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## HaYidion: The RAVSAK Journal

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# From the Editor

■ by **BARBARA DAVIS**

**T**HIS summer I took my very first cruise and traveled to Alaska, where 6,000 hardy Jewish souls live among 722,000 other inhabitants. Five thousand of these Jews, who statistics reveal to be more observant than most other Jews (although there is no day school here), live in Anchorage, where there are two synagogues. I would have loved to have met some of my co-religionists, but a cruise leaves little time for self-directed exploration. Likewise on my cruise, I would have liked to meet more of my fellow Jews, but alas, I seemed to be traveling in middle America. How I longed to play Jewish geography! How hard I listened for an accent that said “big city,” and looked for a chai on a neck chain. When I finally heard some Israelis speaking Hebrew at their dinner table, I could have hugged them!

We Jews have always sought a network; we have always looked for connections. A Jew alone is not a Jew. We need a minyan, a community, we need to be part of a group of landmen, to be part of klal Yisrael.

The 21st century has provided us with the technology to make this networking more efficient, more effective and more widespread than ever before. This issue of *HaYidion* will bring network weaving to your schools in ways that will enable you to fulfill your mission in newer and better ways. The articles contained in this issue include full defini-

tions and explanations for novices like me (who did not know that “network weaver” was an actual job category) to the more savvy who are already Google-eyed, blogging, twittering, crowdfunding, us-streaming and wofooing.



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

I believe that this issue of *HaYidion* is destined to become well thumbbed, and that it will be an extremely valuable resource for heads of schools and board members, not all of whom are comfortable or even knowledgeable about the Jewish community of the cloud. As Jewish community day schools venture ever further into this brave new world, we are ever more grateful that RAVSAK, our very own network, can serve as a guide and facilitator. I am sure you will enjoy the scholarship and features in this exciting issue, and they will inspire you to great things as we begin a new year. ■

שנה טובה

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

# Letters

## *Responses to “The Torah of Relevance” in the summer issue*

The Torah is an ancient book that presents great ideas in simple, accessible language. Thus the Torah invites any reader, teachers and students alike, to study its plain meaning or peshat. That’s the product we have. That’s what we’re “selling” and what we want our students to “buy.” When students are invited to dig into the text, and thereby gain mastery, matters of relevance melt away. Guided as they encounter the text, they will ask challenging questions, tease out meaning, argue with each other and eventually develop their own understandings of basic Jewish ideas.

The idea of relevance is the dinosaur in this matter.

Tzivia Garfinkel, Chicago

While at Army training this summer, I shared this article with colleagues from various Christian denominations at Army Chaplain School. Each of them had a similar response. CH Eran McNeal, a Protestant minister from the Seattle area, stated, “Rabbi Grossman states that dinosaurs are exciting to little children because they are irrelevant to these children. I disagree. Little children, my son included, are excited about dinosaurs because of the wonder, might and power of these creatures from long ago. Also, these dinosaurs are relevant because they speak to God’s creativity and His power. If God put that much care into the creation of the dinosaur, then how much more care did God take in creating humanity in the image of God? The Bible is relevant because it illuminates my life. If it was not for the relevancy of God’s word, we would all be lost and blind without a light to guide our path.”

Perhaps we in Jewish education need to broaden our depth and understanding of text, rather than narrowing it to only context and relevance. We need to have text study for its own sake, with discussion that both connects to their lives and brings out the awesomeness of that text. It is not an alternate reality, but part of our shared reality. It is not “Narnia.” The Torah is as relevant as it is awesome; we cannot teach one without the other. If we do, then it will become irrelevant and mundane and may as well be describing an alternate, extinct reality.

Rabbi Michael Gisser, Greensboro, North Carolina ■

*Take part in the conversation! HaYidion welcomes letters to the editor; send your thoughts to [Hayidion@ravsak.org](mailto:Hayidion@ravsak.org).*



## Reshet RAVSAK Weaves Threads that Bind and Empower

**R**AVSAK announces a major new strategic initiative to connect school leaders and enhance their abilities to learn together and from one another: Reshet RAVSAK, a series of networks connecting a wide range of stakeholders to enable shared growth and support. RAVSAK will both curate and weave these networks. We will identify those with particular talents and knowledge, allowing them to shine and share, and forge connections that enhance mutually beneficial relationships. Each of the individual networks that will form Reshet RAVSAK will be organized in partnership with professionals and lay leaders active in the community day school field.

RAVSAK will work with Reshet participants to set ambitious agendas aimed at having the greatest impact on their work. Reshet RAVSAK will enable participants to find information they need, discover

rich and vital resources and connect with people who possess knowledge and experience that can inspire them and their schools to new heights. Reshet RAVSAK will utilize a wide range of technologies including monthly conference calls, webinars, resource websites, listservs, social media and other technology platforms.

With 125 member schools and their professionals and board members, the RAVSAK network offers tremendous opportunities for collective learning and action. The power of a network comes from the ability of its members to both harness the field’s collective wisdom and access the wealth of individual expertise. Networked learning can help combat a sense of isolation among many in the field by providing access to peer-to-peer learning, collaboration and creativity.

The success of our network weaving rests

not only on our creativity and efforts, but on the participation of the professionals and lay leaders in the network who have wisdom to offer, questions to ask and ideas to share. We need you! Sign up for Reshet ECE, RAVSAK’s first network for early childhood administrators (p. 63).

The next Reshet that RAVSAK will launch is Reshet JD, for Judaic directors. We are pleased that Rabbi Stuart Light of the JDS of Metro Seattle, Tzivia Garfinkel of BZAEDS in Chicago, Sharon Freundel from JPDS in DC, and Rabbi Jack Nahmod from Heschel in New York have agreed to co-chair the Reshet. They are working to shape an agenda that meets the needs of Judaic directors at RAVSAK schools. If you have ideas of topics to include or conversations you’d like to have, email them at [reshet@ravsak.org](mailto:reshet@ravsak.org). Please look for the announcement for the first meeting of Reshet JD this fall. ■

# From the Desk of Arnee Winshall, RAVSAK Chair

By now I hope you all have received RAVSAK's new business plan (of which an executive summary appears on pages 32-33), a plan that envisions investing more resources into the day school field, leveraging existing resources better, and continuing to build on successful strategies.

As a result of the planning process, and the vote of confidence and enabling gift from our partner, the AVI CHAI Foundation, all of us involved with RAVSAK are prepared to launch the upcoming school year with renewed vigor, new ideas, and goals that build on past accomplishments. We are energized to move from planning to action with augmented financial and human resources, ready to undertake new challenges with freshly crafted solutions, in order to realize our aspirations:

- to become a programmatic partner of choice. By clearly articulating an ambitious vision, our goal is for organizations to be eager to partner with us on creative, bold and far-reaching initiatives in Jewish education. Our insistence on and reputation for programmatic excellence is attracting the attention of the leading institutions of Jewish education.
- to become a philanthropic investment of choice. Philanthropists want to see that an organization has a strong sense of its vision, mission and values—that it knows what it stands for and where it aims to reach. The business plan is meant to signal to all of you who believe in the importance of day schools that RAVSAK is a dynamic organization; by partnering with us, you are able to make a strategic, sizable impact on the Jewish future.
- to become an employer of choice. Top professionals in the field have already approached us eager to work with and for RAVSAK, excited at the prospect of contributing substantively to strengthening Jewish education. (Meet three outstanding new members of the RAVSAK team on page 55.) In addition, the plan includes RAVSAK's investment in its staff's professional development in order to help them stay abreast of important trends and realize our identity as a learning organization.
- to become a network of choice. Through our new and continued programming and services, the plan enables us to solidify our ties with your schools and all stakeholders. It allows us to align our menu of offerings with the express needs of schools so that we can serve you in better, smarter, bigger ways.

Over the next five years, our business plan calls for RAVSAK to grow our programs and capacity to serve our 125 Jewish community day schools and the field. We will weave the professionals and lay leaders in our network to enhance their ability to learn from each other and advance the leadership pipeline; represent the needs of our schools nationally and equip them to advocate locally; educate professionals

and lay leaders to promote Jewish leadership and literacy; and provide a focused portfolio of student programs. It is a plan that spells out to all of our constituents how we intend to take on and to measure success.



*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](mailto:arnee@ravsak.org).*

We have benefited from leveraging the collective wisdom and vision of multiple networks to develop this plan. Lay leaders and professional leadership worked together to ensure that RAVSAK focused on building the field of Jewish community day schools, developing strong knowledgeable Jewish leaders, amplifying Judaic program excellence and galvanizing appreciation and support for day schools.

On behalf of all of those who have been involved in this work, I invite you, our readers, to join in contributing to this dynamic, strategic and generative process that enhances our Jewish future. We encourage you to read the full document online at the RAVSAK website ([www.ravsak.org](http://www.ravsak.org)) and to share it broadly with leaders in your community. In that way, you will broadcast widely that you are a part of a much larger field, a field with lofty ambitions under the banner of RAVSAK.

Wishing you all a happy and healthy new year filled with personal growth and learning.

*Leshanah tova,*

Arnee





# Good & Welfare

Mazel tov to new heads of school: Alina Gerlovin Spaulding, **AKIVA COMMUNITY DAY SCHOOL** (Nashville), Rabbi Allen Saks, **HILLEL ACADEMY OF BROOME COUNTY** (Vestal, NY), Amanda Pogany, **LURIA ACADEMY** (Brooklyn), Chaim Heller, **SAN DIEGO JEWISH ACADEMY**, Dr. David Finell, **ROCKWERN ACADEMY** (Cincinnati), David Prashker, **SHOSHANA S. CARDIN SCHOOL** (Baltimore), Dr. Donald Zimring, **BRANDEIS HILLEL DAY SCHOOL** (San Francisco), Einav Symons (interim), **KADIMAH SCHOOL** (Buffalo, NY), Jamie Cluchey, **LEVEY DAY SCHOOL** (Portland, ME), Kathryn Davis, **ELEANOR KOLITZ ACADEMY** (San Antonio), Laila Lipetz, **PAUL PENNA DOWNTOWN JEWISH DAY SCHOOL** (Toronto), Lara Samuels, **JCOSS** (London), Mia Severin, **AKIVA SCHOOL** (Montreal), Miri Ketayi, **JEWISH COMMUNITY SCHOOL OF THE DESERT** (Palm Desert, CA), Noah Hartman, **COHEN HILLEL ACADEMY** (Marblehead, MA), Pam Cohn, **FRIEDEL JEWISH ACADEMY** (Omaha), Peter Greenberg, **KEHILAH JEWISH COMMUNITY DAY SCHOOL** (Hamilton, ON), Dr. Rennie Wrubel (interim), **MILKEN COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL** (Los Angeles), Rhona Birenbaum (interim), **TANENBAUMCHAT** (Toronto).

Dr. Zena Sulkes, former RAVSAK president and past head of the **JEWISH ACADEMY OF ORLANDO**, is the recipient of this year's Heritage Human Service Award, given to a person in Central Florida who is outstanding in tikkun olam.



DR. ZENA SULKES

RAVSAK welcomes two new schools: the **SAUL MIROWITZ JEWISH COMMUNITY SCHOOL** in St. Louis and the **ALEF BET MONTESSORI SCHOOL** in Rockville, Maryland.



SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

Gratitude to the Covenant Foundation and Hidden Sparks for creating a summer cohort of special education teachers from small schools, including **HILLEL ACADEMY** (Tampa), **CHARLOTTE JEWISH DAY SCHOOL**, **AKIVA SCHOOL** (Nashville) and **NEW ORLEANS JEWISH DAY SCHOOL**.

Jill Spielman, the high school Judaic Studies Curriculum Integration Specialist of **DONNA KLEIN JEWISH ACADEMY** in Boca Raton, has been named the recipient of the 2012 South Palm Beach County Grinspoon-Steinhardt Award for Excellence in Jewish Education. Spielman is currently part of Project SuLaM's Cohort 4 and also has participated in Facing History and Ourselves and The Holocaust and Human Behavior.



At **THE SCHECHTER SCHOOL OF LONG ISLAND**'s Upper School, Dr. Ari Yares will be taking the position of principal. Additionally, this fall the school is launching a Sci-Tech Track for 9th and 10th grade students with support from the Center for Initiatives in Jewish Education.

**THE JEWISH ACADEMY OF SUFFOLK COUNTY** has doubled its enrollment over the past two years and achieved outstanding academic results on the NWEA RIT Scale measure (that compares data from 13,000 schools and over 10,000,000 students). Four out of six grades scored in the 95th percentile or above, with 1st grade scoring in the 99th percentile. ■

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

**Please support RAVSAK.**

**Online:** [www.ravsak.org](http://www.ravsak.org) | **By mail:** RAVSAK, 120 West 97th Street, New York, NY 10025

# Dear Cooki

■ by **COOKI LEVY**

The day-to-day interactions that the school leader should embrace require sensitivity, self-confidence and finesse in order to build and maintain the relationships that are essential to success. The HOS must possess the ability to communicate clearly and appropriately with all stakeholders, regardless of the circumstances. This can sometimes be a challenge, as evidenced by the questions below.

**1** *How should the HOS respond to a teacher who continuously makes inappropriate comments at a staff meeting? She does not want to be drawn in, but the comments are undermining the meeting.*

If this kind of staff response is frequent and pervasive, there is a deeper problem of school climate and staff morale that must be addressed in significant ways. (We can address this issue at a later date.) And sometimes a teacher is just having a bad day and no deep-seated problems are on the horizon. But if teacher comments are disrupting your meeting and preventing a productive, goal-directed conversation among staff members, the challenge to the HOS is to maintain a climate and tone of respect while responding to the staff member whose comments are inappropriate, rude or a deliberate attempt to derail the meeting. One could say, "Your comments are not helping us to understand the issues/make a decision/reach consensus. I would be glad to speak with you privately after the meeting (or tomorrow or at another mutually convenient time) to hear your concerns." In doing this, you are respectfully but publicly requesting the staff member to stop and retaining or regaining control of the meeting. You are also modeling

for the staff how one might respond to a student, parent or committee member in a similar situation. And if the staff member continues? If the comments are muted and "go underground," ignore for now and schedule a meeting. If they are loud and disruptive, one might have to ask the staff member to excuse herself from the meeting.

**2** *How does the HOS appropriately end a conversation with a parent who has become rude and aggressive?*

Here again, it is the job of the HOS to model and insist upon a tone of mutual respect. We understand that parents may become very emotional when discussing their children, especially when there are difficulties, and we know as well that the most vulnerable children often have the most vulnerable parents. For this reason, we expect that feelings may run high. The HOS may want to state this at the outset of a meeting that s/he knows will be difficult: "I know that you are very upset and angry. But we will only be able to help your child and find a solution if we listen to each other and speak with respect." If the parent does become rude and aggressive, and a reminder about tone goes unheeded, the HOS should end the meeting, saying, "I see that you are unable to continue the meeting now.

I will call you tomorrow to schedule a follow-up meeting when we will be able to speak and listen to each other in a more productive way." The HOS should then stand up and end the meeting. The HOS should NEVER respond to a rude and aggressive parent by raising his voice or becoming rude or dismissive in return.

**3** *A board member calls to intervene on behalf of the child of close friends. His intervention is completely inappropriate, yet he is a valued member of the school's executive committee. How does the HOS respond?*

The task of the HOS is to educate board members as to their role in the school, clarifying which areas are the domain of the professionals and which belong to the lay leadership. It is in this context that the HOS can respond to the board member's attempt to intervene. The HOS response to the board member should attempt to depersonalize the situation, speaking about maintaining the integrity of the board and seeking his/her partnership in achieving this goal, and about the inability of the HOS to discuss any student with a member of the board, "which I am sure you understand." The HOS should also seek the help of the board chair, asking him or her to find an appropriate time and place to remind the Executive Committee members of the boundaries of their role. Once again, it is the job of the HOS to establish the tone of mutual respect that should be the hallmark of all communications. ■

*Cooki Levy was the longtime head of the Akiva School in Westmount, Quebec, and is a mentor in the Day School Leadership Training Institute. Dear Cooki accepts questions from all school stakeholders. To submit a question, write to hayidion@ravsak.org, with "Dear Cooki" in the subject line.*





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# Building “Us” in an Age of Wii

■ by **ANDRÉS SPOKOINY**

Networking represents a paradigm shift in the way that organizations are structured and get business done. Schools need to get on board, and funders increasingly expect to see change.

this brave new world of hyper-empowered and hyper-connected individuals? How do we create a bridge between the sovereign self and the common good? How can one mix oil and water?

Many kids love playing Wii. Well, yes, I love it too. But I have to admit that I cynically use the power that—as a parent—the Wii confers me: “If you don’t at least *taste* the broccoli, there’s no Wii tomorrow.” And while thinking about this article, I had a bizarre epiphany. I suddenly realized what a deep meaning the name “Wii” has, and how revealing it is about the “zeitgeist” of the early 21st century. We live in such an individualistic time that “we” becomes “w-i-i.” Even the pronoun that denotes the collective is spelled with an emphasis on the “I.”

Am I reading too much into a commercial name? Maybe, but even if I’m pushing the metaphor, the reality is there. We live in a time in which the relative weight of the collective and the individual have shifted dramatically. It is the age of the hyper-empowered individual. In an egg-or-chickenish loop, the changes in technology transform the ways in which we see ourselves, the ways in which we interact with others, and the ways in which we organize ourselves.

Peter Berger, the sociologist who studied the changes that modernity brought to the human mindset, speaks about “the heretical imperative.” Berger reminds us that the origin of the word “heretic” is the Greek word for “choice.” A heretic is one that chooses his own way, that aspires to create a distinct path for him-

self, breaking free from societal norms. Today, Berger says, we are all heretics. Moreover, we are forced to be heretics. We are obliged to choose our own path.

For some time, the modern ideologies occupied the place that religion had in the Middle Ages, but those ideologies that served as “meta-narratives” that explained and organized the world have since been dethroned as well. Post-modernity is defined as the “skepticism towards meta-narratives.” We are left alone to build our own meaning, to navigate the uncharted waters of the 21st century with no compass beyond our own heretical imperative. We live in a world where we build our identities “a la carte.” We hyphenate our identities ad infinitum and we create ever-shifting ideological patchworks, at times beautiful, at times monstrous.

This is indeed scary, unsettling, but utterly fascinating. We have unleashed the creative power of the individual to heights never before attained. We have witnessed an explosion of creativity covering every aspect of the human experience; a world that opens up to us in the pixels of a screen; an unprecedented opportunity to connect, to be heard, to reach thousands. This is the world in which a kid can start a revolution with a text message, where a dictator in Egypt discovers that tanks can’t stop Facebook.

But what happens to collective action in

The answer is networks. In a network, the individual retains his dynamism and his entrepreneurial spirit but he is linked to



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others in a series of multiple loose connections. The network is the bridge that allows individuals to act together without demanding a total belonging or a life-long identification. It is a model of collective action that is radically and essentially different than the 20th century paradigm.

In the Jewish community this is particularly acute. The collective dimension is an essential part of what being Jewish is all about. Mainstream Jewish organizations are all about the collective. During the 20th century, American Jewry created mechanisms for collective fundraising, collective planning and allocating funds. We created “central addresses” that don’t necessarily fare well in a world of networks, because a network has—by definition—no center.

In fact, a network differs from a traditional collective organization in a number of critical ways:

1. While the traditional organization is top-down, the network operates from the bottom up.





2. Instead of being centralized, it is decentralized, having nodes of independent, yet coordinated activity all across the network.
3. Leadership is not an organizational position but a quality that is distributed across the different nodes.
4. While the traditional organization is built so that there's a single line of command, in a network there is a multiplicity of connections between the different nodes. Information flows freely in all direction and not following the organizational hierarchy.
5. If a traditional organization is mechanical, working like a machine, the network is organic, working like a living organism, evolving and mutating all the time.
6. While the multiplicity of lines of communication and different nodes of independent action are destructive for a traditional organization, it is the central strength of a network.

**In an egg-or-chickenish loop, the changes in technology transform the ways in which we see ourselves, the ways in which we interact with others, and the ways in which we organize ourselves.**

7. A network is based not on bosses but on connectors. The most important actors in the network are the ones with the most connections. In our times, a network is what makes “w-i-i” sound like “we.”

Certainly, the traditional 20th century organization has its merits. After all, those organizations created unprecedented prosperity and reached heights of organization that had never been attained before. Indeed, they are great when we need to deal with issues that have well defined answers and known solutions. But they are not equipped to deal with complex issues fraught with uncertainty. They aren't nimble enough to cope with the unexpected; they aren't resilient, because—by definition—they lack the plasticity of a network.

For me, all this is not just a theoretical disquisition; it is the underpinning of the work that we do every day at the Jewish Funders Networks. At JFN, we believe that the future of philanthropy lies with networks. The 20th century was about the collective, the “central addresses” (federations, community centers, major Jewish agencies): organizations that used a 20th century paradigm to cope with 20th century challenges. The 90s and the 2000s saw the explosion of “independent philanthropy.” It was the “do it alone” model, where entrepreneurial funders could create—and fund—a program that would have enormous impact in the Jewish world.

And yet, in the last few years, we are seeing the limitations of that model. The

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issues facing the Jewish world are too complex, too new, too intractable for a single funder to tackle them alone. Impact requires collaboration, and network is the best platform for collaboration. In the 2010s, funders need to share information, think together and form “coalitions of the willing” to solve societal problems. The network is the platform that allows them to produce the change they want to see in the world. It’s a synthetic form, which combines the independence of the individual and the possibility for collective action.

## There’s a subtext to conversations between funders and grantees: “If we collaborate and think through issues together instead of competing, you should be doing the same.”

Funders have realized that, as big as foundations may be, they aren’t big enough to solve problems on their own. And even if they had the money, in a world without easy answers they are extremely unlikely to find the “silver bullet” that will solve an issue. A network allows them to try different options, to learn from failure and to be flexible enough to create a panoply of solutions. From Birthright to Arab-Israeli integration, from Jewish education to the environment, networks of independent funders are now the main vectors of change in the Jewish world.

