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HaYidion: The RAVSAK Journal

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From the Editor

■ by **BARBARA DAVIS**

PETER Drucker wrote, “Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things.”

Yeah, right, you might be thinking. Did he ever run a day school? We *all* entered the field seeking to do the right things, only to encounter the incredible challenges of doing things right. Nobody ever aspired to be just a manager.

Recently on *eJewish Philanthropy* I read, “Just a few years ago, being innovative was key to a new organization’s success. But...recently much of the innovation buzz ...has been replaced by our new friend, *organizational sustainability*.” Imagine my shock, as just five minutes earlier, I had finished an article in *Time* magazine that described the drastic fall of the once mighty BlackBerry, calling it a classic example “of the huge price tech firms pay for failing to innovate.”

So here you are, the head of a school or a member of its board—which way do you turn? Do you fail to innovate and risk decline, or do you scrap innovation in favor of sustainability? Do you deal with fundraising to keep your doors open, or do you deal with the educational programs which are the very reason for your existence? Do you purchase the latest hi-tech gadgetry to compete with the private school down the street, or do you employ your resources to send the seniors to Israel? Do you advertise the Jewish values on which your school is based, or do you feature the high math and science scores?

Do you turn away the child with special needs or do you expend your limited capital on personnel trained to meet those needs? What do you do when the other parents complain? When the child in question is the son of a wealthy donor? Or the daughter of a family on financial assistance? What do you do when a potential donor is waiting on line one, an irate parent is standing outside your door, and you have a child crying in your office? A) do you manage? B) do you lead? or C) do you quit?

Regrettably, option C is becoming increasingly common. The average tenure for

a head of Jewish day school is 3.5 years; at any given time, between 10 and 20% of headships are vacant. The leadership crisis in Jewish organizational and Jewish educational life—indeed, in the nonprofit world in general—is real, with no solutions in sight. There are many causes for this situation; a rabbinical colleague of mine blamed it on the *American Idol*-ization of society, in which everyone gets to sit back, watch, and critique endlessly and mercilessly, without thought to the feelings of the person involved or to the future.



Dr. Barbara Davis is the secretary of RAVSAK, executive editor of *HaYidion* and retired head of school at the Syracuse Hebrew Day School in Dewitt, NY. Barbara can be reached at bdavis74@twcyn.rr.com.

But it is a situation which must be confronted. This issue of *HaYidion* tackles this leadership crisis head-on, with diverse and hard-hitting articles that offer analysis, insight and pragmatic suggestions for attending to this crisis. RAVSAK itself is working on initiatives to address the issue. It is our hope that you will find ideas and inspiration in these pages that will enable you to tackle with renewed vigor both the challenge of doing things right and the joy of doing the right things. ■

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From the Desk of Arnee Winshall, RAVSAK Chair

RECENTLY I had the privilege of attending a celebration in honor of Dr. Barbara Davis, a member of the RAVSAK Board and the editor of this publication, in appreciation of her 25 years as head of the Syracuse Hebrew Day School. Given the topic of this issue of *HaYidion*, it seems most fitting to reflect on the portrait of leadership that emerged that night, both from those who spoke on Barbara's behalf and from Barbara's own reflections on headship.

Speaker after speaker referred to the qualities that distinguished Barbara's leadership—qualities you will recognize as epitomizing so many of our school leaders:

- possession of a strong character and a clear vision
- determination and flexibility
- passion and compassion
- integrity, humility and respect for others
- resiliency and an ability to react thoughtfully to a crisis at a moment's notice.

In fact, Barbara is but one of the gifted leaders who have emerged from within the RAVSAK network of schools. All of the RAVSAK board members were recruited because of the leadership they demonstrated on behalf of one of our RAVSAK schools. With the increasing awareness of how important nurturing Jewish day school leadership is to the success of our schools, we are equally fortunate that many of the founding visionaries of RAVSAK, school professionals who have themselves demonstrated these qualities of leadership, have stepped forward, eager to help mentor current and emerging leaders.

As RAVSAK moves forward to address this field priority, it is already positioned as a front-runner in cultivating school leadership. Our annual day school leadership conference, just held in Atlanta, has drawn record attendance each year for more than a decade. The high quality of speakers and sessions, the value to our schools in inspiration and ideas, the relationships formed among colleagues and the opportunities for professional development for lay leaders render the conference invaluable not only to RAVSAK schools but to the entire field of day school leadership.

Dr. Marc Kramer has guided RAVSAK for over a decade, with the help of an extraordinary staff and the foresight of visionary funding partners, mindful that all our activities and programs be designed with the goal of supporting the development of leadership with a Jewish lens. Project SuLaM nurtures the growth of school leaders by immersing them in the vibrancy and richness of Judaism's sacred traditions and

traditions. *HaYidion* offers insights on issues crucial to day school management and innovation. Student programming such as the Moot Beit Din and Project ROPE cultivate the skills and dispositions of leadership in Jewish study and



Arnee Winshall is chair of RAVSAK's Board of Directors and founding chair of JCDS, Boston's Jewish Community Day School. Arnee can be reached at arnee@ravsak.org.

social activism. Projects such as Representing the Jewish Past raise the field of Jewish education by developing resources and investing in teachers, our schools' most precious asset.

As I think back to the wonderful evening a few weeks ago in Syracuse, New York, the words of one of Dr. Davis's student alumni stay with me: *She created an environment at SHDS that fostered my education at a young age, but more than that, she taught me what it means to be a credit to my people. ...I feel the influence in the way I approach new situations, in my understanding of morals, and in my relationships with others.*

According to the Torah, the Jewish people have a special mission to be a ממלכת מוהרים וגוי קדוש—*כהנים וגוי קדוש*—a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6). It is the mission of Jewish day schools to educate generations of Jewish leaders toward that end; it is a mission our school leaders are fulfilling every day, and it is the mission of RAVSAK to support and nurture their ongoing success.

Wishing you all a zissen Pesach,

Arnee

Letters

In the article “Rethinking the School in Day School” (Winter 2011), Jonathan Woocher laments that day school ads tout the colleges where their graduates attend, underscoring these acceptances as proof of the school’s rigorous academic excellence. He points to this as evidence that day schools are not addressing their real purpose, which should be “sacred learning.”

Woocher, like many educational administrators and school board chairs, are confused between what is good marketing and what is good curriculum content. They are not one in the same. After years of marketing many day schools and other forms of Jewish education, I see this mix-up all the time. How you market a school, and what attracts people to come learn about it, are very different from the curriculum in the classroom. The purpose of marketing is to drive prospective parents and students to the school for a meeting. Once there, they can be informed in the manner the school sees appropriate.

From my experience, there are five primary marketing messages of Jewish day school education that resonate deeply with the marketplace:

- For high schools, the college acceptances and where the graduates go
- For lower schools, the high schools where students go
- Rigorous academic standards
- A values system based upon Jewish tradition
- Community and friendships

After these, schools vary as to how much emphasis to place upon Torah, Hebrew, Israel, community service, electives, travel experiences, sports and a host of other subjects.

It is essential that administrators and

New in this issue

We invited artists and art teachers in our schools to contribute work illustrating articles. Check out their contributions on pages 9, 12 and 29.

Is there an art teacher or artist in your school who would like to be published in *HaYidion*? Send them our way at hayidion@ravsak.org.

Also, take a moment to read the new

Olami column, a personal essay in the back of the magazine.

For next issue, we’ll be starting a new feature, “Good and Welfare,” with significant news from throughout the field. Please send us major news about your school that you want to share with our readership. We will select a few items each issue and share news from different schools.

board chairs are as educated about marketing, how it works and its purpose as they are about the actual curriculum. The future of this enterprise belongs to marketing as much as it does to substance. While the debate on day school curriculum content is ongoing and textured, it is time that the debate on day school marketing be opened up to much the same.

Gary Wexler, Los Angeles

Jonathan Woocher replies:

I am grateful to Gary Wexler for his typically direct and insightful reminder that curriculum and marketing are two different things, and that day schools must market themselves effectively if they are to have *any* impact on students, lest there be no (or many fewer) students to have an impact upon. I agree that marketing messages must be attuned to the values and expectations of the intended audiences or they will not be heard. And I have no reason to question Gary’s conclusion, as the “dean” of Jewish marketing, as to which messages are most likely to resonate with today’s parents.

My concern, however, is broader than just curriculum. I believe that we are at a crossroads in American education today. It seems evident to me that two very different visions for education are contesting in the public arena today—one which promotes standardization and a narrowing of

focus, with the aim of elevating academic achievement for all students as measured by mass-produced tests; and the other that emphasizes an individualized, constructivist and holistic approach to learning that measures achievement through a variety of different types of performance, many of which cannot be quantified. My personal conclusion is that the former is deeply misguided, inappropriate for the 21st century, and doomed to failure and has little to do with an authentic vision of Jewish learning.

My “rant” was a call for Jewish day schools to clearly choose sides in the current debate, and align themselves with what I would call today’s educational counterculture. I believe that this will better serve their students than attempting to compete in an academic marketplace that is too often using the wrong criteria to measure success.

I hope that day schools will also work to educate parents about their educational philosophies and focus them on what I would argue is the true measure of educational success: helping each child become a passionate lifelong learner who uses her or his learning, Jewish and general, to live a more purposeful, fulfilling and responsible life. ■

Take part in the conversation! HaYidion welcomes letters to the editor; send your thoughts to Hayidion@ravsak.org.

Leading Through Crises: A Midrash on Two Lives

■ by **LAURENCE SCHEINDLIN**

Two of history's greatest leaders, Abraham Lincoln and Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai, have much to teach us about the limits of policies and the surprising value of crises.

The man who saved the Union, set slavery on its path to destruction and who forged the United States into a permanent singular rather than a plural (“The United States” rather than “These”) famously and repeatedly proclaimed, “My policy is to have no policy.” On the surface, this hyperbolically noncommittal statement flies in the face of all good business wisdom, including

the counsel of organizations that do such fine work in advising independent schools. We have all been educated to understand the importance of strategic planning, objectives-based management and evaluation, and multiple layers of accountability that rely on explicit and commonly agreed upon plans and principles.

Does the contemporary wisdom not apply to times of crisis? Or is there something to be learned from the behavior of those who have successfully negotiated crises in the interest of something greater that we might apply to our lesser, everyday lives in school?

Just about every school head I know, including the most astute and most planful, talks of living from mini-crisis to mini-crisis. My cellphone rings while I am at a meeting off-campus. I see that it is my school's number and I naturally think, “OK, here's the crisis du jour.” But crises, little and great, are inevitable and probably should be considered part of our own strategic planning.

Perhaps we are too afraid of crises.

Heds of school confront the sometimes conflicting claims of enrollment, development and education, not to speak of the diversity of parental demands. They are challenged to weigh their convictions against their own legitimate need for employment and economic stability. Observers conclude that principals often underestimate their ability to stretch the limits of their own authority in relation to their boards or their ability to influence change upward.

Stable, “mission-appropriate” lay leadership not given to micromanagement often seems in short supply in Jewish day schools in particular. Boards' failure to support the head of school and to establish strategic

My cellphone rings while I am at a meeting off-campus. I see that it is my school's number and I naturally think, “OK, here's the crisis du jour.”

goals combined with the temptation to meddle in day-to-day management bedevil heads and weaken schools. Often the only models to which our Jewish day school lay leaders have been exposed are the dysfunctional, personality-driven non-models of local synagogues. But because lay school leaders tend to graduate with their children, even long-established secular schools engage in aggressive measures to identify and educate leadership.

Perhaps the perceived crisis in Jewish day

school lay leadership is as much an opportunity to think of how to use crisis. Over the years, I have been inspired by the dual examples of Lincoln and Yochanan ben Zakkai—leaders who endured crises and who each exemplified a type of leadership I call pragmatic idealism. Guided by an inner GPS locked onto a vastly important goal, each of them acted in surprising ways that appeared to lack policy if not principle, and that provoke debate even today.

Yochanan's story is famous and thrilling. The traditions tell us that, with the Romans tightening their military grasp on Jerusalem in a military campaign



Rabbi Laurence Scheindlin, immediate past president of the Schechter Day School Network, will retire this year as headmaster of Sinai Akiba Academy to devote his time to consulting on school leadership and to writing on school administration, emotion and cognition in education, and the teaching of prayer. He can be reached at lasch@sinaiakiba.org.

that would end in the destruction of the Temple, the slaughter of many Jews and the resettlement of many others, Yochanan escaped the city, perhaps hidden in a coffin, made his way to the Roman general Vespasian, accurately predicted his ascension to emperor, and asked to be allowed to go to the town of Yavneh, where he would establish an academy and a synagogue and perform the commandments. Vespasian, perhaps charmed by the prophesy, or, more likely, pursuing a typically pragmatic Roman colonial policy, agreed.



Illustration by Jacquelyn West, J.C.D.S.,
Boston's Jewish Community Day School

With the Temple destroyed, Jewish leadership in disarray and the Sanhedrin out of commission, Jewish religious life should have foundered. Instead, Yochanan made crucial and previously unthinkable ritual changes that enabled Jewish religious life to flourish without the Temple. Continuing the chain of instruction, he also reinforced Judaism's ethical component and established a new rabbinical authority.

When Yochanan left Jerusalem, right-wingers and even many fellow Pharisees saw him as a collaborator and appeaser. The Jews were factionalized. Some wanted to fight to the finish, even attacking

For a school head under the spell of an overarching goal, nearly every one of the hundreds of daily decisions that he or she makes each week presents an opportunity to bring the school closer to the goal.

other Jews. Others, outside of Jerusalem, were relatively untouched by the turmoil of the years leading to the Temple's destruction. Yochanan would not have been alone, but many undoubtedly saw him as a traitor.

Like Lincoln, Yochanan's policies must have appeared unpredictable. What he did

have was a unified vision: to sustain Jewish settlement and religious life in Israel. His varied and colorful decisions all emerged from a vision that, to quote Jacob Neusner, had "a very practical consequence...: when Jerusalem lay in ruins, he and his disciples found the faith to continue their study" and, with that faith, he developed contro-

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versial but functional mechanisms to sustain Jewish life.

Lincoln in his day was castigated by liberals for his slowness in publishing a proclamation of emancipation. Many believed—and some to this day argue—that Lincoln was not originally committed to the destruction of slavery. He brought that perception on himself by his careful attention to the temper of the country. In retrospect, historians can see that he had two visions which he placed in chronological priority: first to save the Union,

Lincoln steered the boat from “point to point—setting the course of the boat no farther” than he could see—but moving inexorably toward his destination.

and then to see slavery dealt a death blow. If saving the Union meant—and it hurts to hear this—doing nothing for the time to mitigate the slavery problem, then so it would be, because he needed to stretch the country without breaking it. If he had gone too quickly, slavery might never have come to an end, and the experiment of American democracy would have been broken apart. When we read his early words today, there is no question of his revulsion at slavery. And later he would declare that *both* the North and South would “pay fairly for our complicity” in the wrong of slavery, and “every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword,” and this, he said, would be divine justice. When he sensed the needs and temper of the country were right, finally, after seeming procrastination that brought him virulent criticism from supporters and abolitionists, he signed the Emancipation Proclamation.

To some it seemed that he really had “no policy.” But Lincoln explained “no policy” by reference to his own youthful employment piloting flatboats by oar and pole down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, steering the boat from “point to point—setting the course of the boat no farther” than he could see—but moving inexorably toward his destination. His

political destinations were too important for specific political solutions, which were only incidental to his real goal, which rested, as Allen Guelzo put it, on “a coherent intellectual scheme of things which transcended mere policies.”

We cannot compare the agendas in our individual schools to the vastly important goals and decisions Lincoln and Ben Zakkai faced. But over the years I have found inspiration in thinking about the pragmatic idealism that guided these two leaders who are essential touchstones for American Jews. Great moralizers whose

ideas transcended the realities of the moment, each of them nevertheless was so attentive to those realities that they could confidently use them as stepping stones to a new reality that would embody the transcendent.

The pragmatic idealism Lincoln and Ben Zakkai demonstrated has inspired and taught me some lessons that helped me through the crises of school leadership.

Define what motivates you

All of us are Jewish educators because of a set of beliefs. Each of us needs to define what it is specifically that motivates us, be it a Jewish ideal, an instructional philosophy or a social goal. If you don't feel an idea passionately then either you've got the wrong goal or you need to immerse yourself in understanding it until that idea grabs you, takes hold of you, inhabits you. Only then do you have a destination.

Be conscious of what your population can tolerate

Stretch them as far as they can go without the relationship snapping. That requires much communication, teaching and shaping of opinion. Openness and honesty are the foundation of credibility,

yet communicating the largest goal too soon may be more than some are ready for. What steps will prepare you and your population for the reality of your larger goal?

Steer from point to point toward your real destination

Policies carefully thought out and crafted in cooperation with lay leadership and staff are essential, but they can also be limiting. Real leaders always are facing crises. But it is not only true, as Rahm Emanuel said, that every crisis presents a possibility (he was thinking strictly on the tactical and political planes). Indeed, for a school head operating under the spell of an overarching goal, nearly every one of the hundreds of daily decisions that he or she makes each week presents an opportunity to bring the school closer to the goal.

Leaders sometimes create crises

In fact, passionately feeling an overarching goal creates its own crises: things simply cannot remain as they are. Leaders are often the ones who see an issue not as a problem, not as a flaw, but as a crisis: this needs to be changed because it represents the wrong value, the wrong ideal. This self-created crisis is my opportunity to create a new reality.

Theoretical as these ideas may sound, they are the principles that have guided me through my own crises as head of school. One of the most dramatic and painful of my long career happened just three years ago. I adopt it as a case study not because it represents a perfect recipe for success—far from it—but to explore the significance of the self-created (though unintended) crisis.

Our commitment to activities-based, conceptual and cooperative learning led us to completely overhaul our middle school math program and to adopt an approach to teaching that, we realized too late, seemed to many of our parents to have come from Mars. Most of our faculty was sold on the idea and they were fully trained and prepared through the previous year and summer.

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The September math evening to introduce the parents to our exciting new ideas left us surprised and bruised. Part of the problem was our school's previous success: What if our already stellar test scores dropped? Where are the dozens of practice problems? Why are the students "teaching themselves"?

We dialogued, explained and interpreted, but the pressure became more intense. The only thing worse than the sleepless nights and worried weekends were the five days of school in between. By November I was seriously thinking of backing off and reverting to our old curriculum at the end of the first semester. We had badly misjudged our population. The letters we had sent in the spring and summer had failed to prepare our parents adequately.

But if we gave in, it would be impossible ever to try again. This episode would be embedded in the school's institutional memory.

We called and spoke with every parent. We met with the faculty. Already in the middle of the river, could we figure out how to move from point to point? We searched for changes that would not undermine the new approach.

By mid-year we had not extinguished the fire, but it was no longer spreading. We added practice exercises for homework and announced new assessment methods. We were moving from point to point, but now all eyes were on the following school year. A piquant discussion at a board meeting made me realize how quickly even a strategic board, largely focused on the future and fundraising, could itself revert.

I set up an ad-hoc task force of teachers, parents and administrators and I decided that for year two we would not extend the new curriculum (which initially had been instituted for only sixth and seventh grades) to eighth grade as planned. Some on the staff were unhappy with this decision. The task force asked hard questions as it met in year two. The test scores from last year came in: our already high standardized test scores had now blown



You need to immerse yourself in understanding an idea until it grabs you, takes hold of you, inhabits you. Only then do you have a destination.

through the roof. But, the task force wanted to know, how much progress had students made from 5th to 6th grade and from 6th to 7th in previous years? Did this year's delta really represent anything new? We spent hours analyzing scores. They did.

With the tone shifting still further toward acceptance, I nevertheless, for a variety of tactical reasons, decided for year three to include 8th grade in the new approach but not our lone (and new) 7th grade algebra class. When that one course shifts next year (year four of implementation), it will have taken a full five years to bring about this change.

We will never know what might have happened had we handled the rollout differently. Suppose we had started by creating the task force and developed our curricular plans as part of our explicit strategic

plans? Suppose we had conducted math night in the spring before year one? Suppose we had flooded our parents with information about what we would do and why in the year prior? Suppose we had started only with 6th grade?

Perhaps we would have won over our population in advance. Perhaps, given the traditional investment our parents had in math, we would have exposed our goal too openly and jeopardized the possibility of ever implementing it.

I'll never know. But I do know that many times in those difficult months Lincoln and Yohanan ben Zakkai lived in my mind. And I look back with gratitude and astonishment at the immensity of intellect and spirit that enabled these two men to turn far more complex, profound and dangerous crises toward transcendent purposes. ■

Tell us something about yourself.

I'm a husband, father and lawyer (slowly moving toward retirement in the latter role). I was born in Toronto and have lived here nearly my entire life. I was raised in a family which was deeply engaged with the local Jewish community and Israel. My father, a stalwart of the Labour Zionist Movement in Canada, first visited Israel in 1952. Two years later, when I was not quite eight years old, my parents took my then thirteen year-old brother and me to Israel. While my recollections of that trip are those of a child, it made a deep and lasting impression.

My parents' home was non-religious, but fully identified with all things Jewish. My brother and I attended a Jewish day school through grade 8. Though the school was nominally Orthodox, it was "the only game in town" at the time, and the only vehicle through which our parents could ensure that we receive a serious Jewish education.

My involvement in organized Jewish communal life began in the mid-1980s when, at my father's suggestion, I joined the board of Bialik Hebrew Day School, a RAVSAK school which is affiliated with Labour Zionist Movement. After a few years, I found myself on the executive committee and then was made president. At about the same time, I joined Toronto's Board of Jewish Education, where I served a term as chair, followed by a stint as president of UJA Federation of Greater Toronto. Not long after that, I returned to the Bialik Board, of which I am still a member.

