



ההידרועון

HaYidion

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Strengthening
Community

HaYidion: The RAVSAK Journal

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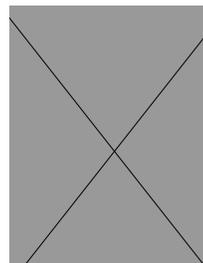
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From the Editor

ז by Barbara Davis

“Community” is the theme of this issue—but what does this word mean? Fifty years ago, sociologist George Hillery listed 94 elucidations of the term in his article “Definitions of Community: Areas of Agreement.” A similar listing in 5771 would be even longer and would arguably find fewer areas of agreement, as a search of the web turns up definitions as disparate as “community begins, but does not end, in our face to face relationships with the persons who are closest to us” and “a community is a group of two or more people who have been able to accept and transcend their differences regardless of the diversity of their backgrounds (social, spiritual, educational, ethnic, economic, political, etc.).”



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Toss in the word “Jewish” and in 0.29 seconds, Google delivers 7,680,000 results to your desktop. Add in online communities, virtual communities, wikis, social networking sites and chat groups and the numbers would rise astronomically. Yet I would wager that all of us frequently say “Ours is a community day school” as a statement of self-definition, and expect and generally find that people understand exactly what we are trying to convey.

The articles in this issue examine community from many different perspectives, and range from the highly theoretical to the eminently pragmatic. Thus everyone in the RAVSAK community should find them, yet again, of great value. There are several I myself intend to copy and distribute to members of my school community. But I believe that this issue has an even more important role to play in that it asks us to grapple with the rapidly and radically altered nature of Jewish society in the second decade of the 21st century. As such, I would like to place it in the context of the update of the famous study “Will Your Grandchildren Be Jewish?” by statisticians Antony Gordon and Richard Horowitz.

Four short years ago, they wrote: “The American Jewish community is now at a critical crossroads. There is finally a dawning recognition that Jewish continuity and survival cannot be sustained in what has been an American lifestyle devoid of serious Jewish education and Jewish living. ... However, we now have the data and studies to know that children who are left without an education leading to deep Jewish beliefs and practices have little chance of having Jewish descendants.”

As members and supporters of RAVSAK, the Jewish Community Day School Network, it is essential that we understand the meaning and nuances of this aspect of our name and our position, so that, as the nature of community changes, we are steadfast in assuring that the education we offer to the children of our community is always relevant, meaningful and impactful.

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From the Desk of Arnee Winshall, RAVSAK Chair

Shalom Chaverim,

As we enter the High Holiday period—ימים נוראים—what better topic for RAVSAK, The Jewish COMMUNITY Day School Network, than that of “strengthening community.” Many of us will spend hours and days together in our synagogues, spiritual communities, and homes reflecting, praying, learning, catching up with friends and being with family. This is one of the times when we most appreciate being part of a community, a Jewish community, and when, if we are not connected to one, we most miss it.

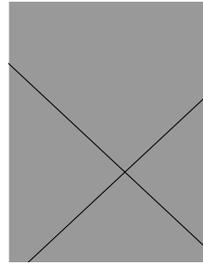
The board of RAVSAK has been particularly focused on some of the key elements that strengthen and build community: a sense of common purpose and commitment to a joint enterprise. Recently we had the privilege of coming together for a retreat in which we identified our priorities: the development of the board itself and ensuring that the organization, RAVSAK, has the guidance and resources to maximize its potential and its impact.

We spent two days together, with most of us physically in the same room and some of us joining via the miracle of technology, not only attending to the business at hand but also using the opportunity to learn together and to socialize, in order to get to know each other and the staff of RAVSAK better. Each time we meet on the phone or in person, it gives us a chance to develop and strengthen our board culture.

As the national board of an organization dedicated to strengthening the Jewish core of day schools and advancing pluralist education, we face certain challenges. We live in different parts of North America. We meet in person only two times a year; otherwise, our relationships are built mostly over the phone. We come from many different backgrounds, have had different experiences and embody different Jewish practices, and we bring complementary strengths and expertise to the table. And yet, in less than one year, we have worked to build an intentional board culture that is guided and focused on RAVSAK’s mission and reflective of RAVSAK’s values. As a board, we are focused on accountability characterized by commitment, independent thinking, trust, candor, diligence and rigor. The culture that has emerged is one of active listening, of openness, of respect, and of kindness.