Of course, operating in a networked way is easier said than done. Even foundations that are the product of postmodern times are deeply embedded in the paradigm of the industrial era. Some still believe that controlling information is more important than sharing it. Many still think that proprietary software is better than open source. Some don’t yet grasp that, in a network, *what you have is what you share*.

As we said before, operating in networks requires a different approach that, in many cases, is counterintuitive. It requires also a level of trust that needs to be fostered. The questions and issues that networking pose to funders are very

concrete: Are we ready to be transparent about what we fund and how? Are we ready to share credit? Are we prepared to share information? Knowing that networking requires process and trust-building, do we have the patience for it? Funders understand now that networking is not just shmoozing at the JFN conference. It is also not a fancy version of “you scratch my back I’ll scratch yours” (meaning, you fund the project I care about and I fund yours). It is a new approach to confront the issues and the challenges facing the Jewish people.

As funders operate more and more in a networked fashion, they demand the same of their grantees. Once they taste the benefits of networking, they have less appetite to fund organizations that refuse to embrace the benefits of collaboration and networking. There’s a subtext in many of the conversations between funders and grantees that says, “If we share, collaborate and think through issues together instead of competing, you should be doing the same.” In times of scarcity and with many requests from all fronts, funders are losing patience with duplication and avoidable waste. They reward collaboration among nonprofits.

When analyzing grant requests, I see more and more funders asking the question, “How do you collaborate with others organizations in your field?” Frankly, I even encourage them to ask that question. With the “central organizations” weakening, funders are more aware of the responsibility that falls on their shoulders. They take it seriously, and they believe that avoiding the waste of resources through duplication and lack of collaboration is their responsibility. That is not to say that they are allergic to competition. Most know that competition is sometimes healthy, but they want smart competition.

What is true for companies, for funders and for nonprofits, is certainly true for schools, especially independent ones. Schools have a lot to gain from embracing a networked approach. The problems facing schools, from affordability to leadership development, from curriculum development to government relations, are too big, too complex and too difficult to be solved by each school individually, especially when those schools don’t have the backing of a “movement” behind them. Certainly funders will reward cooperation among schools—anything from central procurement, to shared administrative services, to collaborative curriculum creation, to full-blown mergers and strategic alliances. Indeed, schools that cooperate will raise more money.

But this cannot be seen as merely a trick to raise more funds. Organizations need to do what is right, and money will follow. Networking needs to be embraced as a way of producing change in a system that badly needs it. While innovation abounds in the school system, it hasn’t solved the major issues facing the field. It hasn’t fixed the unsustainable business model of the Jewish day schools and it hasn’t produced the steady influx of professional talent that the system needs. For me, as a parent of kids that attend a community day school, these issues are far from being purely academic.

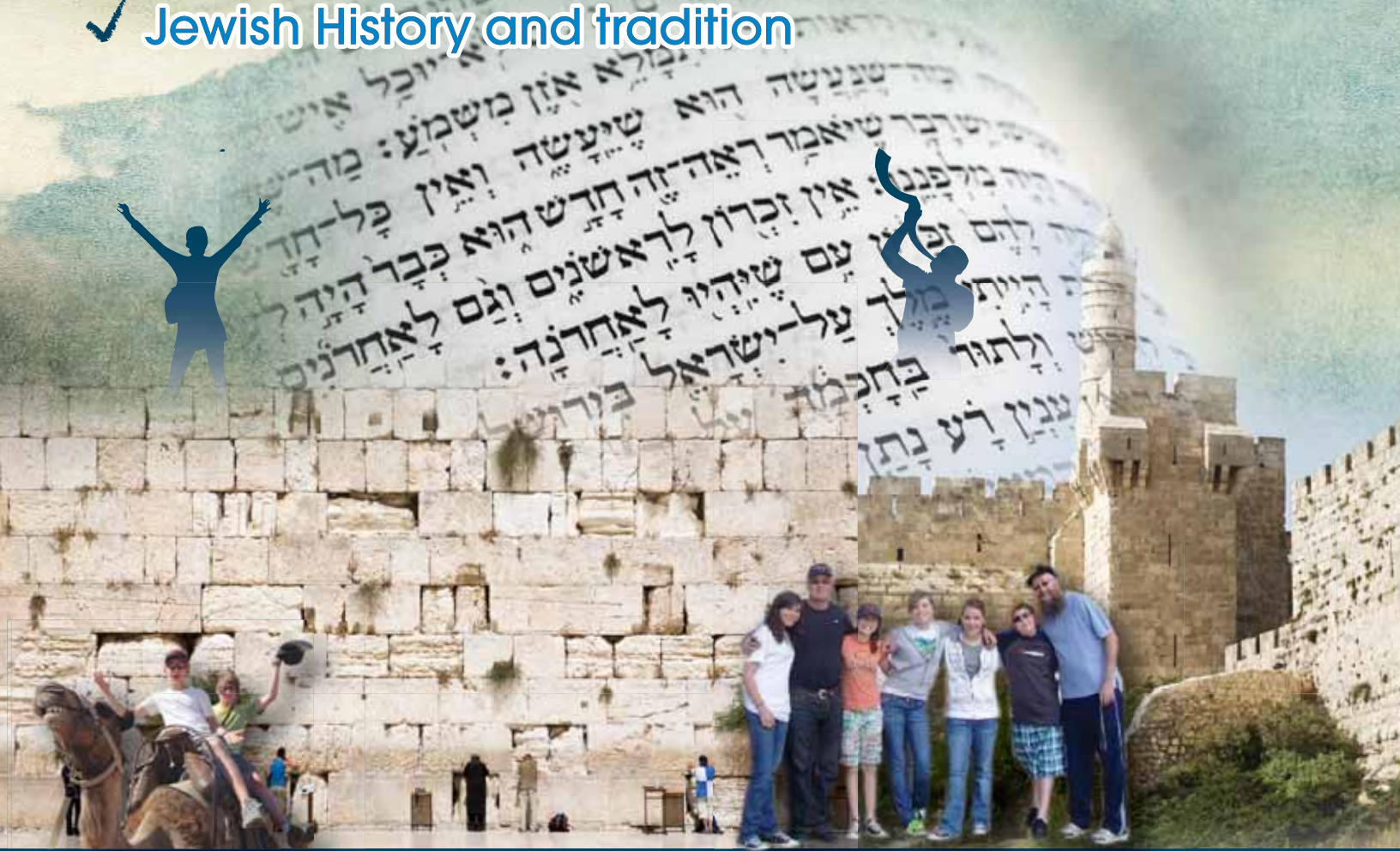
Maybe the solution(s) to many of the issues of the field can be found in the formation of creative networks that involve school, funders, independent practitioners, academic institutions and more (remember, the wealth of network is measured in diversity of connections). For that, schools need to ask themselves if they are ready to challenge some of their basic ways of operating; if they are prepared to look at competition and collaboration in a completely different light; if they are ready to change their approach to information, ownership and sharing; and if they are willing to embrace the risks—together with the benefits—of the network paradigm. Making “w-i-i” sound like “we” isn’t easy, but I’m afraid we have no choice. ■



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# Networked Nonprofits: Embracing Measurement Leads to Success

■ by **BETH KANTER**

The author of *The Networked Nonprofit* describes the stages for organizations to become fully networked and some tools for measuring success in this area.

For nonprofit organizations there are two key processes that lead to tremendous success: to become *networked*, and to use *measurement*. The two books I've co-authored walks organizations through these critical processes: *The Networked Nonprofit* provides frameworks and recommendations for nonprofits to transform their organizational culture to embrace a new way of working, while the forthcoming *Measuring the Networked Nonprofit* helps nonprofit leaders take those first steps to measure the effectiveness of that transformation. If nonprofits take these ideas and put them into practice, they will be successful in an age of connectedness.

## *Being and Doing of Networked Nonprofits*

Our conceptual framework divides the qualities of networked nonprofits into two categories: Being and Doing. These are illustrated in the table on the right. The items in the Being column are all different ways of working in a connected world. The Doing column is the tactical implementation. Becoming a networked nonprofit is not just about knowing which button to push or what technological wizardry to employ, but about embracing a whole new way of working as expressed in the Being column.

## Becoming A Networked Nonprofit: The Crawl, Walk, Run, Fly Model

If there is one thing I've learned from working with many nonprofits in their

## The Networked Nonprofit Framework

BEING	DOING
Understand Networks, Network Weaving, Social Capital	Works with Free Agent Fundraisers
Creates Social Culture	Uses Crowdsourcing To Design and Implement Programs
Listens, Engages, Build Relationships	Uses Learning Loops and Real Feedback for Experimenting and Learning
Builds Trust Through Transparency	Leverages Friending to Fundraising
Embraces Simplicity	Governs Through Networks

quests to become networked nonprofits, it's that slow, small steps work best. I like to call this approach "Slow Social Media," to encourage nonprofits to slow down and be mindful of their practice. Learning to use social media and other emerging technology will only be successful if nonprofits take small, incremental, and strategic steps. Here is a model that incorporates four different levels of social media practice: Crawl, Walk, Run, and Fly. One level is not better than another, it is just where the organization is with respect to becoming a networked nonprofit.

It is important to note that it takes months, if not years, to reach the highest level of networked nonprofit practice. Bear in mind that even an organization like MomsRising, that was born as a networked nonprofit and has several years

of social media experience, has not won dramatic victories over night.

The Crawl, Walk, Run, Fly hierarchy is designed to help organizations understand that becoming a networked non-



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profit is typically a complex and lengthy process. Its purpose is to encourage and motivate organizations to succeed by helping them understand the nature of the process they are going through. This model is simply a method for organizations to figure out what type of measurement they are ready for.

Not every nonprofit will go through





the levels at the same pace, as different organizations have different cultures, capacities, communication objectives, program designs, and target audiences. And the reality will be messy; an organization might not precisely fit the profile in any specific category. But every organization can take pride in their success at whatever level they have achieved.

### *Crawl*

Organizations that are in the “Crawl” stage of becoming networked nonprofits are not using social media or emerging technology at all, or if they are using it, they’re not using it consistently. These organizations lack a robust communications strategy or program plan that can be scaled using a networked approach. “Crawlers” are not just smaller nonprofits, but may include larger institutions that have all the basics in place, but lack a social culture or are resisting transforming from a command-and-control style to a more networked mindset.

These nonprofits need to develop a basic communications strategy or program plan. They will learn and benefit from inspiring

## Becoming a networked nonprofit is not just about knowing which button to push or what technological wizardry to employ, but about embracing a whole new way of working.

stories like the ones we share in this book.

Perhaps your organization already has a robust program plan or communications strategy in place, but is facing challenges to adopting a networked way of working. If so, you should start with a discussion of the issues, followed by codifying the rules in a social media policy. The first measurement step at this level is setting up a listening process, and integrating listening on social channels into a program or communications planning research.

### *Walk*

The nonprofit at the “Walk” stage is using one or more social media tools consistently, but this use isn’t linked to a communications strategy, campaign or program plan. They have in place best practices on tools and techniques as part of the organizational skill set, but may need assis-

tance developing a social media strategy to support short and long-term SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time) objectives. They may also need help to correctly identify the audiences they need to target.

Walkers have internalized listening and are able to use the data they collect to improve engagement and implement best practices. At this stage, leadership may not fully understand social media and networked ways of working. Often, the question “What’s the value?” surfaces. The organization should implement a small, low-risk pilot that can collect stories and numbers to help leadership better understand the value and benefit and costs. The nonprofit in the “Walk” stage needs to avoid spreading the organization’s resources too thin. It should focus on one or two social media tools, going deep on

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tactics, and generating tangible results to demonstrate value.

“Walkers” must identify low-cost ways to build capacity internally, like using interns or volunteers effectively and integrating social media tasks into existing job descriptions. Staff members should evaluate current job tasks and identify what they don’t need to do in order to make time for social media and other emerging technologies, all with support from leadership. They must also enlist the help of their social networks outside their organization.

## Runners use crowdsourcing to help design pilots, generate feedback, or to rethink programs. They know how to measure the impact of the crowd.

A “walking” nonprofit’s social media policy formalizes the value and vision for social media use and networked approach and encourages free agent outsiders to help with implementation. The organization integrates simple measurement techniques and learning as an organizational habit that helps improve practice.

### Run

The nonprofit at the “Run” stage uses one or more social media tools and is strategic, identifying key result areas and key performance metrics that drive everything they do. They also have a formal ladder of engagement and know how to measure it. They understand the importance of visualizing their networks and measuring their relationships.

In a “Running” organization, social media is not in a silo or guarded by one person or department. With a social media policy in place and a more social culture, the organization is comfortable with working transparently and working with people outside its organization, like free agents. They know how to use measurement to identify these influencers. The board is also using social media as part of its governance role.

The main problem for “Runners” is scaling. To build internal capacity they may need to bring on a half- or full-time staff person who serves as a community manager, building relationships with people on social media or new technology platforms. This social media point person also works internally as a network weaver or trainer to help departments and individuals use social media to support the organization’s programs.

“Runners” effectively integrate social media and emerging technologies such as mobile across all communications channels and know just the right com-

bination of measurement tools to evaluate their performance. “Runners” have strong capacity in content creation as well as repurposing or remixing across channels. They use crowdsourcing to create and spread content. Runners also incorporate social fundraising as part of their fundraising tool box, knowing that community engagement is as important to measure as dollars raised.

For program strategy, Runners use crowdsourcing to help design pilots, generate feedback on an evaluation, or to rethink programs. They know how to measure the impact of the crowd. The organization has adequately engaged and built relationships with key influencers, whether organizations or individuals. The organization has codified and shared its program work flow and has made all program tools and materials available so its network can assist with implementation.

### Fly

Organizations in the “Fly” state have mastered everything at the running stage and internalized it. Flyers create a culture of public learning for both individuals and the entire organization. They embrace failure and success alike,

and learn from both. The organization uses data to make decisions, but leaders understand how to lead from the heart as well as the head. The organization has documented and shared dramatic results with its stakeholders and peer organizations. Flyers are part of a vibrant network of people and organizations all focused on social change.

Organizations in this category have adopted sophisticated measurement techniques, tools, and processes. This may include benchmarking, A/B testing, shared organizational dashboards, and linking results to job performances for larger institutions. Above all, measurement is not viewed as an afterthought, but as part of an ongoing decision-making process that helps the organization continuously improve its programs.

A networked nonprofit leverages the power of social media and working in a networked fashion to expand its network of supporters and thereby greatly increase its capacity and success. Becoming a networked nonprofit can be a slow process, but with patience your organization will realize the powerful benefits of this profound transformation.

## Mastering Measurement and Learning Is the Next Leap

Successful networked nonprofits are using social media metrics and data intelligently to improve their decision-making and quantify success. Here are some of the many ways that networked nonprofits make the most of measurement:

They don’t just add up numbers—they measure their impact on the mission and organizational goals.

They value progress and measure results using insight, relationships, organization results, and social change outcomes.

They use key performance indicators to make decisions, to effect continuous process improvement, and to understand what works and what doesn’t.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 61]



## Involve Your Students in RAVSAK Contests!

**R**AVSAK is pleased to announce the following contests! Winners will see their work published in *HaYidion* and on the RAVSAK website. Entries limited to one per student; all participants must be enrolled in a RAVSAK school. For more information, contact Dr. Elliott Rabin at [elliott@ravsak.org](mailto:elliott@ravsak.org).

### RAVSAK ART CONTEST

Empower your students to create richly meaningful work of Jewish art and to present their work on an international stage! Participating artists study sacred Jewish sources about Gratitude and Blessings, prepared by the Global Day of Jewish Learning. Then they produce art that responds to one of the texts. Students will submit, along with an image of their artwork, a short artist's statement explaining the connection of their work to the theme. Works selected by a panel of judges will be shown in a virtual gallery, and top winners will receive special prizes.

There are four separate categories of competition: Middle School, Photography; Middle School, Fine Arts (Painting, Drawing, Sculpture); High School, Photography; High School, Fine Arts. This year's panel of judges consists of distinguished art teachers in RAVSAK schools. Artwork received before October 22nd will have the opportunity to be promoted to hundreds of communities on the Global Day of Jewish Learning in November. Winners in each category receive a gift certificate to an art supply store. Go to [www.ravsak.org/artcontest](http://www.ravsak.org/artcontest) to submit an entry. **Deadline: December 14, 2012.**

### HEBREW POETRY CONTEST

RAVSAK announces the third annual contest for the writing of original Hebrew poetry. There is a winner in each of six categories: one each for a native and a nonnative Hebrew speaker in elementary (grades K-5), middle (grades 6-8) and

high schools (grades 9-12). Poems may be of any style and no more than one page in length, single-spaced. There is an additional category for teachers in RAVSAK schools (one award only).

The contest provides students with the motivation to develop their expressive capacity in Hebrew, and teachers with the opportunity to introduce the riches of Hebrew poetry from the Psalms to today. This year RAVSAK has developed a curriculum of ten lessons on some classics of Hebrew poetry throughout the generations.

Contest winners receive an age-appropriate book in Hebrew and a gift certificate at a Hebrew bookstore. Winners are selected by recognized Hebrew poets and literary scholars. The contest aims to raise the profile of Hebrew learning within schools and throughout the field. Go to [www.ravsak.org/hebrewpoem](http://www.ravsak.org/hebrewpoem) to submit an entry. **Deadline: February 15, 2013.** ■

## School Leadership Opportunity HEAD OF SCHOOL KEHILLAH JEWISH HIGH SCHOOL Palo Alto, California • July, 2013

Kehillah Jewish High School is seeking an exceptional Head of School who will work with the Kehillah community to continue the growth and success of the school. Kehillah is a pluralistic, contemporary Jewish High School, located in Palo Alto, California, and serving grades 9-12. The school's mission is to provide its students with an outstanding education that is immersed in Jewish values. It cultivates young adults who are critical, self-reliant, and integrated thinkers, and who will grow as responsible, committed members of the Jewish community and the world at large. For more information about the school, visit the Kehillah website at: [www.kehillah.org](http://www.kehillah.org). The full position profile for this search is available at: [www.CalWestEducators.com](http://www.CalWestEducators.com).

Interested candidates should email a cover letter stating their interest in this position, a resumé, an educational philosophy and leadership statement, and a list of 3-5 references to [Search@CalWestEducators.com](mailto:Search@CalWestEducators.com). Please reference "Kehillah" in the subject line. Qualified applicants are considered for employment without regard to age, race, color, religion, gender, national origin, disability, or veteran status.



Search Consultants: Lee Miller, President • Amy Sloboda, Consultant

# Networking Millennials Through Peer Engagement

■ by **GRAHAM HOFFMAN** and **ABI DAUBER STERNE**

Hillel's success at transforming its image and impact on Jewish students through its adoption of a networking model has potential for replication by day schools.

## *It's all about Connection*

Within the last decade, we've heard that young people didn't care enough, that they would not engage, that they were abandoning our institutions. To overcome a widespread perception that Hillels were "uncool" and "cliquish," and to involve the many students who were not attending official Hillel events, we sought to go beyond clichés, to understand this population and to build ways of reaching today's students on their terms. Not surprisingly, we discovered that Jewish students today, no less than in the past, want to be involved and can be engaged to take part in Jewish campus life. Although college students may be on their smartphones all day, we've learned that getting to know each one in person is the only way to reach them.

Today, building one-on-one relationships is at the core of Hillel's strategy around the world. Our Campus Entrepreneurs Initiative (CEI) uses upper-classmen as student interns to build relationships with freshmen interns. CEI has transformed Jewish life at the schools that host it. The Hillel is no longer seen as appealing only to the very committed Jews; many more students are getting involved. The results are so dramatic that Hillel leadership has changed the organization's basic approach to all its engagement efforts, including those with alumni, donors and local Hillel boards.

The essence of Hillel's strategy is identifying a cohort of peer-engagers charged with building relationships with other students and connecting them to Jewish life. Typically, on campuses that employ this strategy, 12 interns are hired to each build 60 relationships, reaching over 700 of their peers annually. The right relationship is everything; in order to have an impact on students or to reach them you have to engage them first. We aspire to know every Jewish student.

## *The Super Connectors on Campus*

Local Hillels select engagement interns who are "super connectors," students who already have large social networks. They have not been involved in Hillel and have the ability to reach students that the institutional world has been unable to reach. The interns build relationships with Jewish students and connect them with one another as well as with Jewish life on campus, whether it be a Jewish book group or Shabbat dinner in a dorm room or a Taglit-Birthright Israel trip. The interns get to know students personally, so they can point them to the opportunities that are right for them. At the same time, Hillel provides Jewish enrichment and learning for the interns, advancing their own Jewish journeys.

Our students (even those previously uninvolved in Jewish life) represent an extraordinary underutilized asset. Mobilizing them as interns and teaching them how to build their own networks has enabled Hillel to dramatically increase its reach and what it is able to achieve. The share of college students involved in Hillel rose from one third in 2005 to 45 percent in 2012, and over 57 percent of Jewish students report Hillel has impacted their personal and Jewish growth.



*Graham Hoffman is vice president for strategy at Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life. He can be reached at [ghoffman@hillel.org](mailto:ghoffman@hillel.org).*



*Abi Dauber Sterne is vice president for global Jewish experience at Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life. She can be reached at [asterne@hillel.org](mailto:asterne@hillel.org).*

The interns help students create their own Jewish experiences and activities with their friends. Students of the millennial generation see themselves as unique individuals who want to tailor activities to their individual interests and be able to do them with their friends. Jewish meaning can be found in many untraditional ways, in order to spark students' interest in Jewish life. And established relationships with fellow Jewish students help keep them engaged.

Jennifer Zwilling, associate vice president of student engagement, explains





that “while we didn’t set out to hire engagement interns who were day school alumni—our goal was to reach the less educated—we actually found that several day school alumni have made excellent interns. CEI has created an opportunity for them to claim Judaism on their own terms, and has provided a new kind of entry point for those who otherwise may have checked out of Jewish life during college.”

Ultimately, we cannot expect young people to become future Jewish leaders unless we teach them these relationship-building skills. This is true for day school students too.