Since then, almost all of my community roles have been in the area of education, broadly defined. I joined the board of Paul Penna Downtown Jewish Day School (also a RAVSAK member) about eight years ago at a time when it was going through some difficult transitions. For a number of years, I have been an associate member of the Board of Governors of the Jewish Agency



for Israel where I served on the former Education Committee and now serve on the Israel Engagement Committee. Several years ago, I joined the Board of the Canadian Friends of the Shalom Hartman Institute and, in that role, serve on the Consolidated Board of the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem. My wife, Elaine, and I have studied at SHI's Lay Leadership summer program on five occasions and we are also graduates of the first Toronto class of the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School.

I see my membership on the RAVSAK Board as a logical extension of my focus on Jewish education as the primary element of my communal involvement.

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

Notwithstanding the fact that I remain essentially non-religious, the fact that I am Jewish is central to my identity, to my understanding of who I am. Being Jewish means that one is heir to a vast repository of tradition, learning and wisdom. Jewish education is the process of assimilating and understanding that tradition, learning and wisdom and using it to inform the course of your life. Serious Jewish education cannot be accomplished as an "add-on" at the end of the school day or on weekends. Serious Jewish education requires time and intensity which can only be achieved in a day school setting.

In some respects, I suppose, my attitude is "tribal." In a world which is simulta-

neously fragmented and relentlessly connected, identification with one's tribe provides a base and a structure for defining one's place in that complex world. We need to ensure that our children have that base and structure, both for their own well-being and for the well-being of the tribe.

What strengths do you bring to the board?

I suppose that the main strength which I bring to the board is experience, about twenty-five years of experience in volunteer leadership roles in Jewish education. Over that time, and in a number of different institutional settings, I hope I have gained some insight into what works and what doesn't work in the functioning of a board of laypeople charged with oversight and support of a professional organization. Achieving a balance between meaningful participation and governance by the board and latitude for the professional staff to do the work for which the board engaged them can be a delicate task. I have seen it done well and not so well. The RAVSAK board adds a further wrinkle in that some of its members are professionals in the field in which RAVSAK operates.

Do you have a favorite Jewish teaching?

I have always been attracted to the implications of the passage from the Babylonian Talmud (Eruvin 13b): אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים הן "These and these are the words of the living G-d." To me, this teaching demonstrates that debate is at the centre of Jewish practice and belief. Whatever view one takes of "Torah from Sinai," that which has been transmitted comes through the words of inescapably fallible human beings (until quite recently, all of them men). That means that unquestioning reliance on authority is not a route that is open to us. We are each charged to enter the debate both with oneself and with one's fellows. We must think together for ourselves. ■

It Doesn't Have To Be "Lonely At the Top": Developing High Functioning Leadership Teams

■ by **MARC BAKER**

The vastly expanding demands put upon school leaders provides schools with an opportunity to create their own form of distributed leadership. Baker explains what leadership teams are, why they offer many benefits, and how a team can be most effective.

As we think about the crisis of leadership in schools and what it will take to develop and sustain the leaders and the quality of leadership that our schools need, we must expand our thinking from boards and heads to our school's senior leadership teams. The implementation of a school's mission, vision and values starts from its leaders, including their abilities to execute a school's strategy, operations and educational program, as well as the culture that they create through who they are and how they lead.

Since I began as head of school five years ago, the development of my leadership team has been a top priority for me and, with each year of experience, I come to see the importance as well as the challenge and complexity of this work more clearly. The ideas here have been influenced by and developed in conversation with my executive coach and with members of my leadership team, who are valued colleagues, thinking partners and mentors for me. I have gleaned many insights from books and thinkers about leadership, management and team building, including Ron Heifetz, Peter Senge, Michael Fullen, Patrick Lencioni, Marcus Buckingham, Steven Covey, John D'Auria and others.

In the face of a changing world and in-

creasingly complex challenges, the most important thing schools and heads can do is invest in human capital, building

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the capacities of our teachers and leaders. For our schools to become true learning organizations, schools must value learning and growth throughout our institutions at every level, become obsessed with professional development, and distribute leadership throughout the school. This begins with the board's support and evaluation of the head, and continues with the head's creation and development of a leadership team.

What Is a Leadership Team?

I define a leadership team as *the group of leaders, managers, administrators—educational and non-educational—who are collectively responsible for the implementation of a school's mission, vision and*

strategy, and the management of all day-to-day operations of the school. This team will certainly include administrators who report directly to the head but may also include others who do not, or who have dotted line reports to the head. One of the most if not the most important job of the head is to hire and develop the leaders around him, both as individuals and as a well functioning, collaborative, interdependent team.



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Below are seven reasons why leadership teams are essential and seven ways that heads can build effective teams.

Why Is a Leadership Team Essential?

Head's Survival and Effectiveness

A head is only as strong as the leaders who surround him. From a practical perspective, distributed leadership and delegation are necessary for heads to manage the various demands on their time. The more involved heads are with the day-to-day operations, the less time



they have for the various other roles and responsibilities that they need to play for the school to thrive. My coach and I often talk about the goal of our organization becoming “operationally leaderless” so I can focus on work that “only I can do.” Given the increasing demands on heads of school, heads should be working to reduce the number of people who report directly to them.

More Minds Are Better Than One

If harnessed properly, the collective wisdom and thinking of a team are greater than any one person's. As Ron Heifetz articulates in *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, our organizations will only be able to solve our most significant problems and adapt to our changing world when

The collective wisdom of a team is greater than any one person's. No matter how right I think I might be, I will make wiser decisions if I have a team of trusted colleagues thinking together with me.

we bring multiple, competing perspectives to the table and when we hold the space for new vision, ideas and truths to emerge out of these various perspectives. No matter how right I think I might be in a given situation, I will make wiser decisions if I have a team of trusted colleagues thinking together with me.

Breaking Down Silos

So many of our schools, like other orga-

nizations, are challenged by the silos that exist, most often between the educational and non-educational sides of our school (finance and operations, admissions, marketing development), but also within the educational program itself (between different grades or departments, formal and informal education, special and “regular” educators, to name a few). Integration and collaboration must start from the top. Silos are not neutral; when we are

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not supporting each other's work we are often getting in each other's way. When our teams function interdependently individual leaders can see the whole school, which informs the quality of their leadership, including their decision making and their stakeholder management. When leaders understand each other's goals, strategies, rhythms, challenges, and priorities, they can have each other's backs, supporting and strengthening all

Supervision, coaching, mentoring, team building, professional development, a growth mindset, and putting learning at the center—these processes should pervade the institution from the boardroom through the classroom.

of the pillars of their institution through how they work, rather than through doing more work.

Individual Leadership Development

As Marcus Buckingham teaches us in *First Break All The Rules*, people don't leave organizations, they leave their direct supervisors or managers. If we are going to recruit, retain and develop strong people at every level of our organization, we need great leadership and management throughout. Being part of a strong team also strengthens an individual's leadership. Collaborative decision making, wrestling with dilemmas of practice, collective strategic visioning and thinking—all learned behaviors of a high functioning team—develop the skills and capacities of the leaders on that team. A team culture in which colleagues are able and willing to give each other timely and honest feedback about their work contributes to team members' learning and growth.

Team Building Trickles Down

Most of the senior leaders in a school also lead others and have (or should have) teams that they lead as well. The head can model the kind of leadership that all school leaders should strive for.

Supervision, coaching, mentoring, team building, professional development, a growth mindset, and putting learning at the center—these values and processes should pervade the institution from the boardroom through the classroom.

Leadership Pipeline Development and Succession Planning

One of the most significant challenges to schools' success and sustainability is

the frequency of leadership transition. A strong team and a culture of leadership development lead to leadership continuity for several reasons. Leaders who feel they are growing and thriving are more likely to stay in their schools and their roles. When leaders do move on (and they will, hopefully to positions of senior leadership in other schools, which heads should support and of which they should be proud), others will be prepared to step into their roles. A strong system with a strong culture is larger than any one person in the system. I have found that the stronger my team gets, the more we are able to see the loss of a senior leader as an opportunity, despite how hard and sad it is to lose a beloved colleague and valued administrator.

Leaders Need Each Other

No school leader has it all. We all have strengths and weaknesses. A strong team can maximize individuals' potential by capitalizing on their strengths and augmenting their weaknesses. On a team not everyone has to be good at everything. Great teams recognize and celebrate the different styles and strengths of their members because each member knows she is part of a collective, whose total strengths and capacities are greater than any one leader's.

How Can Heads Build Effective Leadership Teams?

The Right Players

Building an effective team begins with, in the words of Jim Collins, "getting the right people on the bus" and (although this is less often quoted) "getting the wrong people off the bus." While heads need patience and a growth mindset in order to develop the people on our teams to their full potential, they should be voracious about assessing what their schools need from their leaders and whether or not the people in leadership roles are the right people at the right time for the school. Hiring affects not only the quality of each leader's work, but also the professional and personal experiences of the leaders with whom a leader collaborates and of the people a leader leads.

Making Team Explicit

Just because people meet together does not make them a team. Heads need to make the idea of a leadership team explicit, to discuss with the team's members what it is and why it is important. As part of this, teams need to develop shared norms and expectations of attitudes and behaviors for in and out of team meetings. Heads should expect everyone on the team to practice systems thinking and to get "on the balcony" of the whole school. I tell the leaders on my team that they each have at least three roles: leadership and oversight of their particular area, learning to lead, and taking shared responsibility for the collective vision, strategy and performance of the whole school and the whole team.

Mission, Vision, Values

Everyone in a strong school should have a shared understanding of the school's mission, vision and values, and this is particularly important for a strong leadership team. Mission and vision, along with priorities, goals and measures of success are the parallel to a football team's touchdown; they are the shared outcomes toward which team members strive, together. Shared work starts with

a shared sense of what a team hopes to accomplish, and the ways each leader will help to accomplish it.

Putting Learning at The Center

As my coach likes to say, in a learning organization, “the learning *is* the work.” Heads need to create cultures in their schools where learning from failures and successes is as important as the failures and successes themselves. As the leading learners in their schools, heads need to model and expect risk taking, reward failures that lead to learning, and devote time to learning and reflection in one-on-one meetings and in leadership team meetings. Even during the hiring process it should be clear to candidates that reflective practice and the willingness to be vulnerable are nonnegotiable. Heads need to establish openness and trust on their teams in order to create the space for people to be honest with themselves and each other.

Working to Clarify Roles

On great teams, different members of the team serve as experts, coaches, mentors for other members of the team, including the head. On my team, for example, one person is a go-to person for performance management issues, and others for their particular strengths, such as external relationships management, institutional memory, collaborative inquiry, knowledge of child development, and conflict resolution. Recognizing different talents lets people shine and acknowledges that they don’t all share the same strengths or weaknesses. This is, in fact, why they need a team. Who is on the bus is important, but the ride is more comfortable and more productive when where people are sitting also makes sense to everyone.

Engaging, Growth-Oriented Team Meetings

Heads need to develop their own coaching and facilitation skills in order to make leadership team meetings sites for learning and growth. Modalities such as strategic thinking and visioning, dilemmas of practice, after-action reviews, and personal and professional sharing and reflection help develop critical habits of mind and

heart in the school’s leaders. Meetings can help team members get inside each other’s worlds, building empathy and strengthening interdependencies. Heads can minimize reporting and tactical work that are not relevant to everyone and that do not help bring the team members out of their particular perspectives. Finding the authentically shared work of a school’s leadership team can be challenging, so heads should talk with their teams about this and seek feedback about the quality of their meetings.

Genuinely Empowering the Team

Hard as it can be, heads must strive to truly empower the leaders around them. I have learned that one of my blind spots

Teams need to develop shared norms and expectations. Heads should expect everyone on the team to get “on the balcony” of the whole school.

can be a lack of awareness of my own power and the way power dynamics can hinder people from stepping fully into the leadership roles I hope they will play. Heads need to encourage, even beg their teams to disagree with and challenge them—to reward and praise dissent, and show their teams that they value their opinions even when, especially when, they disagree with the head. This means allowing their teams to make decisions

that they disagree with, which is where the rubber hits the road of delegation and empowerment. Decision making is where heads can illustrate their trust in the collective wisdom of the team. Taking back authority after a deliberative process can exact a long-term price, while genuinely empowering a team for even one decision can be a significant investment in team’s leadership effectiveness.

Conclusion

With the challenges facing schools and heads in our rapidly changing world, it is more important than ever that heads do not go it alone. My own experience has taught me that when a head is surrounded by great people who not only strive for

excellence themselves, but who also are invested in working collaboratively and productively with other members of their leadership team, the head can maximize his own potential and the potential of the people around him. Actualizing the full potential of leaders throughout our schools will be a key to our school’s surviving and thriving into the future. And, it makes the challenging work of school leadership rewarding and fun. ■



RAVSAK Welcomes Our Newest Members

- Adelson Educational Campus, Las Vegas, Nevada
- Chabad Academy, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina
- Emanuel School, Randwick, Australia
- Peoria Hebrew Day School, Peoria, Illinois
- United Talmud Torahs/Herzila High School, Montreal, Canada
- Yeshiva High School (in formation), Los Angeles, California
- Hillel Academy of Broome County, Vestal, New York

Questions about membership? Please contact Robin Feldman, Director of Membership and Events at rfeldman@ravsak.org.

Boredom: The Real Crisis in Leadership

■ by **BRUCE POWELL**

Powell urges school heads to avoid making the school sound like the prep school down the block. Instead, he argues, draw inspiration from Jewish tradition and history to create a compelling story about the school.

Most heads of school are not trained to be heads. Most of us just fall into it. We are trained to be educators. We are often outstanding principals who understand teaching and curriculum. Few of us have business acumen, a skill we must often acquire by default, not by kavvanah. And even fewer of us are trained in raising money and student recruitment, two of the three existential skills of headship.

The good news is, almost every head acquires skills in fundraising and budgeting and various management structures and often executes well in these key areas. Bottom line: from my 42 years in the field, I firmly believe that we have dedicated, talented people leading our schools.

So, what is the crisis addressed by this issue of *HaYidion*?

In my view, simply stated, it's boredom.

To explain: it's not that we, as heads, are bored. I have never experienced one second of boredom in the job, nor have I ever heard a colleague say s/he is bored.

Rather, I believe that our message to key constituents is often boring. Our school "stories" lack originality. Our school

mission statements all sound the same:

We are a co-educational, college preparatory, Jewish day school that allows each child to succeed to his/her highest potential... etc. etc.

I have read hundreds of mission statements and vision statements. I do not feel "grabbed," or "compelled," or inspired.

And to be clear, the challenge is not finding the right marketing angle. We so often try to sound like the nearby secular private school and thereby lose our unique character and special vision for education. Yes, we all have a special vision for Jewish education; we all, deep down, know what it is.

Do people walk away from the head's talks saying, "I never saw education quite like that before. This is really interesting"? Do they walk away understanding that Jewish education is about making meaning and purpose in life?

The crisis, in my view, is our inability to articulate this vision in a compelling, effective way that transforms our listeners and readers. Do people walk away from the head's talks or from our printed/on-line materials saying, "I never saw

education quite like that before. This is really interesting"? Do they walk away understanding that real education, that Jewish education, is not about measuring; rather, it is about making meaning and purpose in life? Do we promote the "same old, same old" tune of high test scores, small classes, individualized attention, endless extracurricular activities, and constant tacit comparisons to other fine "private" schools?

Or, do we take the big risk and provide a story that parents and students have never heard, and do not know they want or



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need, and can only find within the sacred contexts of our schools? Do we have the guts to "lead" with our core values? Can we assume that our parents know that our academics are superb but that our

unique task is very different than that of the "typical" school? Can we stop striving to be the posh prep school down the street? Do we dare to lead with Judaism and Jewish values? *Do we dare not to be boring?*

In 1991, while serving as the first headmaster at a prominent LA Jewish high school, I was trying to figure out how to distinguish ourselves from the many posh prep schools in our city. I came across the brochure of one of the best of those schools. It gave a detailed retrospective of the school's history. There was a photo of boys, circa 1940, playing sports. The caption said something like: "We train our boys in the highest ideals of Greece and Rome!"

In one fell swoop, I got it.

Our schools "raise up our students in the highest ideals of Jerusalem."

Our schools see knowledge not only as a path to power, but as a way to wisdom.

Our schools understand the "rights of free speech" but teach the "obligations of speech." Our students know what to say to a bride on her wedding day; and they know the power and dangers of speech.

Our schools guide students in a path of "reflective eating" rather than "fast food." We use the "speed bumps" of blessings to slow things down, to promote appreciation and health.

Our schools teach that beauty is spiritual, not material, and that the "best" is the enemy of the "good." These values promote emotional health, remove hubris, and motivate us to continue our learning. I would never go to a physician who thinks s/he is the "best"; I would, however, fly with Captain Sullenberger, who never thought he was the best, but continued to learn. And now we all know he is the best.

In our schools, art is for the purpose of uplifting the human soul, to follow our lead artist, Betzalel, who walked "in the shadow of G-d."

Our schools teach that every human being is created betzelem Elokim and within that particularistic ideal is the source of universal courage and motivation for life itself. Children who understand this Jewish vision lead lives of greatness and humility; they understand that "advanced

placement" kindness is of equal importance, or more important, than advanced placement chemistry. They become chemists, and professionals, and leaders, who understand their sacred purpose in the world.

And from there the compelling story unfolded.

Our Jewish day schools raise up Jewish leaders for whom Jewish values guide and shape their vision. Our schools edu-

Our schools understand the "rights of free speech" but teach the "obligations of speech." Our students know what to say to a bride on her wedding day; and they know the power and dangers of speech.

cate great scientists who possess a moral imagination and promote ethical action. Our schools are the antidote to the "Race to Nowhere." We are the "where"; we are the destination, not a pass-through for top college admissions. We are not about measuring; we are about meaning. We understand that having a PhD does not create a moral imperative. One can be a PhD and an SOB.

Our story gets even better. It is compelling and historic.

Our story fully resides in the context of the American story. The logo at Yale is in Hebrew (and our day-school kids can actually read it and translate it and tell you where to find it in the Torah); Hebrew, alongside Latin and Greek, was a language of the graduation speeches at Harvard for its first two-hundred years; James Madison partly majored in Hebrew at Princeton. Alexander Hamilton went to a Jewish day school in the Bahamas (the Christian schools denied entrance to bastard children). Yes, even before many of us came to these shores and wept with tears of freedom as our ancestors sailed past Lady Liberty in New York Harbor, Judaism was shaping the values and philosophical landscape of a new nation.

And it was within the context of America,

the only major nation and large Jewish community left standing after World War II, where the mandate to rebuild and replace a thousand years of Jewish learning, and culture, and teachers, and students, and libraries destroyed in the Shoah, took root. American Jews rose to meet this challenge and our schools are a part of this great unfolding Jewish story; our students, steeped in Jewish values, become the universal contributors to that grand experiment in democracy we call America.

And, by the way, your children can choose electives in robotics, bio-technology, nano-science, three-dimensional printing, advanced placement courses, and play on our award-winning and character building athletic teams. But they will understand why they are doing these things.

So welcome to our school; welcome to Jewish history; welcome to a world of contribution to our nation. And yes, we will get your child into a top college (with an active Hillel) where s/he will take powerful Jewish values into the "real" world and transform that "reality" into one of meaning and purpose.

Let's end the crisis of boredom; let our heads, with help from boards and teachers, develop their school's unique metaphorical language and vision. Let's not pander to what is popular; let's have the courage to create exciting and compelling Jewish stories that "sell" who we really are every day. Let's not back down on the core of our being; if we do, what are we? And if not now, when?

And let's be sure to tell these stories with confidence in their power and integrity. And let's be sure to deliver the story through motivated, competent, and loving teachers who live and teach our story every day. ■

In It for the Long Run: Keys to Head of School Longevity

■ by **COOKI LEVY**

Levy, a retiring long-term day school head, shares the lessons that have helped her stay focused, successful and sane over her career.

Among my fondest memories as head of school is the story told to me by the mother of a young student. She reported that, on the previous Friday evening, her toddler had blown out the Shabbat candles, whereupon his sister, a kindergartner at our school, told him, “G-d is going to send you to Cooki’s office!” We laughed at that, and, of course, I am well aware of my place in the scheme of things relative to G-d. But the anecdote does highlight the role of head of school as perceived by a young child—having ultimate authority and knowledge, responsible for everything, and controlling the many strings that keep the day school functioning smoothly.

It is often not only the child, but the parents and the staff who assume that the head of school knows it all. And, in fact, to do the job well, to be truly successful, to be a long-term head of school, one must understand everything or know how to get the information needed, and, most importantly, must be able to anticipate what must be known now, tomorrow, next week or next year.

In the world of the day school, much of that knowing comes from being there—not in the office, behind the computer or on the phone, but out in the corridors, the bus lanes, the parking lot, the classrooms, and the staff room. Knowing comes from listening and speaking to kids and parents, listening and speaking to teachers and staff, being a part of the ebb and flow of school life. Knowing comes from being an active part of the

community, alert to changes in mood, to the arrival of new community members and the departure of others. Knowing comes from responding to questions and concerns and from the insistence on being included in the large and the small events of daily school life.

What else must be true about successful, long-term heads of school? The community will know and understand them—what they stand for, what they value, what decisions and actions they will take. There will be few surprises, and while students, parents or staff may not always be happy with decisions that are made, they will expect nothing different, and will be reassured by



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The successful head of school navigates the delicate balance between complete accessibility, ready to soothe, solve and resolve, advise and help at a moment’s notice, and the need to protect personal and family life.

the consistency of responses. For just as they know their community, the community knows and understands them. Consistency in words and actions, but *not* rigidity or inflexibility—that is a key to longevity as a day school head.

