opportunities to skip school. Membership in the Tikkun Olam Club tends to dwindle as the school year progresses. A few teachers note that there seems to be little connection between the social justice program and the rest of the curriculum. Many feel uncomfortable and unprepared when their students ask why the soup kitchen clients don’t have jobs.

This portrait of GJCDS is actually a composite of descriptions that I have heard from the dozens of teachers, principals, and school rabbis with whom I have spoken over the years. I commend the efforts of these schools to integrate social justice education and service learning into the life of students. But more often than not, our social justice education misses key opportunities and, at times, even does more harm than good.

Jewish social justice education should create individuals and institutions for whom responsibility to the world is a central and integrated part of their Jewish lives. This work should also lead directly to a reduction to inequality and suffering in the world. Achieving this goal requires helping students to identify problems in the world, to understand the roots of these problems, to find useful ways to address these issues, and to integrate all of this work holistically into their Jewish identity and practice.

Below, I outline seven common mistakes made in the name of social justice education, and suggest some ways to remedy these mistakes.

## 1. WE CHOOSE PROJECTS THAT ARE CONVENIENT FOR US, RATHER THAN ONES THAT WILL BEST SERVE THE COMMUNITY.

I often get phone calls from educators wondering where fifteen students can volunteer for three hours on a Tuesday afternoon. Or asking how to bring a group of middle school students on a weekend trip to rebuild homes in the Gulf Coast. Or telling me that the seventh grade has collected toiletries, and now is looking for a place to donate them.

These questions all stem from good intentions. However, our desire to volunteer at specific times and in specific ways often imposes an undue burden on small organizations. In designing the service learning programs at Jewish Funds for Justice, I heard very clearly from a number of community organizations in the Gulf Coast that it

is not worth their time to train unskilled young volunteers who are unable to work for more than four full days. I therefore imposed a policy that requires groups to commit to at least five-day trips—four work days plus Shabbat. Day schools and synagogues often push back, arguing that students cannot miss so many



*Rabbi-in-Residence for Jewish Funds for Justice, Rabbi Jill Jacobs is the author of There Shall Be No Needy: Pursuing Social Justice Through Jewish Law and Tradition, for which a teachers' guide is available. She can be reached at [jjacobs@jewishjustice.org](mailto:jjacobs@jewishjustice.org).*

days of school. But the students’ experience cannot come at the price of creating more work for tiny organizations.

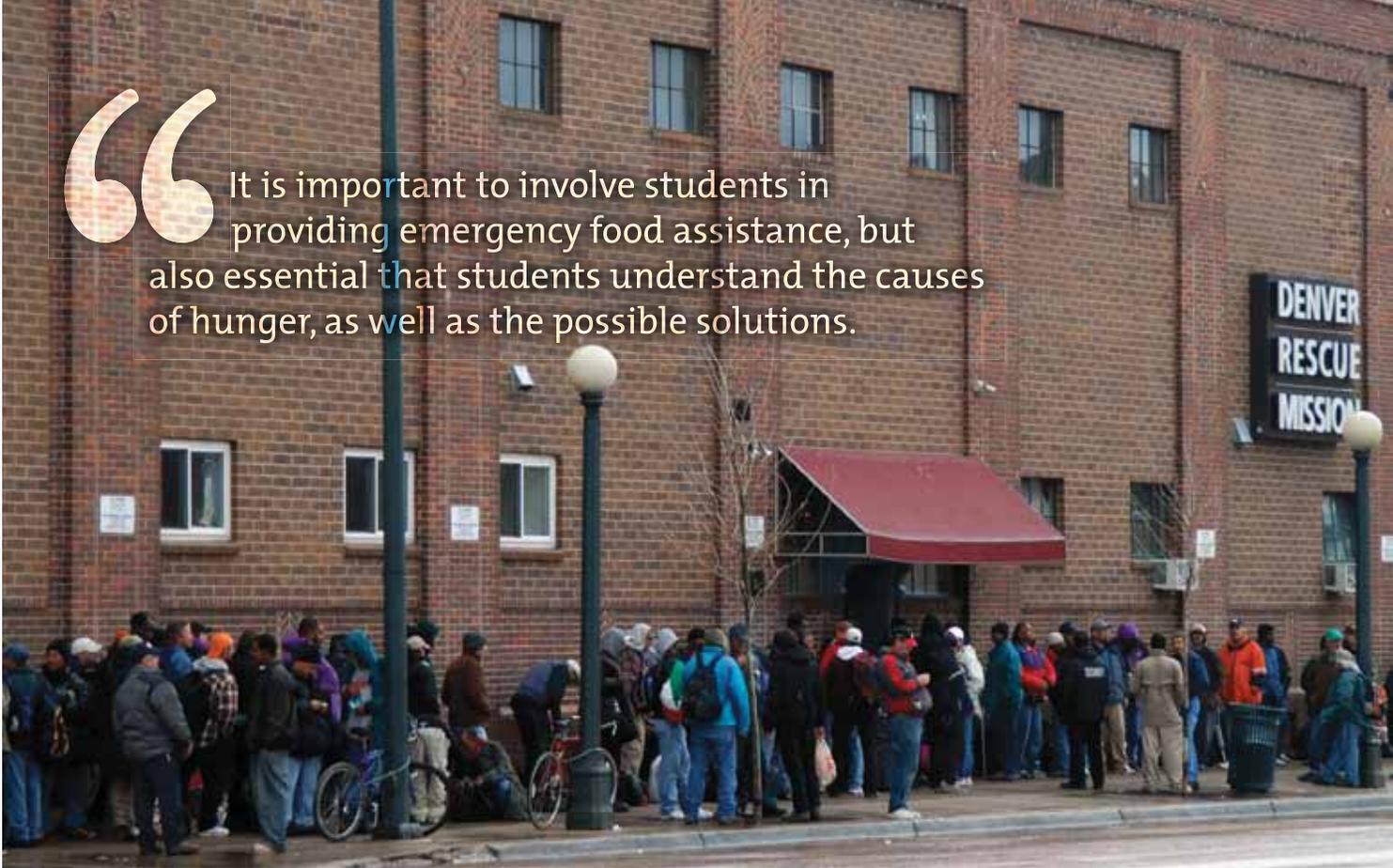
Time constraints are real, of course. Our challenge is to find projects for which the hours that we can give will be a gift, and not a burden. This means first asking about the needs of the community around us. In high schools, students can and should do most of the work of speaking to social service providers, organizing groups, advocacy organizations and elected officials about the needs and resources of the community. In elementary schools, teachers may do more of this work, but should involve students when possible and appropriate. The volunteer projects and collections of specific items (such as food, toiletries, or clothing) should respond to the expressed needs of the community, while also corresponding with the students’ abilities and time constraints.

## 2. WE CHOOSE ISSUES THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO SOME PEOPLE, BUT NOT WIDELY OR DEEPLY FELT IN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY.

When students or teachers tell me that the school has raised several thousand dollars for Darfur advocacy, hunger relief, or a social service center in Israel, I



It is important to involve students in providing emergency food assistance, but also essential that students understand the causes of hunger, as well as the possible solutions.



congratulate the school on this success, and then ask, “How did you choose that issue?” In general, the answers include: “This has been on the news a lot lately.” “A parent in the school works for a related organization.” “One student was very passionate about this cause.” Instead, we might open up a school-wide conversation about what issues students care about and why. In the course of these conversations, we will learn a lot about students’ fears, hopes, and passions—and they will learn a lot about themselves and their peers. From these conversations, we can begin to identify priorities for our social justice work.

### 3. WE LACK LONG-TERM COMMITMENT TO ISSUES OR PROJECTS.

Schools often pick a few organizations at which to volunteer during periodic service days, and other organizations to which to send donations. This approach fails to produce a unified story about the school’s contribution to the world. Once the student body has gone through a process of identifying one or two issues on which to focus, we can look for ways to work on these issues through multiple venues, as well as to

learn more about these issues from a Jewish and general perspective (more on this below).

### 4. JEWISH TEXTS AND HISTORY GET LIP SERVICE, NOT REAL EXPLORATION.

We often throw a token text at students as proof that Judaism supports a particular action or position. This approach sells our tradition short, and also fails to persuade students that Judaism adds meaning or complexity to the discussion. Taking our texts and our history seriously means engaging in a dialogue between Jewish texts and contemporary issues, in which we bring each to bear on our understanding of the other. This means diving deeply into Jewish civil law discussions about housing, poverty, worker-employer relations, and other issues, and speaking about these texts in the context of what students have observed during their volunteer work; what they have learned in social studies or English class; and what they have gathered from other media. In some cases, real-life may challenge initial readings of text; in other cases, the opposite will be true. In all cases, students will emerge with a more nuanced understanding both of the text and of the world around them.

### 5. WE FAIL TO INTEGRATE THE SOCIAL JUSTICE/SERVICE WORK INTO THE LIFE OF THE SCHOOL.

Too often, students absorb the message that social justice and service are optional extras. Service projects take place during one-day field trips. After-school clubs coordinate *tzedakah* and can drives. Instead, we might integrate conversations about public policy into social studies class, while also looking at rabbinic perspectives on these issues in Talmud class. In *tefillot*, students might compose their own prayers related to the work in which they are engaged. We might encourage teachers to talk about their own passions, and about the volunteer work they do outside of school.

### 6. WE MISS THE CHANCE TO TALK ABOUT BIG ISSUES AND BIG SOLUTIONS.

When I ask educators what issue they and their students are trying to address, the answer I hear most often is “hunger.” To address hunger, students volunteer at soup kitchens and collect cans and money for food pantries. But hunger in America stems from a range of much larger issues,

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 49]

# Shema Bekolah—Listen to Her Voice: Women and Gender in Jewish Education

by **JUDITH ROSENBAUM**

**F**OR centuries, the picture of an educated Jew was clear and unchanging. He (it was a given that the educated Jew was male) had mastered a certain body of knowledge, including biblical, rabbinic, halakhic, and liturgical texts, as well as the languages in which these texts were written (Hebrew and Aramaic).

Modernity disrupted that stable Jewish canon (as it did the notion of “canon” itself), and the past two hundred years have seen lively arguments about how to define an educated Jew. What balance of secular and Jewish learning yields the perfect alchemy? And what even counts as “Jewish learning”—does it include Jewish history? Popular Jewish culture?

One important shift in the image of the educated Jew is that “he” may now be a “she.” In all but the most Orthodox settings, Jewish women and girls now have access to traditional Jewish texts once thought to be the purview of men only. And in liberal Jewish settings, the rabbi may even be a woman.

This relatively new visibility of women within the leadership of Jewish religious life has given some people the mistaken impression that the struggle against sexism in the Jewish community is over; that feminism has achieved its aims and no further attention need be devoted to women and gender in Jewish life.

Despite these notable advances, the subject of women and gender remains an important priority for Jewish education today—a subject that should be integrated into curricula, not ghettoized in special-interest electives. Awareness of women’s history and perspectives and of the role of feminism in Jewish life contributes to producing educated Jews for the 21st century.

## EXPANDING THE DEFINITION OF “JEWISH TEXT”

Including the voices of women among those taught to young Jews requires a rethinking of what constitutes a Jewish text. If we limit the study of Jewish texts only to classical and rabbinic sources, we will encounter the voices of very few women. Seeking out female perspectives forces us to expand our scope to include other kinds of sources, including modern, historical, and cultural texts—a letter by Henrietta Szold, a newspaper report on a garment workers’ protest, a new feminist ritual such as Miriam’s Cup, a short story by Grace Paley. While I am not arguing that these texts need be placed on the same authoritative footing as Torah and Talmud, I do believe that juxtaposing classical and modern sources enriches the learning in our *batei midrash* and helps young Jews find Jewish meaning in a wide range of sources.

The inclusion of modern texts also requires that students learn to do close read-

ings not only of biblical and rabbinic sources but also of primary historical and literary sources. An educated Jew in the 21st century must know how to read



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and interpret a poem as well as a page of Talmud, a blog post as well as a Rashi commentary. There is no reason to teach these critical reading and analytical skills separately in Jewish and general studies courses.

## EXPANDING JEWISH ROLE MODELS

If our students are to make their way in the world today with enthusiasm for their Jewishness and confidence in their ability to participate fully in both Jewish and American culture, they must have a wide range of role models—male and female—from which to learn and draw inspiration. Educated Jews today should know where they come from and on whose shoulders they stand. They should understand and appreciate the richness of their full heritage.

Of course, not only girls are empowered by learning about female role models. Both girls and boys benefit from exposure to a diversity of role models. Jewish women’s lives convey messages that are both gender-specific and universal. Learning about people such as Rebecca Gratz, Bella Abzug, and Ruth Bader

Ginsburg may help raise the expectations girls have of themselves, but boys, too, have much to learn from Gratz's commitment to community building, Abzug's chutzpah and persistence, and Ginsburg's quiet yet forceful integrity.

Moreover, one of our most important functions as Jewish educators is to convey to our students that Judaism is relevant to their lives and has wisdom and meaning to offer them. If we limit the role models to which they have access, we risk losing students who will dismiss Judaism and the Jewish community because they do not see themselves and their interests reflected in what they are taught.

## UNDERSTANDING THE VALUE OF INCLUSION

Teaching students about women and gender accomplishes more than simply introducing female voices and perspectives. Acknowledging women as valued contributors to Jewish life and giving attention to gender issues also makes a case for inclusion more generally. When students learn to honor women, who have traditionally been on the margins, they will be more attuned to the experiences of other marginalized groups. They will have been trained to notice not only those who are present in the traditional narratives but also those who are absent; they will have learned the value of diversity to Jewish (and American) culture. They will be prepared to carry on the work of expanding and enriching the Jewish community with more voices and perspectives.