It is no accident that the Jewish people call themselves עם ישראל—“the people of Israel”—rather than דת ישראל, “the religion of Israel.” A sense of peoplehood has long been the defining characteristic of the Jews. On the everyday level, this fo-

cus on peoplehood is translated into an emphasis on the community as the primary organizing structure of Jewish life. Wherever Jews have lived, they have



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built synagogues and schools, established communal organizations, and created systems of communal governance.

All of you who are reading this issue of HaYidion, and in particular the member schools of RAVSAK, are critical contributors to this organizing structure. As RAVSAK board members, we are privileged to serve as part of the system of communal governance, supporting RAVSAK in fiduciary, strategic and generative capacities. Like you, we are dedicated to building the field of Jewish day school education and, in so doing, to strengthen our communities, and serve our client, the Jewish future.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of RAVSAK, I wish you a Happy New Year and an easy fast.

לשנה טובה וגמר חתימה טובה,

Arnee

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Confronting Community

ז by Shira Hammerman

As Jewish educators, we often talk about community. We establish community day schools, partner with community organizations, and reach out to members of our local Jewish community for leadership and support. We may join communities of practice to improve our skills, plan programs to enrich the communities of learners that we are educating, and work to build school-community partnerships. We are certainly concerned about the future of the American Jewish community and our work is likely driven by an interest in its continuity.

Rarely, however, do we question what we mean when we talk about community.

The concept of community has evolved over the past thirty years, becoming a topic of heated discussion among scholars of education. In response to reports that a general demise in community has had a negative effect on society, some educational theorists have called upon school leaders to emphasize community building in schools to inspire future generations to become active community members. These appeals have met resistance from theorists who question the appropriateness and effectiveness of such initiatives in enabling today's schools to accomplish their educational and democratic goals. The result is a vigorous debate about the fundamental nature of community in twenty-first century educational institutions.

This debate has sharpened scholars' thinking about community in schools, and a similar line of questioning should be occurring within the realm of Jewish education. The following is a description of some of the questioning that has taken place among general educational theorists, and an exploration of the relevance of this debate to Jewish day schools.

Deconstructing Community in Schools

Some scholars voice concerns about a general deterioration of community in American society that they associate with the shift from communities that are *Gemeinschaft* to communities that are *Gesellschaft*. They borrow these terms from Ferdinand Tönnies's classical work in sociology in which he describes social relationships within society along a continuum from *Gemeinschaft*, where relationships are based on shared kinship, shared location, and shared mind, to *Gesellschaft*, where relationships are created with a specific, often business-oriented purpose in mind. While a *Gemeinschaft* is ethnically homogeneous, close-knit, and somewhat involuntary, a *Gesellschaft* is functional, rational, strategic, and completely voluntary. Each social arrangement in society exhibits some qualities from each end of the continuum and is characterized as either *gemeinschaftlich* or *gesellschaftlich* based on the resulting balance. Social arrangements that are characterized as *gemeinschaftlich* are associ-

ated with a stronger sense of community and those that are characterized as *gesellschaftlich* are associated with a stronger sense of individualism. Most twenty-first century social arrangements have become overwhelmingly *gesellschaftlich*.

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As scholars' laments over the loss of *gemeinschaftlich* community increased, some educators in the early 1990s were quick to suggest that schools should be at the forefront of efforts to salvage such community in modern society. Armed with empirical research that demonstrates that building community within schools leads to academic, social, and emotional improvements among students and teachers, these educators paved the way for reforms aimed at increasing the sense of community within public schools. They believed that organizing schools as communities would strengthen social bonds among students and halt the demise of *Gemeinschaft*. To achieve this end, they implemented several initiatives such as encouraging a culture of collaboration among teachers, experimenting with new curricula, and creating schools within schools.

Other educators were equally quick to combat these efforts by challenging the effectiveness of building community in today's schools. Educators such as Kenneth Strike and Nel Noddings criticized the notion that members of a *gemeinschaftlich* community must share something in common, claiming that the world is too diverse for this expectation to be realistic. They voiced concern that those who do not share the collective's common goal, idea, or commitment would

be automatically excluded from the community, raising the possibility of discrimination, intolerance, distrust of outsiders, coercion, uniformity, and assimilation.