The successful head of school navigates the delicate balance between complete accessibility, ready to soothe, solve and resolve, advise and help at a moment’s notice, and the need to protect personal

and family life. While some professions do not require the complete support of close family, the job of head of school is not one of them. Being available to the school community is critical, within reason. But maintaining close relationships with family and friends, staying connected to real life and living the day-to-day dramas that the school population faces is critical as well. This deepens the ability of heads of school to communicate with empathy and understanding, not to mention allowing them to maintain their sanity, health and good humor.

Running a school of any size requires the ability to see both the institution as one cohesive whole, and each of the

many unique, distinct parts that form that whole. It requires understanding of how each of the parts relates to and depends on the others, and when one of these areas needs to take precedence. Sometimes, pedagogical issues will need one’s full attention; at other times finance, or building maintenance or community relations will demand attention. Juggling and balancing these interdependent areas and knowing how each affects the others are critical to success.



The head of school makes dozens of decisions, large and small, short-term and long-term, every day. How and when these decisions are made, what kind of collaboration should or should not take place, how consistent and fair the decisions are, and how they are communicated, determine in large measure the school leader's effectiveness. Staff and parents are reassured when decisions are measured, clear and timely. And it's very hard sometimes, especially when there are conflicting and equally important values that come into play, time is short, and someone is sure to be disappointed.

So many other statements would make wonderful posters in every school leader's office:

Don't take it all personally! Parents will be angry, teachers will complain, students will disturb. All the negativity comes to heads of school. Remember that they receive the complaints because others think they can fix them all—and many times they can. But sometimes they cannot—or

Children are not widgets, and schools are not governed by the rules of the corporate world. Solid, unbreakable rules will sometimes need to be bent.

will not, or should not. Remember that the parents of the most vulnerable students are themselves the most needy and the least able to deal with difficulty.

Children are not widgets, and schools are not governed by the rules of the corporate world. Solid, unbreakable rules will sometimes need to be bent. What has worked so well with others may not help in a particular child's case. The almost desperate need of one staff member may trump firm guidelines that one holds dear. People need to be recognized for who they are, what they offer, and what challenges they face.

Love your teachers! Ultimately, the most powerful moments in the school day take place between teachers and students

in the classroom, and so it is clear that among the most important tasks of the head of school is keeping teachers professionally engaged and productive, with a sense of purpose and of being valued and respected. Talk to them; eat with them; stay abreast of their personal ups and downs. Give them the gift of professional growth and development and help them to be successful. Set high standards based on reasonable demands and make certain that these demands are being met. Celebrate successes, but do not ignore the challenge of the difficult teacher.

Seek and accept help and support! School leadership used to be among the loneliest jobs out there, but it does not have to be anymore. There are numerous

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Finding a Speaking Voice

■ by **BARBARA GEREBOFF** and **JOELLE KAUFMAN**

Heads are the public voice of their school, the Communicators in Chief. They should study, practice and prepare for that role in the same way that they study curricular design and financial management. Here are some tips to get started.

Most heads of school look admiringly at those of their colleagues who are inspirational speakers, whether addressing a handful of people or a large audience. They talk without notes. When in front of a large group, they seem to be speaking to each person in the room. Is their skill an unevenly distributed gift? Effective public speaking is critical to the work of a head of school and it can be a real game changer.

Heads of school are called upon to speak frequently, and those speeches can be pivotal to success in admissions, retention, faculty retention and donor cultivation. While most school heads do not suffer from stage fright, not all understand certain fundamentals about speaking that can make a dramatic difference in their performance. Knowing about speech structure, tone, body language, audience and effective use of stories can make the difference that would compel a prospective parent to enroll.

Every time heads speak publicly, they are branding their schools and themselves. In making the move from good to great, an executive speech coach is a valuable resource. These coaches work directly with clients either face to face or electronically. Another effective venue for learning and practicing speech-making is International Toastmasters, an organization devoted to effective speaking.

Following are some of the important lessons that heads of schools (and board presidents) can use to improve their public speaking and benefit their schools:

Lesson 1: Make public speaking improvement a stated goal, and set target goals. Think about the different large public speeches that you give each year and decide that at the first one (opening day of school) you will work on speech structure, on the second one (back to school night) you will make sure that structure is clear and you will aim to work on your opening “grabber,” and on the next one (prospective parent open house) you will work on awkward pauses, “ums” and “uhs.” Understand that this is a learning process that unfolds. Standards and benchmarks and evaluation will lead to success.

Knowing about speech structure, tone, body language, audience and effective use of stories can make the difference that would compel a prospective parent to enroll.

Lesson 2: Find someone or a group of people who can evaluate your progress and who will see that you move along a skill continuum. One possibility is to find a speech coach whose job is to assess your skills and help you improve. The other possibility, not mutually exclusive, is to join a local toastmaster’s club in your area. This organization has been around for many years and there are

clubs in virtually every city. Most clubs meet weekly and there is a set program for speech development that each member follows. Meetings are structured to give every member opportunities to speak, to self-evaluate and to be evaluated. They are an excellent venue for low-stakes learning and practicing speaking.

Lesson 3: Learn the simple structure of most speeches—a grabber (that draws the audience into the speech), three takeaway points, memorable close. Often we have more than three major points to make, but we must face that our listeners can only remember three major takeaways. We have to make them count.

Lesson 4: Make your speeches accessible to everyone; use videotaping and webcasting to record, post and share your speeches. Post them on your school’s website, Facebook page and parent por-



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tal. Realize that people are busy and may not be able to hear you when you deliver the speech, but they are still interested. And they can replay it if needed.

Lesson 5: Find exemplars of excellence and listen to their speeches. It could be a local leader or a nationally televised one. Make a point to recognize their grabber, three points and close.

Lesson 6: Finally, most people have to hear a message multiple times to absorb and own it. We know this as educators—but as speakers, we seem to expect that once is enough. Heads of school need to pick their three messages for the year, and those messages need to be repeated and reinforced in every speech throughout the year. The advertising industry used to estimate that a consumer needed three exposures to a product to remember it. In this era of information overload, the new estimate is 11 exposures to the same message to remember it. Repeat your major theme in each of your major speeches, share the video of these speeches, blog about your three main points—repeatedly, and get feedback from your listeners over time to determine if they can remember your point.

Public speaking is a key skill for heads of schools and something we all can continuously develop as professionals. ■

In It for the Long Run: Keys to Head of School Longevity

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23]

local, national and international organizations able to bring together, at least in the virtual world, like-minded individuals with similar positions. Stay in touch with new and current thinking, read to deepen your own thinking and gain new insights. Ask questions, and share what you have discovered.

Have fun! The head of school has to love the job, and if it's not enjoyable, find out why. Of course, it's not always fun, but it's got to feel good most of the time. Seek out the good moments.

Never lose sight of the big picture. There will be good days and very annoying ones; minor irritations and major problems, inspiring teachers and incorrigible ones, reasonable and unreasonable parents. No one event, no one day or month, not even one year, defines the job for the long-time head of school. It is the collection of moments, the compilation of stories, the bank of memories, the myriad successes of student after student that are the sum total of a life's work.

You're not in the business to be liked and must not search for popularity, but after years in the same office, most likely you will be liked, even loved, nonetheless. That's the bonus.

Statistics indicate that the typical head of school in the Jewish day school system remains at one position for a period of less than three years, on average. The tragedy of that statistic is that it never allows the head of school to get past the birth pangs, past the difficulties that come with all new beginnings, to harness the creativity, the sense of purpose, the satisfaction of accomplishment that are such a large part of being a long-term head of school. The challenge for our communal and school lay leadership is to find ways to support the head through that initial period to enable him or her to move into the second and more satisfying phase of long-term leadership. ■



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Developing a Theory of Jewish Day School Leadership

■ by **MICHAEL BERGER**

The AVI CHAI Foundation, the largest investor in programs to develop Jewish day school leadership, draws lessons from its experience in this area and offers nine functions essential to this work.

When The AVI CHAI Foundation began to turn its attention to day schools in 1994, it did so with the research-backed conviction that in contemporary America, these Jewish institutions had the unique capacity to help create generations of young Jews aware of and committed to their history, people and religious tradition. It did not take long for the trustees and staff to understand that one of the main pillars upon which good schools stood was effective leadership, and so AVI CHAI began to invest both in existing leadership programs and in helping to develop new ones to meet the needs of contemporary day schools.

It was natural, therefore, that as AVI CHAI began to plan for its 2020 sunset several years ago, the trustees and staff chose leadership as one of the areas to explore how the Foundation might be able to have a lasting impact. To pursue this goal, we formed an ad hoc working group together with several PEJE staff members with deep knowledge in the field of school leadership and leadership development.

Our first task was to research and then formulate theories for effective day school leadership and for effective programs that nurture them. Guided by these theories, we believed AVI CHAI would be in the best position to invest its ultimately depleting resources wisely

and strategically. We appreciate the editors of *HaYidion* inviting us to share our current summary document on a Theory of Day School Leadership with the field, both in print and on-line, in the hope of sparking conversation and generating constructive feedback.

Leadership: more complex than ever

Needless to say, leading private schools in contemporary North America, and especially Jewish day schools, has become a very complex job. At the same time as the number of stakeholders and their needs (and often demands) has grown, resources have shrunk considerably, and most day schools still aim to offer a Jewish education to any student and family desiring one. Additionally, in almost every respect, the religious, social, and communal landscape in which day schools must operate has become more challenging. Managing these complex forces takes multiple and varied skills and capacities, reflecting the many challenges American Jewry faces in building a lasting and firm Jewish identity among our children and families. The high turnover of school leaders is just one symptom of the demanding—and increasingly draining—nature of day school leadership.

Much of the literature on leadership focuses on personal qualities (often re-

lated to social intelligence) and effective management strategies (time, personnel, change). We certainly agreed these are core to any successful leader, and included those that were especially important for day schools (see #7-9, and their explanations, below). But we found many of these qualities and strategies to be context-specific and not necessarily generalizable.

Rather, we started with a two-fold premise: 1) the contemporary complexity of running day schools requires a *leadership team* rather than an individual leader; and 2) effective teams require an understanding of the various “areas of function” to better delegate and organize themselves. While we might all wish for the ideal leadership structure and team-members, we all know that the reality of most day



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schools, particularly smaller ones, is that administrators are deployed to their areas of strength or effectiveness, often leading to gaps (or overlaps) in the running of the school. We believe the list of leadership functions has significant, practical implications, which will be enumerated below.

We identified nine distinct areas of day school functions that require effective leadership:

1. Setting Vision, Priorities

With the many claims being made on day schools, it is vital that they be point-

ed in a clear direction to know where to head and of what to steer clear. Professional leaders are needed to help chart this path, along with lay leadership, and even greater skills are needed to provide skillful and savvy navigation towards the goal. In a word, no day school can function effectively without this vision.

2. Jewish Lens

Many stakeholders—parents, board members, even communal leaders—often want the day school to compete with local private and public schools that offer excellent education. However, it is the Jewish character of a day school that is its primary source of distinctiveness; only the leadership can ensure that the varied yet integrated aspects of the school are infused with and express this Jewish mission. Without this function, the Jewishness of a school can quickly be confined to an isolated feature of the program rather than stand proudly as the school's *raison d'être*.

3. Understanding Context

Like any living organism, to survive and thrive a school must not only coordinate its internal pieces but also deal appropriately with its environment. Day schools necessarily function within larger social, cultural and institutional contexts. For a school to succeed, leadership must use its higher perch—what Harvard's Ron Heifetz calls “going up to the balcony”—to gain awareness of the various currents running in the school's wider environment and figure out how best to respond. Additionally, leadership must proactively maintain contacts with the many elements of its setting—other Jewish and non-Jewish schools, synagogues, Federations, etc.—fostering relationships and seeking synergies where possible.

4. Data Driven Assessment and Accountability

In our society, a leader's charisma and intuition can take a school very far, but both eventually run out (or leave). For schools to be sustainable long-term, leadership must model an approach to problem-

Statistics on School Heads

From Marvin Schick, “A Survey of Day School Principals in the United States,” AVI CHAI Foundation (available on avichai.org). The survey was conducted during the 2005-06 school year. Here are some of the more interesting findings.

- Percentage of heads of non-Orthodox schools who are women: 60
- Portion of male heads earning above \$120,000/year: 1 in 2
- Portion of female heads earning above \$120,000/year: 1 in 5
- Percentage of heads serving in schools with under 100 students who earn less than \$90,000: 68
- Percentage serving in schools with 500-749 students who earn less than \$90,000: 16
- Percentage of day school heads who taught in a day school: 80
- Portion of day school heads who are Israeli-born: 1 in 12
- Fraction of day school heads recruited from within the same school: 1/3
- Percentage of sitting heads in their first position as a head: 55
- Average number of years that the head serves in current job: 11.5
- Percentage of heads who identify mentoring as crucial to their preparedness for the role: 45
- Heads involved in “non-educational school administration” (eg, facilities management): 83%
- Heads involved in fundraising: 90%
- Portion of school heads who say the work of headship “has gotten harder”: 5 in 6
- Percentage of heads who report their relations with lay leaders to be “not too good” or “terrible”: 2.2
- Percentage who report these relations as “excellent”: 66
- Percentage who report their relations with parents to be “not too good” or “terrible”: .6
- Percentage who report these relations as “excellent”: 60
- Percentage who report their experience on the job as “rewarding”: 82
- Percentage who report their experience as “disappointing” or “a mistake”: 3.8

solving that is based on data assessment and accountability. These transparent processes are characteristic of successful enterprises generally, and only leadership can ensure that a school's many systems adopt them.

5. Building Staff Capacities

Good organizations foster growth among all their members, generating personal satisfaction and high morale. Schools are of course focused on the growth of children, but good schools are known for cultivating all their members' growth. Leader-

ship, which lives in the present but always keeps an eye on the future, gently pushes everyone on staff to stretch beyond his/her comfort zones, and also constantly maintains information channels and keeps an eye out for talent should a position open.

6. Collaboration

Some leaders prefer to ride in as the Lone Ranger and save the day, but you'll always find a Tonto—even several Tontos—at the side of the best leaders. At the top of

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successful schools we regularly find distributed leadership, and a willingness to work together with other individuals and organizations to maximize the positive outcome by sharing resources.

7. Communication

Day schools—even small ones—have so many people involved in their daily functioning in and out of the building that there is always the risk that people will begin to do their own thing. To calibrate all these individuals and activities requires skilled communication coupled with a high level of emotional intelligence. Whether in personal con-

This document might push day school lay leadership to be more supportive and have more reasonable expectations of its current and future professional leaders.

versation, public speeches, or the written letter or article, leadership uses communication skills to advocate for the school and keep the many stakeholders “on the same page.”

8. Learning and Self-Reflection

There is a tendency among some boards to search for ideal leaders, but the reality is that effective schools are led by individuals who themselves are “CLO’s”—Chief Learning Officers. The ability—and willingness—to look critically at one’s own actions and decisions, to seek out others’ perspectives and feedback and re-think positions are the modeling at the top that typifies all great organizations.

9. Self-Management Capabilities

This is probably the hardest, but without it, day school leaders are sure to burn out. The complexity of day schools has a way of generating its own powerful gravitational pull that overwhelms leaders, stretching to the point of ineffectiveness or exhaustion, whichever comes first. Effective leaders preserve

their energies and monitor how they use their time.

We tried to explain briefly each of these nine areas that we found critical (and irreducible) in day school leadership. To see more detail and bullets under each area, please go to www.ravsak.org/hayidion/AVICHAI.

How to use this document

While our work is based on the research of others, The AVI CHAI Foundation has several hopes for this document.

First, we would appreciate practitioners’ feedback: does this list resonate with your own sense of leadership positions

in day school? With your own experience? Are there *capacities* or *functions* that are missing from our list? We realize all leaders must stretch themselves to learn new things; leaders who began as great educators may need to learn budgeting, or IT, or fundraising depending on their position. But we were less interested in naming those systems within day schools than in focusing on the areas of function and leadership skills. Please respond at this link: www.ravsak.org/hayidion/AVICHAI.

AVI CHAI wants your feedback. Find the complete document online at www.ravsak.org/hayidion/AVICHAI, and share your thoughts on ways it can be used and improved.

Second, as we noted above, we believe this document can be put to practical use. For instance, leaders can review the list and identify which areas they have mastered and which they want to develop further and round out their set of capacities. This could lead to more defined or focused professional development plans for leaders. Head Support and Re-

view Committees can similarly use this document as a basis or rubric for evaluating a leader’s performance and identify which areas might need more attention in the coming years.

Third, we want to underscore once again that while it would be simpler and more convenient for boards to “expect it all” of a single person, it is not realistic to find all these capacities in a single person—nor ought they be. We endorse the current push for distributed leadership; just as lay leadership is manifest in multi-person boards with a chair, so too professional leadership is best arrayed in a similarly distributed structure. Thus, we perceive that *within a day school’s leadership team*, these nine capacities ought to be covered.

Taking the distributed leadership approach in reading this document could help with hiring decisions by locating which capacities are covered by existing administrators, and which capacities are missing. The list can help in evaluation of “admin teams” or enable more constructive professional development plans. Minimally, we believe putting all nine capacities in print highlights how difficult and complex day school leadership has become, and it might push day school lay leadership to be more supportive and have more reasonable expectations of its current and future professional leaders. And that in turn will bring to the field more qualified people who realize the job is challenging but doable.

In sum, we wanted to spark a long overdue conversation for the field of day school education. We desperately need quality leadership to run an institution we believe is vital to American Jewry’s future. Talking about “leaders” without specifying the capacities the job entails is meaningless. We hope this document is a constructive first step in that direction. ■

Thank You to Our Donors

RAVSAK is pleased to publicly acknowledge and thank all of the individuals, families, foundations and schools who have supported our work in 2011. With your help, we are strengthening and sustaining the Jewish life, leadership and learning of community day schools, ensuring a vibrant Jewish future.

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Thank you to our anonymous donors. We apologize to anyone we have inadvertently omitted. ■

The “All Chiefs” Crisis in Education

■ by **ERICA BROWN**

Leadership relies on a culture of trust and respect. Brown urges day school leaders to engage parents and other stakeholders in creating a school culture where leadership can thrive.

As a people, we have never been great followers. We all think we are leaders. Part of the problem is that we often lack the self-awareness to acknowledge that our “followship” lacks a service dimension and that we criticize leaders to a point of paralysis. For a classic example of this, we turn to the Book of Joshua, where this new leader is assured that the people will follow him with the ironic claim, “We will obey you just as we obeyed Moses” (1:17). Anyone vaguely familiar with Moses’ leadership arc in the Bible has to scratch a head. Was there ever a time that we listened to Moses without contention and complaint? Take back that offer, please.

Perhaps nowhere today is this problem more acute than in the sphere of Jewish education. Parents have become consumers rather than stakeholders in their local day schools and are quick to send off a nasty e-mail or tell a teacher what to do during a parent-teacher conference. Consumers return what they don’t like. Stakeholders partner to fix it, respecting expertise and following policy governance boundaries. As a board member in my own children’s school, I recall a conversation with an irate parent whose child did not get the history teacher she wanted: “I’ve decided I am not paying this semester’s tuition bill unless she gets into that class. Money is the only language the school understands.” Yikes!

When I was a kid I distinctly remember sitting on the stairs with trepidation, awaiting my report from parent-teacher conferences. Today, the people who are most afraid are the teachers. They often feel themselves under siege from parents who claim to know how to teach and manage a classroom better than they do. This failure to recognize and appreciate teacher and administrator expertise has brought the capacity to partner in the practice of education to an all-time low. It is a failure of trust, and it has severe consequences.

Ron Clark, an “American Teacher of the Year” and the author of *The End of Molasses Classes: Getting Our Kids Unstuck*, recently shared a conversation he had with a beloved, award-winning principal who is leaving the profession. When he begged her to stay, this is what she told him: “Look, if I get an offer to lead a school system of orphans, I will be all over it, but I just can’t deal with parents anymore; they are killing us.”

Clark writes that most teachers stay in the profession only 4.5 years, and many of them list that the negativity they experience from parents is pushing them into other professions, even though they love teaching. Parent management is just too difficult and not something they thought they had to master when entering the field.

Here is one of Clark’s recommendations to parents: “If we give you advice, don’t fight it. Take it, and digest it in the same way you would consider advice from a doctor or lawyer.” He finds it exhausting to tell a parent that a child has an issue when all they do is fight back and defend their kid. “Trust us,” he asks with a hint of desperation in his words.

There is another framework in which to understand what is happening in the classroom, care of a new word in leadership lingo: the multiplier. Derived from Liz Wiseman’s book *Multipliers: How the Best Leaders Make Everyone Smarter*,



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the term describes a certain type of person who encourages innovative thinking and growth by assuming the intelligence of other people. Wiseman describes the way that the multiplier sees others: “There are smart people everywhere who will figure this out and get smarter in the process.” Because multipliers are intellectually and emotionally generous, they seek to bring people together to create more wisdom and generate more ideas. The multiplier attracts talent and develops it, making sure that people are not underutilized. The multiplier also gives other people credit and ownership over ideas.

Wiseman contrasts this with the diminisher personality who creates a tense environment that suppresses people’s



Illustration by Karen Dresser, American Hebrew Academy

thinking and ability. He or she hoards resources and underutilizes talent. Often diminishers are micro-managers with very low trust in others. Where the multiplier will often say “yes” to a new idea or initiative, we can predictably expect a “no” from a diminisher.