## EMPOWERING STUDENTS TO CHANGE THE WORLD

Some educators are hesitant to teach about women and gender because they fear the story of exclusion and sexism in Judaism and the Jewish community will alienate students. Indeed, it can be challenging to explain Jewish traditions of sex segregation to students who take for granted (at least theoretically) that discrimination on the basis of sex is wrong. However, the story of Judaism and feminism is one with many empowering lessons about the possibility

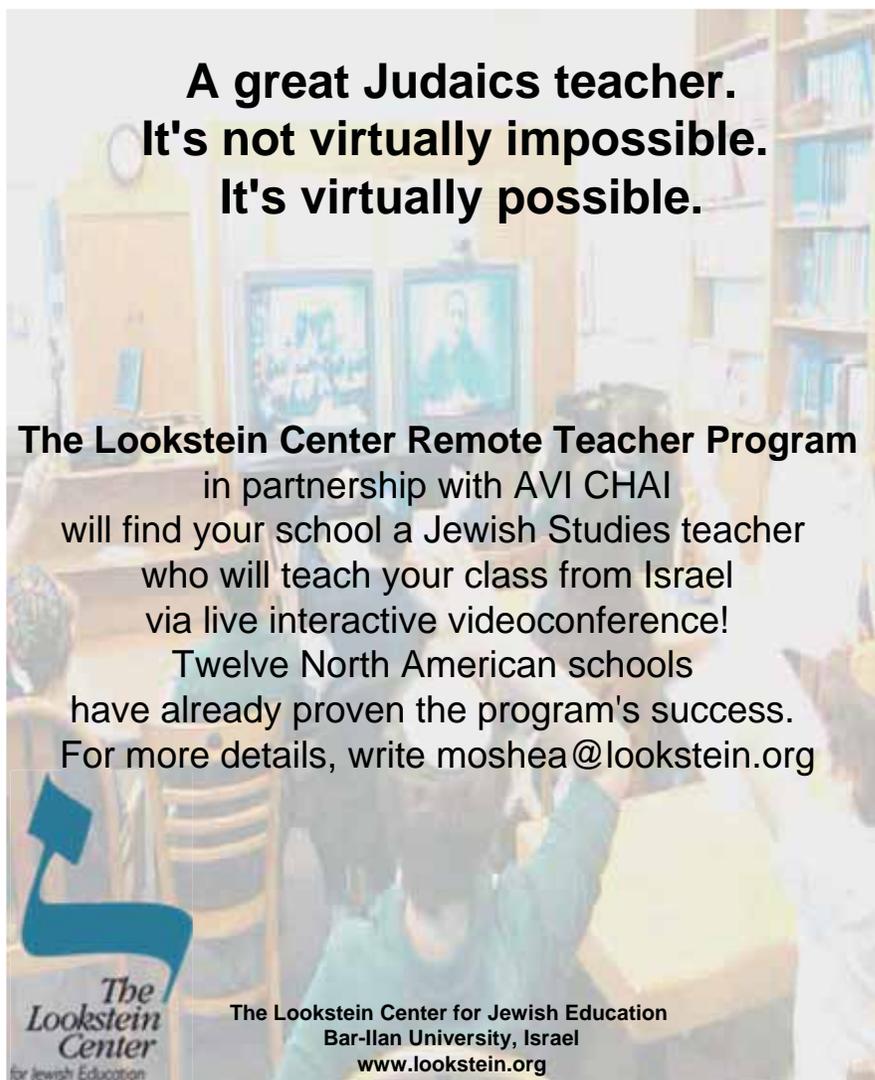
of social change. Only a few decades after American women brought feminism into the Jewish community, Jonathan Sarna and other historians of American Judaism recognize the women's movement as a central force in the renewal of Judaism in the late 20th century. This is a story that emphasizes the power of individuals and of movements to effect change and to revitalize Jewish life. An educated Jew must know that s/he has the power—and the responsibility—to see and act on the potential for change in the world. We educate students, in part, to take on the task of reimagining, reinterpreting, reinventing, and renewing Judaism for their generation.

## CONCLUSION

Educating Jews for the 21st century presents an exciting but daunting challenge. In addition to the content of traditional and modern Jewish texts and the analytical skills required to understand them,

students must also come to appreciate the relevance to their own lives of these subjects and skills. We need to be sure our students acquire not only knowledge but also tools for building rich Jewish identities. They will be ill-equipped to do so without an awareness of women's contributions and gender issues in the Jewish community.

Pioneering Jewish feminist Letty Cottin Pogrebin wrote in a recent article in the *Forward* ("The Ten Plagues—According to Jewish Women") that "The people of the book have too many blank pages because women's voices have been largely unrecorded or silenced by the arbiters of what and who gets into the text." We expect our day school graduates not only to know, love, and value our "book" but also to write the next chapters of the Jewish people. How can they do so if they are missing pages—even entire chapters—in between? ז



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# Bridging Dualism: Cross-Curricular Learning in the Jewish High School

by **REBECCA SHARGEL**

**I**N many of our high schools, students are accustomed to a schedule that separates the day into English, History, Math, Science, Hebrew, and Judaic subjects. Segmenting the day into distinct subjects helps students develop skills and in-depth knowledge of specific content areas. This structure accommodates teachers, textbooks, and parents.

Teachers are typically trained as subject specialists and they utilize textbooks that support their subjects (especially in general studies). Moreover, parents are accustomed to this structure, as it was dominant in their own school experiences. The problem with learning exclusively in this way is that when students envision subjects as discrete “islands” they lose the opportunity to see how different subjects are connected and to ask common questions. If high school programs facilitated more cross-curricular connections, students could find deeper meaning in their studies by seeing recurring themes and patterns that cut across disparate subject areas. Students would realize that some of the same questions are posed in science and Judaic studies or in humanities and the arts. These cross-curricular connections could facilitate learning that is more interesting and leads to a richer and deeper understanding of material.

If Jewish day schools are committed to educating students to be conversant in both Jewish and secular areas, and who can make meaning of their relationship to one another, then a cross-curricular approach should infuse the curriculum. Perhaps we would stop envisioning general and Judaic studies as a dual curriculum and find more opportunities to join the two in fruitful dialogue.

As educated Jews, our graduates should be able to forge connections between secular and Judaic knowledge so that they don't deem one area less valuable than the other. Curricular integration is a way for students to bridge the connections between the two domains and to see their world more holistically. It helps broaden the aca-

demical context and widen the experience so that students can see how both general and Judaic studies help address common problems. The process of deliberately



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planning cross-curricular learning facilitates cross-departmental conversations. This would benefit teachers who are often isolated from each other and miss out on conversations with colleagues that include curricular deliberation.

Seizing opportunities for cross-curricular learning could address the problem of students devaluing Judaic studies. Especially with college preparatory pressures, many Jewish high school students in community schools invest more time and energy in their general studies subjects since they feel that they “count” for college. Instead of seeing general and Judaic studies as two parts of a whole, they see their Judaic subjects as less important, since they don't appear on either the SAT or AP exams or might be foreign to college admittance committees.

A model that works very well at facilitating cross-curricular connections is a theme week that focuses on study of a single topic whose questions are answered by more than one discipline. One successful model for a theme week can be found at the Shoshana S. Cardin School in Baltimore, developed by Leslie Smith Rosen, the school's director of general studies.



## INTERIM WEEK

Imagine a program where students study a topic and all teachers contribute to teaching and planning for this signature event that takes place over a week. Instead of their regular shuffle subjects such as English, Hebrew, History, Science, Jewish texts, etc., students focus on *one topic* that raises important questions whose answers occur in more than one subject area. Teachers with different disciplinary perspectives contribute to instructing students in different electives. Students learn in cross-grade groups to study with a variety of teachers with no pressure of tests. The week is in the spirit of Torah lishma (learning for its own sake). This week occurs each year between the second and third trimesters and is described by students as “a break from school,” meaning a change from the regular routine of classes and exams. As the week focuses on a theme, students enjoy a variety of school-wide programming that includes both formal and informal classes: electives, guest visitors, a school dance tied to the theme, dinners, and performances. This program is analogous to a sort of “stay-cation” for students who get to do something different from their usual school routine but continue to learn mostly on campus.

### *Starting Points:*

By observing the Interim Week at Cardin, I found some starting points for planning a theme week. Below are descriptions for three good starting points that include considering existential questions, historical events, and scientific controversies.

## 1. EXISTENTIAL QUESTIONS

High school students are hungry to discuss life’s big questions with each other and their teachers. This week can provide an introduction to moral and spiritual questions that they will grapple with for years to come. These kinds of questions lead to answers and further questions in Jewish subject areas as well as literature and science. Below are examples:

- a. How did the universe start?
- b. What is real or true in the world?
- c. What are Jewish and other religious approaches to life after death?
- d. How do I successfully sustain friendship and love over many years?
- e. What is my purpose in life?

By crafting some good questions, teachers can find curricular areas where these questions are addressed. Ideally two or more teachers would collaborate to team-teach so that different disciplinary perspectives come into play during the same time slot. For example, in addressing the first question, how did the uni-

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 38]



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[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 37]

verse begin, this could lead to a study of *origins of the universe* that would include text study of first chapters of Genesis and its commentaries, as well as the Big Bang theory and other scientific theories about the beginnings of life in

lactose intolerance. During the Darwin week at Cardin one science teacher taught a class called “Got Milk” that described the phenomenon of lactose intolerance. Students who were familiar with this condition were very interested in the process of genetic mutations that explained

A useful guide to help teachers form cross-curricular models is Robin Fogarty’s model for curricular integration. I particularly like the *integrated model* where four teachers think about overlapping.

Cardin like many of the RAVSAK affiliates is dedicated to pluralism. While most people think about pluralism as a multi-denominational endeavor, I’ve learned a new way of approaching pluralism; this approach allows students *to see an issue from multiple perspectives*.

Theme week gives students a repository of positive memories around an experiential learning component. The students value the week as evidenced by the multiple pages dedicated to it in the yearbook as well as their asking each year: “What will Interim Week be next year?”

## CONCLUSION

We aspire for our graduates to feel comfortable in both Jewish and secular realms. If our children understand the strong underlying questions that bridge Jewish and general learning, they will be more ready to live integrated lives as Jews in American society. They will be able to distill the spiritual and moral meanings of Jewish practice and connect them to broader principles. Not only will our graduates see the harmonies and similarities between secular and Jewish ideas, they will also see the conflicts and the contradictions. With this clarity, our students as educated Jews

“Many Jewish high school students see their Judaic subjects as less important, since they don’t appear on either the SAT or AP exams or might be foreign to college admittance committees.

the universe and on earth. Imagine the science and text teacher engaging in dialogue with each other about how to teach both religious and scientific texts and how those texts raise common questions and theories.

## 2. HISTORICAL EVENTS / CURRENT CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS

History is another starting point. One way to select historical events is to consider anniversaries of people or events. For example, in the spring of 2009, Cardin celebrated Darwin’s legacy and the controversy that it ensued. The calendrical inspiration was Darwin’s 200th birthday as well as the 150th anniversary of the publication of his *Origins of Species*. Another year students commemorated the 40th anniversary of the Six Day War with activities connected to the War, Israeli history and culture. Students remember their Israeli teacher organizing them in boot camp each morning. There were other activities that circled around the events and significance of the Six Day War. You might want to consider birthdays of famous Jews or Americans from your region or your twin city in Israel.

the phenomenon. Moreover, discussion tangents also entered the realms of dairy products as well as kashrut in general. Allowing a forum for science to connect to everyday Jewish practice can make Judaism more meaningful to students who might otherwise see it as archaic or irrelevant to contemporary life.

A way to spark interest in a topic is to begin it with controversy. For example, in the Darwin week at Cardin students began their studies by viewing the film *Inherit the Wind* that chronicles the story of the Scopes Monkey Trial, where a public teacher was sued for teaching evolution in a Southern state where it was outlawed. Students saw the tensions between religion and science and eventually came prepared to debate whether or not evolution and creationism

“If our children understand the strong underlying questions that bridge Jewish and general learning, they will be more ready to live integrated lives as Jews in American society. Not only will our graduates see the harmonies and similarities between secular and Jewish ideas, they will also see the conflicts and the contradictions.

## 3. SCIENCE

High school students are interested in physical matter—especially things that relate to their bodies or the environment. They are ready to discuss health conditions and controversies that are close to them or their families. For example, they might be familiar with the condition of

should be taught in public schools. This question began with science but spilled over into theology and history.

Faculty would appreciate guidance as to how to prepare together in teams.

will forge ahead to create a worldview that makes sense for them. Throughout their lives, they will be able to explain the principles behind Jewish practice—the deep spiritual and moral impulses that underlie Jewish living.

Values





## Interview with Paul Levitch, Member of RAVSAK's Board of Directors

*Why do you believe that Jewish day school education is important?*

I believe that there are many reasons why Jewish day schools are important: because they teach history and cultivate Jewish identity; because they incubate critical thinking and cultivate respect for and knowledge of law, both Jewish and American; because Judaism is the foundation of Western civilization, especially in the development of our moral and ethical awareness; because learning Hebrew develops all the benefits that accrue to knowing a foreign language. Jewish education can connect children to their past and allow them to participate in conversations that have been going on for thousands of years. In turn and really most importantly, it gives young people the opportunity to pass along to their children the objectives, duties, and moral principles that have provided a purposefulness to our lives and that can show them the ways to be an integral part of this assigned task in perpetuity.

The following story pungently illustrates the virtues of integrity, honesty, and generational trust that Jewish education can transmit:

A bird once set out to cross a windy sea with its three fledglings. The sea was so wide and the wind so strong that the father bird was forced to carry his young, one by one, in his strong claws. When he was halfway across with the first fledgling, the wind turned to a gale, and he said, "My child, look how I am struggling and risking my life in your behalf. When you are grown up, will you do as much for me and provide for my old age?" The fledgling replied, "Only bring me to safety, and when you are old, I shall do everything you ask of me." Whereat the father bird dropped his child in the sea and it drowned. He said, "So shall it be done to such a liar as you." Then the father bird returned to shore, set forth with



his second fledgling, and asked the same question. Upon receiving the same answer, he drowned the second child with the cry, "You too are a liar!" Finally, he set out with the third fledgling. When he asked the same question, the third and last fledgling replied, "My dear father, it is true you are struggling mightily and risking your life in my behalf, and I shall be wrong not to repay you when you are old, but I cannot bind myself. This, though, I can promise: when I am grown up and have children of my own, I shall do as much for them as you have done for me." Whereupon the father bird said, "Well spoken, my child, and wisely. Your life I will spare and I will carry you to shore in safety."

*What strengths do you bring to the RAVSAK board?*

I have sat on the boards of nonprofits at the national and local level. I have worked in the educational field for the past 14 years, including being a board member of Interdisciplinary Early Childhood Education (IECE) in Kentucky and founding the University of Louisville's annual col-

lege fair. My experience has involved all the major aspects of board work, such as strategic planning, fundraising, and evaluating grant proposals. Additionally, having started and run my own business gave me the savvy to understand how organizations can be sustainable and well run.

My main strength lies in taking complex situations and simplifying them by asking focused questions. The answers that the Board comes up with give direction to the Board's work.

*Do you have a favorite Jewish teaching?*

One of my favorite poems, Emma Lazarus's famous "The New Colossus," engraved on the pedestal beneath the Statue of Liberty, summarizes the mission of Jewish education in America:

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame /  
With conquering limbs astride from land  
to land; / Here at our sea-washed, sun-  
set gates shall stand / A mighty woman  
with a torch, whose flame / Is the impris-  
oned lightning, and her name / Mother  
of Exiles. From her beacon-hand / Glows  
world-wide welcome; her mild eyes com-  
mand / The air-bridged harbor that twin  
cities frame. / "Keep, ancient lands, your  
storied pomp!" cries she / With silent  
lips. "Give me your tired, your poor, /  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe  
free, / The wretched refuse of your teem-  
ing shore. / Send these, the homeless,  
tempest-tossed to me, / I lift my lamp  
beside the golden door!"