### *Data Driven Organization*

To quantify the breadth and reach of the engagement program, interns keep track of the background of the students in their network and of their subsequent activi-

**Typically, on campuses that employ this strategy, 12 interns are hired to each build 60 relationships, reaching over 700 of their peers annually. We aspire to know every Jewish student.**

ties and Jewish growth by using Hillel’s own relationship-management software. The importance of being a data-driven organization cannot be underestimated. Rather than focus on the number of people who attend an event, the interns measure how students are impacted by their experiences.

As it turns out, essential discussions about Jewish issues are what really propel college students to grow and evolve. Learning in a collaborative way seems to have a real effect on students. As the program grows, the model is modified based on best practices across different campuses. For example, on several campuses, engagement

interns are now joined by Jewish educators, most of them rabbis, who are charged with building their own relationships with students and serving as mentors and role models. The educators approach students in a similar way as the interns do, presenting Jewish learning in a way that is highly personalized.

These educators engage in meaningful conversations with students and offer Jewish wisdom that is directly relevant to the personal issues or questions the students are currently working through. The traditional view of a student as an empty glass that the teacher needs to fill

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 21]

## SuLaMites Take Time for Study and Reflection

Participants in the fourth cohort of Project SuLaM were treated to an intense, heady and joyous two weeks of learning and growth this summer. Combining the intellectual excitement of a beit midrash with the camaraderie and experiential quality of camp, SuLaM enabled adult learners to put themselves into the learning and the learning into themselves. They debated ideas from a rich and challenging curriculum on Jewish ethics; discovered the unfolding interpretive process of Halakhah; and further de-

veloped their understanding of and appreciation for the foundations of tefillah. They explored New York City as a classroom of Jewish life, including trips to local gems of synagogue architecture and an extraordinary encounter with educators in chasidic Borough Park. In the second year, Sulamites will work with their school colleagues to create a new program of substantial impact on the school's Jewish life and character, while continuing their Jewish learning as a community through two shabbatonim. ■

**PROJECT**  **SULAM**  
 Study • Leadership • Mentoring  
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“After my recent completion of SuLaM's second intensive summer institute, I am overwhelmed with how blessed I feel to be a part of a program committed to helping people like me become more confident in our personal and professional expressions of Judaism within our leadership roles.

There were many highlights during the past year, but I will share my top three:

- 1) Meeting and learning with our SuLaM administration, mentors and other talented participants.
- 2) Creating my Individual Action Plan (IAP) which helped guide my professional activities throughout the past year.
- 3) Enabling me to take the time to focus on how I can be an authentic Jewish leader in order to fulfill my role more completely.

### HELENA LEVINE

High School Principal, Donna Klein Jewish Academy,  
 Boca Raton, Florida





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is no longer a relevant model. Finding educators who enjoy learning with the students to make Jewish knowledge and wisdom relevant to college students has been a key driver to the program's growth and success.

### *Unexpected Transformation*

While Hillel's strategy didn't focus on a greater number of students attending Shabbat dinners at the building or attending a local movie with Jewish flavor, the local Hillel staff at the schools participating in the pilot project were pleasantly surprised and inspired to see lots of new faces. Hillel's image on campus has greatly improved.

The interns themselves undergo a major transformation. Many former interns have said that they hadn't realized that they could make a contribution to the Jewish world. The experience made them excited about Jewish things. They also found

their ability to build networks fulfilling, both personally and professionally, and continued to network long after their internship ended.

Moreover, the pilot project has changed the way the Hillel campus staff see their own roles. Rather than merely planning lots of Hillel activities and working to engage Jewish students in them, they focus more on relationship-based engagement. This engagement is now integral to the way they train and supervise their interns, and the results of increased Jewish student engagement have been dramatic. Since the experiment began six years ago, Hillel has trained more than 1,200 interns who have established relationships with more than 63,000 students.

This fall, nearly 50 campuses will host peer-to-peer engagement projects, with senior Jewish educators on ten campuses. Hillel officials hope to eventually bring this approach to all its campuses.

### *Apply the Model across Jewish Communal Life*

Outside of a Hillel context, this model could be tailored for use in Jewish day schools, synagogues or JCCs. The most critical step is to identify the super connectors (or those with the potential to be) who can be tasked to engage each of the target populations the organization wants to serve. Here are some steps a day school can take in adapting this model for alumni engagement.

1. Create a clear plan for what the alumni will be engaged to do once they have been reached.
2. Identify 2-4 "superconnectors" from within each class of graduates—or within each major geography or social network where alumni are currently connected.
3. Develop an appropriate package of

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 61]



Alexander Muss High School in Israel (AMHSI) works closely with Jewish day schools and community organizations to customize an Israel experience that meets the school's and organization's educational philosophy and goals. AMHSI offers campus-based programs, travel programs, creative itineraries and committed educators who bring Israel's history to life. Through AMHSI, teens discover, explore and embrace their connection to Judaism as well as the people and culture of Israel.

## Israel: A lifetime of memories



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[www.amhsi.org](http://www.amhsi.org)

# Personal Learning Networks

■ by **MEIR WEXLER**

Teachers can use social media technology to create a learning environment fostering their own continual professional development.

For years educators have relied on articles and continuing education classes for their professional development. During the school year they would have a few days of “professional development classes,” which often were an afterthought and included simply for schools to claim they provided development for their educators. Many teachers labeled “PD sessions” a waste of time and took their sick/personal days during them despite potentially getting double docked.

Boy how times have changed for educators. Enter the PLN, personal learning network.

A PLN is an informal learning network consisting of educators who connect with each other and learn in a personal learning environment (PLE) or personal learning community (PLC). With a PLN, educators connect to others with the goal of learning something as a result of that connection.

An important part of this concept is the theory of connectivism developed by George Siemens and Stephen Downes. Connectivism was introduced as a theory of learning based on the premise that knowledge exists in the world rather than in the head of an individual. Connectivism proposes a perspective similar to the activity theory of Vygotsky: knowledge exists within systems, which are accessed through people participating in activities. It also bears some similarity with the social learning theory of Bandura that proposes that people learn through contact. Siemens adds “a learning theory for the digital age,” indicating the special importance of technol-

ogy on how people live, communicate and learn.

Principles of connectivism include

- Learning and knowledge rests in diversity of opinions.
- Learning is a process of connecting specialized nodes or information sources.
- Learning may reside in non-human appliances.
- Capacity to know more is more critical than what is currently known.
- Nurturing and maintaining connections is needed to facilitate continual learning.
- Ability to see connections between fields, ideas and concepts is a core skill.
- Currency (accurate, up-to-date knowledge) is the intent of all connectivist learning activities.

PLNs encompass all of these principles. They are not classes. Learners create connections and develop a network that contributes to their professional development and knowledge. The learner does not have to know these people personally or ever meet them in person.

One could argue that educators should really have formal, inside the box PD. That PLNs are too informal and loosely structured. Educators can't really lever-

age social media for professional learning opportunities. My response is simple: educators should try developing a PLN for a month, be it social media, a wiki, website or other learning platform and then reflect on the quality of the knowledge and professional connections they have amassed. It can be created in a very short amount of time.

PLNs are brought about through Professional Learning Community platforms on nings (check out [edupln.ning](http://edupln.ning)).



*Rabbi Meir Wexler is the co-founder of the hashtag #Jedchat, a global professional learning community for all Jewish education stakeholders; he is the upper school technology coordinator and teaches middle school Judaic studies classes at the Scheck Hillel Community School in Miami. You can tweet him @RabbiWex.*

com and [www.classroom20.com](http://www.classroom20.com)) and learning management systems such as Edmodo ([Edmodo.com](http://Edmodo.com)). Edmodo was created by educators as a platform for students to take classes that afford the opportunity to develop vital 21st century skills like communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking and cross-cultural understanding. The platform is a true example of 21st century networking.

Realizing the potential to network with each other, educators then adapted it as a way to develop their own inter-school and intra-school PLNs. For example, math teachers connect with and learn from other math teachers around the world on Edmodo. Educators post ideas and share information and files to a specific learning community (example: the Game Based Learning Community). Edmodo gives teachers the platform they have always needed to network with each other and affords them deeper learning opportunities.





I started an Edmodo learning community at a school and the educators loved it. They could go to Edmodo at their leisure on their schedule. They learned things about each other they never knew and ended up implementing some powerful cross-collaborative units with each other's classes.

People develop and maintain their PLNs through a variety of modes, including social media and specifically Twitter. That's right, Twitter! Twitter is not just for famous actors and athletes. These days, educators cultivate and access their PLNs on it. I knew about Twitter for years but never saw the purpose in it. That all changed a few years ago when a few educator friends of mine mentioned they started dabbling in Twitter as a way of connecting with other educators. I went to Twitter.com, signed up and started following educators I knew. I started reading threads their connections were posting and found many to be extremely useful, everything from recommended reading on differentiated instruction to a link or url to a new web 2.0 tool and how to effectively integrate them into

**Connectivism was introduced as a theory of learning based on the premise that knowledge exists in the world rather than in the head of an individual. Knowledge exists within systems, which are accessed through people participating in activities.**

the classroom. At first I didn't feel comfortable posting, but after a few weeks I realized I had information and answers others were requesting and I wanted to contribute.

Although I was building relationships from scratch, the bond of "everything education" opened doors. Educators clearly wanted to connect. I then saw Twitter had an app for my phone and before I knew it I was waiting in line at the grocery store learning and gleaning information in ways I never knew before. (Being stuck in long lines at the grocery store doesn't bother me anymore!) I had developed connections with everyone from new educators to seasoned vets, to counselors, adminis-

trators, principals, headmasters and educational organizations.

The learning was incredible and self-motivated. I could learn what I was interested in when I wanted to with whom I wanted to. I noticed educators used hashtags (the "#" key) with keywords like "Edchat" and "MathChat" which would pull up all threads of educators who included those terms in their tweets (posts). I started typing in different hashtags and found some educators using "#jed21" in their tweets. It turned out #jed21 stood for "Jewish Education in the 21st Century." There were posts by a few Jewish educators, and organizations and a variety of 21st century learning topics.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 31]

# Building a Network for Israel Education

■ by **GABY KLEIMAN**

A network can be proactive in identifying areas of common need and creating programs collaboratively to address them. This article describes an ambitious initiative.

Good teachers are true creators, creators who turn every classroom lesson into a work of art. But like many artists, many teachers do not love to share their “creative secrets.” They prefer to guard them within the classroom walls, and only rarely are they willing to break boundaries and engage colleagues from other institutions.

For this reason we created Reshet.il, a network of Jewish day schools in Latin America focused on Israel education, whose work would take place by and large online. We knew that Israel will always play a central role in the mission and vision of Jewish schools in this region. However, after a critical review of the curricula and activities in this area, we concluded that the prevailing approach was outdated and not attuned to the current picture in Israel.

The goal of Reshet.il was to empower teachers with resources to succeed in their classroom work by connecting students with contemporary Israel, drawing parallels between history and today, between culture and creativity, while also showing the dilemmas that confront Israeli society and influence Jews in the Diaspora. Reshet.il relied on virtual education as one of its outstanding characteristics. Participating schools constitute a shining example of an active educational network whose members learn together, evaluate pedagogical issues and exchange ideas and projects focused on Israel. From 2004 to 2009, Reshet.il succeeded in re-

vitalizing Israel education, deepening the study of Israel and bringing it up to date, overcoming school compartmentalization through establishing trust and collaboration, and looking at Israel from interdisciplinary perspectives.

In 2009 school administrators involved in the program decided to examine the contents of Israel education within the framework of the network, in the process compiling a list of relevant topics that would be taught systematically in every classroom. The expectation was to exploit the hidden potential of the network through the development of didactic material that would form the basis of a shared curriculum for Israel education.

Initial trials led us to create a bottom-up strategy, with two guiding principles.

First, a team of teachers in each school would develop its own materials. Second, the information that had already been collected on contemporary Israel would inform the desired content; that is, the material that had become familiar through Reshet.il would be expanded and attuned to the needs of students



*Gaby Kleiman is the creator and director of Reshet.il and Project Shituf, both run under the auspices of the Jewish Agency. To contact her, or gain guest access to the site, she can be reached at [gk9704@gmail.com](mailto:gk9704@gmail.com).*

of different ages. The central insight was that the individual product of each school would become the collective product available for use in all schools in the network.

Out of these efforts emerged Project Shituf (collaboration). In 2010, most of the schools involved with Reshet.il entered into this new venture, which required great investment both personal and financial, teams of teachers that would represent the school and create





materials, and the unlimited support of administrators who put their faith in the project. Within the project's framework, each school had to choose a subject to develop a unit on for a particular age group.

Fine in theory, but how to go about it in practice? For all that teachers are knowledgeable in their subjects and infinitely devoted to their work, are they sufficiently talented to produce educational materials at the desired level of quality? Our solution was to match the teacher teams with two experts, one a scholar of Israel, the other a master of educational methodology who was local to the school and available to provide personal guidance.

But what happens when teacher teams exist in Montevideo, Mexico City and Sao Paulo while their guide lives in Jerusalem, Haifa or Buenos Aires? All of the instructional sessions needed to take place virtually through email, Skype or Wiziq. It was not easy to get everyone up to speed, but the participants all met the challenge.

However, despite the fact that the Internet was the natural vehicle of communication, we decided that face-to-face meetings were essential. People need to converse, seek advice, exchange opinions, study together. Therefore, representatives from all the schools met annually in Argentina to present their work. The three-day conferences, conducted entirely in Hebrew, enabled the teachers to comprehend the scope of the shared work involved. They returned to their home bases full of inspiration and ideas for implementing their own units and for including the units of all the teams once the project would be finished.

We decided that each and every unit would go through an intensive process of editing, correcting, linguistic examination, translation and graphic production. Only after this yearlong process would the complete curriculum be uploaded to Reshet.il for use in participating schools.

Indeed, the original plan became reality. Teams from fourteen schools wrote units that dealt with various subjects concerning Israeli society, culture, land, technology, science and folklore. Topics include:

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 26]

*Below are excerpts from the "Rationale" describing one of the units in the new curriculum.*

## PROJECT SHITUF

# Unit on Israeli TV

**Educational Institution:** Martin Buber School, Buenos Aires, Argentina

**Authors:** Ilana Aizenberg, Miriam Reznik, Ariel Liberczuk

**Director of Jewish Studies:** Josef Rozenzon

**Methodological Tutor:** Ester Malbergier

**Content Tutor:** Gabriel ben Tasgal

**Definition of the topic:** "Israeli Television, A Different View upon Israeli Society"

**A. Rationale:** Israeli society is composed of different social elements. Israel lacks the homogeneity typical of Spanish-speaking countries. The encounter in one country of Diaspora Jews with different languages and religious customs creates the impression of a fragmented society.

**Intended audience:** Sixth-grade students, ages 11-12.

### Assumptions:

1. Television is a mass medium that immediately appeals to students. It enables them to recognize the features of Israeli society and to compare them to the daily reality in which they live. Television enables us to analyze, criticize, evaluate and also identify with the reality of life in Israel. Our intention is to arouse a critical investigation through conversation about social stereotypes such as Arabs and Jews, consumer society—pro and con, environmental quality and more. How do these subjects appear in our students' eyes?
2. In our opinion, understanding Israeli society today is especially important, bearing great relevance to 11-12 year olds. With the tools of globalization, students can come to understand what unites them with their peers in Israel as well as the uniqueness of Israeli society, which in many ways is quite different from their daily experience. Our goal is to help them develop interest in a country geographically remote but central to their lives as Jews.

### B. Development of the Subject: What and Why?

This unit belongs to the branch of Culture. Our desire is to bring children close to Israeli society by examining advertisements and programs on Israeli television.

Topics included in the unit:

First meeting: Presentation of the project. First approach to Israeli society.

Second meeting: Globalization. Consumer society. Analysis of advertisements.

Third meeting: Environmental quality. Water. Analysis of advertisements.

Fourth meeting: NGOs. "Peace with neighboring countries." Analysis of advertisements.

Fifth meeting: Humor on television.

Sixth and seventh meetings: Programs for teens.

Eighth meeting: Conclusion. Project evaluation and discussion.

In our school the subject of Israel overlaps several disciplines, including computers, poetry, dance, art.

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25]

Jewish communities and their customs, Israeli television, technological innovation, settlement in the Galilee and the Negev, minorities in Israeli society, ecology and environmental quality, the kib-

butz movement then and now. All units come with a teacher's guide and student handbook. We managed to produce 27 units on Israel education from third to eighth grade, which were entered on the Reshet.il website in the three languages of instruction used in our schools: Hebrew, Spanish and Portuguese.

## Without doubt, the ability to support local teachers and to empower them to write curriculum and produce quality educational material was pivotal.

who encourages and unites the different players, the network would weaken and even vanish.

### Challenges

The essential challenges, at the end of the day, managed to be transformed into some of the project's crowning accomplishments. The teachers sometimes found it difficult to meet the program's high academic expectations; they and their Israeli mentors invested much time and energy in their online meetings trying to fulfill the project's requirements. Ever-present turnover created instability among the teacher teams; some of the teachers trained dropped out of the project, creating difficulty to complete the work as planned. The crowded school schedule made it hard to maintain focus on the project; teachers had trouble devoting themselves to this new goal while carrying dozens of other demands on their shoulders.

Finally, we discovered that it was impossible to move such an ambitious project forward without the services of a network weaver. His role was to build institutional and communicative capacity that would enable the flow of information and cross-pollination, to construct frameworks for mentorship and learning among participants, to assist the decision-making process during the stages of the curriculum's creation and implementation, and to put in place a process of

evaluation that would inform the program's execution. The weaver's role was to set up procedures that would enable the network to survive even after he left the project. Much to our regret, reality proved that without the presence of someone

### Major Successes

Without doubt, the ability to support local teachers and to empower them to write curriculum and produce quality educational material was pivotal. Also critical was the opportunity to introduce revolutionary change in Internet use for purposes of mentorship, enrichment and professional development. The "great monster" that the computer represented to a portion of the teachers turned into a friendly tool useful in expanding information, advice and connections with experts and colleagues worldwide.

We adhered to an ambitious schedule full of targets and requirements new to Latin American education: serious, high-level planning, evaluations, follow-up and consistent documentation

## Meaningful collaboration among different organizations, with unique contributions from each school, is not mission impossible.

throughout the process. We all hope that this learning will penetrate into other disciplines, and that the new tools acquired will serve the schools in other educational frameworks.

The project turned into a community-wide mission. Many schools took advantage of the project's innovative quality to engage parents in the edu-

cational experience—through blogs, digital newspapers and exhibitions. School teams and administrators filled out program evaluations—on the Internet, of course!—reflecting their experience with the process of planning and implementing the units. Pictures and videos were uploaded to the program web page, and teachers were invited to comment on them. Administrators established professional development days so that teachers responsible for creating new material could present the project before all their colleagues, not just Jewish studies professionals. Israel thus attained an important place in the entire school community.

Lastly, we discovered that meaningful collaboration among different organizations, with unique contributions from each school, is not mission impossible. Schools were required first to implement the units that they developed, then each year to choose at least one unit developed at another school in the network. They presented reports describing their experience using units written by their colleagues at other schools. Some decided to consult with the unit's authors and even teach the unit simultaneously at their respective schools.

In conclusion, we demonstrated that in the high-pressure, individualistic world of education today, the power of collaborative work is alive and well. Far-flung school administrators in Latin America did not hesitate to adopt steps requiring full exposure and

transparency. Teachers from various sorts of schools actively took part in shared learning, creating and teaching of material developed by themselves and their colleagues. The dream that Jewish day schools in Latin America will possess an inspiring curriculum in Israel education is closer than ever, and we proved that the dream can come to life: *Im tirzu, ein zo aggadab.* ■



## Interview with Zipora Schorr, Newest Member of RAVSAK's Board of Directors

### *Tell us something about yourself.*

A fifth generation Israeli, I was born in Jerusalem to a family of teachers. All my siblings are either teachers or principals in Jewish day schools, so teaching is in our blood. I have taught English, math, and Jewish studies, to students ranging from 2 to 82.

I started teaching Sunday school when I was about 12 for my sister, who was the principal of a religious school in Detroit, so I have been in the “family business” for a long time. (I taught high school at Yeshiva University High School in Manhattan, then moved to Silver Spring, Maryland, where I built a pre-school and Hebrew school and taught elementary, middle and high school as well.)

My earliest memories are studying Torah with my mother *a”h*, who imbued me with the faith and passion which I have today. Since my father died young, Mother was the one who made Kiddush and lit the Chanukah menorah, and I thought all women did that!

That, in many ways, explains who I am as a woman and as a Jew.

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

I have always been vocal about the fact that I consider Jewish day school education to be the primary factor in perpetuating Jewish connectedness and Jewish identity.

A Jewish day school graduate is a different kind of Jew. He or she is not a bifurcated being, with a secular side and a Jewish side. The two are melded seam-

lessly, and become a part of an enduring identity that translates itself to later decisions and later life choices.

Of course there are no guarantees, but my experience tells me that Jewish day school graduates become the leaders of their communities, they raise Jewish families, they consider Judaism an integral part of their lives. (Here is a stunning statistic: Of all of our high school graduates, 98% are married to Jews!).

I consider community schools an absolute imperative for the American landscape.



For the most part, Orthodox families will send their children to day school; not so all other streams of Judaism, and certainly not the unaffiliated. Does that mean that only the Orthodox will be Jewishly educated? That is a frightening thought, and should propel us to action.

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

The strengths I think I can bring to the

RAVSAK board are my many years of experience, my passion for Jewish education and for all things Jewish, my ability to see the bigger picture and make decisions that take into account many variables, and my shy and retiring nature.

### *Do you have a favorite Jewish teaching?*

Many Jewish teachings are my favorites: *Mikol melamdai hiskalti, mitalmidai yoter mikulam* (I have learned from all my teachers, from my students most of all); *chanoch lana’ar al pi darko* (educate a child according to his path); *baderekh she-adam rotzeh leilekh molikhim oto* (On the way a person wants to go, there he is led).

My current favorite is this:

There is a blessing that is said before the recitation of Birkat Kohanim (the Priestly Blessing). This brachah says: Blessed are You...who has commanded us to bless the people with “ahavah”—with love. This is really astounding: to be told that the only way the priests can bless the people is to do so with love, and it is the only blessing that has this preamble. And the teaching is, to me a stunning one:

the blessing is *not* a blessing, unless it is said with love.