We want the teachers and administrators of our day schools to be multipliers. We want them to see the native talents of our kids and grow it. We want our children to take ownership of ideas and feel empowered by partnerships with other students. But we cannot grow multipliers in the classroom when we have troops of diminishers outside of it. The multiplier cannot thrive in an environment of negativity. The multiplier will sooner leave than live with the depressing and limiting environment created by diminishers.

We have to push back on the negativity and hold up a mirror to the diminishers in

When I was a kid I distinctly remember sitting on the stairs with trepidation, awaiting my report from parent-teacher conferences.

every educational setting who hold back learning because they hold back trust. And that is what teacher and administrators find so hard to do: push back. This is not about one teacher speaking to one parent. It is about a total cultural shift that will not happen overnight where teachers take back their expertise and parents back down.

We have to help parents identify behaviors that diminish and those that multiply. And we need look no further than the second chapter of Exodus to meet a remarkable multiplier. Moses’ mother, Yocheved, gave birth to a male child after Pharaoh’s decree; her two words were not “oy vey” but “*ki tov*”—it was good. This

was not uttered as a statement but as part of the narration of the story, and it mimics the language of creation itself. Moses may have become the great redeemer he was because he was birthed into a world where someone believed profoundly in the gift of possibility. We, too, must inherit that legacy and help parents see beyond the negativity and find the good. If we cannot do it, we cannot expect it of them.

Unless we plan on having classrooms full of orphans, in the words of one frustrated principal who is voting with her feet, we have to become followers and trust that the education of our children is in good hands. ■

Developing Leadership Competence and Commitment:

Project SuLaM

■ by **TODD CLAUER**

RAVSAK's Project SuLaM is an example of a leadership program that cultivates the "whole leader": it develops leaders' understanding of and commitment toward Jewish tradition, while providing ongoing mentorship in Jewish school leadership. SuLaM serves as a model that schools should look to as they groom their own leaders.

One of the most fascinating realities of the books of Bereshit and Shemot is the constant flow of drama that infects the lives of our ancestors. There always seems to be a crisis looming that places the world and the Jewish people in imminent peril. Jewish day school leadership today seems no different: the storm clouds of an imminent crisis put all of us on high alert, as we try to head off any threat to the long term prosperity of the Jewish people.

To be fair, many of the issues related to leadership in Jewish day schools are the same as those faced by educational leaders in all segments of compulsory education. The pressures to be more focused on the "service" component of helping students and families are rising, while simultaneously the imperative to pay for rising health care costs, the repair of aging buildings and more expensive technologies and programs conflicts with enormous budgetary constraints. Despite this reality, I believe that quality training and professional development opportunities are helping substantially to educate, inspire and better equip Jewish educational leaders of today.

Twelve years ago my current school hired me as a math teacher. Despite my growth in responsibility over the years, I

realized that no matter my work ethic or motivation, I was viewing Jewish education through an undeveloped set of eyes because I had not received any formal Jewish education nor did I have training as a Jewish educator. After eight years in the school, I could follow and participate in daily Shacharit services, help my first grader with Hebrew reading, and trace the main themes through the five books of Moses—but I could not come close to feeling like I could play a role in shaping an integrated programmatic view of how we operate as a school.

Two and a half years ago, I had the incredible opportunity to travel to New York City to join a cohort of 16 other Jewish educators from all over the United States in RAVSAK's Project SuLaM (Study, Leadership, and Mentoring). My participation in Project SuLaM has significantly impacted my capabilities and competencies as an educational leader, which has translated into a significant impact on my school and its students.

SuLaM pairs experienced educators with individual mentors and seasoned teachers who have significant experience in understanding Jewish texts, history, rituals and, most importantly, how Jewish day schools

can maximize student growth and learning in serving the missions of our schools. The two-year fellowship program provides intensive learning experiences in two successive summers followed by the ongoing implementation of projects within our schools that are to enrich the Jewish experience of our communities.

As an outgrowth of my work in SuLaM, I have been able to contribute significantly and meaningfully to my school and its curriculum. In Year One, I helped to create a mini-Hebrew/Yiddish dictionary that was placed online to help parents and staff to learn and understand the myriad expressions that are used by Hebrew and Jewish studies staff to describe the richness of Jewish life and rituals. I also was able to re-envision the purposes and goals of our middle and upper school



Todd Clauer is dean of students at Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy in Overland Park, Kansas, where he runs the college guidance office, teaches upper school mathematics and physics, and oversees an egalitarian minyan. He can be reached at tclauer@hbha.edu.

minyanim in collaboration with other Jewish studies teachers and our Judaic head of school. These changes, of which we are quite proud, have led to a positive paradigm shift which has both increased the knowledge and skills of our students while opening up new spiritual pathways.

In Year Two of SuLaM, I assembled a team of administrators and a board member who helped guide the entire school and community through a process by which we created the "Profile of a Graduate" for our K-12 school by integrating ideas of alumni, parents, students, teach-



ers, administrators, board members and community clergy. All of this work was an outgrowth of my time with SuLaM; it was directly connected to my own learning and increasing knowledge of Jewish text, ritual and history.

SuLaM and similar Jewish day school leadership training opportunities underscore the importance of developing more knowledgeable and relevant educational leaders in Jewish day schools, training that could easily be carried through individual schools and communities. In my first job at a secular boarding school, I had the good fortune to have many tremendous mentors and role models. A head of school once talked about leadership as the intersection between commitment and competence. Commitment, he surmised, was based on a passion and a drive to understand the mission and values of a school as well as to connect with parents, students and teachers in meaningful and ongoing ways. Competence was the ability to successfully handle the individual tasks in a teacher's or an administrator's daily life.

I believe that this model of leadership still holds today and that both elements are *fundamentally and equally* important

for Jewish school leadership. Therefore, schools and boards should focus significant energy in developing leaders who continue to grow in their commitment and competence.

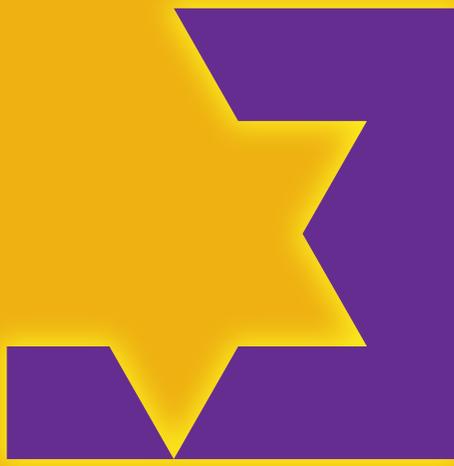
We live in a time when some still are in search of “perfect” educational leaders. These men and women are often expected to display excellence in an unrealistic number of domains, including as (a) scholars who possess the knowledge to understand the complexities and challenges of a dual-curriculum community day school; (b) instructional experts; (c) staff mentors and evaluators; (d) people who connect everyone in the community to a common vision of the school; (e) kind, caring individuals who relate well to children; (f) fundraisers; and (g) financial gurus who understand how to maximize tight budgets and limited resources.

Rather than defining competence and excellence by unrealistic expectations, why not define competence as having a clear command on several fronts, but a commitment to develop and grow and to find allies to round out everything that has to be accomplished to serve the school's mission? This kind of commitment requires a shared leadership model within schools

where teachers and administrators continually engage in discourse to re-focus their energies on the most important tasks of meeting a school's mission.

The experiences I had with Project SuLaM, my colleagues, and the excellent guidance of my teachers and mentors dramatically and influentially increased my level of commitment while building up my competence as an educator in a Jewish day school. Thanks to these experiences, I am able to envision a more complete picture of the richness that can be created in our schools through strengthening Jewish life and facilitating a positive Jewish self-identity for our students.

When G-d chose Abraham for a mission to be a light unto the world, the choice was made, in part, because Abraham was committed to the ideal of being a righteous, compassionate and visionary father of a people. Moses was no different: once he took upon himself the mantle of leading the Jews from Egypt, he put everything into his role as leader. His evolving commitment allowed him to develop the competencies needed to help the Israelites make their way to the Promised Land and to become the people G-d hoped we would become. ■



North American Jewish Day School Conference

Current

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ear, RAVSAK, The
RDeS and Yeshiva
to welcome PEJE

as a partner and conference co-sponsor. Conference organizers innovated with the schedule and format, including special agency-run programs on Monday and repeating mini-keynote speeches followed by intensive sessions on Tuesday. Highlights included the opening keynote by artist Tobi Kahn and writer Nessa Rapoport, urging day schools to be laboratories of Jewish art and cultural imagination;

Rabbi David A. Baylinson's rousing memoir of his battles during the civil rights movement; and online teacher extraordinaire Kristin Kipp's discussion of the opportunities made possible by teaching in cyberspace. Participants gained exposure to innovative developments in subjects ranging from ethical growth, differentiated instruction and project-based learning to financial sustainability and promot-

ing the day school advantage. As always, the time to learn from and be inspired by colleagues old and new was as valuable as the time inside the sessions, offering participants myriad opportunities for personal as well as professional growth. In all, the conference demonstrated the remarkable and continued vitality and relevance of Jewish day schools in the twenty-first century. ■



Where Consciousness Meets Community: Clues from Camp about Jewish Leadership

■ by **ALEX POMSON**

Building upon the articles in the winter *HaYidion*, Pomson looks at Camp Stone, which has a remarkable track record in cultivating Jewish leaders, to explore the principles of Jewish leadership as applied there.

W here might Jewish day school heads look for models to enrich and inform their understanding of the tasks of leadership? From what I've seen of their office bookshelves, it seems that Jim Collins's *Good to Great* and Boleman and Deal's *Reframing Organizations* have become primary references. Those books are on my bookshelf too; but because they address the challenges of leadership in multimillion dollar businesses and organizations, heavy intellectual work is needed to apply their conclusions to the day school sector.

In Erica Brown's important book *Inspired Jewish Leadership*, she takes a different tack. She turns to traditional Jewish texts so as to suggest some core principles for Jewish leadership. Her starting point is closer to home, but an imaginative leap is still required to derive lessons from the Babylonian Talmud or from the lives of Moses and King David to leadership of a Jewish day school in the twenty first century.

I would like to suggest another possibility. I turn to Jewish summer camp for models of leadership. I know that camp is not school, but given that Jewish

camp serve many of the children who populate Jewish schools, it's worth asking what the educational universes of camp and school might learn from one another in pursuit of a shared mission.

Recently, I was invited to spend time at Camp Stone, a Jewish summer camp that under the guidance of Yehuda Rothner, a



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Leadership is how people act and what they do, not the position they occupy. People at every level of an organization can be leaders.

remarkable Jewish educator, has gained a national reputation as an incubator of Jewish leadership. Over the last few years, former staff-members – “Stoners” they call themselves—have surfaced in all kinds of community settings (in day schools, welfare agencies, NGOs and synagogues) as emergent leaders exhibiting all manner of impressive qualities.

Returning to camp for the first time in many summers, I was tasked by the AVI CHAI Foundation with uncovering how young camp staff were learning to lead. To clarify: I was not asked to conduct a study of summer camp, but to look beyond the campers, as it were, so as to bring in to view the processes and expe-

riences that enable leadership to blossom in this special setting.

Here, then, are five things I learned at camp about leadership in general and about Jewish leadership in particular. My focus here is not on how certain leadership qualities come to be learned but rather on what these qualities are. These conclusions are framed with the special

intent of challenging some conventional assumptions about what leadership might and perhaps should look like in Jewish day schools.

Leadership as a verb; Jewish leadership as a subjective stance

As a number of writers on leadership have put it, leadership is a verb not a noun. It is how people act and what they do; it is not the position they occupy. Understood in this way, people at every level of an organization can be leaders. At Camp Stone I found a subjective dimension to the expectation that leadership can occur throughout an organization. In these terms, *Jewish* leadership

involves not only acting in certain ways but also acting with certain kinds of self-awareness, whatever one's formal position. As will be seen below, this subjective stance—this consciousness—is derived in turn from particular assumptions about the nature of Jewish life and the sources of its vitality, assumptions that are rarely made explicit in Jewish institutions.

IMPLICATIONS: Conceiving of Jewish leadership as acting with a certain kind of consciousness has profound repercussions for how future leaders are prepared. This is radically different from a conception of leadership focused on skills and capacities.

BEING A ROSH-GADOL—CONSCIOUS OF WHAT NEEDS TO GET DONE

Leadership at Camp Stone involves being a “*rosh gadol*.” Not to be confused with the “big headedness” of colloquial English, this Hebrew term captures a number of qualities. It means taking responsibility if something needs doing; acting with initiative; and, most fundamentally, being conscious of a bigger picture at camp beyond oneself and one's specific role. By contrast, the “*rosh katan*” prefers to take a back seat, and claims inexperience, insufficient knowledge or a lack of familiarity with the broader context of camp.

IMPLICATIONS: The attributes of the rosh gadol privilege the skills of the generalist over the specialist. The person who feels “I can do this” without special training takes responsibility for the situation, but in getting the job done may not do the best possible job. This attribute is profoundly at odds with the culture of schools, where people's responsibilities are precisely delineated and where intruding in to someone else's professional space is often disapproved.

CREATIVITY/YETZIRATIYUT

Thinking and acting creatively are, in general terms, valuable leadership traits, but what if radical, genuinely divergent creativity is a necessary component of Jewish leadership? At Camp Stone, campers regularly re-enact historical events on an unimaginably epic scale. In a west Pennsylvania field, the staff has recreated, for example, the invasion of ancient Tyre by Alexander the Great, the dedication of the first Temple in Jerusalem, and the illegal entry of immigrants in to Mandate Palestine. The planning phases of programs often involve nailing an idea and then saying “that's good, but what if we...”. Interrupting the flow of program design, people are thus invited to think differently and to dream up new and creative ways to do things. As the camp's promotional literature indicates, there is an operating assumption at Camp Stone that “nothing is impossible.”

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 47]

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Relationship-Based Leadership: The JFNA Approach

■ by **RACHEL AIN**

In this, the first of three articles describing the understandings, aims and methods of prominent national programs in Jewish leadership development, Ain describes the three tiers of leadership programming at the Jewish Federations of North America.

Jewish institutions throughout North America are appropriately concerned with how to cultivate the next generation of leaders, but this concern should not be confused with panic. Rather, it should be seen as an opportunity to work with a group of young people who have the skills, abilities and desire to make a difference in the world. The exciting challenge for the organized Jewish community is to effectively fuel the flames of this passionate group of individuals in order to add their voices and their experiences to an ever-changing global Jewish context.

At The Jewish Federations of North America, the National Young Leadership Department has realized that what has gotten us here, through the 20th century, will not necessarily get us through the 21st century. We must create programs, touchpoints and most importantly relationships that will expose these individuals to the Jewish world, Jewish traditions and Jewish values, if we want them to be superb Jewish leaders. And once these relationships are created, we then must build sustained networks where individuals will understand the power that they have by being in relationship with others. Just as they are the center of spokes on one wheel, there are others who have their own outward spokes. And when those wheels turn together, anything is possible. Therefore, our charge as a community is to create a pipeline of leaders, so that at the beginning of the 22nd century,

people will not be concerned about the “leadership crisis.”

We take a three-pronged approach to the task. First, we recognize that not everyone is ready to be, or wants to be, a leader in the Jewish community. To that end, JFNA partners with over 50 organizations on an annual gathering, TribeFest (www.tribefest.org), which provides ample opportunities for young people to understand the landscape of the Jewish community, its institutions, its traditions, and its leadership, and make personal connections, in order to advance on

and conversations to this next generation of leaders. Additionally, through national conferences such as the Leadership Development Institute, JFNA has created a series of programs that individual agencies might not be able to do on their own. And of course, there is a power in the collective. When Jewish people come together to learn, they create memories and feelings of connectedness.

The third step is working very closely with the committed core. In that vein, JFNA is extremely dedicated to those young leaders who take part in the National Young Leadership Cabinet (www.jewishfederations.org/cabinet). For the past 50 years, this experience has fos-



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Jewish leaders should be able understand the history of the Jewish people and how this history impacts the present and the future.

their path once they are back at home. Follow-up programming aims to keep participants engaged afterwards.

The second step is to recognize that there are those who are, and want to be, emerging leaders—people committed to the Jewish world but need further development of skills and knowledge to make an educated difference for their community. JFNA therefore serves as a consulting firm to its local federations, working on a daily basis with local professionals who are providing programming, content

and promoted Jewish leaders by designing a program that advances the qualities, knowledge base, and habits of Jewish leadership.

What are the qualities of an engaged Jewish leader? At JFNA a Jewish leader is one who understands the importance of how Jewish values and learning underscore what we do; one who has a commitment to philanthropy; one who can articulate the mission and needs of the Jewish (local and global) community; and finally, a person who wants to be a participant in

and a builder of a network of like-minded yet diverse people. The Cabinet experience begins and ends with relationships. Each local and national professional understands where a leader is coming from, what they are passionate about and how they can act on that passion.

Over the course of several years these leaders are exposed to skills training, the past and current global Jewish context, and the realization that asking for money isn't something to fear, but to embrace. The joy of philanthropy is crucial when thinking about leadership development. The ability to give a capacity gift needs to be recognized and celebrated; one shouldn't apologize for asking for money, but rather, see themselves as the conduit through which the Jewish community is sustained and strengthened today and in the future. We offer leadership experiences and platforms each year, including speakers' training, caucus leading, study missions to understand the needs overseas, and advocacy days in Washington, DC, to provide hands-on training for leading at home. We hope that by the end of their experience on Cabinet, they are positioned to be leaders in their local federations, day schools, Hillels, JCCs, synagogues, and other agencies in the Jewish world.

What is the knowledge base for Jewish leaders? Jewish leaders should be able understand the history of the Jewish people and how this history impacts the present and the future. Jewish leaders should feel comfortable with how the values of Judaism inform the work at hand. Jewish leaders should be proud practitioners of Judaism, in that they proudly display their commitment to a Jewish life that reflects the history, traditions and values in whatever way that finds meaning in their lives. Equally important, they should understand the issues facing the Jewish world today. They should have a sense of the demographics with which they are working, the challenges that they are facing, and the opportunities that lie ahead. While knowledge is power, having these tools and a deep understanding of their origins is essential for the effective Jewish leader.

What are the habits of transformative Jewish leaders? We recognize that not all



Jewish leaders look and sound the same, but there are some characteristics that are common to those who are most excellent. Do Jewish leaders need charisma? Do they need to have influence? Of the many habits and attributes of Jewish leaders, I would emphasize the following: the capacity to be self-reflective about their own strengths and weakness and compassionate in their interactions with others; excitement to learn new skills, recognizing that each of us are on a perpetual journey to do better; and finally, placing these skills and ideas into practice in partnership with others. Hillel's popular teaching from Pirkei Avot nicely sums up these behaviors: "If I am not for myself who will be for me, but if I am only for myself, what am I?" People who seek leadership only for gratitude and recognition without making a difference in the community in which they are a part would not, in my opinion, have the habits we are trying to cultivate.

The day school world, which is a micro-

cosm of the larger Jewish community, has at its fingertips parents, alumni, supporters, and funders who have the necessary pride and passion to change and advance the mission of a particular school. By recognizing where people are on their own personal trajectory, senior professionals and lay leaders must work with these individuals, ask them about their passions and put them to work. But they must do this by being given the tools to succeed and the freedom to add their voice to the crucial conversations of the day.

I started with the premise that by doing the above we won't have a leadership crisis in the 22nd century. But the fact is that in 100 years, our context will be different than it is today. Just as today we need to thoughtfully re-evaluate our behavior, a dynamic system and dynamic leaders will always reflect upon themselves. If we create and clear the path now for those on a leadership journey, there will always be people to walk it. ■

Ramah Provides Fertile Soil for Lifelong Leadership Development

■ by **MITCHELL COHEN** and **DEBBIE NAHSHON**

In this second article about national Jewish leadership programs, the leader of Ramah camps reviews some of the elements of their success, and presents recent initiatives to expand their impact well beyond the summer.

From its very inception, the Ramah camping movement was configured as an incubator for leadership. Designed as an immersive experience with what Jonathan Sarna of Brandeis University notes was the openly subversive goal of cultivating a Jewish elite, Ramah focused its efforts on teens and young adults, “the age group most susceptible to role modeling and to rebelling against parental authority, to create a distinctive identity that would be reinforced by peers and role models. In this way,” writes Dr. Shuly Rubin Schwartz, Dean of Graduate and Undergraduate Studies at The Jewish Theological Seminary, “the leadership of Ramah hoped to invigorate Conservative Judaism by cultivating an elite that would be more dedicated, knowledgeable, and more observant than their parents.”

In the aftermath of the Shoah, with the founding of the first Ramah camp in 1947, Conservative Jewish leaders focused on the urgency of Jewish survival. Their belief in the long-term value of the Conservative Movement’s approach to Jewish life fueled an intensive focus on the development of leadership at Ramah camps. The three key pillars of the Ramah experience, in place to this day—Hebrew language, Jewish living, and Judaic study—created the framework for an immersive camp experience where children and teens would be motivated to embrace a lifestyle grounded in Jewish values, ritual, and learning.

As Rubin Schwartz notes in a recent

article (“The Three Pillars of Ramah,” published in Ramah at 60: Impact and Innovation), the North American Jewish community has been transformed since those early years into one that has a much deeper Jewish life, characterized in part by the rise of the day school movement. In response, the elitist agenda of the Ramah movement’s founders has given way to much more inclusive goals, seeking to reach and engage as many young Jews as possible. Yet Ramah’s outsized impact on the community—significant numbers of North American Jewish communal leaders are Ramah alumni—reinforces the belief that a core mission of the Ramah camp experience must remain leadership development in its broadest sense, to serve both the Conservative Movement and the greater Jewish community.