As American Jews, our missions as Americans and as Jews go hand-in-hand and fully complement each other. The values of our tradition inspire us in all the work we do both within the Jewish community and beyond, to our fellow countrymen. Jewish day schools give our students the grounding in Jewish knowledge that they will take with them wherever they go, whatever they do.

# Praying Without the Lake

by EVE RUDIN

FOR too long, the two polar extremes of Jewish education—“formal” and “informal”—were destined to never meet. “Formal” modes of day school and supplemental education were reserved for instruction and stereotyped as “boring” and only content-driven, while “informal” experiences such as camp, youth group and Israel experiences were reserved for Jewish socialization and pigeonholed as emotional “fluff.” Thankfully, these simplistic distinctions have been questioned and the field has evolved so that “schools no longer limit their educational work to formal instruction and contexts such as camps and Israel experiences employ many different methods to accomplish their educational goals.”

While much work has been done, we clearly aren’t “there” yet. Too often we do not connect the dots between those who attend camp and day school. Day school students may at times feel that camp does not deliver enough content, and too often, Jewish campers come home and express their exasperation: “I can’t pray here... there’s no lake!” This can be frustrating to hear, and while we agree that we do not want young people to be motivated solely by the emotional experience of the “lake,” there is certainly something magical that occurs around the camp “lake” that can be brought back to the school setting to help connect one’s Jewish learning with one’s Jewish *doing*.

According to Jerome Bruner, “The most characteristic thing about mental life, over and beyond the fact that one apprehends the events of the world around one, is that one constantly goes beyond the information given.” Surely, all those invested in raising up the next generation of engaged Jews agree that an educated Jew is not simply a Jew who *knows* a great deal of information, but rather goes beyond and in his or her heart *knows* Jewish, *values* Jewish and *acts* Jewish.

While Abraham Joshua Heschel contends that the Sabbath is a sanctuary in time to be separated from the technological civilization of space, it is clear that in order to create a fully educated Jew today, young people must take part in all gateways and contexts available to us to achieve Jews possessing both serious Jewish knowledge as well as a deep commitment to engagement in Jewish communal life. By intricately interweaving time, space, and relationships, talmud Torah keneged kulam—the study of Torah can indeed lead to them all.

For many, Jewish summer camp offers the setting to interweave time, space and relationships to bring Judaism fully to life. While initially deriving its “magical power” from its dedication to fun, camp possesses the luxury of functioning twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Camps have the opportunity to intentionally interweave Jewish education into every aspect of camp: the sports field, the dining room and the camper cabin. Camp is where one not only learns about Shabbat and

Shabbat preparation, but experiences the change in Jewish pace in real time and in real space. The ways of derech ertz



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are not simply a concept at camp, but experimented with and ideally practiced everyday. Music and one’s prayer life can particularly come alive in the physical setting and ambiance of Jewish summer camp, deepening one’s spiritual life and connection with G-d. Especially successful at camp is also the intentional use of role modeling, with college-age counselors as the main guides in this immersive Jewish setting.

This past April, sociologist Jack Wertheimer recently released preliminary findings of a report commissioned by the AVI CHAI Foundation on young Jewish leaders (ages 22-40). While an impressive 40% of young Jewish leaders attended day school, two-thirds attended Jewish summer camps. Because of this power of Jewish summer camp, I am often asked how to merge formal and experiential Jewish education together more. While I believe nothing can be a substitute for the opportunities provided by the long term summer camp setting (i.e. 2+ Shabbatot spent together, living together on an ongoing basis, the use of young role models), there have been many efforts in both settings to help bridge a young person’s Jewish learning with their Jewish heart in order to produce the fully rounded and educated Jew. Just as many camps now seek to infuse “Jewish Teachable Moments” into all aspects of a camp day, so too can more formal settings—such as day schools—seek to infuse more



“Jewish Experiential Moments” into their scaffolding and architecture.

Infusing “Jewish Experiential Moments” into your school can take place in many spaces, times and ways. While there are many low-hanging fruit opportunities available throughout the Jewish calendar to bring Jewish learning to life by *doing* Jewish, such as delivering *shalach manot* packages to elderly shut-ins, shabbatonim and retreat programs, and traveling to Israel instead of only studying about Israel, think also about our goals and approaches for building Jewish identity, community and commitment. Ask yourself what are some of the ways to foster real Jewish communal experiences and real relationships within your school? Is it a student-run bikkur cholim group that not only sends homework home with notes and tips from class, but calls those who are sick in the middle of the day to check in? Is it a commitment to ongoing mentorship and fun between older students and younger students through a Jewish theater program? Is it a recurring “friendly” Maccabiah competition that contin-

ues throughout the school year centered around Israel education? These are just a few ideas, but the core principles are the same; real Jewish experiences based upon real Jewish relationships in real Jewish time and space.

Dr. Barry Chazan challenges us to keep in mind these key points when seeking to incorporate more experiential methods into Jewish education:

Experiential Jewish education should be considered an approach to Jewish education rather than being identified by any particular settings or methods.

The basic dichotomy of feeling and thinking, fun and learning should be dissolved; there are ample opportunities in “informal” settings for cognition and for fun to take place in “formal” settings.

Experiential education should not be mistaken as spontaneous or taking advantage of “Jewish Teachable Moments” only; much of the work of experiential educators involves serious preparation to struc-

ture the environment so that the spontaneous can occur.

Consider then, your overall approach to an area such as tefillah. Remember the camper that returns home and says that she cannot pray without the lake? The root of her frustration is that prayer at the lake was powerful, moving and memorable and that prayer at home seems dull and lifeless in comparison. How can we bring the best of the camp lake into a school’s approach to tefillah to bring Judaism more to life?

The first benefit of the camp lake is the young people themselves. For those day schools with camp alumni, challenge yourselves to truly utilize those camp alumni for tefillah leading. Camp alumni can be your best asset in terms of captivating younger and less engaged students in an exciting Jewish worship community—all you need to do is ask. Ask them to lead prayer and song. Task them with producing divrei Torah. And then take more steps to utilize them outside of the tefillah

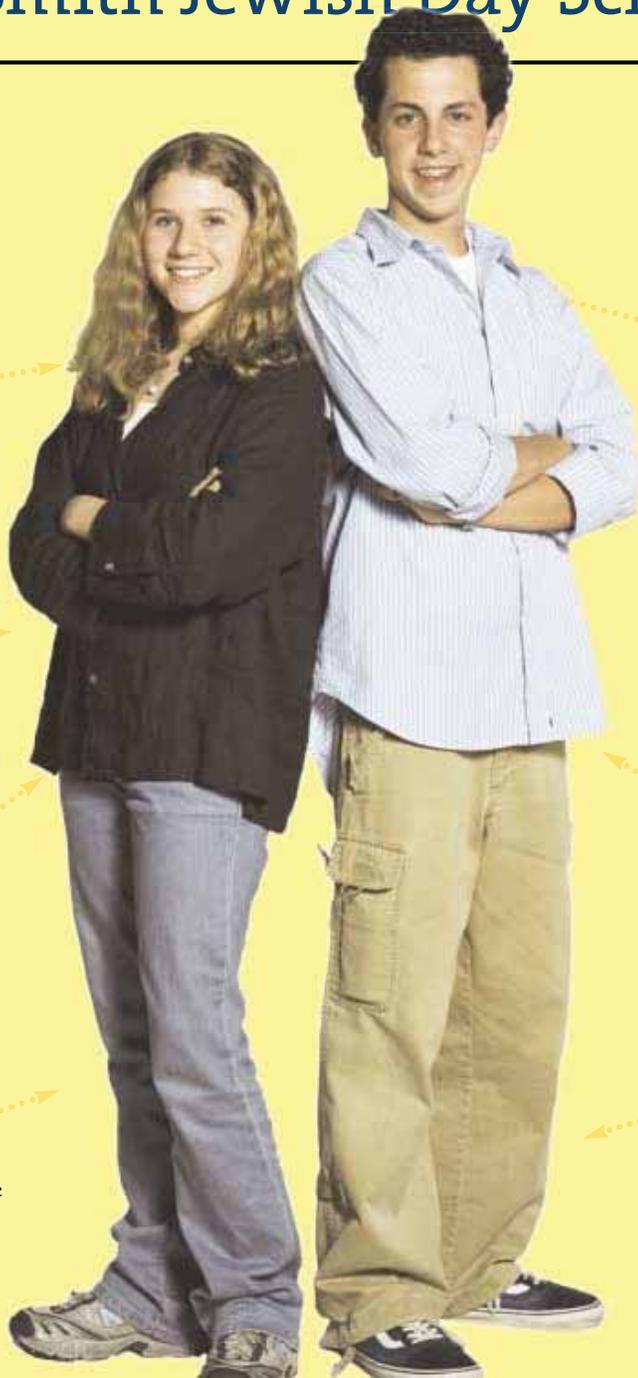
[CONTINUED ON PAGE 56]

# Vision of the Graduate in

**F**or some schools, this document is the indispensable DNA that informs every board decision, every lesson plan, every laptop and volleyball. Other schools reject this document altogether, and some are simply unaware of its existence. Below are examples of the Vision of the Graduate from four RAVSAK schools. What is immediately striking is how different they are, in length, format, emphasis, language. Yet beneath the surface, all of them clearly bear the RAVSAK stamp, attempting to meld together our common values as Jewish day schools while expressing them in the voice of a particular community. The next section contains articles from RAVSAK leaders reflecting upon the Vision document and discussing the functions it serves in different schools.

## Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School

Rockville, Maryland



I am  
**Confident**  
I speak my mind clearly  
and articulately

I am  
**Tolerant**  
I respect the views  
and beliefs of others

I am  
**Well-Rounded**  
I participate in and enjoy  
a wide range of activities

I am  
**Ethical**  
I make choices based on  
deeply held values

I am  
**Responsible**  
for my behavior, and act as a  
role model for others

I am  
**Prepared**  
to succeed in college  
and beyond

I am  
**Compassionate**  
I give of myself to  
benefit others

I am  
**Proud**  
to be Jewish, and passionate  
about my heritage

# Our Schools

## Charlotte Jewish Day School

י CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

Mission Statement For Charlotte Jewish Day School:

We have a vision that the children of Charlotte Jewish Day School will ....

- know that being Jewish is the essence of who they are
- be accomplished, educated students who are motivated, lifelong learners
- care about others even when it is difficult
- understand that it is more important to do their best than to be the best
- have the courage to stand up after they have stumbled
- see the Torah as a blueprint for their lives
- develop a relationship with G-d that is always present
- be proud of their strengths and acknowledge their weaknesses
- recognize the value of all people
- realize the importance of unity among all Jews
- feel an unconditional love for and connection to Israel and its people

Do your students really know their Jewish Homeland?

**No one knows Israel better than JNF.**

JNF has 108 years of experience building the land of Israel and protecting its environment. But there is more. JNF's Israel Advocacy & Education department engages, educates, and energizes Jews all over the world with cutting-edge educational programs to insure our Jewish future and create an abiding connection with Israel.



**Our programs include:**

- Engaging, formal and informal, educational materials for all students (Pre-K and up), enabling you to teach a lasting bond and love for Israel.
- Helping your students raise funds for a trip to Israel by asking family and friends to plant trees in Israel.
- Empowering your students to improve and protect their environment at home and connecting to Israel's environmental issues that are so vital to its survival.
- Enrolling your students in the accredited Alexander Muss High School in Israel, where they can study and travel for 8 weeks and live on a beautiful and secure campus in Hod HaSharon.

JNF knows Israel and we're proud to partner with you on any issue regarding Israel education. We'll definitely have something that will match the needs of your school.

**For more information, please contact 212-879-9305 ext. 263; [education@jnf.org](mailto:education@jnf.org); or visit [www.jnf.org/iae](http://www.jnf.org/iae).**



JNF, for  
**ISRAEL**  
forever.

# Vision of the Graduate in

## Donna Klein Jewish Academy

📍 BOCA RATON, FLORIDA

### IDEAL STUDENT PROFILE

A graduating senior of the High School at Donna Klein Jewish Academy is a knowledgeable and responsible citizen of the world, committed to Jewish values and lifelong learning.

### IDENTITY AND CHARACTER

*The ideal graduating senior at DKJA . . .*

- Strongly identifies as a member of the Jewish people, as an American and as a responsible citizen of the world.
- Has cultivated a depth of character; developed empathy, imagination, and moral courage; acts ethically, displays integrity, and has a sense of humility.
- Has a connection to the State of Israel based on knowledge and experience.
- Assumes responsibility for his or her own actions.

- Explores both intellectually and emotionally his or her relationship to spirituality, G-d, and Jewish religious practices.
- Understands that Jewish identity is found in many kinds of religious, cultural, and/or behavioral expressions.
- Is actively engaged in *tzedakah* (charity) and *tikkun olam* (making the world a better place) and has taken advantage of opportunities to translate these timeless values into socially significant action.
- Values the diversity of the larger community and respects and appreciates differences.
- Has developed a capacity for leadership.
- Exhibits healthy and constructive decision making in his or her own life and in his or her personal relationships.

### ACADEMICS AND INTELLECT

*The ideal graduating senior at DKJA . . .*

- Has developed intellectual integrity and curiosity, creativity and imagination, independence of thought, and a lifelong love of learning.
- Fulfills his or her own intellectual, artistic, social, and physical potential.
- Has acquired the knowledge and skills, consistent work ethic, confidence, maturity, and independence necessary to succeed in a challenging collegiate environment.
- Thinks critically and reflects thoughtfully. Makes academic and intellectual connections and perceives the world as multidimensional.
- Is passionate about his or her interests; deeply and personally involved in his or her work; feels not only accountable but engaged.
- Has developed an integrated sense of self, with deep appreciation of how the Torah is central to modern life.
- Combines intellectual and moral development so that choices are guided by the mind and the heart.
- Takes academic risks and accepts challenges.
- Communicates effectively and responsibly.
- Demonstrates an awareness and concern for global issues.
- Exhibits fluency in the use of Hebrew, the language of the Jewish people.
- Appreciates the value of education in general



# Our Schools

## New Community Jewish High School

ז **WEST HILLS, CALIFORNIA**

Students engage in thoughtful acts of *Tikkun Olam* (world repair), and act with integrity, honesty, and wisdom.

Students understand that learning is a lifelong enterprise, and recognize the vital interaction of knowledge and Jewish values.

Students appreciate their obligation to participate in and strengthen all facets of community life, and to respect the religious practices and ideals of others.

The school engenders in its students a sense of hope, joy, self-confidence, personal meaning, and passion for life based upon their understanding of Jewish tradition.

Students achieve critical, synthetic, and evaluative thinking skills and strive for wisdom in their judgments and choices in life.

Students strive to search for the deeper meaning in life and determine that which is truly important.