How very relevant this is to our entire teaching endeavor. We cannot teach, we cannot influence, we cannot instruct, we cannot even bless—unless we do it with love.

That is probably the underpinning of everything I believe in: ahavah ve-simchah, love and joy. ■

# Networking for Better Understanding Among Jews

■ by **ALIZA GERSHON**

Tzav Pius pioneered the use of the network to promote dialogue and advance social change in Israel. They're now taking that model to the 2.0 level.

bers regard multiple opinions and worldviews as a source of richness rather than of ongoing conflict.

Tzav Pius (An Order for Reconciliation) was established by the AVI CHAI Israel Foundation in reaction to the tension between the religious and secular communities that erupted after the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

The term “networking” (*ri-shut*) entered Israel’s lexicon around ten years ago. As always, it arrived in Israel from the United States after a fashionable 15 year delay, and shortly before the social-networking revolution on the Internet. Before then, we called the phenomenon of exploiting contacts to gain certain benefits “Vitamin P” (the first letter in the Hebrew word *protectziya*, or influence peddling); new immigrants especially had to create a network on their own to help them land a good job, enroll their children in prestigious schools, do business—or anything else. The old networking model was composed of small, local networks barred anyone whose identity was not close enough to that of the other members. Personal trust was a significant component in relationships within each network, and lack of trust was a significant component between one network and another. It was reminiscent of ties between Mafia families, and all too often, of the relationships that mark the various groups and sectors in Israeli Jewish society.

Jewish society in Israel is crossed by numerous fissures that weaken it and sometimes even threaten its existence. One of the most conspicuous fissures, certainly in the past decade, is that between the religious and the secular, which features sectoral self-segregation and fear of the Other’s influence on one’s Jewish self-identity and on the Jewish identity of the State of Israel. These modes of thought and conduct characterize the vast majority of Israelis across the religious-secular spectrum: ultraorthodox (hasidic and non-hasidic), national ul-

traorthodox, national religious, traditional-religious, traditional-secular, and secular. The identity and definition of religious sectors differ from those employed in the United States. For example, the term “traditional” in Israel refers primarily to those of Middle Eastern and North African descent who venerate religious tradition while exhibiting a range of religious observance according to Orthodox Halakhah. The Conservative and Reform streams, as they are known in the United States, are marginal players here.

The dichotomous thinking typical of the vast majority of Israeli society freezes the situation into one of polarization and alienation between sectors and is not conducive to the development of a worldview based on solidarity and mutual responsibility. This thinking also generates ethical and material competition among the sectors and turns diversity into a source of perpetual conflict on issues such as the Sabbath observance in the public sphere, the status of women, and equal sharing of the burden of military service.

As such, there is clearly a need to create a network that links the various groups and sectors in such a way that its mem-



*Aliza Gershon is the director of Tzav Pius in Israel. She can be reached at [aliza@tzavpius.org.il](mailto:aliza@tzavpius.org.il).*



Since its founding in 1996, it has worked in various ways to build a society in which Jews with different approaches to religion can live together in understanding and mutual respect, with a sense of partnership and shared responsibility.

Initially, the organization relied on net-



working as a tool to effect social change; all of its work in the field focused on creating networks in order to connect individuals willing to defy social conventions, to breach the boundaries of their comfort zones in order to get to know their brothers and form significant bonds with them, ranging from informal discussion to deep friendship.

Before the advent of online social networks, our basic tool was the dialogue group with professional facilitation, to which individuals from all sectors were invited. In order to create a significant network from the motley collection of strangers we recruited, and in order to form peer groups of people with diverse identities, at least in relation to religion and tradition, we had to find a common denominator. In every group, we made sure that the participants from the various sectors belonged to the same socioeconomic class; in some groups, they even had the same or related occupations. Thus, we created dialogue groups for journalists, senior educators, politicians, university students, teenagers, and others. Some groups were for men or women only, although we never received a request for such division from potential ultraorthodox participants. To permit a process that would be as impactful as possible, we set a threshold condition that groups hold at least ten biweekly sessions.

Over the years, we initiated and supported the formation of hundreds of dialogue groups, each receiving individual guidance by our staff. We also engaged in professional research and evaluation. To assess the impact of the process on group members, we focused on the change in their cognitive view of the Other and how it was manifested practically in their everyday life, starting with changes in how they talk about the Other, to the creation of friendships that persisted even after the series of meetings was over. For example, most members of the journalists' group we set up 15 years ago remain in touch today; the contacts formed then served some in their professional work and made it possible for religious and ultraorthodox journalists to find jobs in the general media.

Besides creating trans-sectoral social networks, we focused on setting up a network of "ambassadors" to disseminate our messages in the various sectors—people with a more complex worldview who speak in a new language, one that is not dichotomous but accepts and respects differences. It is difficult to quantify the influence of these people on the wider circles of each sector, let alone on Israeli society as a whole. Nevertheless, some of them are now involved in social projects that create bonds that cannot be taken for granted. An example is Jerusalem mayor Nir Barkat, who credits his participation in a dialogue group with the ultraorthodox before he was elected as a major help in running such a complex city.

In the wake of the penetration of Israel by the most active social network—Facebook—we decided to avail ourselves of it in our work. Two years ago we set up a Tzav Pius page; today it has more than 18,000 friends who see themselves connected to one another at various levels of commitment, manifested by

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 30]



## PARDES IS GROWING...



### PARDES CENTER FOR JEWISH EDUCATORS

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### MORE INFORMATION & APPLICATIONS

#### Programs in Israel:

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#### Seminars in North America:

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their level of activity on the page. Every day we post opinion columns on diverse topics related to our agenda, which spark discussions among the members of the virtual community. In tandem, surfers raise issues that concern them, generally related to current events. As part of our efforts to encourage the members of the network to be active, every week we host a public figure in a virtual encounter and discussion, someone who is not usually accessible for questions and discussion with the general public, such as a government minister, member of Knesset, mayor, author or artist.

## The Israeli public school system, divided by sector, does not accurately represent the complex reality that moves along a continuum of worldviews. By contrast, new integrated schools are suited for teaching pupils with diverse identities, similar to RAVSAK schools.

Over the years, we have employed additional methodologies, such as an experiential platform in work with teenagers or Encounters on the Israel Trail, a trek for those aged 18 and older that offers them opportunities to meet those they might never encounter in any other way: religious and secular, settlers and leftists, kibbutzniks and residents of development towns, young and old. There is an educational program that accompanies participants along the journey. Although the trek lasts for two months, people can join for one day or more, as much as they are able. Over the past seven years, more than 6,000 people have taken part in this unique journey, which generates networks that continue for many years; several married couples even met on the trek.

In recent years we decided to focus on creating more closely knit networks that demand much more commitment. In this way, as the years progressed, and against the backdrop of the various changes that have taken place in Israeli society, Tzav Pius has increasingly begun to intervene in guiding and encouraging the creation of new joint communities of the religious

and secular (but without ultraorthodox participation, unfortunately), a phenomenon that began in the late 1990s and has picked up speed in recent years.

Today there are more than 40 such communities, rural and urban, longstanding and newer, that see themselves as the standard-bearers of a new form of pioneering, social pioneering. Many of these communities are not content with working internally to devise policies that facilitate coexistence. They also turn outwards, to Israeli society, with a desire to do their part in social action, especially by strengthening disempowered sectors

that live nearby. Tzav Pius works in various ways to support both veteran and young communities and assists in the founding of new communities, in collaboration with other partners such as the Ministry for the Development of the Negev and the Galilee, Mirkam (the umbrella organization of mixed communities), and the Ayalim student villages.

The integrated schools for religious, traditional and secular pupils are the crown jewel and main anchor of most of these communities. They bring a new message to Israeli society in general and to the school system in particular, by cultivating a new paradigm for trans-sectoral social networks. The Israeli public school system, divided by sector, does not accurately represent the complex reality that moves along a continuum of worldviews. By contrast, these new joint schools have a curriculum and pedagogical system suited for teaching pupils with diverse identities, similar to RAVSAK schools.

The relatively small number of such schools (about 20) does not reflect the growing interest among parents who want their children to attend schools that combine a val-

ue-based and socially conscious worldview with quality education. The integrated schools are known as quality schools and demand for places in them is high; in many instances, they also serve as the community anchor that draws young families to the locality. All of the integrated schools are part of the public school system and teach curricula that have been approved by the Ministry of Education.

I know that the social context in which RAVSAK operates is not similar to that in which Tzav Pius works. Nevertheless, both organizations seek to employ educational activity to promote mutual respect and solidarity among Jews with diverse worldviews and lifestyles in their several communities and in society in general. Over the years, most of our programs were designed for adults, because we believed that they are better able to deal with the complexities generated by the encounter between divergent identities. Today, though, it has become crystal clear that we must focus on educating the younger generation, from preschool to the early 20s, in both formal and informal settings.

In the past few years we have channeled most of our resources to building frameworks that facilitate coexistence among those who grew up in parallel tracks of life but see the anomaly in this and would like to change the situation. Such frameworks—joint communities, integrated schools, mixed pre-military academies, joint batei midrash, etc.—go beyond discussion among the different groups, seeking to weave a Jewish agenda for living together. They reject the “religious-secular” dichotomy and aim to develop a new, pluralistic Israeli center that is deeply committed to Jewish, democratic and civic values, in which the similarities between the groups that compose it outweigh the differences. Tzav Pius’s growing involvement in this fascinating arena stems from the feeling that these frameworks, despite their modest scope at present, have the potential to serve as a workshop for redefining the way we understand Israeli society, serving as both a fountain of progressive Israeli-Jewish creativity and a force that can unify Israel’s diverse communities. ■



# Personal Learning Networks

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23]

A thought occurred to me: What if a hashtag were created that could link all stakeholders of Jewish education from all over the world? The resulting synergy would be so powerful with the potential to change how PD in Jewish education worked. I discovered two other educators in my PLN (Rabbi Akevy Greenblatt, principle of Ohr Chadash Academy in Baltimore, and Rabbi Dov Emerson, assistant principal of DRS-HALB in the Five Towns, New York) who were also chewing on the same idea.

We got together on a Google hangout (a video conferencing tool I learned about through my PLN) and after a few minutes we realized we were all very much on the same page. We came up with the hashtag “#Jedchat” for Jewish education chat. This hashtag would be used for everything Jewish education related. Additionally, every Wednesday night at 9pm EST there would be a conversation held on Twitter supporting a topic educators would vote on. The “#Jedchat” would have moderators to lead the discussions, with educators engaged actively or simply reading the threads but not commenting on them.

**One could argue that educators should really have formal PD. My response: try developing a PLN for a month, then reflect on the quality of the knowledge and professional connections you have amassed.**

We started Jedchat right after Sukkot in 2011. Our first Jedchat had over 40 participants on it from all over the country and Israel, including Jewish educators from all persuasions of Judaism. Many conversation threads were archived so educators could review later and click on links that shared education articles and class materials. Obviously thrilled, we realized how powerful a PLN could be leveraging social media. Since then, Jedchat has continued to be a clearinghouse for Jewish educators, schools and organizations on Twitter. Jewish and secular educators from all over the country (and Israel) are connecting and collaborating with educators in their #Jedchat PLN. Relationships have been forged, synergy has been produced and, God willing, deeper authentic learning experiences have been promoted in the classroom.

Nings, Edmodo and Jedchat are just a few examples of the power harnessed through a PLN. I urge you to try it out for a month. In fact, feel free to be a part of my PLN: my Twitter handle is @RabbiWex. ■

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חזק חזק ונתחזק

# Strengthening RAVSAK to Strengthen the Field

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RAVSAK – the only organization uniquely purposed to serve Jewish community day schools –

embarked on a strategic planning process aimed at determining how best to meet the increasing needs of its schools in the current environment.

Data, information and opinions were gathered from an array of critical informants – school leaders, funders and experts in the field – as well as from existing studies, reports and analogs. Findings from these sources were combined with RAVSAK's own experience to develop the components of this business plan, which was prepared by the professional and lay leadership of RAVSAK with the support of Wellspring Consulting.

The resulting plan establishes RAVSAK's priorities for the coming five years, accompanied by a staffing plan, financial projections, and anticipated field outcomes.

RAVSAK will continue in its remarkable trajectory, bringing positive impacts to the world of Jewish day school education. We will:

## At the core of the plan are 4 strategic priorities:

Weave school professionals and lay leaders with Jewish community day school peers in networks that enhance their ability to learn from each other and advance the leadership pipeline

Represent community day school interests nationally and equip school leaders to be advocates for their schools locally

Educate community day school professional and lay leaders in ways that promote Jewish leadership and literacy

Provide a focused portfolio of direct programs for students that enriches their Jewish literacy and leadership

- **Build** the field of Jewish community day schools
- **Develop** strong, knowledgeable Jewish leaders
- **Amplify** Judaic program excellence
- **Galvanize** appreciation and support for day schools

Do you want to know more about our new plan? To read the full version of the RAVSAK business plan, please go to [www.ravsak.org](http://www.ravsak.org) or email Idana Goldberg at [idana@ravsak.org](mailto:idana@ravsak.org) to request a copy.



## Initiatives

In order to achieve maximal impact, the plan envisions a number of **initiatives** in each of our strategic priority areas. These include the expansion of existing programs and services, the creation of new ones, and the forging of new partnerships. Highlights of these new initiatives are:

- Structured and curated **networking opportunities** that will include the formation of both online and in-person opportunities for shared learning around subject-content areas, pedagogical practices, governance, etc.
- A **formal mentoring program** for new heads of schools that pairs them with veteran heads to ensure their success
- Development of **collateral materials and training seminars** to help school professionals and lay leaders communicate their value proposition
- **National conversations** with key stakeholders and policy makers in Jewish education to represent and advocate for the interests of community day schools
- **Professional development programs** for Judaic directors in areas of prayer, Israel education, and Jewish ethics
- Formation of **new partnerships** to advance Hebrew language learning, Rabbinics, and new teacher support and evaluation
- Board consultations (retreats, webinars) in areas of **effective governance practices** viewed through a Jewish lens and informed by Jewish learning
- New opportunities for **encouraging and recognizing student achievement** in areas of Jewish literacy and leadership in both middle school and high school
- A **leadership development program** for students in Jewish high schools

## Impact

- Professional and lay leaders will strengthen their craft through facilitated networking, the sharing of best practices, and opportunities to learn from one another.
- Funders, parents, and other community members will better understand the importance of Jewish community day schools and will more actively support them. The ability of schools to enroll and retain students and increase their philanthropic base will be enhanced.
- Engaging professional and lay leaders in content-rich, tailored professional development will increase their effectiveness as educators and leaders, support the educational excellence of their schools and help to sustain them.
- Students will develop into mindful, active, and engaged Jewish citizens through their participation in programs that expand their Jewish literacy, their commitment to ritual engagement, their sense of religious purposefulness, and their feeling of connectedness with Jewish communities in Israel and around the world.

## Required Resources

RAVSAK will work closely with other providers who serve day schools, harnessing the power of collaboration to achieve greater benefits. But in order to meet the growing needs of the field, RAVSAK will also need to augment our internal capacity. This will involve **increasing the staff, expanding the office space** and building a stronger organizational brand through **marketing and advocacy efforts**.

This business plan projects that RAVSAK will grow from a budget of **\$1.9 million** in fiscal year 2011-2012, to a budget of **\$3.6 million** in fiscal year 2015-2016. Expenses will be generated from the combination of capacity building and operational needs as well as from new and existing programmatic initiatives. Revenue growth is expected from a mix of sources, including membership fees, fees for service, grants from individual donors, and funding from major philanthropic partners.

**The realization of this plan will be possible only with the support of philanthropic partners** – partners who seek to participate in strengthening the Jewish life, learning and leadership of schools by empowering RAVSAK to act as their agent for growth and change.



# Networks in Our Schools

“The mind of the intelligent acquires knowledge; the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.” Proverbs 18:15

Networking is part of the DNA of Jewish life. It is about much more than being social animals; networking is our means for learning, growing, striving. By connecting with others, we each discover a key to a door long waiting to be opened. The book of Proverbs is a guidebook for networking; as the quotation shows, networking is an activity that takes place with the mind and all the senses. Our schools are laboratories where people take part in and create networks, offering opportunities to acquire knowledge that can strengthen and inspire the school community. Here are four examples.

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## Building Bridges with Early Childhood Centers

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*By Gayle Feldman, Pardes Jewish Day School, Phoenix, Arizona*

Pardes Jewish Day School grew from twelve kindergartners in 1993 to a K-8 grade school with over 300 students in 2012. Yet we continue to face a challenge of how to educate the Jewish community of the validity of a good Jewish day school education and draw students to our kindergarten. Each year we strive to build a strong kindergarten class with a community of parents that will embrace the value and importance of a Jewish education for their children.

Our quest to strengthen the recruitment

pipeline and inform the community about our school inspired us to work with the Jewish early childhood centers (ECCs). Pardes initiated a program to collaborate together as partners. We spend time cultivating a trust and friendship with our community ECCs. Some of the things we do to offer our support include

- Visiting each school and take an interest in their students, teachers and programs.
- Inviting teachers to our school to see our kindergarten in action and share

ideas of how to prepare students for kindergarten.

- Offering to advertise their school events in our newsletters in order to show our support and expand their programs to a larger community.
- Supplying speakers for their programs such as “Getting Ready for Kindergarten” or “Raising a Jewish Mensch.”

Networking is a pipeline that works two ways. I once heard someone say, “Your school is the best kept Jewish secret in town!” This was not a recipe for future growth. It became apparent that many families finishing preschool had not given any thought to attending a Jewish day school. Although many directors were aware of our school, it was evident that many of the staff knew very little about what we offered and had never visited our campus. We all know that those loved and cherished teachers have daily contact with the parents and are at the heart of the discussions about kindergarten options. We needed to build a bridge. We had to get the word out about the benefits of day school education. Here are some of the activities we do:

- Invite the directors to a kosher lunch and tour of our school to experience first hand our vibrant learning envi-





ronment and see our classrooms and our students in action.

- Invite the teachers from the ECC to come for a tour of the kindergarten, meet the teachers and share ideas.

Once the teachers visit the school they can speak to parents from personal experience.

Our collaboration with the ECCs has made us all realize that we are involved

together in the future of Jewish education. Our schools share the responsibilities to raise children who will become the carriers of our Jewish heritage and traditions. We have grown stronger through working together. ■

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## RAVSAK Student Programming Connects the Bubbles

*By Emily Goldberg*

Two years ago, life was much different. My Jewish life in South Florida consisted merely of my community day school, my synagogue, and my family. The “bubble” I was raised in barely expanded outside of the South Florida elderly Jewish community, but I never thought about the other Jewish bubbles that existed around the world. Until April of 2010, when I experienced my first Moot Beit Din Shabbaton with RAVSAK, my Jewish life was limited.

Just two years ago, my three classmates and I walked into the Hyatt Crystal City hotel outside of Washington, DC, unsure of what to expect for the four days ahead of us. Like all the other participating school teams, the four of us studied a modern Jewish case and composed a thorough analysis with given rabbinic sources. Little did we know, however, that the seemingly overwhelming paper would become only one small component of the pluralistic Shabbaton. No one had informed us, four open-minded high school Floridians, that RAVSAK’s Moot Beit Din was not just a competitive talmudic debate amongst students, but rather a four-day weekend of endless

Jewish learning, communal singing, and fellowship—a weekend that would undoubtedly impact our lives.

While the Moot Beit Din Shabbaton enabled me to fully immerse myself in a community committed to talmud Torah and klal Israel, it was the skills I brought home with me after that shaped the person I am today. The various rabbinic texts we all had studied that weekend inspired me to re-examine my own school’s commitment to rabbinic literature. The social service project in which we had participated at the local Boys and Girls home motivated me to explore other forms of tikkun olam. Most importantly, however, my experience with Moot Beit Din helped me expand my South Florida Jewish bubble and connect with future Jewish leaders across the country.

Months following the Moot Beit Din, my school, David Posnack Jewish Day School, and the Weber School in Atlanta, co-led an incredible Shabbaton, where the values of Moot Beit Din were implemented and shared amongst fifty students. After that fully immersive weekend in Atlanta, groups of students arranged

weekly Skype sessions in order to study together.

The following year, a group of seniors that had met during Moot Beit Din decided to pursue their love of studying Talmud in a yeshiva in Jerusalem for the year. Others allowed Moot Beit Din to serve as a foundation for their commitment to Jewish leadership; they pursued their passions for pluralism and communal learning in intensive summer programs such as the Alexander Muss High School in Israel (AMHSI), NCSY’s JOLT overseas program, and the Bronfman Youth Fellowships in Israel. To this day, I continue to stay connected to my friends, chevrotot, and teachers that I met and studied with during RAVSAK’s Moot Beit Din; these friendships and relationships are what truly guide my own Jewish future.

Two years ago, my Jewish life in South Florida was all I had ever known. Today, because of Moot Beit Din, my enclosed bubble expanded, elevated, and strengthened in infinite ways. RAVSAK provided me the ability to connect and engage with a larger community of intelligent thinkers across America and Canada—leaders who will one day drive the future of Judaism to new heights. ■

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## Banding Local Day Schools into a Network

*Baltimore Jewish Day Schools*

As the economy started to sour several years ago, the Jewish day schools in Baltimore decided to

face the impending challenges together. Five local schools, ranging across the spectrum of affiliation, banded together

into a consortium called Baltimore Jewish Day Schools: Beth Tfiloh Dahan Community School, the Shoshana S. Cardin School, Krieger Schechter Day School,

# Networks in Our Schools

the Day School at Baltimore Hebrew and Yeshivat Rambam (since closed). They realized that their schools would be stronger if they stand together instead of competing alone, sharing ideas and pooling resources to raise the profile of day school education throughout the community.

The consortium was built upon a foundation already in place, as the schools had previously held meetings among various members of the staff: information technology specialists, librarians, facilities managers and guidance counselors. These first steps established a spirit of congeniality and the realization that schools had much to gain and learn from each other, leading naturally to the creation of a larger and more formal mechanism of collaboration.