A recent study of Jewish camping by Amy P. Sales of Brandeis University, *Limmud by the Lake II*, notes that retention of staff after one year at Ramah exceeded the North American average by fully ten percentage points, with 67% of staff choosing to return. And by almost ten percentage points again, Ramah staff are well ahead of staff at other camps when they point to the Jewish life at camp as being a key reason for their return. With the exciting launch of the Ramah Service Corps last year, dozens of staff alumni are now able to leverage their leadership skills and talents in year-round communities to help invigorate synagogues and days schools

and encourage recruitment to Jewish camp. The Service Corps was the next logical step in the progression of Ramah leadership development, and its members are performing beyond expectations.

What is the Ramah training formula? In the context of a 24/7 environment, these young people are growing, living and learning among peers who share their passion for Jewish life. They are given multiple opportunities to excel and shine with peer encouragement, learning hands-on skills to help them serve as Jewish leaders, including religious inspiration, Hebrew language, and deep familiarity with Israel. I have



Rabbi Mitchell Cohen is the director of the National Ramah Commission of the Jewish Theological Seminary, and **Debbie Nahshon** is a National Ramah development consultant. They can be reached at Mcohen@jtsa.edu and Debbie@campramah.org.

been amazed at the high level of a 17-year-old’s dvar Torah; the maturity of a 19-year-old inspiring her campers to bond while davening with peers in the Tikvah special needs bunks; the lessons in environmental awareness taught at our new adventure camp in the Rockies; and the excitement of 10-year-old campers using complete Hebrew sentences with raucous encouragement from the camps’ college-age staff.

In recent years, Ramah has invested heavily in new movement-wide programs for staff training, supported by over \$4 million of grants from national foundations. New programs now exist in tefillah, Hebrew language, youth philanthropy, Israel engagement, service learning, social networking, campus leadership and special education. Most remarkable has



been the transference of these leadership skills from camp contexts to overall career and life choices.

The more we invest in the training of young adults, the higher percentage of these camp leaders we find seeking careers in Jewish education and serving as Jewish leaders on campus, in schools, and in other synagogue settings.

At Ramah's national training programs, young staff members learn to apply what they experienced as campers to a broader understanding of leadership development. The energy generated by dozens of young leaders coming together plays an important role in propelling each participant

Participants learn to weave together multiple narratives and voices in order to create one communal story; and to invest heavily in achieving optimal group dynamics.

forward on their leadership path. Participants learn to set the right environment for learning; to facilitate positive interpersonal dynamics; to weave together multiple narratives and voices in order to create one communal story; and to invest heavily in achieving optimal group dynamics, which are at the heart of a successful effort in both experiential education and in community building. Importantly, Ramah also teaches staff members to aspire

to the highest professional standards by creating and collaborating on best practices, and by embracing the ongoing pursuit of knowledge. By the conclusion of their Ramah careers, many of these young leaders are more than ready to become teachers, motivators, and influencers in their Jewish communities.

As Ramah continues to grow and strengthen our existing camps, our mission is expanding to provide more year-round and lifelong leadership experiences, often in partnership with other institutions, including day schools. A recent \$2 million grant from the AVI CHAI Foundation and the Maimonides Fund will help us create a new alumni division to propel this mission, and we look forward to working closely with school and synagogue leaders who understand that working together, and using all twelve months of the year for intensive Jewish education, will be essential to building stronger communities and effective leaders. ■



Developing Leaders, Not Replacements

■ by **DAVID CYGIELMAN**

This third article in the series, by the founder of Moishe House, argues that the crisis lies not in the number of qualified leaders but in the lack of leeway that established organizations provide for young leaders to lead.

To say that there is a crisis of leadership in the Jewish community would be taking a band-aid approach to a much larger issue facing our community. The problem lies not in a lack of future leadership; it lies instead in how we, as a Jewish community, do leadership development. In my work at Moishe House, I am constantly amazed at the quality and depth of leadership among Jewish youth. I actually think leadership is one of the huge strengths of the Jewish community. The crisis that I see is in the confusion between giving opportunities for real leadership versus trying to convince someone to do exactly what is currently being done but calling it leadership development.

Almost every long-standing Jewish organization has a leadership development track. In theory, its goal is to develop leaders, take an organization to a new place, provide fresh vision and perspective and ultimately have people follow this leadership. Unfortunately, leadership development is often built only as a pathway for following, not leading. Particularly in the Jewish community, leadership development is often a narrow track built because those in current leadership positions are ready to move on; before they can do so, they feel they need someone to take over their exact roles.

The trouble with this model is that none of the young leaders I know are particularly interested in those roles. It is not

that they do not believe in the organization or want to develop themselves as leaders; it is that time and time again, their fresh ideas and new directions are blocked by the existing infrastructure. All too often, they learn that the organization is not actually looking for leaders, they are looking for replacements.

There is not a crisis in leading, there is a crisis in following. Not everything needs to be new, fresh or innovative, and a lot of what we are doing as a community is working. We have to be willing to give people the oppor-

tunity to lead, try new things and base decisions not on the past, but rather on the future.

Moishe House (<http://moishehouse.org/>) is a young organization with young leaders working both in the field and behind the scenes to promote a type of community building for people in their 20s that rarely exists in institutional settings. Our staff provides support to people around the globe who are dedicating their spare time to turning their homes into centers of Jewish life for themselves and their peers. With the support of both



David Cygielman is founder and CEO of Moishe House. He can be reached at david@moishehouse.org.

Particularly in the Jewish community, leadership development is often a narrow track built because those in current leadership positions are ready to move on; before they can do so, they feel they need someone to take over their exact roles.





national and localized funders, Moishe House’s model has been overwhelmingly successful mainly because we get out of the way. We believe that residents living in Moishe House actually do know what will build the strongest community.

Of course, we provide a great deal of sup-

port and training, but ultimately we are letting the residents lead the way and doing our best to follow. This model of effectively following our residents is creating many opportunities for new leaders to emerge in a setting they feel comfortable in as well as launching them into the more institutional Jewish community of

their city. It is our hope that these young adults who come into their own through Moishe House will be the leaders who will want to take on the next generation of leadership throughout the Jewish community. Although the question still remains, will the organizations be ready and willing to follow? ■



RAVSAK and ERB Partner to Establish “Network Norms”

RAVSAK is pleased to announce the launch of a new partnership with ERB, the Educational Records Bureau, to craft a “network norm” for RAVSAK schools participating in the CTP reasoning and achievement assessment (Comprehensive Testing Program).

The establishment of a RAVSAK Norm will allow for comparisons of participating school results with other schools in RAVSAK (in the aggregate), as well as having the comparisons to other independent and suburban schools across the country. Day school leaders are frequently (and increasingly) confronted with requests from parents who want to know how their children are performing relative to children in other independent schools. The ability to make meaningful comparisons that demonstrate student and school success is for

many schools a key element in “making the case” for enrollment and philanthropic support.

ERB currently offers norm rating groups for a number of other independent school networks, including NAIS (National Association of Independent Schools), ISACS (Independent School Association of Central States), CAIS (California Association of Independent Schools), the Montessori School Association, and CGS (National Coalition of Girls’ Schools). Additionally, ERB provides national independent school norms and suburban school norms, providing participating RAVSAK schools with a broader context for reflecting on their own data.

Founded in 1927 with the mission of creating “testing and learning solutions that would help schools

develop improved curriculum based on results, thus helping students gain a better education,” ERB today provides testing programs and services in more than 2,000 independent and public schools.

Standardized tests are not a part of every school’s program, nor does RAVSAK advocate for or against standardized testing as a means of measuring student performance. Schools that utilize norm rated tests and those with an interest in this process will benefit greatly from RAVSAK’s new partnership with ERB.

Schools that are currently members of ERB and those interested in learning more should contact Pamela Appleton, regional director, at pappleton@erblearn.org. Additional information about ERB can be found at www.erb.org. ■

Case Study in Day School Leaders

“We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.”
Martin Luther King Jr.

As several articles in this issue note, leadership is a condition of always confronting crises great and small. Crises are issues that leaders need to confront head-on, right away; they hope to confront them “well enough,” and to do better the next time. But like the Greek philosopher in the river, a leader never confronts the same crisis twice. The key for handling most crises well is to keep hold of “infinite hope,” for leaders to retain a sense of perspective based on the lofty vision and mission of the organization. In Jewish day schools, our “infinite hope” is rooted in and nourished by the values and teachings of our tradition. Our crises, too, sometimes arise from the dynamics of Jewish identity today. Here we present a case study of a day school crisis that emerges from conflicting visions of Jewish practice and values. The respondents, in different ways, all seek to anchor their responses in a vision of Judaism’s “infinite hope.”

Mr. Linda and Jack Stein have enrolled their son, Daniel, in kindergarten at the Goldberg Jewish Day School, where you are head of school. They had initially heard about GJDS from a neighbor, and after reading in the admissions materials that the school “respects all levels of Jewish observance and is designed to reflect the range of practices and beliefs of our families,” they were certain that GJDS was perfect for their eclectic Jewish family. Linda was raised in a Conservative home, Jack in a Reform household, and both have gravitated toward Orthodoxy as adults (in fact, they met at a Chabad Purim party in college). Linda and Jack eagerly applied to the school, which was delighted to accept Daniel—a bright, creative five-year-old from a supportive, affluent family. The Steins, a font of social activity, successfully encouraged a number of their friends to apply to the school as well.

Several weeks have gone by since the start of the school year, and your board chair happens to bump into Jack in the supermarket. Jack states that he is very unhappy at GJDS and is considering pulling his son out. He tells the chair that the school’s pluralistic claims are a “sham.” As a modern Orthodox family, their beliefs, traditions and practices are simply not reflected in the life of the school. Jack says that he has raised concerns about what happens in the classroom with the teacher, “but she did not even understand my perspective.” When asked to be more specific, he tells the board chair that he finds the kashrut policy to be vague and unenforceable, the messages about mitzvot being optional problematic, and the overall tone of the school negatively impacted by the classical liberal’s dilemma: we respect all points of view except the traditional one. They are also the only shomer Shabbat family in kindergarten, where Daniel has already missed out on three Saturday play dates with classmates.

The more Jack talks, the angrier he gets. “The more I think about it, I really feel deceived. The school sold me and my friends a bill of goods.” According to the board chair, the conversation ends on two positive notes: Jack says that Daniel loves school and he agrees to make a meeting with you.

So...

1. What do you say to Jack (be specific)?
2. What don’t you say to Jack?
3. What is the role of the board in this instance? What is the role of the administration?
4. What do you learn from this incident?
5. What Jewish values, texts, customs, etc. inform your thinking about this dilemma?

Response by Sam Chestnut

When processing the strong concerns of parents about the alignment of school philosophy with their own experience, one should make sure that the parent is sharing their concerns with the appropriate person (e.g., with the head of school). The parent should be informed that the conversation/meeting will lead to some “discovery” to determine the facts and to begin to gather data in order to come to an appropriate solution. In the first conversation, the head of school should avoid making broad and aggressive statements about other families or faculty until he or she has time to talk with named parties.

At the same time, it is also important to affirm the parent’s philosophy and beliefs and assure him that if faculty and/or parent communities are not acting in a way consistent with the values of the school, then corrective action will be taken. Finally, after speaking with all appropriate parties involved, a course of action, if necessary, will be developed. Any resolution must consider the integrity of all involved, respond to the parent, and provide a clear plan for all. The head of school must work with staff to be sure that they understand and support any actions and to help facilitate productive conversations with all parents to ensure that such challenges can be avoided in the future.

This scenario raises some important issues with respect to proper board-head of school relationship and protocol. The board chair did the right thing by referring the disgruntled parent to the head of school. The board chair should follow up with the school leader to ensure that the matter was processed and that the resolution was consistent with the mission of the school. If there is a real

disconnect between the stated mission and philosophy of the school and how the school truly operates, it would be appropriate for the head of school to raise these concerns with the board chair for clarity, evaluation, collaboration and support in moving toward proper alignment of school mission and practice.

As a product of Jewish day school myself, I often use the values that were instilled in me through the great teachers I experienced. In particular, I think often of the Jewish concept that when assessing a situation, one must reserve judgment until all facts are made available and all parties’ perspectives are considered. In our school setting, we believe that mistakes, misunderstandings and challenges are opportunities for learning and can lead

Response by Ronen Glimer

In communicating to Jack that I appreciate his bringing this matter to my attention, I would work to understand how he defines his perspective, in order to gain insight into the thoughts and expectations he may have regarding practice. I’d also attempt to deflate some of the cynicism and antagonism that led to the comment “we respect all points of view except the traditional one,” by establishing a working context through which to guide him—ideally—towards an understanding that what we teach in the school is not a prescriptive approach towards Judaism and Halakhah but rather an invitation to examine how many different points of view can be brought forward.

The board and the head of school need to have thoughtful agreement about how to respond to situations such as this, so

to higher levels of consciousness and empathy. If we do not use Jewish wisdom, applied in this fashion, we run the risk of missing out on a remarkable learning opportunity.

As we all know, it is not sufficient simply to be able to list as members of your school Jewish families who represent the spectrum of the movements. All of our families must feel well served by a community day school. In addition, we must take advantage of our unique school setting to foster meaningful learning that helps a diverse Jewish community understand the strength of learning with, from and across the spectrum of Jewish practice. Conflict can offer opportunity to create understanding, growth and connection for the entire Jewish community.

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that even in an informal setting such as a grocery store, a board member can confidently assuage a parent’s concerns while knowingly having the head’s back.

Communicating clearly what a pluralistic school is all about is critical for a diverse parent body that may be both attracted by and also slightly circumspect of the claims. Formally outlining—by way of examples and scenarios—the school’s approach and philosophy through practical examples is important. Whether that happens during parent orientation or as part of the recruiting process or simply lives online, the opportunity to educate and explain is one that should not be missed. I believe that the absence of people having a concrete and formal understanding of what a school’s pluralistic claims are is a liability and a teaching opportunity for the school and the community it appeals to.

Case Study in Day School Leaders

It also goes without saying that the challenge of integrating diverse religious perspectives and practices is not an easy one. But at the same time, the notion of a community school that is open, progressive-minded and pluralistic almost implicitly assumes a social contract among its families of shared responsibility for the welfare of the school community beyond just the traditional function areas of endowment and parent involvement.

There are countless examples from the Torah in which communal responsibility and willingness to own an idea or issue have the power to resonate and spur ac-

tion. When Joseph, for example, reveals himself by saying “I am your brother,” he renews and reaffirms the relationship he has to his brothers and rekindles their own sense of kinship toward him. And while community and brotherhood/sisterhood are potentially abstract and over-used concepts, I think that many of the newer models of day schools are not only established with these notions in mind but are created as institutions to live them out through what they practice and teach.

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ceases to be the primary value.

Orthodoxy necessarily cannot subscribe to religious pluralism in the contemporary sense. Orthodoxy is the decision to continue to understand tradition in “the traditional way,” as objective truth and external authority. Pluralism involves a revisionary translation of the tradition Orthodoxy clings firmly to.

Goldberg Jewish Day School no doubt is committed to “respect all levels of Jewish observance and is designed to reflect the range of practices and beliefs of all of its families.” The issue at hand is that the perspective for this honoring and respecting all of its families is based on a non-Orthodox pluralistic world view. Such a view is untenable and unacceptable to any family that sees itself exclusively in the Orthodox tradition.

Classical Orthodoxy argues that Halakhah is absolute and not contingent upon the ethic of the age. Halakhah is seen as binding on all Jews at all times. Today this position is obviously voluntarily entered into as there is no coercion to enforce it.

Inclusion, as Pluralism

What the Goldberg Jewish Day School needs to promote to the Orthodox community is not inclusion through a philosophy of pluralism, but rather what I would call “inclusivism,” a plan for success or inclusion without a philosophy. This because pluralism succeeds only if the historic definition of Orthodoxy is false; Orthodoxy will always define itself in terms of truth and authority, never as interpretation and option. Pluralism denies the self-definition of Orthodoxy. In other words, inclusion through pluralist conceptions of unity is incompatible with Orthodoxy. No wonder then that “The more Jack talks the angrier he gets.”

The only possible approach lies in what the case study ends with. Goldberg Jewish Day School will be desirable to some

Response by Pinchos Hecht

I am reminded of the phrase attributed to Bernard Shaw, that with a slight adjustment may best describe the central issue in this case study: “Jews are divided by a common language.” In his book *The Ambivalent American Jew*, Charles Liebman defined the challenge for us. He writes, “The major categories for the expression of and determination of Jewish authenticity have always been legalistic, but the primary modes of Jewish expression today simply do not fit these categories.” Again, we see how a shared language can actually divide us. Communication between Jews of different backgrounds and beliefs depend on a high degree of ambiguity and the acceptance that key words, phrases, and sentences will convey different and incompatible meaning to different listeners.

Responding to the case study requires that we define our terms. While this may not be pragmatic or even desirable in other situations or settings, it is necessary here for an honest and reflective response and for meaningful conversation to follow. Only after a careful analysis of pluralism and traditional Orthodoxy will we be able to frame the conflict and reply to it. I borrowed from the writings of Jonathan Sacks in helping with these definitions.

Tradition sees Jews as constituting a covenantal community defined by boundaries. These boundaries may be sharply or loosely defined. Religious pluralism as model for Judaism calls for definition and exploration. This definition will almost always differ from one pluralistic institution to another. Traditional religion claims absolute authority over reality, authority and truth, whereas pluralism argues that even ultimate truths are not incompatible, merely alternative expressions of reality. This perspective of pluralism is revolutionary and at sharp odds with religious history. Religious belief is understood in terms of an objective truth that excludes alternatives.

Denominational pluralism is neither a feature of historic tradition nor a response to modernity. Peter Berger argues that such pluralism occurs when religious authority is demonopolized and different groups have to compete for commitment in an open market. In a crisis of secularization such interdenominational cooperation is not a revival of religion, according to Berger. It comes about only when religion has been so marginalized that past internal discords are less prominent, when absolute truth is replaced with choice and when objective authority

Modern Orthodox families if its educational program is superior to all other schools in its area. Goldberg Jewish Day School's educational product must be so compelling that families such as Dr. Linda and Jack Stein decide that despite the irreconcilable issues they have with the perspective from which the school operates they still see the value in staying.

To many Modern Orthodox families, quality education is more important than the lack of a truly authentic Orthodox atmosphere, something they know they will need to create and nurture in

their own home and synagogue. With enough such families choosing to register at Goldberg Jewish Day School a peer group of such like-minded parents and children will lead to Orthodox families finding their place at Goldberg Jewish Day School and able to advocate for their religious needs in the broader context of the school's culture. In other words, inclusion without pluralism.

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Response by Orry Jacobs

I believe this case illustrates very well the need for day schools, particularly community day schools, to make sure that prospective parents have appropriate expectations about the school. The last thing we want is for a parent to have "buyer's remorse."

What does a statement like "respects all levels of Jewish observance and is designed to reflect the range of practice and beliefs of our families" mean in practice? Such statements are open to interpretation, with each individual potentially picturing a different scenario as to how the statement gets reflected in day-to-day school operations. So it is important to discuss with prospective parents school practices which may be important to them such as the school's kashruth policy, which prayerbooks are used, and what is the school's philosophy on discussing differences in observance.

What is particularly challenging for community day schools is that they tend to serve a fairly diverse parent body. With Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, and unaffiliated families all present in many of our schools in varying proportions, it is important to try to deduce what is important to each prospective family. Then the school

needs to address those specific areas that would appear to be important, even if the parents don't ask the "right" questions. This diversity is what makes it so difficult to develop a single "elevator speech" for each community day school!

The board should work with the head of school to set the school's broad educational philosophy and associated policies. The head of school is responsible for interpreting and implementing the philosophy and associated policies. The head of school and the admissions staff should be responsible for explaining the philosophy and associated policies to prospective parents based upon their assessment of what is important

to each parent. In the final analysis, the ideal is for the entire school community—administration, faculty, lay leadership and parents—to develop a common language and to be on the same page about what Jewish pluralism means for their school.

In this case, it is appropriate for Jack to be referred to the head of school. The head of school should apologize to Jack for not having better explained the school's philosophy and how that philosophy is translated into action in such areas as the kashruth policy, messages about practicing mitzvot, etc. (The apology is appropriate even if the head of school believes that the explanation had been sufficient—the customer is always right!) It would be appropriate for the head of school to engage Jack in a discussion about how the school could do a better job of teaching and showing respect for traditional points of view.

The major lesson, however, is to make sure that prospective parents have realistic expectations about the school, so that this situation does not arise. This may mean that some parents will decide that the school is not appropriate for their child(ren), but that is preferable to having unhappy parents who may ultimately remove their children anyway.

Orry Jacobs is the president of The Agnon School in Beachwood, Ohio. He can be reached at orryjacobs@aol.com. ■

Response by Ben Karmel

School heads frequently are placed in the position of learning information from second-, third- and fourth-hand sources. According to the lessons associated with lashon hara, we need to be cautious. School administrators need to be time-sensitive when learning about secondhand comments aired in public about the school, as one of our many key roles relates to ensuring retention by providing perceived valued service to current families.

In this case, as quickly as possible, I would invite both parents to a private face-to-face meeting with administration. Prior to the parent meeting, I would conduct some basic research through contacting Daniel's teacher(s) in order to learn background knowledge relating to Daniel, the teacher's awareness of any parental concerns and which classmates Daniel seems to spend the most time with in

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Case Study in Day School Leadership

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class and during recess. I would consult with the guidance counselor or relevant staff person about other families in the grade who are potentially approachable for trying to assist in creating play dates (without speaking with any families).

On the phone with Jack, I would state that I received a heads-up from the board chair that the family shared their concerns with him about the school, that I have much time for them and would appreciate the opportunity to meet with both parents at the same time in my office to hear directly from them.