### IDEAL NEW COMMUNITY JEWISH HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

In Talmud, in the section called *Masechet Shabbat*, Rava points out that there are six sets of questions a person is asked in the hour he or she is to be judged. The school's vision of the ideal graduate grows directly from these Talmudic queries.

**Did you conduct your worldly affairs in a righteous manner? Did you take unfair advantage? Were you honest in business?**

Our graduates engage in thoughtful acts of *Tikkun Olam* (world repair); understand that they are part of a larger plan, yet are essential to the completion of that plan through individual acts of loving kindness; and know that justice is created in the world by donations of personal time and material resources.

Our graduates understand that knowledge is for the sake of achieving wisdom; wisdom leads to peace; peace engenders a context for

*Tikkun Olam*; and *Tikkun* creates an atmosphere of Godliness in our world.

**Was lifelong learning a priority? Was it a regular part of one's life? Did you fix a regular time to study?**

Our graduates possess deep and integrated knowledge of Jewish tradition, values, and world civilization; recognize the relationship among all facets of human knowledge and appreciate the interaction between the greatest minds of Jewish and general thought.

Our graduates love to learn and have mastered the reading, comprehension and analytical skills to enable the pursuit of lifelong learning activities. Our graduates will strive for excellence in intellectual pursuits, personal health, artistic development, and in matters of values and high standards of character and behavior.

**Did you engage yourself in the raising of children? This means not just in the sense of procreation, but were you part of the "village" that raised all of the community's children? Did you become a part of all of the communities of all of our children?**

Our graduates consider themselves "trans-Jews" or those who possess a full range of Jewish knowledge and skills, so as to be comfortable in any Jewish community anywhere in the world. When asked to lead a prayer minyan, our graduates can lead; or when asked to explain Jewish holidays, texts, history, and philosophy, our graduates can explain. In essence, our graduates appreciate and respect all facets of Jewish life and can easily "transit" within the complex Jewish world.

**Were you an optimist? Did you try to make things better by participating in acts of Tikkun Olam? Did you have faith in God and the goodness of the world? Did you work for peace in Israel and the world?**

Our graduates achieve a sense of self-con-

fidence, of joy and a passion for life, based upon a deep understanding of Jewish tradition and knowledge of how that tradition creates personal meaning and inner peace. They support the State of Israel and appreciate Israel's centrality in Jewish life and Jewish history.

**Did you use wise judgment? Did you argue details with wisdom? Did you know when to let go of the unimportant? Did you separate the argument from the individual? Did you make a contribution of wisdom to the greater academic and world communities?**

Our graduates know and apply critical thinking skills needed for analytic and synthetic thought. These include inductive and deductive reasoning; finding similarities and analogies; synthesizing information; assessing the costs and benefits of ideas; predicting short and long-term consequences; achieving insight- the awareness of self in relation to others, to moral problems, and to world issues; and the ability to analyze one's own thinking process, to identify strengths and weaknesses, and to adopt strategies for productive action based on the highest principles of moral and ethical thinking.

Our graduates gain admission to fine colleges and universities not only to enhance his or her own education and opportunities, but also as a means to enhance his or her ability to make a significant contribution to our local and national communities.

**Did you understand and search for the deeper meaning and hidden meaning of life? Did you understand a word within a word or the thing within a thing?**

Our graduates value their special gifts, and understand their responsibility to use those gifts to uplift humanity. They maintain balance and perspective in life, thereby being able to determine that which is truly important and meaningful, and that which will make a difference for future generations. ז

# Envision Ideals, Not the Graduate

י by **ERIC GROSSMAN**

ONE of my darker pleasures as a twenty-something in Jerusalem was sitting in hotel lobbies watching my fellow yeshiva students endure the awkwardness of shidduch dates. The courting ritual customarily involved a young man with a pad of paper going through a prepared inventory of what he desired from the marriage candidate: education, pedigree, trousseau, and myriad other attributes and skills. The dating exercises I would witness were entertaining only in their anachronism. How offensive it felt to hear someone outline the qualifications of an ideal spouse, as if we could shop for a human being as we would for an automobile, listing standard and special features, upgrades, bells and whistles.

And yet that is precisely what we do as educators when we present our Visions of the Graduate. We aver that she should be conscientious, hard-working, athletic, artistic, religiously involved, a social activist, a student leader, club president, left-brained, right-brained, creative, passionate, and organized. She must be well liked by peers and faculty, an active member of her synagogue community and a leader in her youth group, involved in tikkun olam, volunteer for the young and the old and serve as a role model and ambassador for the school outside of school hours, on weekends, and during the summer, a living embodiment of the principles and values of our institution. Worse still, common educational parlance labels this elusive individual the Ideal Graduate, as if to suggest that an 18 year old who falls short in even one of these categories has not met our expectations. Even if the term “ideal” is not employed explicitly, it is certainly implied.

I believe that a Vision of the Ideal Graduate is not healthy, not realistic, and not desirable.

We must consider foremost the psychological effect such a document has upon our teenagers as they navigate their place in the world and carve out their identity. It is bad enough that students feel we expect them to be academically exemplary. The straight A report card, once a statistical rarity, has now become the baseline for college admission, supplemented by extracurricular activities, athletics, and fulfillment of community service obligations. These unrealistic expectations press upon our students’ minds even before we present them with our own institutional expectations. Already they fear failing their parents, their teachers, and themselves. By presenting a Vision of the Graduate we set up yet another external matrix by which they will be judged inadequate. Instead of exhorting our students to excel in their own path and

carve out their own destiny we present them with a narrow mold into which we expect them to fit.

Not having a Vision of the Graduate does not mean that a school should not have vision, and not having an Ideal Student does not mean that we should not have ideals for our students. Schools—Jewish day schools in particular—must have both vision and ideals. It is our charge as educational leaders to articulate an inspiring vision of Judaism, the Jewish future, and the Jewish people. Schools



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should also set forth ideals toward which students must be encouraged to strive. We may choose to idealize religious commitment or academic excellence or diversity. Schools must also distinguish themselves from each other by their choice of ideals: does the mission idealize pluralism or sectarianism? Is Zionism included as an ideal? Schools should be mission-driven, and a powerful mission must motivate with vision and ideals. But having ideals must not be mistaken for having ideal students. A school may choose to have academic excellence and gemilut chasadim as ideals, but a graduate who is a mediocre student yet a great ba'al chesed should never be labeled by that school as less than ideal. Are any of us prepared to line up our graduates at commencement and rate them based upon their congruity with our vision? In our climate of liberal education few of us are prepared even to name a valedictorian.

Practice

rian. Could any of *us* pass this test?

Instead of speaking of an Ideal Graduate we should speak of ideals that we encourage our graduates to adopt. If a graduate embraces one ideal over another he should be celebrated for exemplifying one particular aspect of the school's mission. To brand as failures students who diverge from an element or two of our vision is not only hurtful, but fails to recognize the very nature of the human condition. Children come to us with a unique set of predilections, likes, dislikes, propensities, beliefs, and habits. One need not be an ideological pluralist to recognize the diversity of personality and practice that exists among individuals in an open society. To pretend that we can perfectly shape our students in our image or in the image set forth in a Vision of a Graduate is not only offensive, it is also unrealistic. No school is a factory. The humanity of our students prevents us from forging them on the anvil of our mission.

Our students will also grow and evolve as they age and will value different parts of our mission in different proportions at different times. The Vision of the Graduate is too much of a snapshot in time and fails to look at the effect of an education upon a person over a lifetime. We must also expect that at some point in their development a certain percentage of our students will not accept, or will outright repudiate, our mission and vision. We should take this as an indication that our mission has substance, and that our institution stands on clear and distinct principles that can be accepted or rejected.

By the same token, we hope that each year we produce a core of graduates who embrace our mission fully. Here again we must avoid designating these as our ideal graduates. Rather, because these students embrace the fullness of the mission, they will possess the unique charge of carrying on the ideals of the school to the next generation. These students will become our schools' visionaries and leaders of the future.

At the school that I lead, the Frankel Jewish Academy, I have consciously made

the decision not to have a Vision of a Graduate. When I speak publicly of our school's mission I always emphasize that we do not have an Ideal Graduate. In publications and publicity

communication. *All* of our students are part of the school community and are therefore part of our vision.

Rav Kook taught that the 613 command-

## Are any of us prepared to line up our graduates at commencement and rate them based upon their congruity with our vision?

we make a point of not featuring pictures exclusively of students who are idyllic exemplars of our mission. Of course all day school leaders feature such students in their brochures: visibly high achieving, Jewishly committed, attractive, etc. But constantly highlighting such students to the exclusion of others sends the message that these are the students we *really* want at our schools. Instead, our school showcases a representative variety of our student body in our marketing and com-

ments were given to the entire Jewish people because the mitzvot can only be fulfilled by an entire nation. No one individual can observe both the commandments of men and women, not to mention priest and Israelite, king and subject. Only as a whole community are we able to fulfill our Divine mission. Come commencement, as you look at your graduates arrayed in identical caps and gowns, take heed to remember and honor the uniqueness of the individuals beneath. ז



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# Vision of a Jewish Educational Leader

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24]

and more fully appreciating its educational implications and/or problematics.

- Designing a leadership-development program so that it includes (through the examination of research, imaginative literature, and movies, as well as through site-visits to appropriate educating institutions) significant opportunities to appreciate the educational importance of forms of leadership that embody a compelling guiding vision, as well as opportunities to struggle with the effort to develop and deepen one's own personal stance.
- Significant opportunities to better understand the relationship between a guiding educational vision and the practice of education, with attention to such matters as curriculum, pedagogy, the design of the social environment, and program evaluation.

It is also important to note that my suggestion is not that attention to vision drown out educational agendas that focus on acquiring skills associated with good management and institution-building. Rather, the point is to make a meaningful space for both kinds of emphases. Given resource constraints, the demands that leaders face, and their portfolio of responsibilities, it will be an important challenge to decide how to balance out and integrate these very different concerns in the selection process for leadership education, in the actual professional development program, and in continuing (“in-service”) professional development opportunities down the road.

Put in the Jewish terms laid out by Ahad Ha'am in his article “Moses,” the educational leaders we need must be a combination—and perhaps a more effective one than their biblical counterparts—of Moses (the inspired visionary) and Aaron (who can mediate effectively between the world of vision and the challenges of

the real world). The enterprise of Jewish life is not just about surviving, but about maintaining and/or creating thriving communities organized around compelling visions of Jewish life. If Jewish education is to contribute to this effort in a serious way, educational leaders who are dedicated to inspiring visions that effectively guide their work are essential. If the trends in the preparation of leaders in general education are at cross purposes with this agenda, then we must be careful not to emulate them but to exemplify a more worthy leadership education agenda. We can count ourselves lucky that a number of Jewish education programs in significant denominational and non-denominational institutions of higher learning have come to appreciate the need for such an agenda and have begun to embody it in practice. But it remains a challenge to further develop and to sustain its meaningful inclusion, especially given the multitude of competing demands and fads that are pressed on leadership-development institutions. ז

## Visions: Past, Present, Future

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8]

every day. My hope is that the various leaders who have become committed to this agenda can respond to the needs of the growing field through the publication and dissemination of their work and by creating frameworks in which we can learn from each other's experience and contribute to each other's expertise. Within this field, above and beyond my focus at the Mandel Leadership Institute on the training of vision guided educational leadership, I am personally engaged with the challenges of Zionist education, both in Israel and in the Diaspora. As well, I am working on how to deepen the impact of Jewish education through an emphasis on the theological underpinnings of Judaism.

*Where should schools look to grow and improve over the next decade?*

I think that Jewish schools need to work

with parents in enabling them to take a greater part in the Jewish education of their children and in the life of the Jewish community at large. Philanthropic families and foundations have made critical contributions to Jewish education, but their intention has not been for day schools to be treated as service providers. The Jewish lives of learners and the vitality of the community at large will only be as strong as the commitment of the average Jew. If parents treat Jewish life as something important to them, this will enable the school to do its work more effectively with their children. But in order for parents to play this role, they themselves need to work through their own visions of Jewish life and education. Here is one domain where the school can play a critical role, but in order to do so, it must focus on this issue in a systematic way. If the price of this orientation is greater emphasis on “inreach” than on “outreach,” so be it.

Unless the core of the Jewish community is strengthened, it will not be able to radiate outwards.

*What questions do you wish Jewish day school leaders would spend more time thinking about?*

How can we get our trustees and board members to become partners in taking on challenges that relate to the substance and content of our programs? How can we reorient our school culture, staff, and program of formal and informal study so that the worldliness and depth of being a Jew comes across stronger than aspects that are narrow and provincial? Why must a learner be part of a community altogether—isn't it enough to be a liberal individual who can construct his or her identity however he or she chooses from out of a smorgasbord of possibilities? ז



# Creating Jewish Citizens

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 33]

principally the low wages paid by the service industry, the high cost of health insurance, the dearth of good jobs, and the absence of healthy food options in low-income neighborhoods. Ending hunger will require policy changes on the local, state, and national level. It is important to involve students in providing emergency food assistance, but also essential that students understand the causes of hunger, as well as the possible solutions.

## 7. WE PERPETUATE PREJUDICE.

Two years ago, at a seminar co-coordinated by RAVSAK and Jewish Funds for Justice, I led a session on teaching race and class. I began by asking the assembled teachers—all of whom were engaged in social justice education—whether they ever spoke about race and class with their students. The answer was an almost universal no. The teachers expressed concern that talking about race equaled racism.

But power dynamics, including race, class and gender, are present in virtually every human interaction, and certainly in every service interaction. Students will not fail to notice if most of the clients of a soup kitchen come from a minority group, or have a different class background than the students themselves. If we do not discuss these dynamics, we cannot know what conclusions students draw from these observations.

We should first break down the paradigm in which wealthier and predominantly white communities “help” low-income communities of color. By providing opportunities to learn from leaders of grassroots community organizations, we encourage students to view low-income communities as partners and sources of wisdom, and not only as victims and recipients.

Second, we need to talk about the institutions, cultural norms, and individual prejudices that perpetuate racism, classism, and sexism. These issues are not easy. Any conversation about race, class, or gender can easily turn sour if participants feel threatened or judged. In some cases, educators within our own schools may have the necessary experience to discuss these issues in an age-appropriate way. In most cases, it may be more appropriate to engage

an outside facilitator. Local grassroots organizations are good sources of information about who in your community is doing this work.

The challenge of educating for social justice is a difficult one. To succeed, one needs deep grounding in Jewish text, an understanding of contemporary policy issues, and relationships with local organizations. We can no more expect Jewish educators to be sufficiently prepared for this task than we can expect a history major to be able to teach calculus, or a science teacher to integrate Talmud text into her lesson plans.