Others, such as Gail Furman and Ernestine Enomoto, cited the complexity of the modern world as a hindrance to efforts to build gemeinschaftlich communities in modern schools. They explained that today's students are mobile, today's families are interspersed, and today's cities are multiple times larger than the small towns that characterized *Gemeinschaft*. Furthermore, as they described, modern individuals prefer to be part of multiple temporary social groups rather than attaching themselves to a single permanent social group and cannot be expected to accept the values of group leaders. While these educators were critical of traditional understandings of community, they did not negate the importance of building community. Rather, they pushed thinking among scholars and practitioners regarding the definitions and boundaries of community and experimented with new models of community.

The debate over the place of community in modernity is far from resolved. However, the resulting discussion has helped theorists and educators clarify their understanding of community and adapt their thinking to meet the realities of the twenty-first century. They have shifted from defining community only in terms of common beliefs and values, common geography, and common heritage to examining more closely how people are united by sharing various elements in their lives. They have come to understand that individuals can be united into communities by a range of factors, including common experiences, common appreciation of difference, common dedication to taking care of one another, or a common devotion to critical reflection, dialogue, and process. They have also accepted the notion that each community is different and that what unites one group may not be a unifying element in another group. Theorists continue to question their understandings of community, often seeking definitions that are flexible enough to fit the changing realities of a diverse, modern society but substantial enough that they exclude col-

lectivities with weak, ephemeral bonds.

A Shifting Day School Community

The Jewish world has experienced changes in its communal relationships similar to those experienced in the broader society. Just as observers have identified a decrease in civic duty within the general American public, Jewish leaders have noted a drop in synagogue membership and shifting forms of identification and affiliations within the Jewish community. Jewish society is more diverse in its values, ideologies, and lifestyles than it was 30 years ago and is no longer as ethnically homogenous as it once was. These realities challenge the notion of "Jewish" community and have sparked initiatives in Jewish education that parallel the general educators' attempts to model community in schools in an effort to preserve the future of Judaism in America. However, there has not been a parallel attempt among Jewish educators to examine how the term community is used within the field or the ramifications of the evolving sense of community on the Jewish education that day school educators provide.

Day school education was created at a time when Jewish community, even in America, preserved several characteristics of a *Gemeinschaft*. The first day school families lived in close proximity to one another, shared a common heritage, and shared a common interest in maintaining close connections to that heritage. Both denominational and non-denominational, community schools were founded based on the underlying assumption that Jews are united by certain commonalities and that those who choose day school education are primarily interested in maintaining those commonalities. This assumption was critical in shaping early day schools, influencing decisions about curriculum, staff, and other important elements within the school.

Day schools prospered at a time when Jewish leaders were concerned about the decline of the Jewish *Gemeinschaft*. Many influential Jewish voices responded to reports of rising intermarriage rates in the early 1990s by increasing support for day

school education. They emphasized day schools as venues for bolstering Jewish identity and modeling Jewish community, and efforts to strengthen day schools became intertwined with efforts to strengthen Jewish community. In contrast to the debates on community that were growing simultaneously among scholars of general education, there was little questioning among Jewish educators as to the appropriateness and effectiveness of applying the concept of community in Jewish day schools or the vision of community they were pursuing.

Jewish day school education faces serious challenges as we enter the second decade of the twenty-first century as a result of various sociological, demographic, economic, and political factors. One factor that needs to be explored more thoroughly is the mismatch between common assumptions about community and the realities of the modern Jewish community. In an era when *Gesellschaft* has become more influential in society, it may no longer be safe to assume that day school stakeholders share as much in common as they may have shared in the past; it may no longer be safe to assume that any particular school population resembles a *Gemeinschaft* in any sense at all; and it may no longer be safe to assume that the primary reason why children are in Jewish day schools is because parents are dedicated to the preservation of a gemeinschaftlich Jewish community. While Jewish educators may differ from their non-Jewish counterparts in their understanding of community and its implications for education, refraining from deep analysis of the concept may lead to missed opportunities for improving Jewish education.

Implications for Jewish Educators

Today's day school stakeholders, like other individuals, compartmentalize their identities so that they are able to connect with multiple groups at one time. Though their association with Judaism may be a piece, in some cases even a significant piece, of their personas, this connection is only one of many facets of their identification. If stakeholders share little in common other than a loyalty to a largely undefined sense

of "Jewishness," their common connection may be overpowered by the many interests that they do not share, and they would function as a loosely connected set of interest groups rather than as a traditional gemeinschaftlich community. As a result, even within schools where populations are heavily identified with Judaism, policies based on an assumption of commonalities may prove to be ineffective in motivating active involvement in the school community. Policies based on a deep understanding of the school community as it actually exists and an openness to changes in the nature of community would be more effective in inspiring school stakeholders.