In the meeting I would thank Jack and Linda for their assistance in attracting other families to the school. I would ask them if it was true that indeed Daniel loves school, what is it precisely that Daniel loves about school and whom among the students does he spend his time with. Then I would ask them to share with me their specific concerns of what happened and why they are disturbed about the school. I would listen very carefully without interruption, taking notes and paraphrasing their concerns back to them. To clarify, I would ask them what is it in their minds that would resolve these issues, what would make them happy or change their minds positively about the school for each of their concerns.

I would be careful not to mention our

admissions material or policies, or any promises about implementing theoretical solutions to satisfy the parents, or anything about individual staff members or the board's role.

At this point I would tell the parents that I really appreciated their taking time out of their complex schedules to meet with me and for being candid about their concerns. I would tell them that I will take some time to review their case and to consult on the matters raised today, but that I would get back to them by a specific date.

The administration plays several roles in this instance. First, the administration must act quickly so that the parents believe that their voices were heard, that they matter as a family to the school and that the school will get back to them in a reasonable time frame to address their concerns. Second, it is the administration's job to enforce the school's mission, vision and values (probably written in admission materials) and to enforce school policies.

Third, administration needs to ensure that families perceive that they are receiving a valued service. To this, administration supervises staff in demonstrating their familiarity with policy areas such as kashrut and ensures that staff members (Jewish and non-Jewish) are educated about the sensitivities involved. Fourth, administration needs to verify that the

admission materials section that states that the school "is designed to reflect the range of practices and beliefs of our families" is in fact a true statement that does not contradict the school's mission or vision and/or values.

If it is a true written statement, administration needs to sit down with the chair of the board to determine how does the school in practice "reflect the range of practices and beliefs of our families" (especially in a heterogeneous family setting as the school in this case appears to be), and can this in fact actually be done. The board would then re-examine their mission, vision and values to verify that its mission cannot be open to misinterpretation, exposing the school to criticism that the school is misrepresenting itself on paper as something that it does not do in practice—for example, by fostering a flexible kashrut policy that only gives lip service to mitzvot.

A major lesson from this case is that a school's core beliefs of mission, vision and values are not static. These guiding principles for the school have a shelf life and need to be re-examined. When reporting about or hearing concerns secondhand, one needs to be cautious of the lessons surrounding lashon hara.

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חג פסח שמח

We at RAVSAK wish you a Happy Passover!

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 35]

IMPLICATIONS: *At Camp Stone, there is an implicit message that Jewish leadership and life is compromised by a lack of imagination. That's a message profoundly at odds with the world of schools (and not just Jewish ones) where fixed systems constrain conceptions of what is possible and ultimately of what is desirable. What if Jewish leaders were required to think and act outside the box, so that Jews and Judaism might thrive and not just survive?*

Beyond interpersonal intelligence to areyvut (collective responsibility)

The rhythms and texture of camp life create an emotionally intense environment at the heart of which is the relationship between camper and counselor. Leadership in this environment is profoundly interpersonal. But the interpersonal relationships between counselors and campers are important not only because the staff must act in *loco parentis*, taking care of other people's children. These relationships are also rooted in a subjective sense that campers and counselors, the whole camp, is connected as Am Yisrael. The campers are not other people's children. Literally, they and their counselors share an identity as "the children of Israel"—a sense nurtured within the incubator-like environment inside the camp gate.

Nobody at the camp is moved more powerfully by this sense of shared identity than Rothner, the camp director, who regularly talks about the camp community as our "*am*" and of the "sacred" rela-

Being aware of making a contribution to the Jewish people seems a minimum requirement for all Jewish leaders wherever located.

tionship between camper and counselor. This feeling of deep emotional connection to others comes from a powerful awareness of the ties that connect Jews with one another and it seems foundational to the fulfillment of the tasks of Jewish leadership.

IMPLICATIONS: *One wonders why (this) camp demands a more expansive sense of self than that called upon in other Jewish educational institutions. Ought not all Jewish leaders feel a sense of shared identity with the wider Jewish community and not just a sense of professional obligation to their clients or congregants?*

Jewish purposefulness/yi'ud

One last characteristic of Camp Stone leaders is their sense of making a difference to the Jewish future. The senior staff (almost all of whom are only in their early twenties) explain that they come to camp because they've been encouraged to think about the contribution they're

Jewish leadership means to be always in a self-aware and dynamic relationship with the Jewish past, present and future. It occurs where one's Jewish inner world meets the Jewish world outside.

making to klal Yisrael. They see the potential in their jobs to "change people's lives."

Being aware of making a contribution to the Jewish people seems a minimum requirement for all Jewish leaders wherever located. But this same sense can become radically altered when one sees one's contribution not only in relation to the present Jewish moment but also in relation to the ancient Jewish past or at least to multiple generations of Jewish experience. In these terms the Jewish

leader carries the burden of Jewish history even when occupied by the seemingly mundane task of taking care of young American Jews for four weeks of their summer vacation, even if that only involves cutting salad in the kitchen. Thus, the camp director startles the staff, in his

last talk before camp starts, by suggesting that the first century rabbi Yohanan Ben Zakkai would be looking down on their work smiling, surprised that the Jewish people have survived so well. With an expanded sense of the context for one's acts, Jewish purposefulness has an almost cosmic scope.

IMPLICATIONS: *It is worth asking how leadership is changed by an expanded sense of mission. Does this expanded sense change the quality and intensity of leaders' practice?*

I submit that these five qualities are not peculiar features of the special circumstances at camp. They are readily seen in

the immersive environment of camp—and particularly at a special camp like Stone—but they can just as well compose what to look for in Jewish leaders in any number of institutions, not least in contemporary Jewish day schools.

Some of these characteristics are not peculiarly Jewish. Their Jewish force, I think, comes from the way that, together, they inform a way of being in the world. Jewish leadership in these terms means having a special sense of one's person, and also of one's place in Jewish history and among the Jewish people today. Jewish leadership means to be always in a self-aware and dynamic relationship with the Jewish past, present and future. It occurs where one's Jewish inner world meets the Jewish world outside. It is where consciousness meets community. ■

To learn more

Pomson, Alex. *Summer Camp as an Incubator of Jewish Leadership: The Case of Camp Stone*. New York: AVI CHAI Foundation.

Leadership from Within

■ by **BETTY WINN** and **LARRY KLIGMAN**

Where should schools look for its leaders and how should they be cultivated? The current and future heads of California's Heschel Day School describe a successful process of transition within the school.

But Moses said to G-d, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" And G-d said, "I will be with you."

"The majority of recruiting is reactive," writes David Hakala in *HRWorld*. "An opening occurs and the recruitment process kicks in to fill an immediate need for talent." Instead, he notes, "recruiting should be proactive, looking ahead to the future to see what talent will be needed in key areas... and taking steps now to fill those needs."

The Jewish community day school world needs to apply this principle of proactivity. Unanticipated head of school turnover is all too frequent, and even in the best of situations, transitions occur all the time. If a school is thoughtful and planful about meeting its present and future needs for leadership, it will have greater success than if it merely reacts to events that occur.

Although change is a given within any school, it is not always embraced in the most productive ways, especially by faculty and parents. We all know that a major change in senior leadership can be a time of reflection, growth, and new vision. Yet when the change originates from someone new to the school, it often creates anxiety, speculation, and uncertainty. Students are resilient, yet their parents and our faculties and staff may have a more difficult time when there is a complete shift at the helm. This can result in poor morale along with higher than normal student and faculty attrition.

However, when a school looks "inside" and develops leadership from within it can often result in a "win-win" situation. Now the school can retain and promote a valued leader and in doing so ensure a continuity of vision, a familiarity of culture, and a comfort level for many constituents, which is especially important for fundraising and enrollment.

In this article, we propose that the best place to look for future leadership is within the school itself. Succession planning involving cultivation and promotion from within can not only help solve the leadership crisis, but has the ancillary benefit of enhancing morale and productivity within the school, as talented teachers and administrators position themselves to move up a career ladder.

Succession planning requires a series of steps that must be implemented carefully in order for the process to be successful. Based upon lessons learned from a previous less-than-easy transition, we offer the following guidance from procedures we implemented to assure that the next transition would be smooth and positive. What we are trying to build in this model is the support necessary for when the big challenges come.

- Identify someone in your school who has innate leadership skills that can be nurtured. Perhaps there's an administrator on the team who has a real talent for leadership.

- Start a conversation with that person about what leadership would mean. Would s/he want to be a school head? What would it take to get there?
- Invest in this person through leadership training utilizing local and national organizations in the field. AVI CHAI funded programs such as DSLTI, Project SuLaM, leadership programs through Harvard's Principal's Center, and NAIS's Aspiring Heads Fellowship are examples of outstanding resources.
- Provide opportunities for the future leader to engage in the many governance, development, and strategic ac-



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tivities that are involved in headship: budgeting, performance reviews and contracting with faculty, participation on board committees and attendance at meetings, interactions with all constituents including donors, grandparents, and alumni, assuming responsibility for larger projects within the community, involvement with administrative groups in the independent school world and within the Jewish community.

- Communicate with your board chair and your head support committee. Make nurturing leadership within the school one of your goals as a head of school.
- When it becomes clear that this person is a right choice, ready to take on

the challenges of leadership, present his or her candidacy to the head support committee, letting them know your intentions and timeline and suggesting that this person would be a worthy successor.

- Provide opportunities for the internal leader to meet one-on-one with the board chair and select members of the board to allow them to look at the candidate with this specific goal in mind.
- Put together a transition team with members consisting of various constituencies of the school to evaluate whether to do a search or to appoint the nominee of the current leader. Our committee consisted of several members of the executive committee along with past board leaders. This is a vitally important and difficult task, since it is potentially undermining to both sides. The board needs to get to know the candidate and to vet him or her before determining if s/he would be the best person for the position or whether to do a search. Allow enough time for the transition team to do its

work. (In our case, it took about two months.)

- Once the executive committee makes a recommendation, the person should be presented to the entire board for their review and vote.
- Should the board approve the candidate, determine a timeline and strategic plan for the transition. Allow the appropriate amount of time and provide for support for both the current head and the head-elect. In our case, we have changed the structure of the administration to add an asso-

strategic issues, etc.

- Before any decisions are made, confidentiality is critical. Once there is a determination for moving forward, communication is essential. Communication must be clear, ongoing and as transparent as possible.
- Create a transition team. Assure that board leadership is not new at the same time the head is new. Work to assure a seamless transition. Remember that the new leader will have his or her own leadership style.

When a school develops leadership from within, it can ensure a continuity of vision, a familiarity of culture, and a comfort level important for fundraising and enrollment.

ciate head position which will allow the head-elect to work with the current head for a full school year to see the school through the “head’s eyes.” Make the head-elect part of the conversations and decision-making on big issues involving students, faculty,

- Provide ongoing mentoring support for the new head through RAVSAK or other avenues.

Finally, remember: leadership is both innate and learned. Even Moses needed help. ■



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The Leadership Recruitment Challenge: Expanding the Pipeline

■ by **DANIEL ALTER**

In contrast to the previous article, Alter argues that the qualities of leadership required by day school heads differ substantially from the qualities required for excellence within the classroom.

In the Jewish day school world we often hear complaints about the lack of strong heads of school and few candidates capable of visionary leadership of our most precious educational institutions. Even more distressing, the average tenure of a head of school in the United States is shockingly short—which further strains the successful and stable navigation of our day schools. How can we change this reality?

This question is by no means a new one and has been the focus of discussion for many years. A number of charitable foundations and donors have invested heavily in well run, professionally executed programs that develop leadership skills among present and aspiring day school leaders. While many of these programs have impacted positively on the landscape of educational leadership, we continue to ignore a basic and systemic flaw in our process of leadership development. Questioning some of our basic assumptions may help alleviate our leadership deficiency.

We are removing our superstars from the most important role in our schools—the actual educators of our children.

Under the present system, our best teachers “rise” to upper level administrative positions through the day school’s organizational structure. Peter Principle aside, this accepted pathway for advancement is inherently destructive to the quality institutions we are try-

ing to build. We are removing our superstars from the most important role in our schools—the actual educators of our children. In addition, the implicit assumption of this promotion pathway is that teachers are uniquely qualified to manage the organization in which they work, and are therefore best suited to take on administrative leadership roles in the Jewish day school world.

I would challenge this assumption.

While teachers generally do possess a solid understanding of the world of education, this is not enough. The skill set that we seek in our teachers is fundamentally different than that required for heads of school. Teachers need to be skilled in content areas such as classroom management, content knowledge, and pedagogical expertise. The skill set for administrators is quite different. Administrators are responsible for matters such

Consider a typical day of a teacher and then contrast it with a typical day of a head of school. The roles differ in radical ways. Making a tough call concerning an adult subordinate will likely test the leader much differently than classroom challenges. Asking teachers to use their skill set to become a head of school is not that different from asking engineers to become the CFO of the large company in which they works. While select teachers may well possess the right leadership and administrative skills to become a strong head of school, it is often not an obvious and logical next career step.

If the issue were merely one of develop-



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ment of a desired skill set, the challenge would not be difficult to overcome. Programs could be created, both within schools and on a national level, that address the deficiencies in the skill set of teachers and train them in the leadership fundamentals required to be a head of school.

However, the issue is far more profound and goes to the core of the type of person we seek to lead our schools. The personality type of a teacher tends to be very different than that of a CEO. If you were about to hire a new teacher and a new administrator and as part of your job interview you administered a personality test to each of the applicants, you would be looking for very different results for each of the new hires. The personality

type that can become an extraordinary teacher will often not make for a good administrator.

What needs to change?

If we are to be serious about changing the model, we will need to make a number of cultural and programmatic shifts.

First, we need to reevaluate our priorities. Our star teachers should be encouraged to remain in the positions in which they excel. We need to support a culture where star teachers are valued and ranked on the top of the Jewish day school hierarchy. This means that we need to create tracks for continuous job and skill growth opportunities. Creation of titles such as master teacher, mentor teacher, or other titles that carry certain pedagogical responsibilities with them may be a good place to start. In such roles, these teachers can serve as mentors and guides for new teachers, play a role in working with parents on parenting skills, or develop curriculum or other teaching related activities.

Nonetheless, teachers' primary focus is in the classroom, continuing to work their magic with their students. Of course, we will need to rethink our remuneration priorities under this model. Star teachers will need to be remunerated in similar fashion to our administrators. This may mean giving these star teachers roles that they can play over summers, or it may simply mean making their salary equivalent to administrators in proportion to the amount of time they

Master teachers can serve as mentors and guides for new teachers, play a role in working with parents on parenting skills, or develop curriculum or other teaching related activities.

work per year if they prefer to have two months off in the summer—a perk that teachers receive and administrators do not. A number of years ago, Dr. Bruce Powell shared with me that he follows this practice and is willing to pay teachers more than administrators if they are expert teachers.

We also need to consider new pipelines for developing heads of school. As I look back at my own experience, my best training for the job of head of school was not from the teaching that I did prior to my present role. Rather, it was from my ex-

While there are differences between schools and businesses, we are not as different as one would think. It is ironic that many in the business world make the same argument.

perience as a shul rabbi, involved daily in community building, working with volunteers, navigating politics and creating a vision for the institution for which I was a spiritual leader.

Additionally, if I were given the ability to return to school to acquire a degree that would benefit my school today, I would study for an MBA, not a degree in education. By opening ourselves up to a broader view of potential school leaders, our pool will increase dramatically. Successful Jewish executives in the for-profit or not-for-profit world, who are looking to move into a career where they can make a difference in the lives of our students and impact on our communities, may be open to considering a role as a head of school. These individuals can bring incredible talent and important skill sets to the table.

The first step in moving in this direction is for Jewish day schools to achieve clarity on what is expected of each position, how to measure success in that position, and how to hold individuals accountable. With

Many will find this idea threatening and protest vigorously. They will argue that my approach is far too corporate and schools don't run like businesses. They will claim that bringing someone in from the outside who does not understand

school culture is an experiment doomed to fail. While I agree that there are differences between schools and businesses, we are not as different as one would think. It is ironic that many in the business world, when faced with the question of hiring a CEO internally or externally, make the same argument. They argue that the culture of their industry is fundamentally and radically different than other industries, and bringing in an outsider is destined to result in catastrophe.

We don't need to reinvent the wheel in this area; there is much literature about the process of hiring a CEO externally. Of course, one must be sensitive to the fact that each industry has its own character and unique attributes. For some, profit may be the bottom line, while others are far more invested in developing positive values as part of their culture. At times a CEO may have the personality to thrive in one industry, but will fail miserably in another. Schools are no different. Hiring a successful CEO from a different industry to take over a school without thoughtful examination of the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate is imprudent. If the process is managed correctly, however, our schools can broaden their search for qualified candidates to lead our schools and we will be the better for it.

The future of the Jewish community is dependent, to a large extent, on strong, talented and capable leadership. As such, it is critical that we find the best and most capable leaders to guide our Jewish day schools, the most important of Jewish institutions, into the future. The ultimate beneficiary of these changes will be our children, the future of our community. ■

Preparing Our Next Professional Leaders: It Takes a Community

■ by **DAVID EDELL, DARA Z. KLARFELD, and JOSH ELKIN**

Representatives of a prominent search firm for nonprofit leaders encourage organizations throughout the Jewish community to take responsibility for leadership development.

As nonprofit recruitment consultants, we spend our days working with clients who are in the midst of leadership transitions. While recruiting a new CEO or executive director or head of school is never an easy task, we find that most search committees begin their work skeptical that they will find a pool of talented professionals who have the complex skill set required to lead, and who also have the desire to do so. They also ask if they need to consider candidates from other fields or the private sector in order to find the caliber of professional leadership their organization or school requires.

What is driving our clients to ask these questions? Most lay leaders and senior executives tell us that the challenges of leading a nonprofit organization have changed significantly in the last decade. As these challenges become more complex, the need for the professional to have expertise in a number of areas is more critical than in years past. Challenges of funding, government relations, serving diverse constituencies, fiscal management and organizational strategy, vision and governance all require an arsenal of skills and knowledge. In a majority of senior leadership positions, professionals are forced to develop new skills in real time or “on the job.” In addition, there is evidence that many talented professionals shy away from the top slot because of the enormous pressures and endless demands of senior level positions.

In order for the nonprofit community

to address this challenge in a significant way, agencies, professional organizations and movements need both to strengthen their capacity for developing future executives and attend to their ability to plan and act strategically in anticipation of inevitable leadership transitions.

The leadership “crisis” has come to the forefront at this moment in time largely because of the significant demand for new executives. A 2011 survey of nonprofit executives conducted by Compasspoint and the Meyer Foundation found that more than 40% of current CEOs plan to leave their positions during the coming five years. Nonprofit management graduate programs in schools of business, public administration, education, and social work are trying to address the burst of interest amongst the millennial generation, but they do not address the immediate need.

In the Jewish community, the crisis of leadership is even more acute. Hundreds of Jewish organizations will, in the very near future, experience a significant turnover in their leadership. A recent survey commissioned by the Andrea and

Charles Bronfman Philanthropies found that the expectation for executive turnover is also above 40% in the coming five years. However, only 25% of executives at Jewish nonprofits surveyed could identify an “up and coming star” who could run their organization after them. In addition, the majority of executives could not think of where their succes-



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sors might be found. This leaves the field confronted with a sense of uncertainty, frustration, and concern about the capacity of a next generation of professionals who have the skills and experiences to serve in senior leadership roles in the coming years.

Perhaps what is most disconcerting is that the Jewish community’s concern about future Jewish community profes-

sional leaders is not new. The Council of Jewish Federation's Commission on Professional Personnel issued a report in 1987 entitled "The Developing Crisis." The chairman, Morton Mandel, wrote, "We confront a crisis in personnel that poses a threat to the effectiveness of the Federation. Even more basic, it puts the quality of Jewish community life at risk."

In order to change the future landscape of successful executive transitions in the Jewish community, the development of a strong pipeline of professionals needs to be grounded in the notion of collective responsibility. It is the responsibility of communal organizations to mentor and train young professionals, with the understanding that they will likely take those learned skills and apply them down the road to their work in a different organization, but with the hopes that the cycle of leadership will land them senior professionals who have been trained elsewhere, and are now applying learned skills at their organization.

Likewise, it is the responsibility of current senior executives to prioritize and enable an organizational infrastructure which incubates young talent. Executive development is not just about coursework, seminars and conferences but in having the opportunity to handle executive responsibilities. This is a widely appreciated notion, but as many senior executives tell us, the work at hand is often overwhelming in scope, and to allow for a professional structure which provides successful outcomes for the organization will at minimum require additional funding, and will most certainly remove professionals from their day-to-day responsibilities.

Lastly, it is the responsibility of the lay leadership to recognize the limits of human capacity and to make sure that executive leaders have the appropriate professional support and access to their own professional development opportunities, which are a prerequisite for a successful and appropriate tenure in a position. This is most critical, since the professional demands placed on senior executives make them vulnerable for early burnout.

Working with Jewish day schools during periods of senior level transition presents

additional challenges. In addition to being the chief executive, heads of school also work with a complicated and diverse combination of constituents including parents, teachers and students. Often times, heads of school are public leaders in their Jewish community, in many cases setting the tone for making the case for the value of formal Jewish education, in a day where concerns about cost, competitive marketplace and the goal of high academic achievement reign supreme.

In addition, successful professional leadership in Jewish day school demands mastery of a complex set of management and business administration skills which are often not acquired in the traditional higher

It is the responsibility of communal organizations to mentor young professionals, with the understanding that they will likely take those learned skills to their work in a different organization.

education programs, from which many heads of school graduate. The community of stakeholders in the Jewish community must continually be thinking about strategies like distributed leadership, which can help to train and mentor young professionals to strengthen their acumen in all areas of leadership required running a successful and thriving school.