In the long-term, we need to create training programs to help educators and teams of educators to gain the skills necessary to teach Jewish social justice in an integrated, effective, and responsible way. In the short term, we can make use of prepared curricula, and ask for help from others in our own com-

munity. Jewish Funds for Justice ([www.jewishjustice.org](http://www.jewishjustice.org)), American Jewish World Service ([www.ajws.org](http://www.ajws.org)) and Repair the World ([www.werepair.org](http://www.werepair.org)) all offer helpful on-line resources. The Corporation for National and Community Service website ([www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov)) includes hundreds of links to secular service learning materials, as well as to volunteer opportunities. Social studies teachers, leaders of local community organizations, and parents who work in related fields may all be able to help students put their service work into a larger context. Community rabbis and Judaic studies teachers can provide the Jewish background for the work.

The task may be difficult, but the reward is immense: through social justice education, our students will become involved and knowledgeable Jews and active citizens of the world. And, for these students, these two endeavors will feel like a single, unified mission. ז

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# Should Day Schools Aspire to Create Educated Jews?

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14]

have certain responsibilities to others, and that they derive certain benefits from being in association with others. In education, building school communities is instrumentally valuable for any number of reasons: because it facilitates engagement (both emotional and financial), because it lowers barriers of resistance to institutional goals, because it creates loci of meaning that contribute to individual human flourishing. All these benefits are generated by having good and healthy communities in the schools, or created by the school, or with which the school interacts.

However, my point here is to consider the possibility that communities are not only instrumentally but also intrinsically valuable, that they are ends in themselves rather than (or as well as) means to the end of individual fulfillment and flourishing. What are the educational implications of thinking about communities as ends in themselves? What happens if, in our construction of visions of Jewish education, we seek to establish not only what is an educated Jew but also what is an ideal Jewish community?

As it turns out, it is quite hard to sustain an inquiry into this question; discussions of educational aims seem to collapse into individualistic terms almost inevitably. In my work on this question, I first sought to borrow from communitarian political theorists, people like Michael Sandel and Charles Taylor, who help us articulate a vision of human flourishing in which the good life is (among other things) a life led by the individual embedded in healthy and vibrant communities. But even when we articulate that vision, we have not escaped the focus on the individual. After all, a need, while possibly important or even essential, is still in the service of the thing that needs it. So we can affirm the idea that individuals need healthy communities, but when we do so, we are implicitly saying that the value of communities is, in the end, derived from a conception of individual human flourishing. The former (the community) is derivative; the latter (the individual) is primary.

But if political theory does not get us where we need to go, the Jewish tradition—what Daniel Elazar famously called the “Jewish political tradition”—just might. How can we articulate the concept of the ideal community? Well, the tradition represents its values in terms of mitzvot, obligations; a mitzvah is, at once, a technical obligation and the expression of a particular value. Most mitzvot are incumbent on individuals, of course. The individual is obligated to give charity, to lift a lulav on Sukkot, to honor one’s parents. But some are not. The individual is not obligated to establish a judicial system; instead, the community is obligated to do so. Likewise, certain public worship rituals are the obligation of the community, not of the individual. Another example is education: when parents are unable to educate their children, the obligation falls to the community. An analysis of these communal obligations, and others, suggests a three-part taxonomy. Some communal obligations derive from or suggest a conception of community as acting *in loco parentis* (as in the case of educating children). Others derive from or suggest a conception of community as a kind of corporation, in the legal sense, acting not merely as a collection of individuals but as a corporate entity (as in the case of certain communal rituals). And others derive from or suggest the communal expression of certain deeply held values (as in the case of the establishment of a judicial system, embodying the values of justice and order).

If we then ask our educational question, about the pursuit of community as an educational end in itself, this taxonomy may provide some guidance. Community is certainly a means towards individual human flourishing. But it is also valuable as an end in itself in these three ways. The community steps in where individuals cannot. The community is a corporate agent for certain purposes. Finally, and most interestingly, the community embodies or expresses certain deeply held values. If we are constructing a vision for Jewish education, then perhaps alongside our ideas about the educated Jew, we

ought to articulate these ideas about our ideal Jewish community.

Recently, Yitz Greenberg has written (about Jewish day schools in particular, in an address titled “Judaism and Modernity,” 2006) that “the day school gives educators the opportunity to create a world which can embody the holistic holy community which is our dream for the world.” Notice his focus on community as an end rather than a means. There is nothing in this brief expression of a vision for Jewish day schools about the benefit of holism for the individual educated Jew. There is nothing about the purpose of holy communities in creating such people. Instead, a “holistic holy community” is an end in itself, as an expression of our deeply held ideals on the community-wide or indeed global scale. Perhaps, he suggests, we might create day schools to be microcosms of those holy communities.

So should Jewish day schools aspire to create educated Jews? Of course they should. But as we think about what that means—as we do the hard work of articulating our visions of Jewish education—we ought to keep three cautionary notes in mind. First, we ought to remember Rousseau and Rosenzweig, warning us about the limitations and liabilities of planning for the future without sufficiently attending to the student in front of us. Second, even as we promote ideological engagement with weighty matters of ultimate concern, as we certainly should, we ought to be wary about whether and how those ideological stances guide pedagogical practice. Frequently, they do not. And third, we ought to be alert to the individualism implicit in the focus on the educated Jew. We can balance that individualism by promoting a deep understanding of the importance of community as part of our conceptions of the educated Jew. But even more significantly, we can balance that individualism by articulating a specific, positive vision of the kinds of communities that we want to create—and then creating those communities in our schools.

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Practice



# Jewish Day Schools as Incubators of Kavannah

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 30]

## Gratitude, Appreciation, Celebration and Jewish Prayer

Robert A. Emmons, Professor at the University of California, Davis has devoted his life to studying the role of gratitude in building a healthy life. His research demonstrates that people who *regularly get in touch with what they have* just do better in every way. They transcend tragedy. They get along better with others. They are physically, mentally and spiritually healthier. The bulk of Jewish prayer is about thanksgiving, appreciation, gratitude. One doesn't need the siddur to get in touch with what one has lost or the troubles in one's life. I do not need the siddur to be reminded of my daughter Aviva who died in her thirties. But how many people awake each day and spontaneously get in touch with what they have? Professor Em-

mons recommends daily exercises to help people do just that even when they are not in the mood to do so.

For me, one of the great virtues of daily prayer is that it provides a structure for me to celebrate what is good in my life and think about how I can share it with others less fortunate. Taking things for granted is a dangerous weakness to which we are all prone. Since so much of Jewish prayer is about thanksgiving, appreciation and gratitude, I would suggest that it is not such a big jump to go from cultivating the habit of daily appreciation through prayer and transferring that habit to the people in our lives who enrich us each day.

## Closing Comment

It is doubtful that many people (including me) can honestly say that he or she is able to pray with kavannah every time. To use an analogy, sometimes, I feel as

if I am practicing scales. But any serious musician will tell you that without practice, one rarely if ever produces great music. Sometimes, I achieve deep kavannah. Sometimes, I start out with low expectations and suddenly a word or a phrase leaps out of the page because of what is happening in my life, and I make a strong connection with the text. Over the years, I have heard from former pupils who say, "When I am praying, I sometimes remember our study of the prayers and it helps me to connect." Preparation is an essential component of our personal and professional lives. Preparation for prayer (cognitive and experiential) can make a difference in the quality of the prayer experience. Limiting ourselves to the practice of skills (important as they are) is not the way to nurture kavannah in prayer. Knowing *how* and knowing *why* are both important; both deserve to affect curriculum decision-making in our schools. z

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# Characteristics of the Ideal Barrack Graduate:

## A Work in Progress

by **STEVEN M. BROWN**

**T**HIS past summer I took an energizing seminar with Independent School Management (ISM) on the role of the head of school in fundraising. Among the many ideas I gleaned from that seminar was the notion that we needed to translate our lofty school mission into something much more tangible that could be shared with our community and held up as a model of what our school is trying to produce. This past fall and winter I took our faculty and staff through an exercise to create a vision of the ideal Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy graduate. I began the process by conferring with my Academic Advisory Council, made up of division directors, department chairs, and representatives of each faculty discipline. We discussed how this process might unfold to involve the entire faculty in a meaningful way.

We began by asking each department to develop its own list of characteristics of the ideal graduate both within its own discipline and in general. Each department then worked for many weeks to make lists of skills, attitudes, competencies, habits of mind, heart, and body that it felt ought to be the outcome of its particular discipline, while at the same time reflecting the school's mission as a whole. These lists were then collated by administrators to reduce duplication and submitted to the faculty at an in-service day held in January. We grouped faculty members across disciplines and invited them to do the hard work of reducing these long inventories to lists of no more than a dozen characteristics of the ideal graduate. There was much passionate debate and excitement, and a remarkable amount of congruency across departments about both the skill areas and the general Jewish and human qualities that we wish to produce in our graduates.

Some samples of suggested specific outcomes included: a strong work ethic; positive self-esteem, independence in learning, and a passionate, lifelong love of learning; learning for learning's sake; *menschlichkeit*: moral and ethical caring; participates effectively as a member of a team/group; effective and affective leadership skills; self-awareness and awareness of diversity; strives to understand the world around him or her and is respectful of divergent opinions and viewpoints; understands how the past has important impact on the present; values pluralism, tolerance and respect as an approach to living; values open-minded questioning and contemplation as a key to the process of learning; possesses an appreciation of the natural world and the concept of global interconnectedness; is unafraid of the endless possibilities of self-expression; ability to read liturgy as well as other textual items in

Hebrew; appreciation of the power and beauty of mathematics and how it is applied to the world; critical reading skills; development of critical thinking within the framework of scientific methodology; the ability to solve problems by ap-



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plying valid meta-cognitive practices (inquiry, discovery, evidence, collection and analysis) to test and evaluate hypotheses and propose theories; knowledge of Jewish philosophical texts; understands the geography of the TaNaKH and Siddur; able to function in Hebrew and appreciate Hebrew as a window into the Jewish people; appreciates the centrality of Israel as the historical and national homeland of the Jewish people; appreciates and understands how to read Shakespeare, poetry, plays, fiction, nonfiction; applies writing processes including proofreading and editing; ability to technically manipulate a wide variety of art materials both one and two dimensional; ability to research, evaluate and synthesize cultural and historical information to support artistic choices, etc.

The science department developed a visual model for us: in the center of a circle is "the ideal Barrack graduate." That circle is surrounded by orbiting circles that included the following items: critical thinking and problem solving, writing skills, leadership, communication skills (oral, written, and technical); ethical decision-making; research skills; appreciation of

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the natural world; appreciation of the arts. This wonderful diagram gave us a vision of how we would finally orchestrate the final product in a rich, interactive way as we work through the final stages of this process. We will create a new area on our website which will use a graphic similar to the one just described and it will include the five areas which we have now collated as our central ideas of the ideal Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy graduate. Each one of these areas will be interactive and the viewer can click on them and see more detailed skill and conceptual outcomes by department or discipline.

At this writing, while we have not yet processed the final version with the faculty for its approval, our current iteration of the ideal Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy graduate is one who embodies:

**Jewish identity:**

- Sees himself or herself as an active link between the Jewish communities of the past and the future, understanding the centrality of kehillah, Israel and the Hebrew language in the history and culture of the Jewish people.

**Lifelong learning:**

- Approaches learning as an independent, curious and articulate thinker, with a strong work ethic, who values open-minded questioning, who respects differences and has the capacity and confidence for critical analysis and deep contemplation when learning and working in our ever-changing society.

**Moral outlook:**

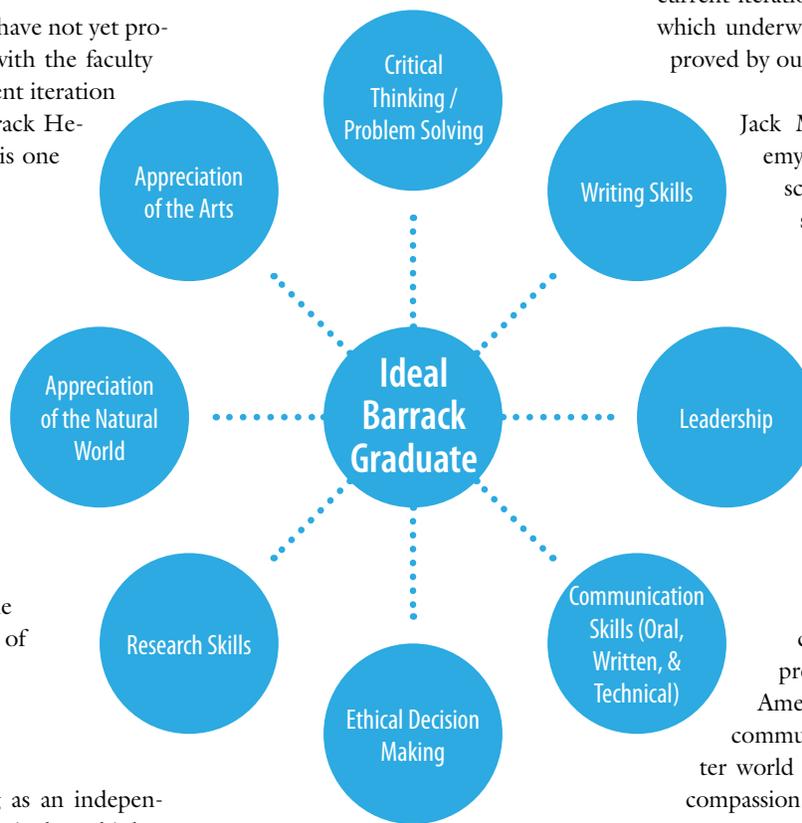
- Moves through one's life as a mensch, guided by a firm moral compass and a sense of responsibility; embodies commitments to derekh erez, tzedakah, hesed, Torah lishma, and tikkun olam.

**Health and citizenship:**

- Participates in the community as a knowledgeable citizen anchored by a healthy mind, body and sense of self as well as an appreciation for diverse forms of religious and aesthetic expression.

**Skills:**

- Has strong, practical skills in oral, written, visual and technological expression with the ability to discover, evaluate, and apply resources that will



improve the community.

**Leadership:**

- Demonstrates a willingness to assume a position of leadership or to work collaboratively to solve problems in creative ways.

These outcomes will guide us in the decisions we make as a school regarding curriculum, programs, co-curricular activities, faculty hires and institutional advancement in continuously improving ourselves as a

21<sup>st</sup> century learning environment. Good schools are never done becoming better, and excellent schools are never finished striving for higher levels of performance. The next step in this process will be to develop an inventory of characteristics of professional excellence in our school to evaluate and create learning environments in our classrooms and institution as a whole that lead students to the achievement of our desired outcomes. In this way we hope to concretize our mission statement and make it clear to students and families who are in the school and may come to the school in the future what we are trying to do. The current iteration of our mission statement which underwent review and was just approved by our Board of Directors is:

Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy is a pluralistic Jewish day school for students in grades six through twelve from a broad variety of backgrounds. The school integrates a comprehensive and rigorous college preparatory curriculum with the teaching of essential Jewish values and texts. Barrack graduates value diversity, celebrate the richness of Judaism's language, culture, and history, and have a strong connection to Israel. Barrack prepares future leaders of the American, Jewish, and global communities who work for a better world through acts of justice and compassion.