The new consortium started by focusing on marketing. While of course there is

still a need for each school to continue to market itself, the schools believe that each school will benefit from presenting the idea of day school education as a product to the larger community. Marketing as a collective enables schools to reach a larger audience, conduct a joint advertising campaign and broadcast the message in more and bigger places unavailable to individual schools on a shoestring marketing budget. Representatives from the schools have met monthly to develop a cohesive marketing strategy. The campaign has focused on the general advantages of choosing a day school as compared to a public or independent school, including Jewish growth of the student and family, learning Hebrew, connection to the Jewish community and fostering a love of Israel.

Among other outlets, a joint website was created: [baltimorejewishdayschools.org](http://baltimorejewishdayschools.org).

This site provides not only information about the participating schools, but also research on the advantages of choosing a day school, FAQs for parents considering day school, articles, links, and a blog with a monthly rotation among member schools, thus keeping the site fresh and current. Additionally, the joint campaign has enabled schools to reach Jewish preschools more effectively than in the past, when preschool directors were concerned not to favor one day school above another.

More recently, the consortium has expanded its outreach by generating social media together. It has also been working with the PJ Library and the Baltimore Center for Jewish Education to increase its outreach efforts on behalf of day school education. Collaboration has been a powerful tool to leverage resources for the good of day schools, Jewish education, and the entire Jewish community. ■

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## Develop Professionals of Different Faiths Share Their Wisdom

*By Adina Kanefield, Jewish Primary Day School of the Nation's Capital, Washington, DC*

**N**etworks help us in our journey to determine what is right, what is wrong, and which way may be

a better path. They help us pursue derekh eretz and engage in thoughtful conduct within defined norms and expectations.

In the nation's capital, networks are a way of life that bring forth the power of ideas. They serve as mini-constituencies, incubators, and immediate benchmarks. The clash of ideas creates an instant re-





ality check on our work and helps us set our course. While many formal networks wield great power in the halls of Congress, informal networks also serve various constituencies in important ways outside the bastion of politics.

Development professionals from a variety of independent schools throughout the metropolitan DC area have formed our own informal network to learn from one another. We come together as a diverse group of professionals from the independent school community—Jewish, Catholic, Episcopalian, Quaker, and non-sectarian—and we help each other along the way. At meetings, located at a different host school each month, we study trends in annual giving, share annual reports and statistics, advise each other on successful programs and outreach efforts, provide information on capital campaign consul-

ants and initiatives, and discuss everything from annual galas to printers.

A volunteer group leader for the year sets the monthly agenda with the input of the entire group. Topics range from stewardship, alumni engagement, and database management to cultivation of prospects and volunteer leaders. All topics are self-selected by the group at the prior month's meeting. A simple monthly email reminder brings us together. Because of the current and practical value of this network, each school makes the time to be represented in this fine network, thus bringing together at least 20 to 30 professionals—and viewpoints—at our gatherings. This collective group of development professionals helps set a better course for each individual school.

Our development professionals network

serves as a reality check on our own choices and provides a practical backdrop to the absolutes of the “dos” and “don’ts” in the literature of fundraising. We benchmark, freely share best practices, help one another, and analyze our various paths toward our goals. Through our collective wisdom, based on varied experiences and challenges, we seek to find the right way of achieving our distinct goals. We share the choices, patterns, codes, and conduct that have led us on our journey for the year.

Informal networks are easy, cost-effective structures for learning, growing, and making smarter choices. Simply put, networks are a built-in chevruta. They push and challenge each of us to see things in a new way and to better our work, our thinking, our decisions and our choices—leading us along the path of derekh erez. ■



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# The Secret Sauce: It's *More Social* than *Media*

■ by **LISA COLTON** and **CAREN LEVINE**

A leader in helping Jewish organizations adapt to social media, Darim Online suggests best practices to guide planning and practice in this new environment.

and adjusting our patterns for a new age.

Below are a few tips to share from our experience working with schools that are

Jewish day schools understand that social media is a powerful new tool to communicate with current families, prospects and alumni. But we're all still learning what it takes to use these tools well.

Last year Darim Online, in partnership with the AVI CHAI Foundation, conducted a six month academy to teach day school leaders the conceptual, tactical and strategic foundations of social media. In addition to receiving training on various tools and strategies, schools were supported by coaches to develop specific projects which put these tools to good, mission-centric use.

What we learned is that schools need to focus on culture change as much or more so than the social media tools themselves. Social media is just that: *social*. Yet so many of us have been professionally trained and gained most of

our experience in a broadcast era. As a result, we tend to apply the old rules to a new game. And then we wonder why no one is commenting on our Facebook posts or blogs.

Developing, activating and leveraging our networks—for marketing, alumni engagement, fundraising and more—is based on relationships. Relationships are about people, not technology, and thus we must shift our mindset from *informational* to *relational*. This is not an easy shift to make. It means unlearning many of the ways we do our work,



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making important strides in developing their social culture.

*Focus on what's meaningful—to your community, not just to you*

If you truly understand your audience, you'll be able to provide insightful, valuable content that earns their attention and invites their participation. Push yourself to craft your content in ways that focuses on people, community and mission, rather than on the institution. As one participant from last year's Academy observed, "The conversation has to be meaningful and sticky—to them! No one listens unless we're sharing and engaging." Several schools used a fun method for engaging alumni by posting old class pictures on Facebook and asking them to tag their classmates. This reconnection was valuable to the alumni, and additionally it served to

## Excerpt from Darim's Social Media Policy Workbook

*"The Jewish people are recognized by three qualities: They are compassionate, they are modest, and they perform acts of loving kindness." Talmud, Yevamot 79a*

Engaging in social media is your organization's opportunity to genuinely reflect online who you are in person too. Though technology is constantly changing, foundational values endure. As such, your social media policy should not live in a vacuum, but should be guided by the values and vision of your organization. Reflect on your organization's values and think about how to translate those values into guidelines for social media. What values define your organization? What core concepts do you strive to embody? To guide your activities online, start by defining a list of about six core values—be they Jewish, professional, or universal—which are central to your organization's work, and thus to your use of social media too.



pull alumni together and strengthen their connection to the school, which will in turn pay dividends for the school down the road.

### *Have personality!*

The perfectly polished, highly edited communications of the past have given way to a more casual and social voice. This helps readers feel like they are in conversation with a real person, rather than an institution. Personality makes you real. Real earns attention. Be prepared to put some of yourself into the endeavor, and to think about the persona of your school, and how you'll share it in the most authentic way.

### *Be conversational*

We've all been stuck in a cocktail party conversation with someone who just talks and talks about him- or herself. It's no fun. It's no different online. Ask questions, as they invite a response. Actively respond to other people's posts, and find opportunities to deepen the conversation and your connection. Think of yourself as the host, rather than a marketer. As a host, how can you draw in the guests, learn about their interests, and facilitate connections among the participants in your community?

### *Be generous*

In an attention economy, we dedicate our time and energy where we get value in return. Just like with any friendship, support and generosity needs to flow in both directions. Commenting on other's posts with encouragement, information or connections to resources shows that you're a generous conversationalist, you're listening, and you care. This small investment of time pays off in strengthening relationships and networks both online and in person. As Allison Fine, co-author of *The Networked Nonprofit* and a collaborator in last year's Academy, says, "Social media is a *contact* sport, not a spectator sport." Being generous is a great excuse to be in contact.

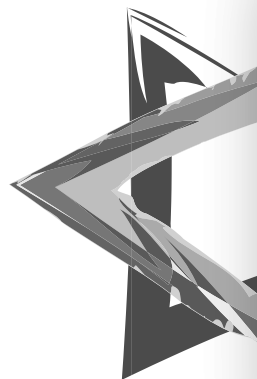
### *Learn new social norms*

We know how to be polite in face-to-face conversations and on the phone. We're getting better at it via email, too. And now we need to learn how to translate these social norms into the social media sphere as well. It can feel like learning a new language (literally, given language and acronym conventions—have you ever tried to explain a complex tweet to someone?) or finding yourself in a foreign land with different social conventions. This is a new kind of fluency to learn and practice. Often, the easiest way to absorb new norms and social cues is by "shadowing" experts. Find a variety of bloggers, tweeters, and other types of social media gurus and observe how they craft their messages. Remix their strategies in ways that make sense for your goals and in your own voice.

### *Reflect your school's values online*

What are your school's core values? Just as your mission and vi-

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# THE DAVID PROJECT

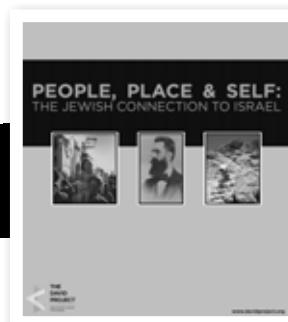
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[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 39]

sion statements should reflect these values, so too should they be integrated into your social media strategy. Think of social media as another way you tell your community's story. What values do you want to highlight? What core concepts do you strive to embody? How will your staff model these values in their use of social media on behalf of the school? One school regularly posted thank you notes to volunteers who did both small and big jobs in the school, as a way of promoting a culture of volunteering and a shared investment in the school, regardless of finances.

### *Set your school culture, online*

In addition to learning social norms for our personal behavior, we're also learning how to steward the culture of our online spaces. We all take social cues from each other, so encouraging diverse participation is key to developing your own online culture. It's hard to be the first or second person to comment on a Facebook post or blog, but once there are a few comments, it's easier to gauge how intense or silly, long or short comments should be. Thus, you might find it helpful to ask some friends to break the ice by being the first to comment here and there. Their participation will make it easier for others to jump in. If the school asks a question about a serious topic—Torah, holidays, ethics—how in depth does a comment need to be? Is it an inviting topic for parents and alumni, or intimidating? What kind of humor is appropriate for your Facebook page? By thinking in advance about the culture you want to develop, you'll be better able to develop a content plan and put it into action.

### *Be open and transparent*

By sharing something about yourself, you invite others to share too, leading to a more connected community. One teacher we worked with posts photos of her personal travels and hobbies, which elicits comments and more sharing from parents and alumni. Many schools in the Academy wrestled deeply with how much they can and should share publicly about their community and their accomplishments and challenges.

Several took inspiration from the Indianapolis Museum of Art, which has a full dashboard of data on their website: <http://dashboard.imamuseum.org>. Transparency builds trust, and trust is the foundation of any healthy relationship.

### *Help leadership become comfortable with what you can control, and what you can't*

To some, social media feels like the Wild West, where anything goes. In fact, you have more control than you might think. And the places where you don't? Just remember that there have always been parking lot conversations that you can't control, let alone know about or participate in. To some degree, "control" has always been an illusion.

**Just remember that there have always been parking lot conversations that you can't control, let alone know about or participate in. To some degree, "control" has always been an illusion.**

Several schools in last year's Academy pursued creating social media policies to explore and articulate their boundaries. To help schools develop their own social media policy, Darim Online has created a *Social Media Policy Workbook for Jewish Organizations* (see sidebar). You can download a copy here for free: [www.darimonline.org/smpw](http://www.darimonline.org/smpw).

### *Integrate social media tools throughout your operations*

Schools that have matured their use of these tools the most are adept at integrating them seamlessly throughout their work. One school used Twitter during a class trip to Washington, DC, to keep parents up to date on their activities, complete with photos. As a result, several parents started following the school's Twitter stream. Even those who weren't Twitter users could read the updates on the Twitter site.

With attention to the ten points above, you'll start to find places where social media helps you do what you do bet-

ter, or where you can do new things to engage your community, strengthen relationships with them and activate your network to achieve shared goals.

### **Conclusion**

Social media plays an important role in how we do our work as professionals and lay leaders in a "connected age." The key to using social media is focusing on the *social*: that is, the relationship building that it facilitates strengthening and growing our communities. Schools that have been most successful in this work foster engagement and act deliberately to create opportunities for their community members to interact and share with each other, as well as with the school. They are also careful to cultivate warm, safe spaces for these experiences

to take place, to provide valuable content based on their community's needs, and to align their social media strategy with their overall mission, values and goals.

So, what's next?

First, jump on board yourself. Just like you can't really learn a foreign language solely out of a book, you can't learn about social media only as a spectator. Explore common tools as a regular user so you can understand it from the perspective of those you are seeking to engage.

Second, reflect on how you prioritize your attention as a user. We're all living in an attention economy, and this honest reflection will help you learn how to succeed in this landscape.

And third, stay nimble and continue to learn. The only constant in this "connected age" is that the tools and strategies continue to evolve—quickly. Being an active part of the conversation will help you know where to invest your time and energy. ■

**RAVSAK**  
***Jewish High School Network***

# Moot Beit Din

**April 18 - 21, 2013**

For more information please contact  
Dr. Elliott Rabin at 212-665-1320  
or [erabin@ravsak.org](mailto:erabin@ravsak.org).

## ***Recruiting Schools for Moot Beit Din***

Registration is open for this year's Moot Beit Din, a premiere program in Jewish Studies for North American high schools. Don't miss out on this unparalleled opportunity for your students! Through Moot Beit Din, your students will:

- Study a compelling and balanced case, created just for this year's program, on an issue of contemporary relevance
- Explore an area of law not definitively adjudged within Halakhah
- Engage in advanced research in Jewish legal sources
- Research, find and examine halakhic sources pertinent to the topic; schools with less advanced rabbinics tracks receive a sourcebook
- Write up their own ruling based on the sources they discover
- Present their decision orally before a panel of judges expert in Halakhah
- Socialize with like-minded peers from throughout North America who are passionate about Jewish study
- Bond with their peers through sightseeing, a chesed project, tefillah, study sessions and catered Shabbat meals

RAVSAK is able to offer this program at rates significantly below actual cost. Travel stipends and teacher honoraria are available again this year.



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# Crowdfunding Strengthens Your School and Community

■ by **NAOMI LEIGHT**

Crowdfunding is an exciting new tool that has the potential to do much more for your school than make money—though it can do that in spades.

Over the last few years, social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter have exploded in popularity, have become intergenerational and achieved massive global reach. They have developed from a simple way to connect and share with friends near and far, into vital tools for a number of different audiences. Social media technology provides both vital data and strategic audiences for marketing agencies and corporations. It is a disseminator of real-time news and information from traditional as well as citizen media sources. These tools can also be harnessed as change facilitators, listening mechanisms, public feedback loops—and unbeknownst to many, as financial resources.

As professional Jewish educators, this last descriptor is where you should focus your attention. You may be wondering how a social network—your personal networks, your student's networks, your friend's networks, your school's networks—can be harnessed as a financial resource. This article will share the newest way in which the nonprofit world can turn their individual and collective social networks into a nontraditional source for funding. This new concept is termed “crowdfunding.” By understanding crowdfunding and how it's currently benefiting projects, ideas and causes within the Jewish community and beyond, you will gain insights into how Jewish educators can utilize crowdfunding both to raise money through these online networks and to develop a stronger community.

Crowdfunding is the act of receiving money from a large number of persons collected together. This concept should feel familiar to you because it is not a new one; it was only recently coined because of the newest way it is being pursued. Think back to the last gala dinner you attended, or even the synagogue appeal you sat through. The organization hosting the gala called upon the attendees seated at tables to raise their hands or stand up to pledge a contribution to their hosts. The synagogue president solicited the congregation members to pledge a donation for the new building fund or Hebrew school. In both of these cases, a person stood up in front of a crowd and received monetary pledges from a group of people collected together. This is a traditional fundraising strategy and it works. This new conception of crowdfunding refers to these activities being conducted in an online space, specifically on a crowdfunding platform.

Crowdfunding is a key tool for the Jewish community because it exists in the space which reaches the next generation of Jews, Gen X and Gen Y, which make up the college student and young profes-

sional demographic between the ages of 20 and 45. This “next generation” engages each other and the greater Jewish community in the online space. Furthermore, studies have shown that giving trends for this demographic are small amounts to many project-based ideas and causes. Unlike their parents and



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grandparents who give larger amounts to fewer organizations where their funds are allocated according to the needs of the organization, the next generation insists that they know exactly where their money is going. There is one more component that hooks in Gen X and Y and that is related to the way crowdfunding functions, a project does not simply take donations, but takes contributions that are exchanged for rewards. Meaning, crowdfunding is not simply giving money to a project you want to support and participate in but receiving something in return, which will be discussed in detail later on in this article.

In order for Gen X and Y to give, they want not only to have a connection to the project, idea or cause but also to see that they can trust the organization or

**Gen X and Y donors want not only a connection to the project, idea or cause but also a trust in the organization or person behind the project. They prefer to give smaller amounts of money to a larger number of projects and causes.**

person behind the project. The next generation prefers to give smaller amounts of money to a larger number of projects and causes. Crowdfunding meets all of the next generation's giving criteria and facilitates trust building, actively asks for participation and engagement, and encourages small contributions to many projects.

Understanding the concept of crowdfunding and why it's a strategic new tool for Jewish communities around the world is only the beginning. In order to use your networks as a fundraising tool, you must understand how crowdfunding works and how it can be harnessed to make an impact on your bottom line and to grow your community. Let's start with a sample idea: your Jewish day school wants to start a garden to teach the students about life cycles, *chakla'ut* (agriculture), Tik-kun Olam and tzedakah. However, your school does not have the budget to take on such a project and cannot run a traditional fundraising campaign for it. School staff and some engaged parents decide to create a team to fundraise for this project and want to do so through crowdfunding.

This is an exciting and innovative project. You've done the research and know how much money you need to raise to get it off the ground and up and running for the next school year and how to incorporate it into the students' schedules. Your principal has approved it for the curriculum if the funding is in place. You know what the positive impact will be on your students and the Jewish community. You have a team of supporters behind the project, who are ready to campaign to achieve success.

## Giving Habits of Millennials

Millennials or Generation Y = people born between 1981-1991.

- 93% of Gen Y said in 2010 that they gave to nonprofits
- 90% of Gen Y would stop giving if they lost trust in an organization
- 85% donate because of a compelling mission or cause
- 63% said they gave to 3 or more organizations
- 79% of Gen Y volunteered in 2010
- 65% want to know how their money makes a difference
- 59% contribute because of personal requests
- 58% prefer to give online
- 58% said their largest single gift was under \$150
- 56% contribute because of a personal connection or trust in the organization's leadership
- 52% gave because of a friend's endorsement
- 43% want monthly contact from organizations which they support and to know about programs, services, volunteer opportunities and fundraising events
- 42% donated because of a family member's endorsement

These facts and more can be found at: The 2011 Millennial Donor Report.

With all of these points in place, you are ready to crowdfund. The first step is to choose the right platform for your project. There are dozens of crowdfunding platforms, the two most well known and popular being Kickstarter and Indiegogo. However, your project is special because it serves the Jewish community. You may want to consider a niche market platform that caters specifically towards Jewish projects, ideas and causes, such as Jewcer.com, of which I am a co-founder.

There are three key reasons as to why picking the right crowdfunding platform is so important, and why bigger is not always better. The first is all about your networks. Through crowdfunding, money is not raised from crowds of random strangers but by a network consisting of first, second and third degrees of personal connection to the project creator. This means you will raise 95 to 99 percent of your funds from your family, friends, ac-

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 44]



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quaintances and friends of friends. There is a very low probability that a person unconnected to you, your friends or your community will come to your project and pledge money.

The second is visibility. On a large crowdfunding platform with tens of thousands of projects, it is unlikely that your small, community-based project will be featured on the homepage of the website or Facebook fan page. On a niche platform such as Jewcer, each and every project is featured on the homepage and Facebook

As a Jewish educator, you may spend a significant amount of time thinking about how to enhance your students' education. In the world of crowdfunding there are specific types of projects that see more success: they have to be creative, innovative and compelling. You already have a leg-up in this area because your projects and ideas are related to children! Projects which seek to benefit the development of children are popular because most people who have children want to see the best for them, or people feel that they were missing something from their own childhood experiences.

## In the world of crowdfunding, successful projects have to be creative, innovative and compelling. You already have a leg-up in this area because your projects and ideas are related to children.

fan page. There is a very high probability that everyone who arrives there will see your project. The third is correlation. On a niche market crowdfunding site, all of the projects are connected in some way. A person who comes to a project on Jewcer that is focused on health and wellness through Jewish values, may see your related project and say, I love the idea of teaching kids how to create a garden, I wish I was able to have that as a child, I will pledge \$18 to become part of making this happen. The correlation between the two projects is high and so the probability for non-connected funders increases. Picking the right platform increases your chances for success through crowdfunding.

After selecting a platform, you will need to submit your project to the site, crafting a project description in the format that will best work on the crowdfunding platform. Once your project is live you will begin to outreach to your networks. This network outreach is done carefully and strategically, and the best tools are social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, and of course through personalized emails. With an innovative and creative idea that clearly makes a positive impact on the Jewish community, your project has the ability to attract your networks to participate, contribute and share your project.

The next key component to a successful project is the rewards. Projects that have very high success rates offer what the crowdfunding world terms "pre-sale" rewards, which are typically products which you purchase before they are made. For example, your students have a class project in which they are assigned to create a storybook. In order to fund the printing of this book for the children, parents, family and friends, the teacher can create a crowdfunding project. For a \$50 contribution, donors might receive one copy of the storybook and fund one student in the class to receive the book for free. For \$118, they receive the same reward plus a second copy of the book. A \$5 contribution garners a thank you note written by the students via email,

## People recognize when they are being used as a resource versus being invited to become part of, and provide their thoughts and funds for, something greater.

and \$18 earns a thank you email including a picture of the class holding their storybook. You are "purchasing" the storybook before it has been created, hence "pre-sale." That is just one example of a pre-sale model project and how rewards can work.

However, a project that is not pre-sale can also succeed with creative and fun rewards. Have your students make a thank you video or song. As an art project, have students make thank you cards that you can send to the people who contributed to your project. There are endless possibilities and as you all know, children are more creative than adults and can come up with innovative rewards for the project.

In crowdfunding, the types of projects you want to stay away from are those that don't speak to Gen X and Y, those that don't speak to your networks and those that are just seeking to raise money, like a new building fund or to send the class on a school trip. If your idea is not project-based and does not have a specific end goal, crowdfunding is not the right tool.