These issues and realities inform so much of the work that we do. In the short term, we are working to address the crisis in leadership by probing our clients to think broadly and strategically about where new models for leadership may be coming from. We are aggressive in counseling our clients to strongly consider professionals both from other nonprofit disciplines and from the private sector and women for executive positions. In each case, when working with our clients, we work to identify, recruit and vet candidates by looking at their overall leadership capacity, their areas of experience and expertise, and their motivation and preparedness.

In the longer term, professionals, foundations and community stakeholders need to

think strategically about the need for developing a sustainable, broad based model which will lead a next generation of senior leadership to be both sophisticated and skilled in the areas that they will require in order to lead the Jewish community over the next 30 years.

A successful search is at its core a direct outgrowth of the notion of collective responsibility in both the Jewish and non-profit world. By gaining a complete understanding of the all the stakeholders involved in a particular search, they all feel invested in the success of the transition in each of their particular roles. This "discovery" phase is critical in information gathering, and it also sets the stage

for the last part of the transition—the "successful conclusions" phase, when new professionals begin their work. Successful conclusions begin with the placement of a candidate in a job, who can thrive when stakeholders from the "discovery" phase provide coaching, mentoring and supporting of their new hire during the first years of their tenure. A culture of investing in a new executive with the expectation they will learn and grow in their position is encouraged.

It is the responsibility of the community to pay attention to developing the pipeline of executives who are prepared and motivated to assume executive leadership roles. We encourage the various stakeholders in the Jewish community and in the nonprofit world to think strategically about how we can collectively be successful in cultivating the leaders our organizations need in the coming years. ■

To learn more

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The Classroom Boardroom: Lessons from Wexner

■ by **B. ELKA ABRAHAMSON**

The president of the Wexner Foundation, which has educated hundreds of Jewish lay leaders, offers guidance for creating boards with the excitement, growth and collaboration designed into their programs.

Leslie H. Wexner, founder and CEO of Limited Brands, was asked in the early 1980s if he would get in line to become campaign chair of a major national Jewish organization. “I don’t think so,” he responded.

“Why not?” he was asked.

“Because growing up, my folks moved around a lot, and I never had much of a serious Jewish education. I am really not prepared to be that leader. It would be like my asking you to become chairman of The Limited. What do you know about women’s clothing?”

Later, Les realized that others probably felt similarly when they were approached to assume Jewish leadership positions. Either they accepted such positions despite feeling unprepared, or they declined those positions, depriving the Jewish community of their considerable talents. In either case, the Jewish community lost out.

In response to this experience, Les, together with Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman (z”l) conceived and established the Wexner Heritage Program in 1985. The purpose of the program is to educate Jewish communal leaders in the history, thought, tradition and contemporary challenges of the Jewish people. The program seeks to expand the leadership vision of its members, deepen their Jewish values, and bring a Jewish language of discourse to their policy and decision-making in the community. By upgrading their skills in these ways, the Heritage Program enables its members to serve their communities with an enhanced

sense of Jewish authenticity, confidence, and effectiveness.

From the very beginning, Leslie Wexner viewed leadership as the decisive factor in human affairs, the element that makes a difference in business, government and community life. Les knew nearly three decades ago what many have come to realize over time, that the Jewish community will stagnate or flourish based upon the quality of its leadership. Today, this is the “gevalt” heard round the Jewish world. “Where have all the leaders gone?” More specifically, “Where will we find our next effective board member or dazzling day school board chairperson?” It is a good question. But is it a new one? Was there a time when finding chair people and qualified board members was easier?

Some, as evidenced by the theme of this publication, have named this alleged dearth of leadership a crisis. I will refrain from either agreeing or claiming otherwise. But from my particular perch in the Jewish world I am convinced that talented leaders do, in fact, abound in our Jewish orbit though we have not, as a collective, done our best to capture the imagination or attention of our own talent. At the same time we have, as a community, developed a set of increasingly higher demands for those we call upon to “lead.” And, to be honest, we propel willing, energetic, individuals from the ranks of room parent to board chair with warp speed. Anyone who puts a toe in the wa-

ters of school involvement is pulled swiftly into the moving currents of institutional leadership sometimes knowing only how to tread water.

We make the assumption that those who offer any kind of organizational support are interested in and prepared for all kinds of responsibilities. If we care about our institutions, and especially about the success, soul and well-being of the individuals within those institutions, current board members and chairpersons must think carefully about the trajectory, expectations, and preparations of those we recruit to lead. Sink or swim is not an effective leadership philosophy. How do we draw and retain appropriate leaders to our boards?



Rabbi B. Elka Abrahamson is president of The Wexner Foundation, wexnerfoundation.org. She can be reached at eabrahamson@wexner.net.

The Wexner Heritage Program has consistently drawn talented individuals to its cohorts despite the serious time commitment required for participation. It is a remarkable experiment that has enjoyed unwavering success for nearly three decades. Why?

One Heritage faculty member of long standing, Rabbi Yitz Greenberg answers with this, “[Heritage participants are] seeking Jewish growth. They are not bound by the boxes and barriers in American Jewry. They are pluralists and idealists who turn ideas into action and leadership responsibilities.”

I think he is correct, but I don’t know that all of the candidates we select for our program begin the experience as Rabbi

Greenberg so describes. We provide a carefully crafted classroom in which individuals can explore alternate perspectives to tightly held assumptions about Judaism, about Jewish institutions, and about change within the Jewish world. With the right mix of people around the table in tandem with outstanding facilitators and faculty, we witness time and again the transformative potential that is tapped among these cohorts. We have taken the time to articulate a set of values that infuses the way in which we strive to exercise leadership and informs the particular characteristics we seek in volunteer leaders.

The Heritage Program is a precious space in which Jews of vastly diverse backgrounds and approaches to Jewish life come together. We embrace, indeed celebrate this *diversity* and labor to conduct conversations across difference. Giving others the benefit of the doubt as to their sincerity, and integrity forms the baseline of our respectful engagement with each other.

Imagination and *curiosity* are encouraged. These intellectual exercises require the use of special mind muscles. Plenty of smart people fail to knock on the door of their own imagination, fail to color outside of the lines of current organizational perimeters, and cling to what is instead of asking “what might be?”

We place a high premium on developing and shaping *emotional intelligence*, the ability to be self-reflective, self-aware, to self-

Laughter fuels our energy...leadership, though a serious undertaking, should be fun.

Finally, we celebrate the quality of *humility* which allows us to truly listen. Humility enables us to embrace our own shortcomings, blind spots, and to constantly evolve. Humility paves the path to effective *collaboration* which we believe is at the heart of effective Jewish leadership.

These are the middot we seek in emerging leaders and are qualities we employ in assessing our work as professionals. Of course, these italicized items are mere words, platitudes on the page unless we actively strive to live by them and check our work against this demanding list. These (and other) qualities shape a rich text to be studied, interpreted, and expressed through behavior.

What if our day school boards took on the challenge of identifying leadership characteristics to which its members aim to adhere to in conducting school business? To ask the question differently, what if we expected from the day school board room exactly what we demand from the day school classroom: articulated objectives, dynamic facilitation, ongoing learning, engaging conversations, an enthusiastic exchange of ideas, good listening, playfulness, a space of curiosity and imagination, nutritious snacks (and an occasional cupcake), stimulating homework, fair evaluation of progress, laughter, creativity, and effective collabora-

these candidates provide written answers to questions seeking a personal vision for the Jewish community. They have in mind grand and sweeping changes as well as organization-specific transformations. We put together what we believe are representative community cohorts designed to surface complicated conversations wherein leaders will, over time, develop a community perspective rather than an insular one.

The day school board should likewise reflect the entire community it serves, and its members should consider exactly how the institution fits into the constellation of the wider Jewish and civic community. The members of that board should be part of a circle of learning, a spirited classroom holding the interest of the institution and its lived values in high esteem. The boardroom should mirror best practice, not relegate it to flat discussion. And board members would do well to identify and then bridge the gap between the school's stated and demonstrated values.

Day school boards have serious agendas to tackle. And yes, Rabbi Tarfon is wildly waving his raised arm in the back of the room and declaring, “*Hayom katzar vehamlachah merubah...* the day is short and the task is great” (Avot 2:20). Indeed. Having served many years on the board of our (gem of a) community day school, I know well the constant pressure of fundraising, enrollment, facilities, soaring tuition, retention and securing outstanding professional leadership. A board is bound to fulfill a set of primary responsibilities essential to healthy institutional governance.

Nonetheless, serving on a board should be viewed as a privilege and as an opportunity for personal Jewish growth. Time spent in the board room can be fulfilling and stimulating when it is not only a place to talk about shaping the Jewish identity of children, but also a place for adults to reflect on their own Jewish stories, their own Jewish growth. Divrei Torah, fairly commonplace (I dare hope) at the organizational boardroom table, can take the form of such stories either through the lens of traditional texts or as texts unto themselves. A collection of board members interested in the educational excellence and Jewish character

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The Jewish community will stagnate or flourish based upon the quality of its leadership. Today, this is the “gevalt” heard round the Jewish world. “Where have all the leaders gone?”

coach in group settings, and to manage our desires, our fears, and our vulnerabilities.

The pace of change in Jewish life, especially within organizational life, is measured. Adaptive change requires a steadfast commitment to what can be a lengthy process. We need to move forward on many organizational fronts. We must be attentive to ideas that emerge from the margins and those in the mainstream with a delicate combination of urgency, *optimism* and *patience*.

tion among a diverse group of participants who respect one other? Who wouldn't want to be invited to join a “board community” that could be so described?

To be fair, we benefit from the opportunity to select Heritage members through a rigorous process. Distinct from our day school or organizational boards, candidates interested in the program complete applications and interviews for consideration. Because we believe that leadership is fundamentally about orchestrating meaningful change,

Building a Diverse, Philanthropic and High Functioning Governing Board

■ by **ELIZABETH JICK**

This article presents an expert map for the successful functioning of a professional, invigorated, well managed board.

More than ever before, boards of trustees are expected to function at a level of excellence that is equal to that which we expect from our non-profit leadership and education programs. Today's market demands greater accountability and professionalism from 501(c)(3)s. At the same time, there is significant competition among nonprofits to access the limited, known donor and volunteer resources in their communities. Even more challenging, especially during recessionary environments, independent schools face increased competition from public schools and charter schools for students.

Addressing these formidable challenges requires hard work and creativity, especially as they relate to effectively engaging our trustees when they are already overextended with their own personal, work and volunteer responsibilities. In order to successfully tackle these challenges, three basic conditions must exist or be created within the framework of our schools: a strong partnership between the president and the head; a thoughtful, documented governance infrastructure that will support a system for trustee training, engagement, and committee participation; and a pervasive "culture of philanthropy."

In these uncertain times, trustees are searching for real meaning in their lives and are driven to organizations that operate professionally, demonstrate a proven positive impact on their constituencies,

and share a common purpose and common values with fellow trustees. Operating in an environment through which, collectively and collaboratively, they can truly make a difference in helping the institution reach new heights, trustees tend to naturally become proud ambassadors and more generous supporters.

President-Head Partnership

Active communication and mutual trust are two key components to a healthy partnership between the board president and the head. Establishing shared common goals and working collaboratively creates a welcome, united, productive environment devoid of posturing and competition. It also makes tackling the myriad challenges that we all face as trustees more enjoyable. The president and head have very different job descriptions, yet they share the same objective: to focus strategically on achieving the school's mission. The president takes the "macro" approach and focuses on governance, succession, long term sustainability and overseeing the head's performance, while the head focuses strategically on tactical educational programming, professional development, operations and finance. Nevertheless, they are interdependent—in order for one to be successful, the other must be successful, as well.

Equally important is the rapport between the president and head, including their

willingness to be constructively critical of one another. Respectful disagreements and challenging inquiries between the president and the head will lead to a healthier institution. As advised through the sage words of my late grandfather, Rabbi Leo Jung, we can "agree to disagree agreeably." Given the frequency of contact and communication between the president and head, it helps if the two enjoy working together. We should not understate the often implicit dimensions of a healthy, positive working partnership, including interpersonal dynamics between partners.

Governance Systems and Structures: Strengthening How We Govern

While the president-head relationship is critical for a school's success, this partnership alone does not guarantee a thriving, high functioning board. Properly



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established governance infrastructures with concomitant high quality trustee experiences are equally important components necessary for establishing a high functioning board.

Effective Board Meetings

Our boards should be places where lay leaders in our community *want* to be, and where trustees need not question their decision to serve. Several ways we can ensure this are structural and systemic, and others involve hands-on human resource

work with our trustees. Many of us have had experiences attending board meetings at which a particular trustee brought up issues that were either irrelevant to the topic being discussed or too personal to their individual circumstances. We may have questioned whether we were really contributing in a meaningful way to the organization, or asked ourselves whether we were experiencing personal growth from a particular board experience.

A meaningful trustee board meeting experience can be achieved by instituting simple basic measures. For example, starting and ending meetings on time, sending out agendas and committee reports in advance, and planning diverse agendas that incorporate a combination of information, education and strategic discussion components. Trustee attendance at board meetings should be mandatory, whenever possible. Assuming that a communicative and trusting relationship exists between the board and head, executive sessions following board meetings can be another effective tool for fostering trustee conversations and collegiality, in what could be considered a less intimidating environment after the school's professional leadership have been dismissed.

By-Laws

Proper board governance begins with reviewing, and if appropriate, changing, the institution's mission statement or by-laws. This should be more than a legal-technical process; it should generate strategic, adaptive questions that engage the entire board in conversations about the nature and quality of how the board functions.

High-Functioning Committees

Often, the most engaging work for board members happens in committees, which makes the effectiveness of committee work essential. Creating meaningful board committees spearheaded by dedicated leaders, establishing term limits and a well planned system for trustee selection, stewardship, evaluation and succession planning are critically important measures to implement. Active participation by trustees on board committees that have strategic goals aligned with the institution's



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mission is another effective way to engage trustees so that they can become meaningful contributors to the school. Other methods for enhancing the trustees' experience include instituting a formal orientation program, paying attention to board diversity, reengineering board meetings, orchestrating a strategic planning process approximately every three years, and instituting a system of evaluation, accountability, and feedback for all.

Trustee Development/ Stewardship: Nurturing the People Who Govern

Board Profile and Recruitment

In order to provide a truly rewarding board experience for trustees, being mindful of trustee diversity is very important. This could mean not only religious diversity, but also regional, age, gender, professional and "feeder school" diversity. Receiving trustee insights and contributions from a multitude of perspectives provides a richer experience and offers greater comfort that the institution's various constituents are well represented.

This kind of outreach and trustee diversification is critical if our schools hope to reach beyond their often narrow circles of influence and become more relevant to our broader communities, which is critical for expanding our funnel of prospective students and donors. In addition, the quality and diversity of trustees can also be a significant contributing factor to trustee satisfaction. One of the reasons trustees are motivated to attend board meetings and participate actively in committee work is because of the quality of people with whom they are working.

New Trustee Orientation

Implementing an informative trustee orientation program is an effective and efficient vehicle through which to welcome incoming trustees and one that is not difficult to orchestrate. Providing an information packet—complete with a trustee responsibility description, listing and backgrounds of fellow trustees, board minutes from the previous year, copies of the by-laws and mission statement, audited financial statements and the fiscal year budget, listing of committees and com-

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mittee goals, annual board objectives, strategic plan, demand statistics, development statistics and board meeting dates for the year—enables new trustees to be adequately informed in advance of the first board meeting. On the orientation day, new trustees can receive brief 10-15 minute overviews from the directors of finance, institutional advancement, admissions, educational programming, and college counseling so that they can better appreciate the student experience and the operations of the school. It is also worthwhile to assign to each new trustee a veteran trustee “mentor.”

Strategic Planning

Just as having a sound strategic plan is vital to school sustainability, it is also a way to inspire board members, to shift them from managers to leaders and visionaries.

Implementing a strategic planning process, in which both trustees and school management participate, that links the school’s annual work with its mission and vision, often in conjunction with a board retreat, is a wonderful way to foster intensive strategic collaboration among trustees outside of their committee work and board meetings. By focusing on the long term educational, programming and development needs required to achieve long-term financial sustainability, trustees are carrying out their fiduciary responsibilities to the organization. When a consensus on these needs is reached, the longer-term vision will then clarify the school’s short-term annual priorities, which will have direct budgetary implications for the next fiscal year(s).

Board Self-Evaluation

In the same way that we expect the head, faculty and staff to be evaluated annually, that same standard should apply to trustees and committees. Annual trustee and committee surveys are an ideal tool for this and serve a dual purpose: the board president receives feedback on the trustees’ personal experiences and perceptions of their own productivity through committee work, and trustees feel that their opinions are being heard as the board

president and head establish objectives, committees and board meeting agendas for the coming year. In addition, one of the ways to gain feedback about the board and also to ensure that every board member feels seen and valued is for the president and/or head to meet annually with every board member. This is an opportunity for informal conversation as well as feedback about the school, the board, and the trustee’s experience and perspectives.

A Culture of Philanthropy

With a strong partnership in place between the president and the head, and a professional, transparent, inclusive governance infrastructure established, through which trustees can actively participate collaboratively and contribute to the institution’s growth, a philanthropic environment should naturally follow. It takes time and patience to implement a culture of philanthropy throughout an institution, and it is never too late to start. It begins with establishing clear expectations of 100% trustee participation in the annual fund effort. A dynamic and diverse development committee administered by experienced professionals and equipped with state-of-the-art development software is critical, since so often lack of proper and immediate follow-up obliterates any benefits of productive cultivation meetings and events.

One of the ways to gain feedback about the board and also to ensure that every board member feels seen and valued is for the president and/or head to meet annually with every board member.

The development committee membership should be diverse, and comprised of parents, grandparents, alumni, alumni parents, and community members. Committee outreach should involve a combination of minimum donor size events, parlor meetings and open community events. Educating trustees on the importance of supporting the institution financially and setting the example for others help establish the philanthropic culture. For those trustees not in the po-

sition to donate financially in a significant way, they can still be effective partners in other ways— by serving as active ambassadors of the school, hosting parlor meetings, and making strategic introductions to other donors and/or prospective students.

It essentially can be summed up as follows: offering a compelling product will result in successful fundraising. Those that are the most invested in the school’s success (i.e., trustees), and are in the position to make a significant positive impact on the school, tend to give generously once they believe in the product, understand what makes it unique, and see its effectiveness. When trustees feel as though they have played a major role in contributing to the school’s success the institution soon becomes one of their top philanthropic priorities. The additional philanthropic dollars generated by trustee giving for scholarship, programs, professional development, technology, facilities and endowment to secure the institution’s future will further highlight the direct impact of trustee support and make the trustees’ experience even more personally rewarding, hopefully enticing them to remain committed to the institution for the foreseeable future.

In conclusion, with a strong president-head partnership, solid systems and operations, and a trustee-centered culture

that values the experience and contribution of every board member, schools will establish professional, transparent and accountable environments where trustees are meaningfully engaged, well educated and enthusiastic about the school and its impact on the community. This will foster effective governance and a thriving culture of philanthropy that will ultimately enable schools and other nonprofits to grow exponentially and operate more efficiently and strategically. ■

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of a school will develop a profound interest in the Jewish character of one another.

Allowing board members to be moved and motivated to connect to one another within the context of a meeting can lead board members back to the essential meaning of that word. Meet: to come into the presence of another. Pressing business pushes aside the important work of knowing who is at the table, of playing with new ways of conducting conversation, for small group/breakout brainstorming to confront challenges, or for a short few minutes of hevrutah to expand thinking. How many boards allow reflection time to ask *and* answer, "How are we doing? Are we listening to each other? Are multiple voices being heard around this table? Are we conducting our business according to our values? Do you feel your talents are being utilized? What are you taking away from this meeting? What frustrated you? What excited you?" I am describing real-time assessment of the board's work, an open progress report achieved in a few minutes. While a brief reflection won't take the place of the "parking lot post-meeting debrief," it will minimize it, it will keep more of the meeting in the room and not outside of it, and it will build trust among colleagues in a refreshing climate of increased transparency and openness.

Finally, place a high premium on strong, focused facilitation. Day school and other organizational boards must recognize that how a meeting is conducted directly affects outcomes as well as "buzz." Board members deserve a thoughtful encounter with co-leaders. It is unlikely and even unnecessary for a board chair or president to be a highly skilled facilitator.

I propose a new role be considered for our boards; an experienced meeting facilitator, a volunteer leader who understands both the art and skill of conducting important conversations in an open, thoughtful, and measured fashion. Seek out a facilitator who can bring out the best in board participants, manage a multiplicity of voices, trigger creative propositions, and generate inclusive, deep, and open conversations. The meeting facilitator, seated next to the president or chair at each meeting, would conduct meetings in much the same way a quality teacher navigates a thoughtful lesson. I suggest a facilitator participate only in that role, not as a voting member of a board, and without a particular point of view. The role of the facilitator is to structure board time so as to maximize engagement, creativity, problem-solving, Jewish identity growth, and learning around the table. The business agenda of the institution would be enhanced and not hindered within such a boardroom environment.

Wouldn't you (even) apply to sit on such a board? ■

To learn more

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Gardner, John W. *On Leadership*.

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

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MORE INFO OR TO REGISTER, CONTACT:

Stephanie Hoffman at 617-428-0012 x1133

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Leadership Giving: The Board's Role in Your School's Financial Future

■ by **DIANE REMIN**

There's no way around it: giving needs to start from the board. Remin describes how to conceptualize and incentivize a board that holds its financial weight.