*Approved by Board of Directors, March 24, 2010 / 9 Nisan, 5770*

We received permission to borrow some phrasing from RAVSAK's new mission statement, as we thought it was highly appropriate. Perhaps, if other RAVSAK schools adopt a similar methodology of using key phrases from the association's mission statement, we will unite our schools and allow families who move from community to community to understand that there is this powerful network of community Jewish day schools who share much in common.

# The Importance of Vision in Early Childhood Jewish Education

by **DIANA GANGER**

**E**XCELLENT schools have a clear shared vision, strong parental engagement, a reflective culture of inquiry and dialogue, and a context of investigation through play that grows the moral development of a child. Graduates of schools that excel in these areas leave with enhanced focus, a collaborative stance and self-reliance. Families, as well as the graduates, are seeded with Jewish ideas and memories left to sprout throughout a lifetime.

They see that their children are involved in deep experiences and long-term project work.



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Exemplary early childhood Jewish education is to be found in schools that are intentional about their vision and how it translates to ordinary moments in the daily life of the school. The moment families enter the school, they see writing and images that welcome them and declares the vision and philosophy of the school. The stated values are immediately carried out with a warm welcome and a crafted environment. When families walk around the building, they see and hear the vision in action: people greet them and it is the children's voices that dominate. The school walls tell a story—they display photographs, words and images of the children's work and thinking. This process of documentation communicates the values of the school and vision of those who share it. Jewish objects adorn the classrooms inviting curiosity and exploration. Natural materials are available, and quality books invite reading. The overall tone of the school is joyful.

Further, the place is transparent with the staff made known through photographs and a short bio, an empowerment to the families. A warm response greets a family that calls, with answers to pertinent questions and invitations for parents to visit and spend time at school. Everything is open and honest, and even reciprocal as during the first visit questions are also asked to get to know the family and its unique context.

Parents from excellent schools are engaged in a number of ways. They know how to partner with a leadership that cares to listen and communicates regularly with parents as well as invites parents to engage with the daily life of the school. They commit to learn and to relate with the school and other parents. They know that teachers take time to reflect upon the children's learning through sharing documentation and images. The school partners with parents and understands that to maximize a child's potential there must be communication, collaboration, and a model learning community—a place of continuous reflection and dialogue with one another.

Parents in these model schools are encouraged to participate in their child's education. Their backgrounds, interests and areas of expertise are known and are invited into the classroom and school environment in a variety of ways. Parents further engage by seeing and reading documentation pertaining to their children's learning community in the classroom: how they think, hypothesize, wonder, and experiment.

Parents are expected to “know and be known.” They develop friendships and there is a sense of belonging in the schools. Their opinions and thoughts are invited often and serve as the source of ongoing dialogue. True dialogue and learning are fostered as this way of communicating goes well beyond sharing information. Parents see the teachers as eager listeners and learners who seek to develop meaningful relationships. Children thrive as they see their home and school deeply connected. Parents are invited to learn in a variety of formats—from small group dialogue and text-based formats to larger Jewish experiences with other families. The graduating family will have grown over the years gaining Jewish knowledge. They will continue to seek Jewish experiences in the future. The school will intentionally engage families to think about their future growth as a Jewish family.

Play is where the child develops and expresses; how it is orchestrated is what makes excellence. The role of the teacher is essential in facilitating meaningful play. Teachers act as researchers, ask questions, and journey with the children for as long as the children are interested. Teachers model a collaborative, warm environment. Teachers listen to the children and create a

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negotiated curriculum. Through these interactions, children learn to ask questions and reflect on their work and are only satisfied after much editing. And it is not the adult who puts an end to the work, but the children.

Behind a successful play session is time. Only in schools that realize the need for time to engage in creating scripts with complex plots and a variety of characters will children flourish. Within these scenes, children can investigate the world—using

another. The intentional modeling of values at all levels forms the foundation of an empathetically based morality.

Beyond time, children are treated with dignity and seen as competent. They are also given a great space from which to operate. There are quality materials and a provocative environment that stimulates the child's curiosity. With these tools, play becomes wondrous, joyful and satisfying; it becomes fertile soil for the formation of a thinking, socially competent child.

To instill a Jewish foundation, the environment filled with Jewish imagery and objects contains photos of Jewish diversity, both religious and ethnic. Israel is represented both with Hebrew language and other symbols. Jewish books steeped in Jewish values are chosen. All of this creates the environment that the child explores and slowly integrates as the norm. Apart from environment, Sabbath experiences as well as other Jewish holidays and lifecycle events imprint the child and

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“Exemplary early childhood Jewish education is to be found in schools that are intentional about their vision and how it translates to ordinary moments in the daily life of the school. The moment families enter the school, they see writing and images that welcome them and declares the vision and philosophy of the school.

In turn, this leads to enhanced focus, strung along by an investigator's curiosity, and towards collaboration with peers [fellow students]. Children know they can think, translate ideas into creations that are recognized and honored by the teachers.

props and their imaginations through the high drama play can generate. In addition, both personal identities and interpersonal relationships are shaped through the vicissitudes of interactions. The environment becomes emotionally responsive; children learn to self-regulate and take care of one

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 55]

stimulate a spillover of information back to the family.

Children learn to initiate driven by their desire to make meaning of the world. But

John Dewey has stated, “We do not learn from experience...we

ing and how people collaborate.

Teachers take time to learn together—they develop a learning community and think about their practice. They set goals for themselves and strive to grow through coaching and mentorship with protected time to do so. For example, teachers may

thinking within the environment is made visible through documentation teachers’ produce. Other members of the community are invited to respond and to engage in dialogue to deepen the learning.

At excellent schools, children learn to learn. They will enter any future learning environment with a love of learning and a self-confidence that will propel them forward. A strong Jewish identity will be sown through innovative environments that incorporate Jewish visions with which the children can wrestle. Because families grow along with the child, as they are intimately involved on a daily basis, they also grow closer to their Jewish foundations. This sets the stage for developing and evolving the families’ Jewish identity at a crucial time in their development as a family.

Also, they are part of a greater community of parents at or near the beginning of their life journeys. They build friendships through this commonality and partake in Jewish experiences together. The school presents them with occasions to celebrate holidays and experience many other Jewish education opportunities. In the end, what emerges is a complete child who embodies many Jewish fundamentals: inquisitiveness, creativity, a relational stance, curiosity, emotional self-regulation, thinking, friendship, a budding morality, an identity within the greater Jewish community, and a family that looks to start or continue their life journey through a Jewish lens. ז

learn from reflecting on experience.” In an excellent Jewish early childhood learning experience, the process of reflecting through dialogue and inquiry is ongoing. It is a value. New staff are acculturated and leaders pay attention to the fact that the school can always grow and become better at what it does in all realms. The reality of the everyday is set against the vision to assure that gaps are minimized. The quality of relationships is continuously analyzed at all levels—family to family, school to family, teachers and child, school leadership and board, staff to staff etc. All members of the community question how the school is a place of learn-

chose to observe how children use the space and equipment in the classroom and ask themselves the following questions: How are the children using the space in the classroom? How are they invited to think in this environment? Can they take initiative and wonder? How accessible are the materials? What is the quality of these materials? Is the space provocative? Are the children able to focus? Is it cluttered and overwhelming? Is the furniture welcoming? These types of questions frame the teacher’s observations of the children and support the process of reflection on an ongoing basis. Children’s learning and

**In the end, what emerges is a complete child who embodies many Jewish fundamentals: inquisitiveness, creativity, a relational stance, curiosity, emotional self-regulation, thinking, friendship, a budding morality, an identity within the greater Jewish community, and a family that looks to start or continue their life journey through a Jewish lens.**

## Praying Without the Lake

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 41]

setting as leaders in social justice projects, Shabbatonim and other school community building programs. Their energy will be contagious.

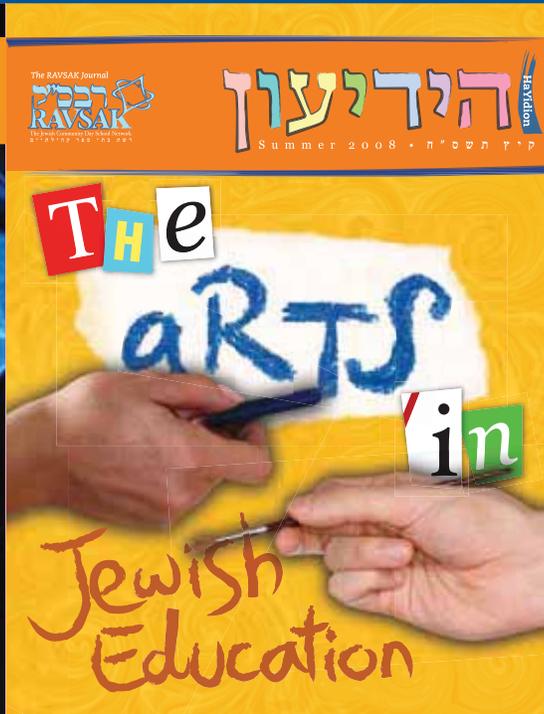
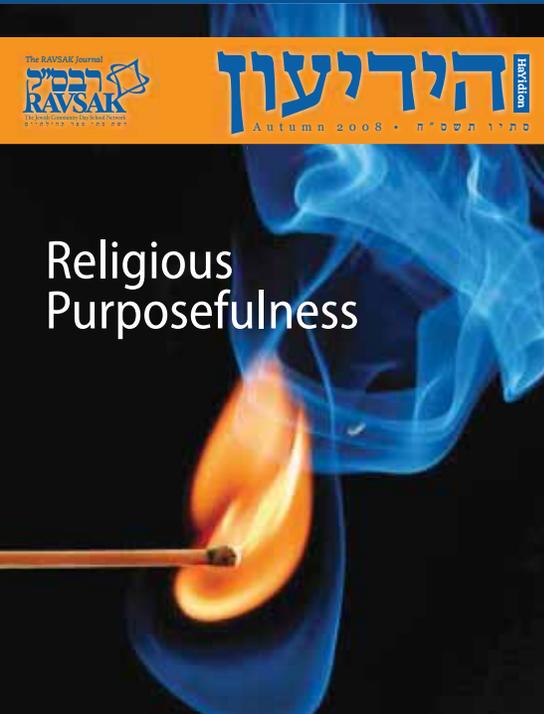
Mincha/Maariv at the camp lake obviously takes advantage of ambiance and setting. Use your student leadership to really think about where tefillah takes place at school. Do you want to show that Jewish prayer can only occur in one place, in one way, with one leader? Or can it take place in different settings, in different group-

ings, a different manner, and with different prayer leaders?

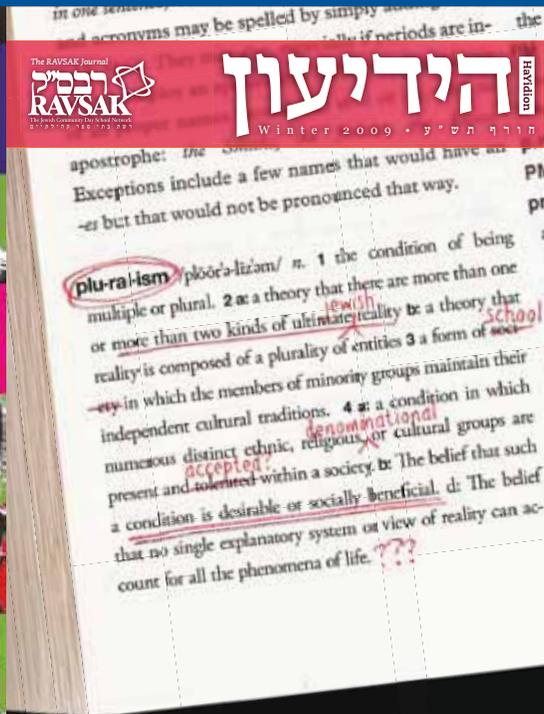
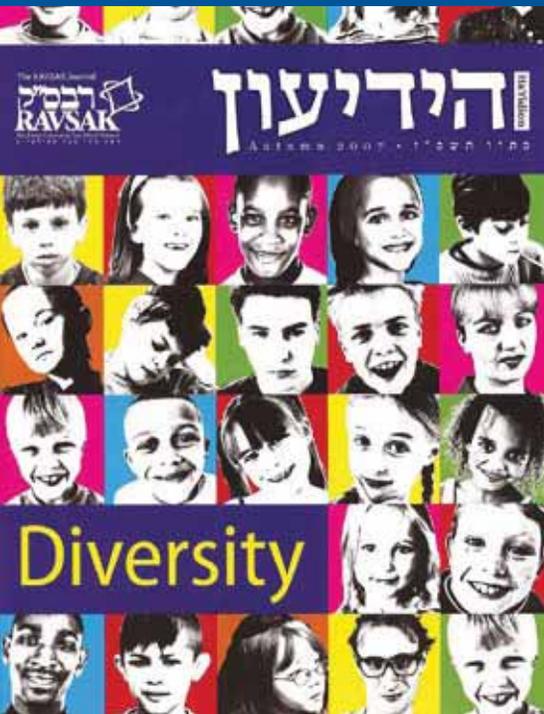
The intentional use of music is the cornerstone of the success of the camp lake. Challenge your school to bring in more music in order to engage students more deeply. Remember, that adding music is not only a matter of repertoire, but also necessitates an enthusiastic and skilled music leader’s ability to teach music in a welcoming way that results in an entire community singing together. It helps if that music leader is someone that the students look up to.

Anyone who has ever celebrated Shabbat at Jewish camp has experienced the contagious ruach that permeates. It’s important to remember when bringing in more experiential methods into your school, that such magic and ruach aren’t accidental; many factors such as the use of space, time, role-modeling and relationships have been intentionally utilized in order to achieve such magic so that campers know and *do* Jewish. Many of these factors can be used in your overall approach as well in creating Jews who love learning, being and doing Jewish. Behatzlachah! ז

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# Educating for Character and Leadership in an Israeli Religious High School

by JEREMY STAVISKY

HIMMELFARB High School is Jerusalem's largest high school for religious boys; at present, 650 young men from the greater Jerusalem area are educated in its halls. Obviously, scholastic achievements are important to us, but of even greater significance is our critical mandate to "fortify" the personalities of these adolescents and give them the tools to successfully contend with the vicissitudes and trials of contemporary life. We expect our graduates to demonstrate leadership and make a singular contribution to society.

There are two unique characteristics to our school. Firstly, Himmelfarb is an integrated institution, both socio-economically and academically. As a public school, we are a melting pot that plays host to a mélange of the brightest students and their relatively weaker counterparts (albeit in distinct tracks). We are committed to creating a mirror image of Israeli society, for both ideological and pedagogical reasons. This mission is fully consistent with our philosophy that assumes responsibility for the broader society and compels us to provide a quality education for students of *all* backgrounds.