Most importantly, you should never see your networks as merely a funding source but as participants in your project, idea or cause. In this connected era, people recognize when they are being used as a resource versus being invited to become part of, and provide their thoughts and funds for, something greater. Crowdfunding should not only provide a way to fund an idea but to create a pocket community around a project that brings people together, strengthening both the project and the community as well.

Crowdfunding is a powerful tool for mobilizing your networks, but as with any tool, it should be wielded with great consideration, used only strategically

and harnessed for a greater cause. Jewish crowdfunding has enormous potential for supporting existing Jewish communities and funding projects and ideas, while planting the seeds for developing and strengthening the Jewish communities of the future. ■



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# How to Be a Network Weaver

■ by **DEBORAH FISHMAN** and **NAAVA FRANK**

The term “network weaver” occurs throughout this issue. This article provides a job description and suggestions for operational techniques for this newest of occupations.

wanting opportunities for professional development.

The way to create more connections within a network is by network weaving. June Holley, who coined this term, gave the following definition: “A network weaver is someone who is aware of the networks around them and explicitly works to make them healthier [more connected]. Network weavers do this by helping people identify their interests and challenges, connecting people strategically where there’s potential for mutual benefit, and serving as a catalyst for self-organizing groups.”

**T**he DSLTI (Day School Leadership Training Institute) part-time network weaver, Jane Taubenfeld Cohen, became aware of several alumni who had a common need. They had previously served as heads only of high schools but would be starting at the helm of K-8 schools, and were concerned about their ability to lead instruction without background in emerging language and literacy in young children.

She turned to early childhood educator Anna Hartman for advice, and out through the DSLTI listserv zoomed an invitation to a series of webinars on early and emerging literacy in Judaic and general studies for leaders moving from high school to elementary school. Five people responded, “This is just what I need right now!” They generated a flurry of 37 emails in one night, discussing, How should we organize the webinars? When should we meet? How will we let others we might have missed know our plan?

They designed a series of three small-group webinars to be publicized through Facebook and Twitter and held in August, and a follow-up discussion to assess further need and decide on next steps. “It was contagious. You would think they had just won the lottery. We understood their need and responded quickly. We also didn’t overdesign up front; we brought them in to make the content and structure their own,” Jane reflected on this project.

This all was able to happen because the people involved recognized the possi-

bilities that emerge from working with a network. A social network is a collection of individuals and the connections that exist between them. The more connections there are, the more potential that exists for those in the network to become more effective in their jobs, be it fostering communication, spreading ideas, bringing in resources, getting work done, or influencing others.

In Jewish education, like general education, teachers often face isolation in their classrooms. Yet the enormous, rapid change happening in education today means that educators and administrators need to develop new skills and strategies, and they can’t do that alone. Indeed, research affirms the importance of educators learning from each other. While there is some vulnerability in sharing curriculum and ideas, there’s also enormous power to strengthen the Jewish educational experience through connecting with and supporting each other. In a Jewish day school, this could look like teachers seeking to connect with other teachers to find and share new classroom resources; directors of admissions looking to reach new families and increase enrollment; and school administrators



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In some networks, someone steps up to volunteer to be a network weaver. In other networks, an organization may pay or assign someone to be the primary network weaver such as the coordinator of a community of practice or professional learning network. Yet the more people involved in weaving the network, the stronger the network becomes, and the more resources, ideas, and projects the



network comes to embrace. The idea of weaving networks is not new; many of us naturally operate in and weave networks as part of our day-to-day life. Yet we are not always as deliberate in this as we could be, especially now that best practices are emerging through academic research in social network theory. Each of us can be proactive as a network weaver for the networks we care about.

Are you ready to be a network weaver? Here are some first steps you can take.

### *Identify the strengths and gifts of those in your network*

The first step in strengthening your network is getting to know the people in your network. Look around you. Start in your physical school building or office, and also look virtually at people you know in different schools and communities, whether through virtual or in-person connections. What are their interests, strengths, challenges, and resources they use from which you may be able to learn and benefit? In most cases, asking people about their work or expertise makes them feel valued, and most people like to be recognized for as having expertise and being able to provide helpful information.

Once you know about what information someone would be happy to share with you, you will know you can turn to them for help in specific areas in the future, and they may contact you in areas of your expertise, or because you have positioned yourself as someone “in the know,” in contact with different parts of the network. Best of all, you will then be able to suggest ways to connect to create productive synergies. But all of this requires an investment in getting to know people before you can begin to reap the rewards of the network.

If you are a teacher, find out more about the parents and grandparents of your students. There may be all kinds of interesting non-monetary resources they can provide to your classroom. If you are in a small school, find teachers in other schools who are teaching similar grade level and content areas. Sharing resources and ideas can save you time and energy and lead to creative new possibilities of

## Hit “Pause” Before “Send”

A major part of network weaving is connecting people. But before you type in two email addresses and press “send,” be aware that there are many ways of forging those connections. Are you using the most appropriate mode for your context? Are you just encouraging schmoozing, or truly facilitating productive collaboration? Here’s a table to help you be a strategic network weaver.

### *The Introduction Pyramid by June Holley\**

LEVEL	ACTIVITY
1	Suggesting to A that A should talk to B
2	Suggesting A talk to B; tell B to look for A
3	Introducing A to B in an email
4	Introducing A to B in a joint conference call
5	Introducing A to B in person
6	Introducing A to B in person, following up with A & B to nurture connection
7	Introducing A to B in person and offering transitional collaboration to get A & B off to a successful partnership

\*p. 113 in the *Network Weaver Handbook* – [www.networkweaver.com](http://www.networkweaver.com)

## The enormous, rapid change happening in education today means that educators and administrators need to develop new skills and strategies, and they can’t do that alone.

collaboration. If you are an administrator, create a personal learning network (PLN) of people and places that provide value to you when you check in with them. (For more on PLNs, see the article by Meir Wexler in this issue.)

### *How can you learn about those in your network?*

*Meet at a coffee shop:* For people who are local, take advantage of your geographic proximity. While online communication is revolutionary, it has not overthrown the fundamental benefit of human in-person connection. Meeting in person helps each party gain a more complex and holistic understanding of the other—and a coffee

shop (rather than at your school or organization) is a comfortable “third place” which can provide a good environment in which to really get to know someone.

*Interview those in your network:* If you have a professional role as a network weaver, plan a formal interview with members of your network. Asking someone questions about themselves and their work is always the best way to get to know someone. Even more, consider documenting their answers. At minimum, you will have a record of the conversation which can be referred to later. If the interview produces information you find useful or interesting, it can also be shared publicly. Recording

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# Using Facebook to Build a Connected Community

■ by **DEBRA ASKANASE**

As Facebook's IPO shows, the bloom is off the rose. Everyone's on it; most are disenchanted. Here are ideas for making the original social media tool work for schools.

Facebook has so much promise as a platform for community engagement. While individual Facebook profiles have always been designed to share content easily, connect, and find new friends, Facebook pages seem to have been designed as a broadcasting mechanism. What any organization wants, however, is the opposite: to connect with its stakeholders, deepen engagement, and create a relationship with its stakeholders. The good news? Facebook has recently revamped its groups design to facilitate the development of real communities and community engagement on Facebook.

Though every organization uses pages, the native pages interface puts a distance between the organization and its stakeholders. Facebook pages are designed to be an "official organizational space" on Facebook, which usually includes company branding and messaging. While there's nothing wrong with this, the very act of creating an "organizational space" means that it is not a "community space." Most day school Facebook pages that I have viewed are "broadcast" spaces devoted to sending information out one way to Facebook fans. I have yet to visit any organizational Facebook page that is wholly devoted to and encouraging of fan updates, fan news, or driven by fans. (I think this could be a fascinating experiment in organizational community-building, however!)

The new page design is counter-intuitive (two columns to view at the same time? And which side is more important?),

awkward and clunky. Fan "Posts by Others" are hidden within pages, comments often take place within individual news-feeds (which hinders community-building within a page), and administrators have tremendous control over what can be posted by a fan to a page. Page administrators have to work very hard to overcome the distance set up by Facebook in order to create a sense of community. Waiting for fans to post may mean waiting a long, long time!

In addition, pages are at the mercy of the Facebook news feed algorithm. Posting an update to a page doesn't mean fans will see it. The average post by a brand only reaches 16-17% of fans. If that update is shared, commented upon, and liked by more than a few, then Facebook will optimize that post to show more prominently *in certain fans' news feeds*. One of the reasons pages struggle so much with engagement: most people don't see the updates. Compounding this, most fans don't visit the page once they've liked it, so the opportunity to create a community space is limited by Facebook's own news-feed algorithm.

## *How to make your Facebook page a community-based Facebook page*

From the page Timeline intended to tell the story, to the page updates intended to encourage conversation, however, page admins do have the opportunity to facilitate conversation within a page. The first

question to ask is: what do the Facebook page fans want to talk about? Where is the intersection between what the fans want to talk about and what the organization represents and cares about?

The second set of questions to ask yourself is around content. What content do the people engage with most: photos? videos? blog posts? About what? What gets the most likes, shares, and comments? Take a



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look at the page Insights to find out more about the content that fans want more of, and optimize that content for engagement. Paying attention to the posts that have great reach, "Talking About This" numbers (numbers of likes, comments, and shares per post) and virality will point you towards your most engaging content.

Invite the community in. Ask questions around the content they want. Invite answers, photos and content submissions related to "the conversation." Commit to a 50-50 rule: no more than 50% of the page content comes from you (Picture 1).

Or hold a weekly content contribution theme and ask for submissions (Picture 2).

Create a group of community content creators and curators from your biggest fans. Identify your most frequent contributors and invite them into a private online group to think about and curate the community's Facebook content.



Picture 1



Picture 2

Message them personally through Facebook asking them to become contributors. (When I was the Digital Engagement Manager at FirstGiving, we asked our two most engaged members of a Facebook group whether or not they'd be willing to be guest blog contributors for three months. They both happily accepted.)

Lastly, tell a story using the Timeline milestone dates on the right-hand side. Add relevant photos to milestone events and place them on the timeline: founding of the school, opening of the middle school, new head of school, etc. Invite alumni to submit their photos for Timeline milestones and use those. This is the opportunity to include the community in telling the school's story, and share the story of the school through photos and narrative.

### Experience the real community on Facebook: Facebook groups

While I have consistently counseled that page owners can use Facebook pages to create community and deepen commit-

**Invite the community in. Ask questions around the content they want. Invite answers, photos and content submissions related to "the conversation." Commit to a 50-50 rule: no more than 50% of the page content comes from you.**

ment, that trust and commitment can never compare to what happens in a group. Facebook groups were designed to facilitate online community-building. *The mere fact that admins must post to the group as people changes the internal dynamic of the group.* Groups become personal places. Group members are notified when anyone posts, as opposed to relying on it to appear in a newsfeed. The conversations in groups tend to focus on issues, experiences and connections.

I am a member of several Facebook groups that were created by organizations in order to launch and discuss either an online campaign or an issue. Within these, I've seen friendships build,

investment in the group and organization deepen, and member-to-member connections move people to action. There's a bit of magic that happens when a group begins to feel and act like a connected community. I've witnessed great, even magical ideas generated from within the group. The organization is just the facilitator, and the momentum is generated from within the members of the group.

Facebook groups offer Jewish day schools the opportunity to create a real community partnership amongst organizational stakeholders through Facebook groups. Whether or not your school has a Facebook page, consider the value that

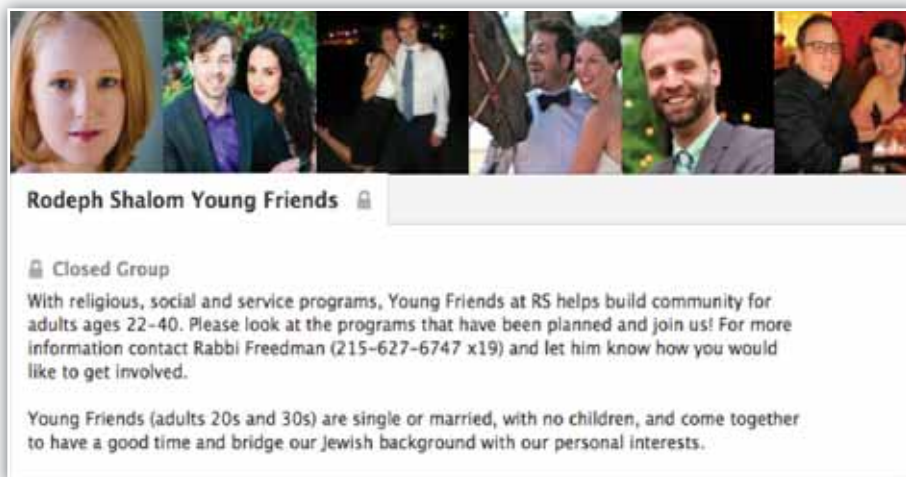
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a group might add to your school: listening to what the community cares about, community-sourced content and conversation that adds value to the community (and might inform curricula), and creating lifetime relationship with alumni and parents.

Many day schools use Yahoo groups and Google groups for parent communication and inter-parent communication, but these are lists. Lists by their nature do not encourage conversation. Facebook groups encourage group conversation through its features: members' photos who participate appear in the



Picture 3

## The Timeline gives the opportunity to include the community in telling the school's story, and share the story of the school through photos and narrative.

header, members can upload and discuss files and photos, members can add their friends to any closed or open group (facilitating group ties), and conversations flow more intuitively on the page when there are no logos talking at us.

### *Ideas for creating community with Facebook groups*

Consider first "the conversation" that your stakeholders most often want to have, whether in the hallways or on a listserv. Do they care most about what is happening right now in the school, or what will happen in two years? Is the most liked content on the page related to education, Judaics, va'ad (parents' association) activities, mitzvah projects, school policy, or something else? From there, consider whether or not there is sufficient interest in a particular conversation topic to warrant its own group, or whether starting a broad Facebook group is the right choice.

Facebook groups that are natural fits for a Jewish day school might include a Torah study group or va'ad-sponsored regular Torah study, a young alumni group (see Picture 3) and/or general alumni

group, a mitzvah project group, or a group for discussing greater community activities.

If you consider creating a broader Facebook group, have a clear focus on the purpose of the group, and what you think the conversations should be. Recruit a few trusted supporters to support the conversations until conversation begins to develop naturally. These types of Facebook groups could supplant the

Lastly, consider how the Facebook group ties back to the school's Facebook page. Groups serve a great role in creating and strengthening connections between those in the group. Connect group members back to the page with regular updates to the group from the page. Continue select conversations from the page to the group (and vice versa) so that the two Facebook presences do not operate independent of each other. Be sure to remind both page fans and group members of the role of each Facebook place.

Whether groups or pages, Facebook isn't just for broadcasting news. Ideally, your school's Facebook presence should connect the organization with its stake-

## Facebook isn't just for broadcasting news. Your school's Facebook presence should connect the organization with its stakeholders, deepen engagement, and create a relationship with its stakeholders.

Yahoo and Google listservs. They could easily serve as the water cooler for all school-related conversation, as well as those other conversations that knit community together: challah recipes, plumber recommendations, where to go on vacation, and advice for planning a simchah.

holders, deepen engagement, and create a relationship with its stakeholders. In order to be effective, you have to invite the community into your space on Facebook, allow the connections to happen, and encourage conversation and content about what your community wants. ■

## The AVI CHAI Foundation Awards \$2.35 Million to RAVSAK to Jumpstart New Growth

In recognition of RAVSAK's leadership in the day school world and its potential, The AVI CHAI Foundation has awarded a four-year, \$2.35 million grant to RAVSAK for organizational capacity building. The AVI CHAI capacity funds, together with new funds to be raised from others, will enable RAVSAK to invest in new key hires and an expanded infrastructure, strengthen its leadership and expertise, expand its philanthropic pipeline, and implement a series of new educational initiatives that respond to the growing needs of the field.

Arnee Winshall, RAVSAK's board chair noted, "RAVSAC's growth from grassroots startup to field leader has been largely due to the visionary leadership of Dr. Marc Kramer, the involvement of lay and professional leaders from member schools, and the strategic involvement

of key philanthropic partners like The AVI CHAI Foundation. Energized by the plan, we welcome the opportunity to expand our collaboration with our current organizational and philanthropic partners and to engage with new partners to invest in the unique and critical role that day schools play in ensuring our future as a Jewish community."



"AVI CHAI has long supported the impressive work of RAVSAK in advancing Jewish literacy, religious purposefulness and Jewish peoplehood throughout

North America. This capacity building gift to RAVSAK is part of our strategy to help build strong organizations to support day schools now and beyond our sunset. This grant demonstrates our trust in RAVSAK's board and staff and their ability to achieve impact across the community day school field," said Yossi Prager, AVI CHAI's executive director.

Dr. Marc Kramer, RAVSAK's executive director, says, "RAVSAC's deep relationship with The AVI CHAI Foundation grows from our shared vision of the profound importance of Jewish education to ensuring a vibrant Jewish future. We are delighted and humbled by AVI CHAI's trust in our ability to transmit that vision and help our schools educate a new generation of knowledgeable, proud, engaged Jewish youth." ■

### I'm [living.] With Gaucher disease.



Today, I'm on treatment. Out of bed. Out to dinner. Working. With my kids. I'm living.

One out of every 450 Ashkenazi Jews has Gaucher disease. I'm one of them.

Gaucher can make you feel exhausted all the time, with achy bones, bruises, easy bleeding; symptoms that are often ignored or misdiagnosed...and can be fatal. And anyone can have it.

Gaucher disease can cause: anemia, fatigue, nosebleeds and easy bruising and bleeding, osteoporosis, bone pain, easily broken bones and distended stomach due to an enlarged liver and/or spleen. Both parents must carry the Gaucher gene in order to pass it on to their children.

If you or a family member has symptoms of Gaucher, talk to your doctor about testing and the various treatment options that are available. A blood test can detect if you are a carrier or have Gaucher.

To learn about the importance of early diagnosis, testing and treatment call 1-888-275-8719 (toll free) or [www.GaucherDisease.org/rav](http://www.GaucherDisease.org/rav).

#### "Go For Gaucher" 5K Walk/Run

To help raise awareness of this debilitating disease, we welcome individuals and teams of all ages to join us for our "Go For Gaucher" 5K Walk/Run, **October 14, 2012**, Mason Mill Park, 1340 McConnell Drive, Decatur, GA. Start building your team today!

For details, sponsorships, or to register online, visit our website at [www.gaucherdisease.org](http://www.gaucherdisease.org), or contact the NGF at 800-504-3189 or 770-934-2910. To place an ad in our program book, please contact and send your ad by **September 14th** to Rosina Papantonio at [rosina@gaucherdisease.org](mailto:rosina@gaucherdisease.org). See ad sizes at our website.

# The Right Technology for Reaching Your Audience

■ by **KEVIN MARTONE**

Online media are generally complex and flexible tools that can be used in multifarious ways to meet your needs. Some strategic tech planning can increase success dramatically.

Last year, Lander-Grinspoon Academy, a small Jewish day school in Northampton, Massachusetts, placed 2nd (People's Choice) in the Jewish Day Schools Video Awards, which were sponsored in part by the AVI CHAI Foundation. How did they garner enough votes to beat larger schools? Executive Director Bil Zarch explained on his blog afterwards that it wasn't just the quality of their video.

He credits "people power" for the win. In his words, the school

*"used all of our resources to get the word out about the contest, encouraging our greater community to send out the link to their friends and family. And it worked! We got creative, and we hit often. Practically every Jew in the Pioneer Valley (and a lot of non-Jews as well) knew that LGA was participating in this contest."*

They used channels both online and off to spread the word and ask others to take action on their behalf: personal meetings; eNewsletters, Facebook; traditional newsletters, etc. In the end, it was word-of-mouth, spread via online and offline channels, that resulted in their success. In fact, Lander-Grinspoon had run a successful Double Chai fundraising campaign earlier in the year; the people they worked hard to cultivate for a gift at that time were much easier to convince to support them in the video competition.

That said, the Lander-Grinspoon team would be the first to admit that the process would have been easier had they al-

ready built strong online networks to tap into. For example, their Facebook Page was not fully formed or regularly updated at the time. Social channels—Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.—allow organizations to find and build community, a network of interested constituents, ready to act on your organization's behalf *before* you need it.

So organizations need to think about their goals: what do they actually want people to *do*? Enroll their children in your school? Donate? Attend an alumni event? Only when a school has defined its goals should they consider the tools/channels to utilize to reach those goals. A common mistake organizations make is setting up a profile on a channel with no strategic consideration of how it can help them realize their goals. For example, many organizations rushed to Twitter or Pinterest when those social networks first appeared, but then failed to utilize them effectively to build community.

To select the right technology to reach the right audience and move them to act, keep the following in mind.

**Consider your goals first.** Everything else follows from your goals: technology choice, communication plans, person responsible, etc.

**Select a tool based on your goals and**

**audience.** Don't select the "hot" tool or one you happen to be comfortable with.

**Don't silo.** Make sure everyone involved in communications at your school works together to reach your goals.

**Assign resources; do the work.** You can't build community online without some effort. It works best when someone is ultimately responsible for reaching your goals.



*Kevin Martone, technology program manager at the Grinspoon Institute for Jewish Philanthropy, helps organizations utilize technology to reach their goals. He can be reached at [kevin@hgf.org](mailto:kevin@hgf.org) or @kmartone on Twitter.*

**Put in the work now; move to act later.** Build your community and relationships in advance. Only later, when you've built trust with your community, then ask for help.

So what are the right tools/channels for reaching *your* audience? Now we'll review a few tools that have strong community-building potential, and think about how other organizations have considered the above steps in implementing these tools. But you'll have to consider your particular goals and audience to decide which will work best for you.

## #Tweetchats

The best book group I've ever been involved with was a #tweetchat. What's a #tweetchat, you ask? On Twitter, hashtags (words with a # at the beginning to allow simple search and discovery) are a great way to build and join a



conversation on a specific subject. As an example, your school might include the #jds (Jewish day schools) hashtag for others in the Jewish day school community to find your tweet when they search that tag. #Tweetchats take this a step further by using a specific hashtag at a specific time to hold a conversation on a particular subject.