The percent of contributed revenue metric is a great benchmark. It tells you where your board stands right now. If the percent is low, the metric is an effective motivational tool.

However, percent of contributed revenue is not the whole story. It is, in fact, a moving target. As you build your board with stronger donors, total contributed revenue will increase—the desired outcome. You'll want to track

The single greatest indicator of an organization's fundraising success is the amount of board giving. June Bradham

Board giving sets the tone

The board is the most devoted group of volunteer leaders. If this group is not “at the head of the class” when it comes to giving, what are other prospective donors to think? One hundred percent annual board giving is just a start. The board needs to combine passion, vision, skills and ability to donate a meaningful percent of contributed revenue each year. (“Contributed revenue” refers to donations, grants and other operating gifts, as opposed to “earned revenue” such as tuition.) In addition to their operational impact, board donations send a message that reverberates through the community.

Additionally, donors making significant annual fund gifts are the very same people most likely to make lead gifts when it's time for a capital or endowment campaign.

Even if you are not contemplating a big campaign right now, having a board in place that can donate a significant percentage of contributed revenue bodes well for your school's current and future needs.

What percent of your school's contributed revenue is donated by the board?

June Bradham, quoted at the beginning of this article, recommends that the board account for twenty-five percent of contributed revenue. That's an eye-popping percentage for many boards. I routinely encounter board giving that accounts for less than five percent of contributed revenue. A leap to ten percent



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One hundred percent annual board giving is just a start. The board needs to combine passion, vision, skills and ability to donate a meaningful percent of contributed revenue each year.

may feel insurmountable. One solution is to set a goal of increasing the board's percent of contributed revenue by a targeted increment, e.g. two percent, each year.

Here's an example of how the percentages translate into dollars: If your school is currently raising \$1M per year, then the gold standard is a board contributing \$250,000. Let's assume the board is currently contributing \$100,000 per year or ten percent of \$1M. A two percent increase would be \$120,000 per year or a \$20,000 dollar increase. The final section of this article will outline one approach to building a board that can close the \$20,000 gap.

the dollar amount of board giving as well as the percent of contributed revenue.

It's easy enough to imagine periods where contributed revenue is increasing faster than board giving, even though the board is, in absolute dollars, giving more. You elect board members with more giving capacity. They invite some of their friends into the fold. You have a new set of donors giving at higher levels. Contributed revenue is now \$1.5M. Your board that used to give \$100,000 is now donating a record-breaking \$250,000. Celebrate!

Board-building goal: Fifty percent of board members who can make an impact gift

How do you maintain board diversity while you increase board giving capacity? Aim for fifty percent of board members who can make a leadership or “impact” gift. Depending on the size of your school and its budget, leadership giving may be \$10,000 per year, \$25,000 or more. The fifty percent rule allows for a mix of parents, alumni, and other community members with a variety of skills, ages and points-of-view. Parents often constitute a hefty percent of board membership of Jewish day schools and certainly have much to offer. Other articles in this publication have pointed-out that parents constitute one board constituency, not the only constituency.

Let’s return to the school that raises \$1M each year. Your board hasn’t been contributing much and your first major benchmark is a board that donates ten percent of contributed revenue. If you have eighteen board members, fifty percent is nine people who, as a group, donate \$90,000 annually. (That leaves 10% or \$10,000 to divide among the other nine members, who are assumed to be giving in the \$500 to \$2,000 range.) To reach the goal of \$90,000 per year, it is ideal to have at least one board member donating \$20,000 or roughly twenty percent of the total. Three or four people donate \$10,000 or \$15,000; and the remainder \$5,000. The tiered scenario is the pathway to success. It is more likely than finding nine donors each of whom donates \$10,000.

Concentration of wealth

Why all the emphasis on board members and donors who can make larger gifts? Wealth is concentrating. Organizations are discovering that a smaller and smaller percentage of their donors account for an increasingly large slice of total contributions, e.g., ten percent of donors accounting for ninety percent of contributed revenue. Furthermore, according to *Giving USA*, eighty-one percent of the \$290B of giving in the United States in 2010 came from individuals.

In terms of types of financial wealth [net worth minus value of home], the top one percent of households have 38.3% of all privately held stock, 60.6% of financial securities, and 62.4% of business equity. The top 10% have 80% to 90% of stocks, bonds, trust funds, and business equity, and over 75% of non-home real estate. Since financial wealth is what counts as far as the control of income-producing assets, we can say that just 10% of the people own the United States of America. G. William Donhoff

Board-building: Strong committees

Skills and diversity considerations often over-shadow straightforward talk about money. That’s why the fifty percent rule is so effective.

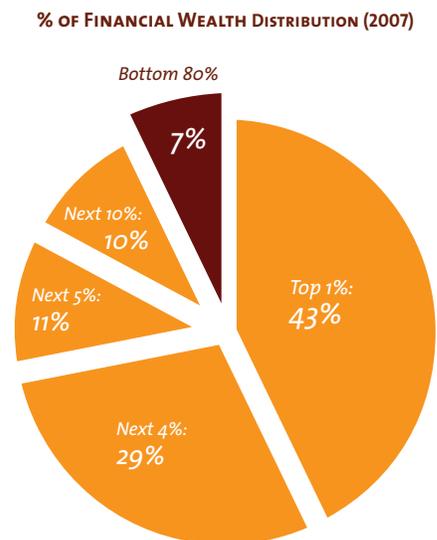
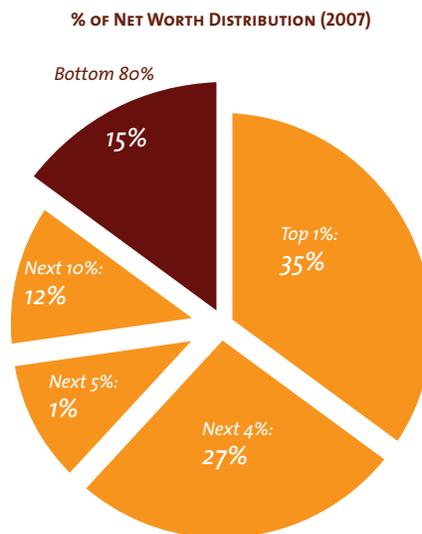
That said, the board’s expertise certainly does matter. Most effective boards do their work through a committee structure. Look through the committee lens to define the skills that will be most helpful to your board at this time. Is it finance,

board member agree to serve on a standing committee. Committee service is often the most engaging aspect of board service. Put board members in a position to be valuable—and they will feel valuable.

How do you build a leadership-giving board?

Jan Masaoka at blueavocado.org has developed a creative yet straightforward solution: a Blue Ribbon Nominating Committee that meets once for 90 minutes. That’s right, once. Once is the brilliance, as a busy, successful person may be willing to carve out time for a single meeting.

Prior to making the list of potential Blue Ribbon Nominating Committee members, define your board’s most critical need in addition to the ability to make an impact gift. This might be a marketing committee, a strategic planning group or buildings & grounds. Identifying this need is a critical step for two reasons: 1) you are



nominating or marketing, as examples? Are you about to develop a new strategic plan? The committee lens is so effective because it not only directs you toward whom you need, but also insures the board member will be immediately put to good use.

One of the key reasons board members become disenchanted is that they don’t feel helpful. It is recommended that every

focusing on the one or two places you really need help and 2) the prospective board member will be well-utilized and have a satisfying experience. Then identify people you wish were on your board and people you think know people you wish were on your board. Think big. Invite them to serve on your Blue Ribbon Nominating Committee—which meets once and then disbands. Your goal is eight to twelve peo-

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 62]

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ple in the room. You may have to contact two dozen to get this number.

At the Blue Ribbon Nominating Committee meeting, welcome participants and then have the Board Chair & Executive Director make a ten to fifteen minute presentation that focuses on one or two key strategic initiatives that the board will be addressing in the short-term (not a dog & pony show about your programs and statistics). Make clear what the new board members can and will be doing. Then give attendees a form on which they can submit nominations. Include space where the committee member can indicate why s/he thinks this nominee might be interested

in your school and the task at hand. Be clear you will be saying, “Joe Smith suggested I give you a call...”

The Blue Ribbon Nominating Committee does one thing: provide a list of promising names that combine expertise you are seeking and financial ability. It will be up to the board’s standing nominating committee along with senior staff to follow through with the actual board recruitment process.

A document called a Board Prospectus is recommended to support the recruitment effort. This combination marketing and “reality” piece describes your school’s philosophy and strengths; key data points, e.g., budget, number of stu-

dents, faculty, etc.; and board expectations, including giving and attendance.

Most importantly, pick up the phone and see if the prospective nominee will get together with you for coffee. Major gift fundraising is all about personal relationships. Board development is no different.

Build that board! ■

To learn more

Bradham, June. *The Truth About What Nonprofit Boards Want*.

Donhoff, G. William. *Wealth, Income & Power*.



JCAT Continues to Grow and Improve

RAVSAK’s premiere middle-school program in Jewish history, the Jewish Court of All Time (JCAT), has finished its second year of operation with growth and success in myriad ways. This year, over 250 students from twelve schools engaged in this online, highly interactive learning platform. Thirty-nine mentors, graduate students from the schools of education at the University of Michigan and University of Cincinnati, offered guidance and support as the students exercised their creative muscles to think and talk as historical characters confronting weighty ethical and political challenges.

This year, the team of professors from Michigan and Cincinnati created a new scenario designed to provoke discussion and reflection around issues of the Holocaust’s legacy. The students—the members of the “court”—were presented with the case of a descendant of a survivor of the ship the MS St. Louis. This was the famous ship to whose passengers the US government denied embarkation; the passengers ultimately were forced to return to Germany,

where many of them perished in the Holocaust. The plaintiff requested an official government apology and reparations to go into a humanitarian fund.

Students performed their own research into the historical evidence around the MS St. Louis, examined the political climate in the United States on the eve of WWII, and considered how their particular historical characters—most of them from times and locations far removed from the circumstances of the case—would have construed the issues and motives of this case. The program provides opportunities for student growth on so many levels, including the researching and interpretation of historical documents, creative role playing leading to empathy for characters from history, adopting stances on significant social and political issues and defending those stances through argument and discussion with characters holding a range of opposing positions.

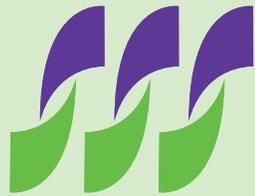
JCAT continues to develop the fruitful synergy between RAVSAK schools and academia. A team from the University of Cincinnati led by Professor Miriam Raid-

er-Roth supported participating JCAT teachers with an online action research project on topics including Getting Into Character and Thinking About Evidence, in addition to conducting monthly conference calls. They also taught on online mentor seminar focused on supporting participants in learning to observe, reflect, and act based on their role as mentors in JCAT. Miriam recently Meanwhile, the team at the University of Michigan

At the day school leadership conference this year, Professor Raider-Roth was joined by Michigan’s Professor Jeffrey Stanzler and Amy Wasser, head of school at the Hillel Academy of Tampa, where they presented JCAT as a model for online student learning. A packed room discovered the program’s many moving parts and the remarkable student work in JCAT. Miriam recently presented the program in Israel, and received numerous queries asking how Israeli schools could join.

JCAT is now recruiting for next year’s program! To learn more, contact Dr. Elliott Rabin at erabin@ravsak.org.

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A Beit Midrash Model of Lay-Professional Leadership

■ by **YONATAN YUSSMAN** and **MAUREEN DEWAN**

The authors contest that the prevailing model of head-board chair relations is too confining and unrealistic. They advocate a model of collaboration and mutual growth, with some overlapping areas of consultation and responsibility.

It is commonplace to read articles and hear advice that boards and heads of school should have distinct roles. According to PEJE, the first two of three keys to a successful board-head relationship deal with clarifying roles and boundaries between them. For example, boards govern while heads manage. Or, boards create the mission and heads implement the mission. Or, boards create policy while heads execute policy. Or, boards should not involve themselves in the daily administration of the school, while heads should be wary of stepping on board members' toes. In this traditional model, highly differentiated roles exist between the board and the head of school.

Despite widespread agreement on these principles, the average tenure of a Jewish day school head of school is still between two and five years, according to articles by Larry Scheindlin and Barry Dym. While there are of course many different reasons why this may be true, we posit that one explanation is that the traditional model of board-head of school relationships contains significant problems.

In our experience and judgment, there are several problems with the old model. First, the reality is that many of the traditional board functions are done by the head of school, and many of the head of school functions are completed by the board. In our school, we are both co-leading the board retreat; we both are full partners in creating our strategic plan; the board solicits the head's feedback in finding new board members, and in the selection of

the new board chair; the head suggests policy discussions for board meetings; the head's advice and counsel is solicited during all aspects of board discussions, and the head calls on board members all the time in aspects of daily operations—how to deal with a particular parent, for thoughts on whether and how an employee should be dismissed, all the way down to whether or not to cancel school on a snow day.

It may be nice and neat to think in more black and white delineations between board and heads, but the reality is that there are very few decisions that the head or board make in isolation from each other. Probably the only decision the board makes alone is whether to hire or rehire the head. And a wise head, who technically has power to make many decisions alone such as hiring faculty, will frequently want to get the quiet advice of board members before making key hires or decisions.

The second fallacy with the old model is that it supports the notion that boards should not meddle in day-to-day operations. However, as Peter Drucker, often called the creator of modern management theory, has written, "Boards should meddle. To begin with, there is no way to stop them, and if you can't lick them, join

them! ... They had better be organized to meddle constructively." Besides, boards are usually organized to work directly with the school administration anyway, and in many cases without going through the head of school. For example, budget committees may work directly with a director of finance, development committees may work directly with a director of development, and education committees



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of various sorts may work directly with deans, principals, or department chairs. Board committees need to be given serious, strategic work to do in concert with key administrators.

Third, by pretending that there are neat divisions between the board and head, the potential for a dynamic, shared leadership may be missed. Some heads of school may have tremendous talents in strategic planning, policy development, board evaluation, or legal and fiduciary responsibility, and can guide boards. And some boards may have former heads of school, amazing educators, and talented admissions professionals, marketers, and development experts who can be of tremendous ben-

efit to the day-to-day running of a school. Creating artificial boundaries between what a board or head can do may weaken shared leadership potential.

Fourth, schools aren't linear. The old model assumes that schools are predictable, and that roles can easily be defined and demarcated. But schools are much more adaptive and dynamic. As noted by Ronald Heifitz, co-founder of the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard's JFK School of Government, many times we apply technical solutions to adaptive problems. Unlike a car that won't start (which requires a technical expert), schools are dynamic institutions that require a new paradigm of leadership—a community of adaptive learners and problem solvers, made up of professional and lay leaders, working together for the success of the school.

At the Jewish High School of Connecticut, where we are putting this community of leaders model into practice, our common denominator for decision-making centers on one question: "Are we advancing the mission?" To that end, it often does not matter whether our weekly meetings are about "board matters" or "head matters"—the discussions are always about whether something is good for the mission or not. Every single decision we make reflects the mission.

Clearly, boards should not micromanage the head of school, and it is worthwhile defining boundaries. For example, a board should not become involved in student discipline issues, how teachers plan lessons, what book the English teacher should be teaching, or how the school secretary prioritizes her responsibilities. And a head of school must realize that the board is his or her employer. A good head of school needs to know when to "lay low" and let the board work things out themselves and make their own decisions.

Of course the basis of this new paradigm of board-head partnership requires plenty of communication and relationship-building. We officially meet on a weekly basis, but we email or talk by phone most days of the week. We are open and honest with each other about everything, and feel free to give each other feedback. We know that our opinions and decisions are not based upon private agendas—our only agenda is to



Unlike a car that won't start (which requires a technical expert), schools are dynamic institutions that require a community of adaptive learners and problem solvers.

advance the mission of the school. We are currently developing a comprehensive multi-year strategic plan with the entire community, and agree that decisions need to be made according to the strategic plan.

We also learn Judaic texts with each other once a month (which needs to be increased!). On the first Friday of each month, we have set aside time to learn. We invite others in the community to come learn with us, and the topic of learning often has to do with a current event, or something having to do with the development of the high school. For example, we studied talmudic texts that shed light on what institutions can learn from how the scandal at Penn State unfolded, and other sources that inform the economic crisis and how we can be better leaders in these trying times. These discussions focus us on Judaism, learning, ethics, strategic leadership, and our mission. It has been a pleasure when others join us, such as the founding board chair, parents and other community leaders.

Ultimately, this paradigm is the same one used in any good *beit midrash*. These are usually loud places of learning with many pairs of *chevrutas*. A *chevruta* describes two or more people who are bound to each

other, and who strive to come to a deeper understanding of something holy—often a Jewish text, but in this paradigm it is the school. *Chevrotas* work hard at coming up with a common translation and understanding, look at things in a great variety of ways, and try to make logical arguments that advance a line of thinking. *Chevrotas* spar, laugh, learn, manage conflict, and successful ones know when it is time to be bold in offering ideas and when it is time to be humble in listening to others. The *chevruta's* desire for truth, whether it is understanding Torah or advancing the school's mission, is the basis for this new board-head paradigm. ■

To learn more

Scheindlin, Larry, "Success of Jewish Day Schools Breeds Crisis," *Jewish Journal*, May 3, 2007.

Dym, Barry. *Leadership Transition in Jewish Day Schools*. PEJE.

Drucker, Peter, "Lessons for Successful Nonprofit Governance," *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 1:12.

Heifitz, Ronald. *Leadership Without Easy Answers*. Harvard University Press.

How to Survive Cancer at a Jewish Day School

■ by **RHONDA ROSENHECK**

THE Paul Penna Downtown Jewish Day School sprang up in the historic downtown core of Toronto in 1998. Opened with ten students, it served Jews who, by virtue of living downtown in the former shtetl, lived outside the current shtetl; urbane, socially conscious Jews who celebrated diversity and the arts and built them into their school. These Jewish and non-Jewish, religious and secular, gay and straight, single and married parents of Jewish children viewed community more through a lens of inclusion than exclusion. The school's adults formed what researchers Alex Pomson and Randall Shnoor termed "a community of difference," meaning that one of the traits members shared in common was gratitude for the many things that distinguished one from the other.

When I became principal a year ago September, I rented right downtown and began socializing with school families. Common wisdom is that there are risks to immersing oneself personally where one serves professionally. Nonetheless, I chose to dive into this community head first.

Ten months into my tenure, one day after school closed in June, I was diagnosed with cancer. Post-surgery radiation treatment began on the first day of school in September and recovery was slow. My board president suggested tak-

ing a medical leave and I accepted, elevating the director of curriculum and instruction to interim principal until my return.

Here's what the school community did for me. One mom knit me a sleeve for the one arm that was cold during treatments because it had to be held away from my body. Several families chipped in on a Kindle, so I would always have something to read without carrying heavy books around. The staff bought me a spa treatment to use during my leave. Butternut squash soup, cookies, and videos arrived on my stoop. A dad checked in with me right before Rosh Hashanah: did I need any last minute food or supplies for the holiday? A mom and her daughters brought food to my door erev Yom Kippur after I declined an invitation to join them at home.

A staff member and her husband ordered a Shabbat meal delivered to my house. A parent showed up with several meals worth of food and sat me down to eat while she cleaned my kitchen on an evening when I couldn't get up to feed myself. Parents and grandparents drove me to and from the hospital. The board proactively offered me a fully paid medical leave. The co-presidents played an unusually operational role to support my staff. And many others emailed and wrote to send me their best wishes for recovery.

Here's what happened professionally. The board and I negotiated a delay of contract negotiations; they extended my initial contract by one year, at which point, if they offer me a new contract, it will be for three years. As interim principal, the director of curriculum and instruction, new to the school, made two mid-year hires and did both her job and mine in my absence. The business manager, also new to the school, worked under close board supervision. Important operational and educational initiatives advanced according to plan, and most importantly, good teaching and learning happened every day.

I am healthy, humbled, grateful, and a bit proud in the wake of this experience. I am cancer-free and, thanks to the rest and support I got, well into recovery from treatment. I am humbled by a body that went on strike, grateful for a community that, notwithstanding its non-insular composition, smoothly came together to help, and proud of staff and lay leaders who balanced generosity, realism, and their fiduciary or professional responsibilities, supporting with their wisdom and efforts each other, the students, me, and this precious school during a difficult time. ■

Do you have a special story to tell about your experience in day schools? Share it with the field! Send an essay of 600 words to Haydion@ravsak.org. Submissions from all stakeholders welcome.

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RAVSAK Conducts Simultaneous Shabbatonim for Project SuLaM in Atlanta

In advance of this year's conference, thanks as always to the generosity of the AVI CHAI Foundation, RAVSAK ran two shabbatonim, one for the

current cohort and a second for alumni of the program. The current Sulamites studied Jewish texts about kedushah, holiness. They truly refreshed themselves at the wells of Torah, immersing right away into profound conversations around this notion so central to Judaism and Jewish day schools. They challenged each other, their teachers and themselves to go deeper in understanding the sources and wringing les-

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sons for our personal and professional lives. In sessions with their mentors and colleagues, participants were able to focus on the challenges and successes of translating their Jewish learning into their administrative work in their schools.

The SuLaM alumni were treated to a shabbaton entitled "Literatoyre," exploring the relationship between mod-

ern Yiddish literature and Jewish sacred sources. Dr. Miriam Udel of Emory University shared her passion for Yiddish writings and her broad-ranging knowledge and intellect with an audience of school professional and lay leaders. The effect clearly wore off, as many of the participants have already shared some of the treasures of Yiddish literature with their faculty and students. The alumni renewed their connections of fellowship and shared purpose that help sustain them through the sometimes lonely responsibilities of school leadership. ■



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