From a religious standpoint, we are similarly bound to show sensitivity to the needs of all members of society. Religious education which is "elitist" stands in contradiction to the fundamental Jewish value of *chesed*. While we must strive to offer venues for academic excellence that challenge gifted and talented youth, we must not abandon other students not so identified. Indeed, it is striking how many of those deemed "less fortunate" during their junior high school years later emerge as model citizens and dynamic members of their community. There is nothing more rewarding than bestowing an advanced education on children whose parents have been denied one.

Additionally, we strongly believe that encounters with those unlike ourselves are essential to the goal of fostering character. In so doing, our youth become acquainted with a fuller range of humanity and its diverse struggles, learn to appreciate varied perspectives and ultimately develop the tools required for them to address the complexities of their own personal lives. It might be simpler to shepherd a monolithic student body, but this would deprive our children of the richness which such diversity affords. The eclectic mix of Ashkenazi and Sephardic melodies for selichot filling the corridors of our school before the Yamim Nora'im is supremely uplifting.

It is thus a privilege for Himmelfarb to serve a population that is not only half-Sephardic and half-Ashkenazi, but also 5 percent of which is of Ethiopian origin. Some of our students come from families on welfare, while others come from affluent Jerusalem households. Years ago, a group of North American principals visiting our school were simply astounded by



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the extent of the diversity that we have proudly cultivated.

The second characteristic of our school is its identity as *both* Orthodox and modern. As difficult as it is for these two attributes to co-exist in United States, achieving their comfortable synthesis is that much harder in Jerusalem. Subjected to the powerful influence of fundamentalism, educators might almost be forgiven for advocating the less complex course of "one truth" and disparaging the merit of modern Western culture. But we must have the capacity to acknowledge the inherent blessings of liberalism while, at the same time, continuing to uphold our values and principles as Orthodox Jews—particularly when the two come into conflict. Thus, we try to illustrate how the democratic tradition derives directly from the Jewish notion of *tikkun olam*. Our curriculum engages our students to debate the limits of artistic freedom and fuse evolutionary biology together with the Genesis narrative of Creation.

Being both Orthodox and modern, it also behooves us to create space for our secular brothers and sisters, and even for other communities of faith. Again, this is no small challenge in Israel, where people have a tendency to perceive themselves under threat. At Himmelfarb, sophomores are formally “introduced” to Islam and Christianity, and often have occasion to meet with their representatives. I vividly recall the tension in the room when a prominent Israeli Arab addressed our students on the complexity of living as both an Arab *and* an Israeli.

When I became principal at Himmelfarb, I was forced to prioritize. Principals are tasked to achieve an exhaustive array of objectives, but ultimately, each of us has to decide what are genuinely the most important among them. For me, this was a policy of “zero tolerance” for violence, physical or emotional, between students or for insolence (aka chutzpah) of students toward teachers. Although such conduct is regrettably prevalent in the Israeli school system, I determined that any acceptance of such behavior would effectively undermine our school’s moral justification. To my mind, if students and/or faculty are either frightened or abused, our ability to educate is utterly destroyed. For that reason, Himmelfarb policy obligates all teachers to report any such incidents to the administration, which generally results in a two-day suspension for the offending party. It has been gratifying to see that students, teachers and parents all appreciate the seriousness of the matter and have united to make our school a virtual non-violence zone.

I also resolved to define the core function of our religious curriculum, which, I deeply believe, has to concentrate on making us better people. If a day school education does not produce a more moral person, it is of no value, even if our students remain observant. I could not have been happier than when our senior class raised \$2,500 to cover the medical expenses of our non-Jewish custodian. In fact, it falls to us, as educators, to lead by example in teaching our students to show respect for those lower down on the proverbial totem pole. Only then can I expect my students to exercise moral au-

thority as soldiers and officers in the IDF.

Almost 1 percent of IDF infantry officers are Himmelfarb graduates. While I am cautious never to tell my students how or where to serve—after all, this a complex, personal decision—many volunteer as combat soldiers, giving expression to their profound belief that the existence of a Jewish state is nothing short of a Providential gift. And as such, we are honor-bound to sustain the Zionist enterprise and accentuate its moral character. Our graduates understand that officers must not only prepare soldiers for battle, but must also attend to their emotional and physical wellbeing. Sometimes, this even means providing food for their poverty-stricken families.

Intellectual accomplishments are im-

portant. Undoubtedly, those with an informed understanding of both Jewish tradition and contemporary Western culture are better equipped than those who lack such familiarity. Accordingly, our students study the lessons of human history and evaluate its implications for the Jewish people. But education cannot just be about knowledge; it must also build character. We endeavor to give our students the practical capability to survive the challenges that await them, including a coherent belief system that will guide them through the complexities of the modern world. We expect them, as believing Jews, to contribute to their communities and actively participate in *tikkun olam* throughout their lives. Above all, we insist that the world should be a better place because they were here. ז

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# Adult Jewish Learning: Modeling Risk and Growth

by **LESLIE PUGACH**

**T**HIS is my first year as Upper School Director at Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy. It is my first year as a mother-in-law, standing under a chuppah as our daughter became a Jewish wife. It is the first year that I began to study Hebrew and Torah. It is the first time that I researched, wrote and delivered a Dvar Torah. It is the first time that my husband and I visited Israel. Most of these firsts I attribute to the self-confidence, knowledge, and personal growth that I gained as a result of my participation in SuLaM's Cohort III.

First, some background. As a fourth generation American, I grew up in an extended family, particularly on my mother's side, that was extremely active in the secular aspects of Jewish life in the greater Philadelphia area. My maternal grandparents made certain that my mother was extremely well educated, both Jewishly and secularly, even at a time when girls were often not given that opportunity. On Shabbat, their kosher home was ground central for Jewish leaders who were visiting Philadelphia—Mordechai Kaplan, well known rabbis and other leaders of the Conservative and growing Reconstructionist movements. Dinner table conversations were lively, political, Zionist and learned.

Although we belonged to a Conservative synagogue and I was forced to attend afternoon/Sunday Hebrew school and High Holiday/occasional Shabbat religious services until I was twelve (no bat mitzvah ceremony was offered at either synagogue to which we belonged), most of my formal religious education and understanding was gained through family gatherings—Shabbat, the High Holidays, Purim, Pesach. I learned the secrets of rolling hamentaschen dough at my grandmother's elbow and the unwritten recipe for gefilte fish made from fish that we kept in the bathtub and ground in a metal hand-grinder that I use to this day. My familiarity and comfort with Shabbat tefillah came not from organized services in shul, but from years at Jewish overnight camp, where Shabbat experiences were wondrous, loud, spirited and meaningful to an adolescent Jewish female. Like my maternal ancestors, I was involved in community organizations from an early age; chesed and tikkun olam were ingrained in my life.

When I joined the faculty of Akiba Hebrew Academy in September 1981, my ex-

posure to academic Jewish life broadened. As my involvement in Akiba began to expand beyond the classroom, it was clear to me that there were major gaps in my formal Jewish learning as well as in my self-confidence. While I could tell a Tanakh from a Talmud, the Midrash from the Mishnah, a few night/summer session classes in Hebrew were not



*Leslie Pugach, Upper School Director at Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy (formerly Akiba), has been involved in education for over forty years. Her e-mail address is lpugach@jbha.org.*

enough for me to feel confident in the Judaic areas of our school's curriculum development, as well as in the supervision and evaluation of our Jewish Studies faculty or in my work with Board committees. While I gained expertise in Holocaust Education at CAJE and

**“** Fear of failure, avoidance of embarrassment, a desire not to appear too ignorant and difficulty with short term memory—all of these (with the exception of the last!) are part of a middle school student's worst nightmare and even more so for an adult.

American Jewish History as a Feinstein Fellow, it was clear that something was missing. Then along came SuLaM which has taken on the daunting task of educating adults who are already considered leaders in the broad field of Jewish education.

What makes SuLaM a model for successful adult education?

First, SuLaM realizes that adult learners, particularly those who are educators, are not unlike the children that we teach. Fear of failure, avoidance of embarrassment, a desire not to appear too ignorant and difficulty with short term memory—all of these (with the exception of the last!) are part of a middle school student's worst nightmare and even more so for an adult. SuLaM's instructors respected those personal and emotional elements, as does my current Hebrew teacher who effusively praised us when we completed reading and translating a story from the Mishnah! Even adults need stars on the tops of their papers.

Second, as in any group of students, there are some who come to class with a wealth of prior information, an affinity for a particular type of subject matter, or a base of knowledge in related areas, while others enter the group with no experience at all. As with our own students, adults are hesitant to ask a question that will betray their lack of background, fearing that asking an uninformed question or making a seemingly unrelated comment will stigmatize the speaker. However, by the second or third day of SuLaM, the members of our cohort were comfortable enough with one another to discover that we shared a common, secret fear: "I'll be the dumbest one in the class." By learning in a non-judgmental environment, we realized that there were no foolish questions or comments.

Next, the SuLaM program understands that each participant brings years of experiences, pre-conceived notions, prejudices, values, time-tested ways of learning and nuances of knowledge to this program. SuLaM uses these valuable characteristics, largely by creating a community of learners—a place where no one person, including the instructor, has all the answers and where every opinion is given thoughtful, balanced consideration. In a short period of time, through SuLaM's quiet nurturing, our cohort has become an interdependent family that celebrates our successes and empathizes with the vagaries of our academic lives.

Finally, SuLaM realizes that as education-

al leaders and as individuals, adult participants have institutional demands and goals to achieve as well as personal ones. The Individual Action Plans, as well as the monthly mentoring beyond the classroom, not only make each SuLaM-ite's aspirations achievable and relevant, but also follow the best practices

*shanah haba'ah birushalayim!* to end our seder, I not only could read Hebrew and understand the grammatical context, but the words took on new meaning. Now the "firsts" of 5770 will become "next times"—in Israel, where I hope to be able to speak some Hebrew with Israelis in a meaningful way; when I excitedly look

“By learning in a non-judgmental environment, we realized that there were no foolish questions or comments.”

of successful professional development. Adult learners, just like the students in our schools, need validation, redirection, knowledgeable guidance and praise.

So this past Pesach, when our gastronomically satisfied family shouted out *La-*

forward to the mental gymnastics required to prepare my next Dvar Torah for our faculty or our SuLaM Cohort; when I help to create more integrative curricula for our school; and most of all, when I struggle to apply new meaning in my Jewish identity.

## Open Doors with DeLeT

The DeLeT programs at **Brandeis University** (Greater Boston) and **Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion** (Los Angeles/San Francisco) congratulate our 2010 graduates:

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# How a School and its Board Create “A” Human Beings

by **HOWARD FARBER**

WHILE looking through some boxes of old stuff in my closet a few weeks ago, I came across the 3x5 flashcards that I brought up to the bima when I delivered my Bar Mitzvah speech. While the ink on the cards had faded somewhat, the words were still legible, so I took a moment and sat down to read what I had said to the congregation at my first attempt at public speaking.

Once I began reading the speech, the memory of what I had said some 40 years ago came back to me. I spoke about the three steps necessary to build a house, first the foundation, next the walls and finally the roof. As I read my speech, I had a very strange feeling that the words I spoke back then seemed to guide me throughout my entire life. I realized that everything that I have ever been involved in has needed a strong foundation in order to be successful.

From the very beginning my parents provided me with a strong foundation, a home based upon Jewish values. I thought about how their decision to send us to Hebrew school and Camp Ramah was truly the foundation of our Jewish learning and values. I realized that this solid foundation of values helped guide me during the different stages of my life. Throughout my school years they helped to keep me grounded and focused. I thought back to my university days, when I became president of my fraternity, and realized that I had the responsibility to lead based upon the values and teachings of its founders. And when I joined the family business, the core values established by my grandfather, and passed down to my father and uncle, were the foundation that we as the third generation now used to follow in their footsteps.

This is also the reason why, that when it came time to contemplate building a Jewish high school, the first thing we did, two years prior to opening our doors, was to hire our head of school, Dr. Bruce Powell. The main reason for doing so was because we needed to establish a foundation. If we were to be successful, our new institution had to have a set of core values which were based upon Jewish values that everyone could follow. It was our intention that not only our head of school, the faculty, staff, and students would follow them, but our board of trustees would also use them while acting as ambassadors for the school.

Today, at New Community Jewish High School, or “New Jew” as it is lovingly referred to, we are successful because everyone has a solid foundation of core values which are constantly used to guide our decision making process. New Jew’s Expected School-wide Learning Results or ESLRs (pronounced S-lers) are a set of guide-

lines that are designed to, as Dr. Powell says, “create ‘A’ human beings.” The six ESLRs we use to guide us are as follows:

1. Students engage in thoughtful acts of Tikkun Olam (world repair), and act with integrity, honesty, and wisdom.
2. Students understand that learning is a life-long enterprise, and recognize the vital interaction of knowledge and Jewish values.
3. Students appreciate their obligation to participate in and strengthen all facets of community life, and to respect the religious practices and ideals of others.
4. The school engenders in its students a sense of hope, joy, self-confidence, personal meaning, and passion for life based upon their understanding of Jewish tradition.
5. Students achieve critical, synthetic, and evaluative thinking skills and strive for wisdom in their judgments and choices in life.
6. Students strive to search for the deeper meaning in life and determine that which is truly important.



*Howard Farber is the founding board president and a current board member of New Community Jewish High School in West Hills, CA. He can be reached at [Howard@alpertandalpert.com](mailto:Howard@alpertandalpert.com).*

Dr. Powell reminds the faculty, staff, students and members of the Board of Trustees of our ESLRs, in order to keep

Practice



הדרישות • תורת

everyone focused on the type of value-based education which we desire for our children.

The ESLRs are used by the faculty in the classrooms when teaching students, regardless of the subject matter. The teachers also use them outside the classrooms with their students and with each other, thus creating a campus-wide system of mutual respect.

The administrative staff uses the ESLRs when communicating to students, and parents alike. Everyone who comes into the administrative office finds it to be a very hospitable place and the entire staff polite and accommodating.

The students use the ESLRs in their search for, as Dr. Powell says, “understanding a big thing from a little thing.” Recently when a group from an outside accreditation committee came to the school, they did not truly buy into the whole ESLR thing. When they actually engaged students in conversation, chosen at random, they found out that our students not only “walk the walk, they talk the talk.” It was

clearly evident to them that our children both truly respected and embraced the ESLRs.”