If you search for #MyBookClub, you'll find discussions around the monthly books they discuss, often with the author included. That was the #tweetchat book group I found so effective. The conversation about the nonfiction book (*Enchantment* by Guy Kawasaki) was stimulating, I gained new insights into the book, and I met a number of new people on Twitter with similar interests. Others have had similar experiences with #tweetchats and are excited to take part in them. To make a successful #tweetchat, you need to:

- Create a short, clear hashtag
- Discuss an interesting topic
- Promote the #tweetchat widely
- Prepare questions in advance
- Facilitate the discussion
- Follow-up: search the hashtag and continue the conversation long-term; connect with new Twitter users who took part in the chat

#Tweetchats are great for raising the awareness of your school or a specific program. For a day school example, let's say Lander--Grinspoon was starting a new science program and wanted the larger local community to be aware of it. They might schedule a live #tweetchat with a new hashtag like #LanderScience. Next, they'll promote the time and subject matter of the #tweetchat across Twitter and various other channels and prepare questions to ask the audience during the #tweetchat. Anyone on Twitter can respond to the questions, ask their own questions, or simply join the conversation. And everyone who takes part in the chat shares their posts with all of their Twitter followers, growing the reach of your organization beyond its existing constituency. People can search and join in the #LanderScience conversation when the #tweetchat is finished as well. It can be an ongoing conversation, continuing the reach of the initial event.

Want to find a real-life example pertinent to Jewish day schools? Search #jedchat. This is a thriving Jewish education #hashtag that started off as a weekly #tweetchat.

### *Live Facebook chats*

I work with many Jewish overnight summer camps who have found creative ways to use specific online tools to reach their goals. URJ Henry S. Jacobs Camp, for example, realized that

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 54]



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## Northeastern

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 53]

first-time camper parents are often anxious about what they and their child can expect from their summer at camp. The camp had already promoted and facilitated a private Facebook group for parents, so they leveraged that audience by holding a live chat for first-time parents on the group. An added bonus? Anyone who wasn't available at the time of the chat could go back and read the questions and answers in the private group later.

In this case, a #tweetchat may not have been appropriate. The camp wanted a private venue to allow parents to ask sensitive questions. They also had a closed group of parents and didn't have a need to promote the chat beyond this audience. Jacobs Camp understood their goals and audience and catered to their needs with the right tool.

### Integration

In some cases, integrating multiple tools or channels is optimal. URJ Eisner Camp enhanced their annual phone-a-thon by incorporating a free live UStream video feed on their website of the festivities (like a traditional telethon), a live #tweetchat incorporated into the same webpage, and a big Donate Now button on the page. They also asked donors to post a link to the page on their own Facebook profile to promote the phone-a-thon to a wider audience.

Each individual part of this phone-a-thon was meant to reach a particular goal:

- The UStream live video and live Twitter feed engaged the existing audience and also brought in new people to the event.
- The Facebook posts raised the awareness of the event to a wider audience.
- The Donate Now button brought in donations.

The integration of each of these tools increased the success of the phone-a-thon by working together to reach these



goals. As a result of adding in these components, their phone-a-thon resulted in 20% more individual donors from the previous year. The event itself brought a nearly 300% increase in web traffic to the site over an average day. The video itself had a total of 38 hours of viewing by over 120 unique visitors.

Like Lander-Grinspoon, which utilized both offline in-person meetings and online outreach to reach their goal (gathering enough votes to place in the video awards), URJ Eisner Camp integrated a number of tools and channels to increase the effectiveness of their campaign. When considering your goals, remember not to silo efforts; your content on each channel can work together to multiply your success.

### You can do it

Each of these projects was successful because the organization started

with clear goals and then developed a smart communications and community-building strategy that aligned with them. And they selected tools that could effectively reach these goals. Don't try to put a square peg into a round hole: the greatest technology in the world will fail miserably unless it is optimized for your needs. URJ Henry S. Jacobs Camp's parents would not have felt comfortable asking sensitive questions in a public #tweetchat. At the same time, a private Facebook group would have been far too hard for me and other nonfiction book readers to find to get involved in #MyBookClub. Finally, don't underestimate the need for hard work; in every one of these examples, it required committed effort by real people to leverage the power of these tools.

Now it is your turn. What do you want to accomplish? What tool(s) will help you reach these goals? ■

## RAVSAK Staff Grows to Meet The Growing Needs of the Field



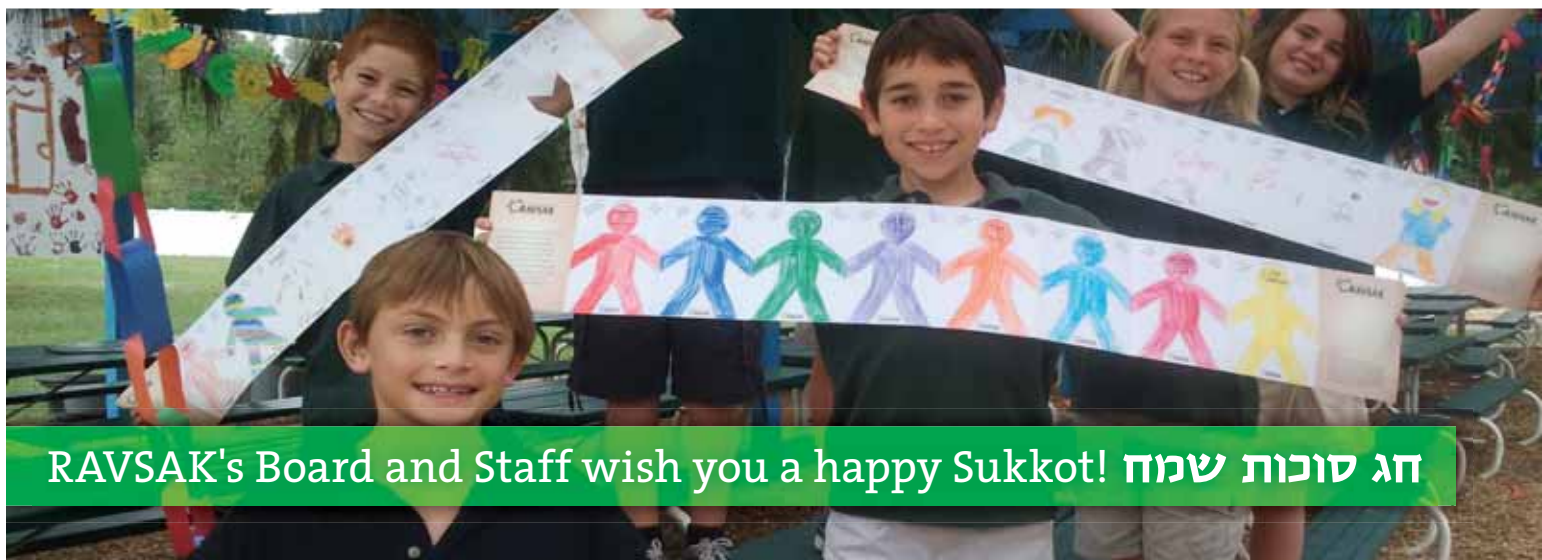
**L**iza Sacks is RAVSAK's new Development Associate. Liza works with RAVSAK's senior leadership to help implement long-term and short-term development strategies, as well as contributing to major gift cultivation and donor relations. She worked in development at The Little Red School House Elisabeth Irwin High School, responsible for the Alumni Council and alumni and fundraising events. Liza was a freelancer for Jack Morton World Wide in corporate fundraising and event planning, and interned for the lobbying firm Podesta Group. She sits on the board of directors for The Summer Camp in Bridgdon, Maine, that serves girls from low-income and foster homes. Liza has been inspired by family members who have worked in Jewish schools. She can be reached at [Liza@ravsak.org](mailto:Liza@ravsak.org). ■

**D**arone Ruskay joins RAVSAK in the newly established role of Director of Digital Strategy. He will explore the ways that technology, social-media, the web and other online tools can be used to their fullest to further RAVSAK's work. Darone has fifteen years' experience in the field of Jewish education, at organizations ranging from CAJE, JTS, The Skirball Center



for Adult Jewish Learning, and most recently JCast Network. In each of these positions he has brought his passions and commitment to Jewish education and Jewish community together with his passion for, and belief in the power of, technology. Darone is married to Rabbi Stephanie Ruskay and the proud father of twin boys. He can be reached at [Darone@ravsak.org](mailto:Darone@ravsak.org). ■

**J**ames Gurland joins RAVSAK as the new Director of Institutional Advancement. He will implement RAVSAK's strategic development plan and manage all fundraising activities, including cultivating and growing a major gifts program. James was national director of the Jerusalem Foundation, executive director of the American Committee for the Weizmann Institute, NJ Region, and development director for SSDS of Raritan Valley. He serves as vice president of the board of the Daughters of Israel Geriatric Center in West Orange. James lived in Israel for a year on Project Oztma and spends a long weekend every summer traveling the country to see all the Major League Baseball stadiums. He considers being a father to his son Ariel as the most satisfying job in the world. He can be reached at [James@ravsak.org](mailto:James@ravsak.org). ■



RAVSAK's Board and Staff wish you a happy Sukkot! חג סוכות שמח



# Fostering Leadership Through Teacher Networks

■ by SARAH BURNS

Networks of teachers, whether within one school or over a broader range, can foster individual growth while enriching the school community in powerful ways.

In the landmark book *The Power of Teacher Networks*, Ellen Meyers describes teacher networks as a force that breaks teachers out of isolation, improves their practice, advocates for students and schools, and keeps our best teachers teaching. Networks bring teachers together in powerful ways, working toward the ultimate goal of improving students' learning experience.

In my research and my experience, I have identified four attributes of strong teacher networks that illustrate their importance. First, teacher networks are a forum for teachers to share resources and to support each other, avoiding the isolation of solo teaching that can lead to weary teachers and stagnant teaching. Second, teacher networks provide opportunities for ongoing professional development. Third, teacher networks foster teacher leaders. Networks strive to develop teachers' voices so they can affect change on local and global levels. Finally, under ideal circumstances where administrators and colleagues are receptive, teacher networks have a ripple effect, where an individual member's growth can positively impact her whole school. The result is a group that is greater than the sum of its parts.

One such teacher network is the DeLeT Alumni Network (DAN). DeLeT is a masters-level Jewish day school teacher preparation program, generously funded by the Jim Joseph Foundation, with sites at Brandeis University in Massachusetts and Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles. While DeLeT gives its participants strong initial preparation, its

graduates face challenges that are common throughout the field. Some DeLeT alumni have struggled with lack of support and coaching during their first few years in the classroom. Others have sought a safe place to work on problems of teaching in their classrooms and schools, but didn't know where to find like-minded colleagues. Still others have taken on a range of informal and formal leadership positions in their schools, but there was no structure in place to critically examine the skills needed to be a teacher leader or to share examples of teacher leadership in action.

At the first DeLeT alumni conference in 2009, alumni agreed on the need to organize to support each other, share successes, and develop leadership skills. With generous support from the Laura and Gary Lauder Foundation, the DeLeT Alumni Network was born. DAN now offers a variety of professional learning events, resources for teaching and teacher leadership, and social networking for DeLeT alumni across North America and beyond.

Teacher networks build community. Networks connect people and encourage collaboration, which helps reduce common feelings of being isolated and overwhelmed. Participation in a network can be as simple as reading an article on a Facebook page or as notable as presenting at a national conference. The key is for teachers to participate. Sometimes,

a faculty meeting or team meeting is dominated by items of immediate concern, like schedules and logistics. It can be refreshing to have a community of colleagues who are outside of those day-to-day matters and who make space for important conversations about teaching and learning. By connecting with other teachers and sharing their work and



*Sarah Burns is the senior director of the DeLeT Alumni Network. She can be reached at [sarah@deletalumni.org](mailto:sarah@deletalumni.org).*

experiences, teachers stay grounded in their commitment to student learning.

Teacher networks are meaningful for teachers. DAN believes it's important to provide multiple entry points to our network, making resources and events accessible and inclusive, without sacrificing substance. This way, members of the network can find their involvement worthwhile at all stages of their career. Sharon Feiman-Nemser, DeLeT's founder at Brandeis, conceptualized a continuum of teacher learning across three career stages: initial preparation, new teacher induction and continuing professional development. Networks can guide their members through that continuum by creating learning opportunities designed for different career stages.

Depending on where they are in the continuum of professional development, network members might take advantage of the network's resources on a variety of levels, and some might take on leadership roles and contribute to

those resources. For example, this year, DAN is launching the DAN Curriculum Bank, where members of our network can digitally share teaching materials. This initiative will include a social networking component where members can comment on each other's work and share successes and pitfalls in teaching the posted lessons. Experienced teachers will contribute lessons and projects shaped by the practices fostered by DeLeT. Newer teachers will access the Curriculum Bank to build up their repertoire, while more experienced teachers will use it to add something new to materials they already use. First year teachers and veterans alike can post materials and pose questions to the group, and peers can become informal mentors as they offer constructive criticism. This ebb and flow of offering and receiving support of different types as people move through their careers is what keeps teacher networks vibrant and relevant to a cadre of professionals in an ever-evolving field.

Teacher networks offer opportunities to foster leadership: experienced teachers mentoring novices, developing a new curriculum, giving a colleague useful critical feedback or facilitating a discussion about teaching and learning. Teacher leaders work for change, whether by helping another teacher, transforming school culture or advocating for broader educational policy. If we want to affect real change in schools, we need to include teachers in the conversations that are shaping our schools. Teacher networks can keep these conversations focused through rich programming, and, through a network's size, status or connections, they can make teachers' voices heard.

Networks also offer opportunities for members to develop leadership skills. Just because a teacher has experience or some good ideas doesn't mean she knows how to be an effective leader. Teacher leadership has its own unique skill set. Although the skills are often assumed to be innate in only a few special people, or naturally acquired over time, on the contrary, teacher leadership skills can be identified and taught. Learning and applying leadership skills

**It can be refreshing to have a community of colleagues who make space for important conversations about teaching and learning. By sharing their work and experiences, teachers stay grounded in their commitment to student learning.**

are important components of continuing professional development, as teachers expand their responsibilities and contribute to their school, the profession and teacher networks in new ways.

Making a commitment to leadership doesn't necessarily mean that teachers are hoping to become administrators. In fact, the majority of DeLeT alumni

involved in DAN are classroom teachers working toward mastery of their craft while simultaneously working to transform their schools. Our members have started professional learning communities and study groups in their schools, initiated new programs and earned multiple advanced degrees. Some alumni have become DeLeT mentor teachers, sharing

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 58]



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[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 57]

their experience and wisdom in a more structured way. Through all of their actions, our members have proven an important point: strong teaching informs leadership, and vice versa.

Administrators should still take note. Embrace the power of teacher networks, and encourage your whole school to take advantage of them. Involvement in teacher networks and professional learning groups should be a recognized value of your school, emphasizing ongoing development of teachers' practice and leadership skills. I acknowledge that this commitment takes time and effort, both from administrators and teachers. But in my experience, it is a worthwhile commitment because the return is so high. You'll find that individual teachers' involvement in networks that are relevant to them will strengthen the collaborative culture among all of your teachers and will enhance student learning for all students. When we raise the bar for the intellectual work of teaching, we all benefit. Unfortunately, teachers can't do it all on their own. There are specific things administrators can do to facilitate the ripple

effect of teacher networks so that each individual's impact is magnified.

First, teachers need administrators to advocate for teacher participation in networks. Explicitly encourage your teachers to participate in teacher networks and professional learning communities, within your school or on the outside. Give teachers time and incentives to attend conferences, take a course, or collaborate with other teachers. Seek out teachers who are members of strong professional networks when making hiring decisions. A teacher (even a new teacher) with outside mentors, role models of outstanding teacher leaders, connections with other schools, and a commitment to ongoing learning just might bring more to your community than a teacher (even with experience) who has spent his or her career solo teaching behind closed doors.

Second, follow up! Be an active partner with your teachers in sharing the content they learn from their network with others. Often teachers leave conferences and workshops rejuvenated and inspired, but the enthusiasm fades away if it's not sustained in their practice.

Finally, remember that teachers are already busy with the daily tasks of teaching. If enhancing their practice and taking on leadership roles is simply added to teachers' regular workload, teachers will perceive it as a burden. This ultimately drains their time and energy to the detriment of their teaching. Give teachers room to grow by making dedicated time in teachers' schedules for professional development and involvement in networks so their participation can become a tool for enhancing their practice, rather than a hardship.

Day schools across the continent are full of intelligent, creative, courageous, innovative teachers who are doing great things. But how far is their reach if they are isolated behind the closed door of their classroom or within the walls of their school? When teachers make their practice public, everyone grows. I've found that in addition to making individual teachers stronger, teacher networks like DAN promote an ongoing conversation, normalizing the radical idea that teachers can and should be leaders and agents of change advancing education in Jewish day schools. ■

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# How to Be a Network Weaver

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 47]

the conversation adds a layer of formality and purpose to the meeting and also gives it a concretely productive goal.

Below are questions from that can be used in a conversation.

1. *Exploration/expressions of interest (getting the lay of the land)*: What have you been working on recently? This week? Today? What are your top priorities at the moment?
2. *Probe for successes and challenges (be sure to learn about both)*: How is it going? Anything really exciting / successful / fulfilling / surprising? Where are you stuck?
3. *Offer of support*: Is there anything I or other members of the community can do to help you better realize your goal? What do you think would help you get unstuck (skills, resources)?
4. What special talents or passions do you have that you might be willing to share with your peers?

To see a sample of an interview done by a professional community of practice facilitator along with other resources, go to the wiki of the Baltimore Associated Family Engagement COP and click on the document “COP Member Interview Guide” ([bjfamiliescop.wikispaces.com/Evaluation+Resources](http://bjfamiliescop.wikispaces.com/Evaluation+Resources)).

*Send out a survey*: If you have a preexisting group of people you are looking to learn about, want to collect such a group, or already have been through all your coffee shop meetings and interviews, you can set up a simple form (using Google forms or wufoo.com) to learn about the group’s interests and skills. (Click here for an example: [tinyurl.com/kehillyot](http://tinyurl.com/kehillyot).)

## Help people with common interests connect

Network-weaving goes beyond simply making connections, or “networking.”

The next step in weaving a network is to actually form productive working relationships. Weaving can be done through thinking about whose skills you have identified in a particular area could be useful to someone else, and introducing them to each other. Then collaborations can develop, starting with small projects and growing to strengthen the community and increase the knowledge available in it.

*Questions for weaving the network*: How can we share your success with others? Whom do we know who can be of help to you?

## Encourage complex reciprocity

While establishing collaborations, it is important for a network weaver to foster a culture that values *complex reciprocity*: sharing information and resources with others without expecting a return from that person, because you know others will share with you.

Dov Emerson, the facilitator of the YU2.0 Community of Practice, has a motto for his CoP: “As always, remember that the strength of our CoP lies in all of the wonderful resources and thoughts on Jewish EdTech that you can share! It may be ‘obvious to you,’ but it’s ‘amazing to others!’”

Another teacher posted an example of a homework assignment given to a class, and thanks to the use of technology, teachers in another school saw it and reported it started a “homework revolution” among their teachers. This is how helpful ideas are spread.

## The importance of diverse perspectives

When you are working hard on specific projects or within the context of a school or organization, it is very easy for the conversations and ideas sharing to be concentrated in colleagues directly involved with those projects or groups. Yet it is critically important to maintain and cultivate relationships with those outside of this immediate group—known as your

*periphery*. The periphery has fresh perspectives which will bring new ideas and innovation into your work. Even when those views at times conflict your own, exposing yourself to them is important, will help you grow, and benefits the network as a whole.

Ask yourself: Who can I connect to this network who has some parallel but not many overlapping interests? Perhaps a non-Jewish educator or someone from a different school? Their questions and perspectives will help you get out of your own limitations, discover your blind spots and likely solve your problem more quickly and easily.

## Grow more network weavers

Traditionally, leadership has been appointed through titles and positions. But new trends in technology, communication and theories of distributed leadership have empowered individuals to exercise grassroots leadership, regardless of their technical position.

With network leadership like other forms of leadership, there is always a temptation to practice it by yourself. But it is actually part of a network weaver’s role to set the culture of the network, including the expectation that all will take responsibility to build the relationships that will strengthen a network supportive of learning and work. As an indirect leader, the weaver identifies, mentors, and influences new emergent leaders appearing throughout the community who will eventually take over much of the network building and maintenance. This transition is necessary for the network to increase its scale, impact and reach.

We hope these steps will lead you on a journey of network weaving which will not only increase your productivity, access to resources, and professional growth, but also will expose you to new perspectives you may not have found otherwise and new fulfilling relationships that will add value to your life on both personal and professional levels. Behatzlachah! ■



# JCAT Teachers Shine at U Mich Seminar

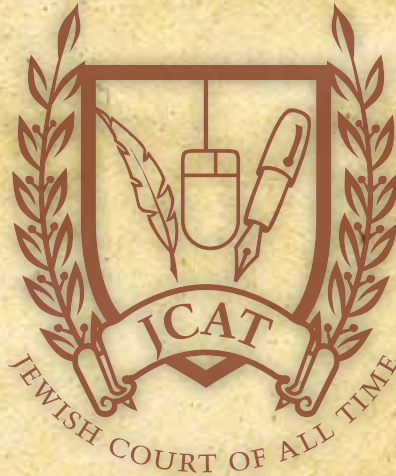
We welcome four new schools into JCAT, RAVSAK's ambitious middle school program in Jewish history that links students with mentors at the Universities of Michigan and Cincinnati:

- Adelson Educational Campus (Las Vegas, NV)
- Chicago Jewish Day School (Chicago, IL)
- Samuel Scheck Hillel Community Day School (North Miami Beach, FL)
- Ronald C. Wornick Jewish Day School (Foster City, CA)

They join these schools continuing in the program:

- Abraham Joshua Heschel Day School (Northridge, CA)
- Addlestone Hebrew Academy (Charleston, SC)
- Austin Jewish Academy (Austin, TX)
- B'nai Shalom Day School (Greensboro, NC)
- David Posnack Jewish Day School (Plantation, FL)
- Donna Klein Jewish Academy (Boca Raton, FL)
- El Paso Jewish Academy (El Paso, TX)
- Hillel Academy of Tampa (Tampa, FL)
- Jewish Day School of Metropolitan Seattle (Bellevue, WA)
- Paul Penna Downtown Jewish Day School (Toronto, ON)
- Rockwern Academy (Cincinnati, OH)

The new teachers flew to Ann Arbor for a two-day training seminar run by professors from Michigan and Cincinnati. The training, like JCAT itself, was fully funded by a grant from the Covenant Foundation. They were thrown into the spirit of JCAT by participating in a "cocktail party," where they engaged in role-play as characters from Jewish history. The training workshops introduced the teachers to the program and



its web platform, demonstrated the power of play to excite students about history, and explored the mentorship carried out by the graduate students who themselves act in role during the program simulation. Teachers planned ways of integrating this program into their curricula and discussed techniques for working with primary historical documents. They left confident in

their ability to lead their students in JCAT and energized by the many ways that their students and schools will benefit.