Finally, the Board of Trustees uses the ESLRs not only when policy issues need to be decided, but

turned away due to need” policy is also backed by the Board when a child needs financial assistance to go to Israel on one of the school’s two programs. The Board follows ESLR number 1, and acts with integrity and honesty when other financial decisions are made. For example,

**“If we were to be successful, our new institution had to have a set of core values which were based upon Jewish values that everyone could follow. It was our intention that not only our head of school, the faculty, staff, and students would follow them, but our board of trustees would also use them while acting as ambassadors for the school.**

throughout our board meetings when crucial decisions affecting the school or an individual are required. In the past, they have been used when additional tuition assistance funds were needed to make “New Jew” available to every Jewish student wanting a Jewish values base education, and an affirmative vote of the Board was required. This “no child is

when deciding faculty salaries and benefits, we budget for our Head of School to be able to fairly compensate and provide everyone with benefits without compromising the academic excellence our parents and students require. The ESLRs are even used by each sub-committee of the board when they are developing

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 65]

## JCAT Cohort Chosen!

**R**AVSAK welcomes the first cohort selected for JCAT: Jewish Court of All Time, our prestigious, interactive, online program in Jewish history for middle school students.

Mazel tov to the participating schools!

- Abraham Joshua Heschel Day School (Northridge, CA)
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- David Posnack Hebrew Day School (Plantation, FL)
- El Paso Jewish Academy (El Paso, TX)

- N.E. Miles Jewish Day School (Birmingham, AL)
- Paul Penna Downtown Jewish Day School (Toronto, ON)
- Rockwern Academy (Cincinnati, OH)
- Seattle Jewish Community School (Seattle, WA)

Teachers from these schools will take part in a training seminar for the program on June 6th-7th in Ann Arbor, MI. Profes-



sors from the University of Michigan and University of Cincinnati will guide the teachers through curricular development, technology use, and professional development in JCAT. The program and training are fully funded thanks to a three-year Signature Grant from the Covenant Foundation.

If you would like more information about the program or want to know how your school can participate, contact Dr. Elliott Rabin at [erabin@ravsak.org](mailto:erabin@ravsak.org).

# Vision in Development

by **RAY LEVI**

JEWISH community day schools are relatively new entrants onto the educational scene. Our unique mission to teach and support a range of approaches to the practice of Judaism provide an opportunity to define our niche. But, as Seymour Fox z"l frequently reminded me, mission is not sufficient. "What is your vision of the ideal graduates of your school?" he would ask. At the Heilicher Minneapolis Jewish Day School, we wrestled with this question in the traditional way when our Board of Trustees reviewed our mission statement, electing to add a vision statement describing our students, and interestingly, the characteristics of a teaching faculty that facilitates children's achievement.



*Dr. Ray Levi is Head of School at the Amos and Celia Heilicher Minneapolis Jewish Day School. He can be reached at [rlevi@HeilicherJDS.org](mailto:rlevi@HeilicherJDS.org).*

But it was a request from our Development Committee that has inspired our most recent dialogue. The Committee was building a Case Statement for our Annual Fund campaign and sought a definition of what we do best—and our aspirations—in order to build donor confidence in HMJDS and understanding of how gifts would be directed.

Initially, we explored Jim Collins's (*Good to Great*) "hedgehog concept." What is it we do best? Our Educational Leadership and Administrative Teams as well as our Board's Executive Committee considered this question. Our discussions were informed by the results of our Peer Yardstick Parent Survey, which provided information about what we are doing well and what parents believe should be of importance. Ultimately, we chose three foci: Judaism, Academics, and Community. While the attention to Judaism might distinguish us from many schools, these areas would not be particularly distinctive unless a well stated vision of our graduates could be crafted.

Relentlessly pushed by our Development Committee to offer a concise statement, we engaged our Educational Leadership and Administrative Teams, our full Board, and Team Leaders and Department Chairs. Though the process involved quite a number of people, our use of such structured protocols as Chalk Walks and Consultancies allowed us to use time efficiently, with editing work overseen by our Development Committee Chair, Board President, and me.

Our Case Statement begins with this vision:

- *Judaism:* Offer the textual knowledge base, ritual experience and Hebrew fluency necessary to empower HMJDS graduates to be ambassadors in shaping a meaningful and engaging future for our local Jewish community, world Jewry, and the State of Israel.

- *Academics:* Provide a learning experience that develops the necessary analytical, research and communication skills that allow HMJDS students to become leaders and creative problem solvers into the 21st century.
- *Community:* Build a strong, inclusive and accessible school commu-

nity that models values of mutual support so that HMJDS graduates are champions of community diversity and have the commitment and tools to care for others.

Our Annual Fund ambassadors have built on this vision, using the Case Statement document to tell the HMJDS story. We have described accomplishments in each of the three identified areas. Ambassadors describe ways in which contributions will immediately impact our vision through listings of short-term plans. And as we think about endowment possibilities, descriptions of larger, long-term initiatives help potential donors see where we're headed, linking current projects to strategic planning for our future.

Beyond the value in our development planning, I hope you would agree, this vision statement has far greater application for our families, for those interested in HMJDS, and perhaps most importantly, for our educational staff as we refine and develop new programs. It has given clarity of focus to virtually all communications with our community. ❧



# How a School and its Board Create “A” Human Beings

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 63]

programs or working on fundraising opportunities.

A prime examples of how our Board follows ESLR number 3, building community, is our policy that encourages our head of school to go out into the community, to other schools, and provide pro-bono workshops on everything from Board governance, fundraising, and even helping to create mission and vision statements.

One of the most gratifying moments was

when our Board admitted a student to our school who was asked, for whatever reason, to leave another school. We did so because of our school motto of “building community, one mind at a time.” We did so because of ESLR number 1, engaging in thoughtful acts of Tikkun Olam. What better way could we begin repairing the world then to save a child, who had a terrible lapse in judgment. Today, this child is a graduate of New Jew and attends a major university, and as a Board, we are very proud to have been able to help along the way.

All of us associated with New Community Jewish High School are guided by our set of core values, or ESLRs. It is our belief that if we all strive to follow these guidelines, then together as a community, we will create not only an educational institution that will turn out “A” human beings, but we will have created a system of succession planning based upon Jewish values. Generation after generation of “New Jew” alumni will constantly engage themselves in thoughtful acts of Tikkun Olam, and on that day, our vision and mission will have been accomplished. *ז*

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## Bridging Vision, Curriculum, and Student Learning

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17]

tic performance assessments that require students to synthesize skills learned and knowledge attained.

Standards and benchmarks are, then, critical bridges between a school’s vision and its actual curriculum. Without standards, vision talk and curriculum planning are two separate enterprises. Standards help teachers align the lofty statements of educational vision with the daily work of what goes on in the Tanakh classroom. Standards and Benchmarks are *Visions of Jewish Education* meets *Understanding by Design*. It’s a powerful combination of educational theory and practice.

*Standards and Benchmarks Develop Collaborative Faculty Culture*

By developing a shared vision for the teaching and learning of Tanakh, and committing to working together to embody this vision in practice, teachers and Judaic studies leaders suddenly find themselves planning curriculum together in teams;

using protocols to tune and aid each other’s work; observing each other’s teaching; studying Tanakh together; and engaging in professional learning- all hallmarks of effective professional development. Through their work together, teachers develop common language about their shared vision and professional practice. Ongoing collaboration provides teachers with an opportunity to learn from one another while increasing individual teachers’ instructional skills. Faculties participating in the Standards and Benchmarks Project soon become “professional learning communities” which Michael Fullan has verified improves student learning.

### STANDARDS AND BENCHMARKS BEYOND TANAKH

While the Jewish Day School Standards and Benchmarks Project has thus far concentrated on the teaching of Tanakh, it has implications for the way we teach other Judaic and secular subjects in our

Jewish day schools. What would it mean to create standards for a rabbinics curriculum, or a Jewish history curriculum? How would we translate a school’s vision of Jewish education into instructional manifestations in the learning of Talmud and Midrash, or modern Israeli history and sociology? Or, thinking more holistically, how might a school’s Jewish vision infuse the learning outcomes we seek in social studies or language arts? Once you start thinking in the language of standards and benchmarks, previously fanciful statements such as these become within curricular reach.

Standards and benchmarks are not a panacea for education in our schools. But our experience with schools which have gone through the Project over the last few years does indicate that it can be an extraordinary way to enhance instruction and improve student learning in Tanakh. Ultimately, what it has taught us is that vision and curriculum can and must be bridged. *ז*

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**RAVSAK** strengthens and sustains the life, leadership and learning of Jewish community day schools, ensuring a vibrant Jewish future.

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# Bookcase

THIS column features books, articles and websites, recommended by our authors and people from the RAVSAK network, pertaining to the theme of the current issue of *HaYidion* for readers who want to investigate the topic in greater depth.

## Books / Studies

Block, Peter. *Community: The Structure of Belonging*.

Brown, Erica. *The Case for Jewish Peoplehood: Can We Be One?*

Darling-Hammond, Linda. *The Right to Learn*.

Emmons, Robert A. *Thanks: How the New Science of Gratitude Can Make You Happier*.

Fogarty, R. *How to Integrate the Curricula*.

Fox, Seymour with William Novak. *Vision at the Heart: Lessons from Camp Ramah on the Power of Ideas in Shaping Educational Institutions*.

Fox, Seymour, Scheffler, Israel, and Marom, Daniel, eds. *Visions of Jewish Education*.

Fullan, Michael. *Leading in a Culture of Change*.

Ibid. *The New Meaning of Educational Change*.

Holtz, Barry. *Textual Knowledge: Teaching the Bible in Theory and Practice*.

Kohl, Herbert. *Growing Minds: On Becoming a Teacher*.

Martin, Jane Roland. *Reclaiming a Conversation: The Ideal of the Educated Woman*.

Noddings, N. *Educating for Intelligence Belief or Unbelief*.

Pekarsky, Daniel. *Vision at Work: The Theory and Practice of Beit Rabban*.

Reeves, Douglas B. *The Leader's Guide to Standards*.

Rinaldi, Carlina. *In Dialogue with Reg-*

*gio Emilia: Listening, Researching and Learning*.

Rosenak, Michael. *Roads to the Palace*.

Wachs, Saul P. *Towards a Theory of Practice for Conducting Prayer Services That Are Meaningful*.

Wheatley, Margaret. *Leadership and the New Science*.

Wiggins, Grant, & McTighe, Jay. *Understanding by Design*.

## Articles / Periodicals

Buber, Martin. "The Education of Character," in *Between Man and Man*.

Chazan, Barry. "The Philosophy of Informal Jewish Education," retrieved from [http://www.infed.org/informaljewisheducation/informal\\_jewish\\_education.htm](http://www.infed.org/informaljewisheducation/informal_jewish_education.htm).

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Levisohn, Jon A. "Ideas and Ideals of Jewish Education: Initiating a Conversation on Visions of Jewish Education," *Journal of Jewish Education* 71.

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Peters, R.S. "Education and the Educated Man," in R.F. Dearden et al., eds., *Education and the Development of Reason*.

Reimer, Joseph B. and Bryfman, David. "Experiential Jewish Education," in *What We Now Know About Jewish Education: Perspectives on Research for Practice*, eds. R. L. Goodman, P. A. Flexner, and L. D. Bloomberg.

Reimer, Joseph B. and Kress, Jeffrey S. "Shabbatonim as Experiential Education in North American Day High Schools," in *Jewish Day Schools, Jewish Communities*, eds. Alex Pomson and Howard Deitcher.

Sales, Amy and Saxe, Leonard. "Limud by the Lake: Fulfilling the Educational Potential of Jewish Summer Camps," October 2002, Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University.

Wertheimer, Jack. "Jewish Education in the United States: Recent Trends and Issues," *American Jewish Yearbook, 1999*, ed. David Singer.

## Online Resources

American Jewish World Service: [Ajws.org](http://Ajws.org)

[Jewishjustice.org](http://Jewishjustice.org)

Jewish Women's Archive: [Jwa.org](http://Jwa.org)

[www.jtsa.edu/standardsbenchmarks.xml](http://www.jtsa.edu/standardsbenchmarks.xml)

[http://www.lookstein.org/integration/curriculum\\_intro.htm](http://www.lookstein.org/integration/curriculum_intro.htm)

[Mli.org.il/MandelCMS/English/ProgramsEn/Visions](http://Mli.org.il/MandelCMS/English/ProgramsEn/Visions)

[Nationalservice.gov](http://Nationalservice.gov)

[Servicelearning.org](http://Servicelearning.org)

Touchstones Discussion Project: <http://www.touchstones.org/>

[Werepair.org](http://Werepair.org)

# Otzar HaHochma

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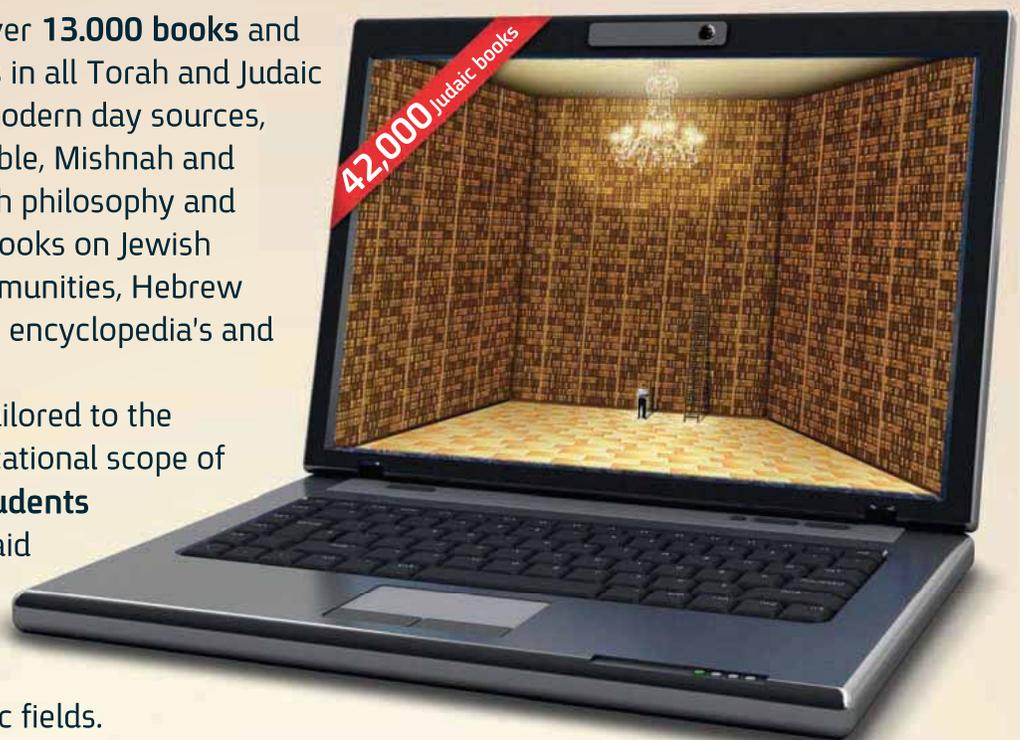
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