This year the students will work on a new case concerning the French law banning overt religious symbols in the public schools. Two students, a Muslim girl who wears a hijab and a Jewish boy who wears a kippah, are bringing their case to JCAT, and the court will explain that they must argue their cases together. The teachers were very excited about the potential for the case to raise interesting cross-cultural issues. This case presents students with the opportunity to engage with history in the present tense, helping them understand that the narrative arc of the Jewish experience is one grounded in the encounters with other people (positive and negative, to be sure) and that this theme of encounter extends across oceans and millennia. ■





# Networked Nonprofits: Embracing Networks and Measurement Will Lead to Success

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16]

They measure failure first. Learning from failure is like compost: while it might stink at first, it gets more valuable over time. It is also important to understand the cause of success, because it may have happened by accident.

They are experts at setting up and measuring low-risk experiments to test

their strategy and tactics and learn from them.

They join the “Spreadsheet Appreciation Society,” filling their rows and columns with meaningful data, and avoiding bogus metrics like the plague.

They use data to set priorities and better juggle workloads.

If you are new to measurement, then the best way to get started is by doing simple pilot studies; those already experienced at measurement can try advanced measurement techniques. Networked nonprofits should continue to push the envelope in these important areas. Measurement can be fun. It gets results. It gives you greater control, makes you more powerful, and it will help you change the world. ■

## Networking Millennials Through Peer Engagement

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21]

incentives and responsibilities, along with methods of gathering data.

4. Create a recruitment strategy to ensure the right candidates will apply for or be interested in the role.
5. Design a training plan and clear vision for the kind of enrichment that will be provided to ensure the engagers are equipped, inspired, and prepared to effectively reach their peers.
6. Provide incentives to the interns for their work. This could include defining the role as a paid internship or volunteer opportunity (there are trade-offs associated with each. Don't underestimate the value of a token payment which can ensure greater accountability and commitment).

### *Adopt and Adapt the Approach*

Hillel's greatest hope is that many others will benefit from, adopt and adapt a version of this approach. Networks are an essential vehicle through which Jewish experiences, content and involvement will be proliferated for the next generation. By cultivating these skills and capabilities as foundational components of Jewish leadership, we have the possibility to create a Jewish world of talented and inspired young leaders who are prepared

to fill vacuums of Jewish experience and involvement through their own relationship-building. We look forward to the

next chapter of inspiring others to create ingenious ways to engage their peers Jewishly. ■

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# Networking ECE in the Day School Space

■ by **DEBBY KINMAN-FORD**

Early childhood, often overlooked within the spectrum of Jewish education, can be a critical time for building habits and dispositions to inspire families to choose day school.

A great deal of attention is paid to strengthening connections along the continuum of education: elementary school to middle school, middle school to high school, high school to college or vocational school. Our eyes are always focused on where our children are going to next. Are they ready? Do they have the skills they need? Are we networking and building relationships with the schools we are sending our students to?

In this continuum, the earliest link, early childhood (birth through pre-K programs), too often gets overlooked. In a recent article in the *Forward*, “If You Want Me, Give Me Childcare,” Deborah Kolben talks about why Jewish childcare is so important. New parenthood brings with it feelings of isolation and trepidation. Young parents seek a connection, a place they are familiar with to meet other people, like them, maneuvering this new uncharted water. Kolben argues that the first two years of parenthood are the most critical in forming a community. As head of a school that offers three month old care, I can testify firsthand that the bonds parents form the first few years often lead to lifelong friendships.

Many parents come to our school stating that they have done nothing with their Jewish identity since their bar or bat mitzvah. Now that they have children, they are trying to figure out what Jewish life means for them and their family.

Just as new parents are hungry for information from knowledgeable people on nutrition and safety, they are hungry for help defining their spirituality. How do I answer those questions about God my child is asking me? Do I teach them bedtime prayers, and what do they look like? What does my family believe, and where does it fit within the spectrum of Jewish faith and practice? Jewish ECE can fill this critical role as a guide during this formative time in a family’s identity. The longer families are at our schools and the more we have the opportunity to bond and engage with them, the more likely parents are to consider the options of Jewish day school and synagogue affiliation.

Kolben states that the reason we are not focused on early childhood is that it is expensive with a low profit threshold. Birth to age two is especially costly and not much profit is made. However, there’s a good reason to start that young: most families that begin at that early age continue on in the school. The older ECE years, from two to pre-K, see a much higher profit margin, and many times ECE centers serve

as the cash cow of synagogues that run them.

At these ages, you really have parents seeing the results of a Jewish school experience. Two days ago, a mother told me about how her two-year-old daughter’s favorite day was Shabbat and the mother asked why. The child replied she loved the prayers. Mom asked which



*Debby Kinman-Ford is day school director at B’nai Israel Community Day School in Gainesville, Florida. She can be reached at [debby@bnaiisraelcds.org](mailto:debby@bnaiisraelcds.org).*

one she liked the best and after reciting them all she said her favorite was the blessing for the wine. How excited that parent was at her child’s love of Shabbat and of her education! How much did that family’s chance of continuing this positive experience through elementary school just increase?

Jewish preschool provides the best bridge to Jewish elementary school. Of course, the fact that public elementary school is free presents a big temptation to our parents. However, if families are at your school paying for preschool, they already are putting money toward their child’s education. It’s a lot easier to trade in a car to buy a new one when you’re already making a car pay-

Just as new parents are hungry for information from knowledgeable people on nutrition and safety, they are hungry for help defining their spirituality.

## Attend the Launch of Reshet ECE

Join Reshet ECE, RAVSAC's network for early childhood education, in its first conference call of the year on Tuesday, September 11th, 2-3 pm ET. Don't miss this essential opportunity to strengthen your school, develop your own knowledge and capacities, contribute to and learn from the collective wisdom of RAVSAC educators! Agenda items for this

meeting include Rosh Hashanah programming, marketing to elementary schools and the Jewish community, and social media strategies. The reshet facilitator is Debby Kinman-Ford, director of B'nai Israel Community Day School, a preschool for ages 3 months to pre-K in Gainesville, Florida. Call-in information: (218) 862 – 6420, Code: 706417. ■

ment. It's harder once the car is paid off and you suddenly have to come up with several hundred dollars for a new bill. If they are already attending your school, happy with the program and environment, then paying for elementary school tuition is much easier.

If your school isn't about to create its own ECE center, it is essential to forge the strongest relationships with the schools in your community that offer early childhood. This means not just checking in around registration time. You should apply the same PR tactics with those schools and their personnel and parent base as you are with potential donors. Are you bringing them treats at Purim, sending birthday cards to the directors, offering to sponsor events they are holding? What about field trips to your school?

You should leverage your school's operational systems to create financial ties with these early childhood centers: for example, placing orders for arts and crafts and office supplies, or larger truck items you need to order, sharing expenses for resource staff or special programs. That saves you both money and creates a bond between your institutions. Do you invite those smaller preschools to join in your teacher training? Now, you have those professionals on your site, working side by side learning with your staff.

Let's address the schools that have early childhood centers already on their site and treat them as completely separate in-

stitutions. In reality, they aren't; they are your future students—only shorter. Too many ECE programs stand alone and are given very little in resources.

I am thrilled that RAVSAC has begun to offer monthly conference calls and a list-serve for this population through Reshet ECE (see sidebar). There are so many resources among us, and our experiences are more similar than different. Let's share great ideas, brainstorm dilemmas and offer accomplishments for others to shadow. Jewish education is a small community; Jewish early childhood education is even smaller. Reshet ECE will help us expand our knowledge and network of colleagues, enabling us all to grow and our schools to improve and thrive.

I encourage you to reconsider if you don't have an early childhood program. If you do have one, what are you doing to develop those parental and professional relationships? The longer the continuum of Jewish education, the richer the experience for everyone. We all win. ■

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# A Letter of Introduction

■ by **JAMES GURLAND**

**I**t has to be bashert that I have the honor and privilege to join RAVSAK as its first Director of Institutional Advancement at precisely the same time that the AVI CHAI Foundation makes an extraordinary and historic commitment to enhancing and strengthening Jewish community day school education with a grant of \$2,350,000. As the grandchild of a survivor of the horrors of Buchenwald, and first generation American Jew on my mother's side, Jewish continuity has been at the forefront of my life both personally and professionally. From the time I spent a year in Israel as a fellow on Otzma II to the present, I find myself becoming more passionate about klal Yisrael, by blending it into the fabric of my being, by ensuring that we will have a Jewish future. Thus, there is no better way to achieve that than by working for an organization, whose "client is the Jewish Future."

As Director of Institutional Advancement for RAVSAK, I envision my role as a "strategic enabler," to take the roadmap as set forth in the five year business plan and through the power of philanthropy, make it real, or as Theodore Herzl did with his words, "If you will it, it is no dream." To do so, moreover, in partnership, with the incredible staff of RAVSAK under the visionary leadership of Marc Kramer as well as the Board of Directors, all of whom I am looking forward to working with.

So exactly, how will we do this? I will be the first to tell you, that these are indeed challenging days for those who wish to advance their missions with the help of philanthropy. Yes, we do know that while giving in the US is growing, it will take 10 more years to get back to the level it was in 2007. Yes, we do know that the Jewish community in North America is facing what may be defined as the "Second Great Jewish Contraction." But one thing is undeniable: in a rapidly changing Jewish world and day school landscape, RAVSAK remains compellingly relevant.

ing a significant contribution to the Jewish community.

We will endeavor to create an infrastructure, within the confines of our resources, that will enable philanthropists to have a deep, profound and personal connection to our mission. We will build relationships that allow philanthropists to realize their dreams, fulfill their missions and have an impact that will not only benefit many, but will inspire others to do so as well.

Just as we look to develop the best and brightest through our hallmark programs such as SuLaM, so will we engage philanthropists to collaborate with us on projects of unprecedented influence and innovation.

Just as day school education offers a spiritual enlightenment for our precious children, so can it offer growth and satisfaction for philanthropists who wish to partner with us by not only maintaining its compelling relevance but strengthening it.

As I take the next few weeks to become more familiar with RAVSAK's team both lay and professional, I welcome the opportunity to network with you, meeting, learning from and most of all listening to you—to hear of your dreams, your visions and how we, in partnership, can strengthen the Jewish future. ■





# Terms for 21C Networking

The following are some of the terms and platforms referenced in the articles in this issue.

## Terms

**A/B split testing:** A marketing test method where an e-mail subscriber list is split into two groups; every other name in the list is sent one message, the other names getting a different message. The open, response and conversion rates to each message are tracked.

**Crowdfunding:** The work of individuals who network and pool their resources, usually via the Internet, to support efforts initiated by other people or organizations.

**Crowdsourcing:** The use of the “talents of the crowd” to answer questions and get information.

**Dashboard:** A single location used to watch metrics in marketing and social media in order to be able to view and monitor the successes and failures of attempts to reach the clientele.

**Hashtag:** A way of organizing Tweets for Twitter search engines. Users prefix a message with a community driven hashtag to enable others to discover relevant posts.

**Key performance indicators (KPIs):** A tool that helps organizations achieve goals through the definition and measurement of progress. KPIs are usually long-term considerations for an organization.

**Network weaver:** *A person who intentionally and informally—and often serendipitously—weaves new and richer connections between and among people, groups and entities in networks.*

**PLN (Personal Learning Network):** An informal learning network consisting of

educators who connect with each other and learn in a personal learning environment (PLE) or personal learning community (PLC). With a PLN, educators connect to others with the goal of learning something as a result of that connection.

**Social media:** A term used to describe a variety of Web-based platforms, applications and technologies that enable people to socially interact with one another online. Some examples of social media sites and applications include Facebook, Del.icio.us, Twitter, Digg, Pinterest, blogs, and other sites that have content based on user participation and user generated content.

**Social network, social networking:** A social structure made of nodes that are generally individuals or organizations. A social network represents relationships and flows between people, groups, organizations, animals, computers or other information/knowledge processing entities. In common parlance, social networking is the act of participating in social media sites.

## Tools

**Edmodo (Edmodo.com):** An educational site that takes the ideas of a social network and refines them to make it appropriate for a classroom.

**Facebook group:** Pages that you create within the Facebook social networking site that are based around a real-life interest or group or to declare an affiliation or association with people and things. Facebook groups create a community of people and friends to promote, share and discuss relevant topics.

**Google hangout:** A free video chat ser-

vice from Google that enables both one-on-one chats and group chats with up to ten people at a time.

**Nings (Ning.com):** An Internet service that allows people to make personal on-line social networks.

**Pinterest (pinterest.com):** A social networking site that lets people share images and videos from their own personal media collection or from websites they visit. Pinterest uses a system of “boards” which contain a collection of photos on a given topic. On the Pinterest website the word *pin* is used to mean *any image added to Pinterest*, while the word *board* means *a set of pins*.

**Tweet:** *Noun:* A 140 character (maximum) post on a person’s Twitter account. *Verb:* The act of composing a message on Twitter.

**#tweetchat:** A conversation that goes on at a specific time on Twitter. People can join the conversation by following a specific #hashtag, and including that #hashtag in their replies.

**Twitter (twitter.com):** A company that provides a service by the same name, Twitter is a free, real-time short messaging service (SMS) that delivers messages on computers and handheld devices.

**UStream:** A website (ustream.tv) which consists of a network of diverse channels providing a platform for lifecasting and live video streaming of events online.

**WizIQ (wizIQ.com):** An online teaching platform with a range of tools for teaching online, from a virtual classroom, to functionality to create and deliver courses with assessment tools and content sharing features.

**Wufoo (wufoo.com):** A web application that helps people build online forms. ■

# Evolution of a Lay Leader

■ by LESLEY ZAFRAN

We live in a time when our culture changes its mind in less than a generation. Our youth use the word “sick” to mean something is really great, and I just heard a researcher on public radio say he has done a three year study that shows procrastination is actually a valuable tool that enables better decision making.

I grew up on both sides of the Atlantic—first in Miami, and then in London, in a family that fasted on Yom Kippur, forsook bread during Pesach, celebrated Chanukah and thought it important that I marry someone Jewish. I went to synagogue school, became bat mitzvah, was confirmed. I worked in publishing, taught, managed a company and eventually fulfilled the perfect fairy tale: I fell in love with a wonderful Jewish doctor and we settled in Florida. As my husband and I considered having a family, I wondered, “What should I do for my children to give them the right tools to live their lives?”

When our children went to a synagogue preschool I realized right away that I loved the way they made learning about Judaism fun. Yet when my son was ready to enroll in first grade, I thought there was only one goal to consider when choosing his next school: it should be the absolute best academically and—oh yes—the teachers should be wonderfully nurturing to him! As I went to interview every private school, I asked many questions and tried to sense the ethos around me. Then someone suggested I visit a Jewish community day school and my life changed forever.

When the admissions director explained that the school spent one-third of the day teaching Hebrew and Judaics, and that Jewish values and developing Jewish identity and connection to Israel would be a priority equal to that of all the secular studies, I was stupefied! I could send

my children to a school where they would partner with me in teaching my children what it means to be Jewish, what it means to be a mensch!

I now preside over the board of Donna Klein Jewish Academy in Boca Raton, and have the additional distinction of serving on the RAVSAK Board. I am a passionate advocate for community day school education, having clearly seen the evidence for the past 15 years that our schools’ dual curriculum can permanently impact our students’ lives as Jewish citizens of the world in a way that goes far beyond (what I now call) *just* the academic.

The RAVSAK board often engages in discussions about the nature and future of Jewish education. A recent article in the *Forward*, which implied that community day schools are somehow an inferior brand, made all of us sit up and take notice. It was clear to us that the community day school is still a misunderstood phenomenon.

Community day schools have been struggling to explain themselves since they began. Are we Jewish enough? Too Jewish for some? Are we trying to be all things to all people? When we welcome all types of Jews, and sometimes even non-Jews, into our schools, are we weakening or strengthening the very mission we set out to accomplish? Perhaps *that* is the question: What do we set out to accomplish?

I believe that our schools offer a unique opportunity for families at all stages of their Jewish journey to become part of a Jewish learning community—from those who may simply seek to avoid Hebrew school, to those who have fond recollections of Pesach seders and hope to learn how to make a Jewish home, to committed secular Zionists, to Judaically learned

families, and those active at their shuls. And if we do our job right, parents as well as students will leave our schools with the indelible treasure of Jewish values and identity no matter what thoughts and goals they originally walked in with.

My son is now a senior in college. He, and almost all of his DKJA friends, have kept their Jewish connection throughout college; my daughter and her friends are looking at universities keeping in mind their Jewish populations and culture. The way they are choosing to live their lives is evidence of the powerful, lasting impact of community day school education.

I think community day schools’ biggest problem may be our modesty. I say let’s publicize our achievements more, putting articles in the paper and on our websites when our alumni make us proud, and making sure that our Jewish communities understand the distinct added value of a community day school.

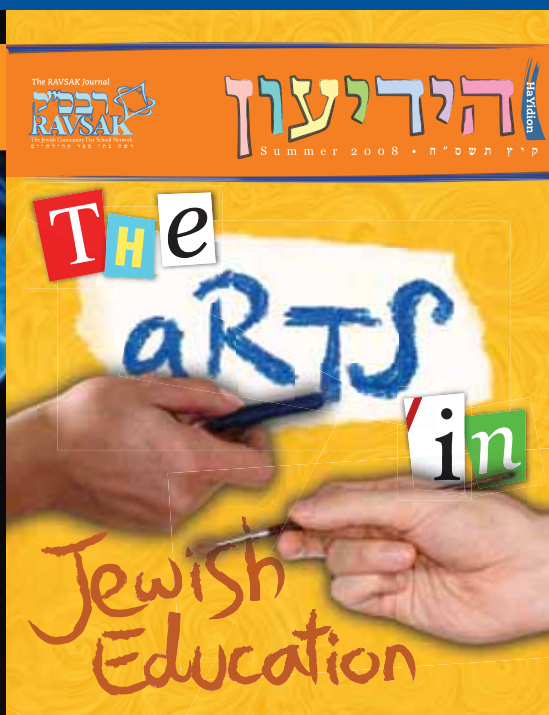
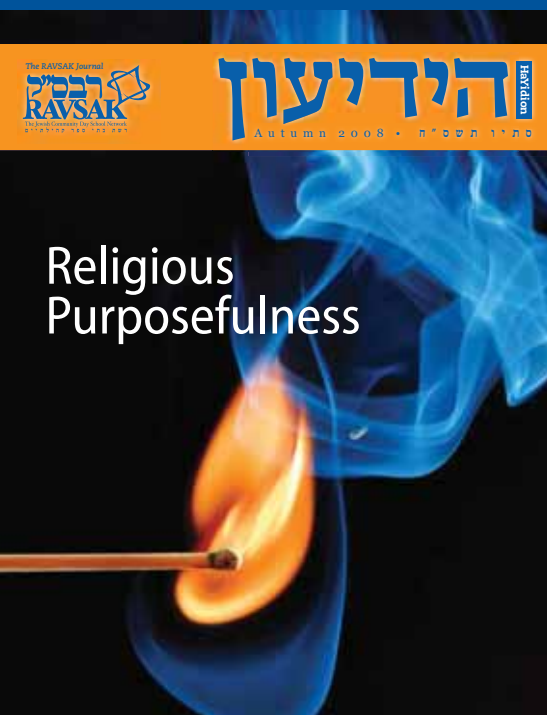
I say let’s start right now, as the new school year begins. Let’s have our heads of schools, administrators and faculty (parents and students if you can find them!) write a list of all the incredible value-added treasures that community day schools afford their families. And then, let’s send those lists to the *Forward*...as well as put them on our websites, in our local newspapers and on the agendas of our coffees and open houses.

Let’s make sure that everybody knows what we have learned: community day schools are “sick”—in the most healthy of ways. ■

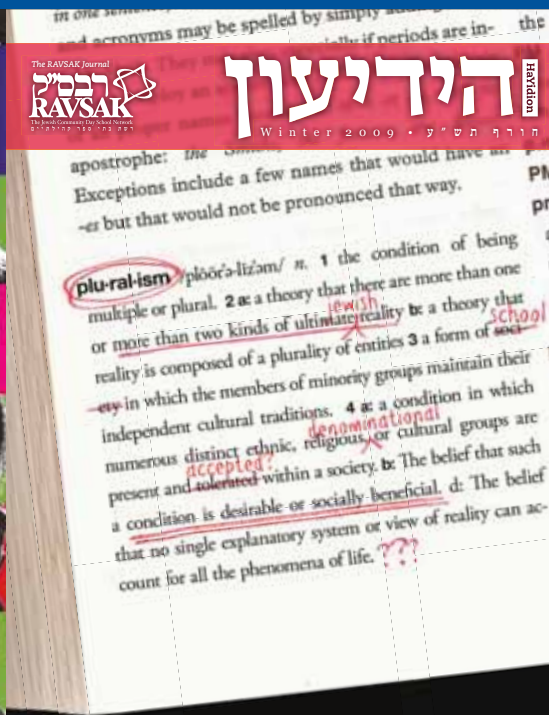
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