Day schools must continuously ask themselves what their stakeholders share in common. Their answers

individual interests. When this purpose loses its ability to unify, the process would start anew.

Simultaneously, Jewish educational scholars must follow the lead of our non-Jewish colleagues in becoming more aware of the multiple ways that community is understood and used within our schools. We may wonder: Does each day school serve the same type of community? Do all Jewish community organizations represent the communal interests of all day school communities? To what does each day school refer when it claims to promote continuity of the American Jewish community? Is there crossover in the way we are using the term community when we speak about our professional communities, our learning communities, and our local Jewish communities?

This is one reason for my having somewhat retracted from the term "vision." You cannot buy or plan substantive Jewish education the way you would make a decision.

will have serious ramifications for the goals they set for themselves, the ways they are structured, and the approaches they take to teaching. A discovery that school stakeholders are no longer connected by a particular perspective on Judaism would require that school leaders find new elements to unify the school, possibly in addition to the school's Jewish purpose. This may mean reconstructing the school's visioning statement around a common sense of responsibility for one another, a common mission, a common experience, or a common process. This shift would likely require practical adaptations: changes may need to be made to school-wide rituals; policies surrounding minyanim, siddurim, kashrut, and Shabbat observance may need to be updated; school-wide celebrations may need to be scaled back or further developed; choices of Judaic studies offerings may need to be revisited; and new forms of experiential education may need to be implemented. The result would be a school community that is driven, at least temporarily, by a common purpose while allowing individuals to maintain connections to their

How we answer these questions has deep ramifications on both individual educational programs and the Jewish community as a whole. Failing to address them may blind us to important changes with the potential to improve the effectiveness of our schools. Addressing them wisely will allow us to create schools whose students value their own Judaism while building community with those who affiliate with Judaism differently and will play an important role in preserving Judaism in the twenty-first century. ז

Shared Mind, Shared Place, Shared Kinship

¿ interview with Alex Pomson

With his Melton colleague Howard Deitcher, Alex Pomson is the editor of the recent volume *Jewish Schools, Jewish Communities: A Reconsideration*. We asked him to reflect upon the anthology's formation and significance.

What inspired the idea for this volume, and the conference that it was based on?

The conference that gave birth to the book was inspired by a sense that although the field of Jewish day school education had significantly expanded worldwide, there hadn't yet been sufficient consideration of the consequences of that expansion for the larger Jewish community. My colleagues and I were also aware that while a burgeoning research literature has explored the potential of public schools to serve as anchors of community within and beyond schools, little consideration of that potential exists in relation to Jewish schools. My own ongoing research at the Downtown Jewish Day School in Toronto provided an intimation of these possibilities; I was curious as to whether such phenomena might be more widespread.

A number of articles reference a field of "communitarian" studies. What can you tell us about that field, and why is it of interest to the field of Jewish education?

The emergence of genuinely pluralistic rather than simply non-denominational Jewish community day schools is a recent phenomenon. The tensions implicit in these institutions and the potential they promise has not yet been fully explored. With "community" being such a promiscuously overused term, the broader scholarly literature on community can help us understand the sources of stable community, the forces that can sustain it and the influences that can undermine it. In my own work, I have been much influenced by Debra Meier's account of the nurture of community within schools and by Claire Smrekar's research on the school's role and function within the larger community. I was especially pleased that they both agreed to participate in the conference at Hebrew University and then contribute to the volume.

In the Jewish professional world, "community" is a term much in vogue. Is there a corresponding interest in the study of community within Jewish scholarship in general, and scholarship of Jewish education in particular?

I think that there has long been an interest in the varieties of Jewish community organization and how Jews have lived and acted together in different eras despite their differences. The historian Yeshayahu (Isaiah) Gafni, for example, has produced some compelling work on how community functioned in Mishnaic and Talmudic periods that has strong resonance for the present day. The cultural diversity of Jewish life today also offers the tantalizing possibility that despite circumstantial differences there may be something quite fundamental about what holds together collective Jewish

life wherever it is located. For historians and sociologists of Jewry, then, community is an especially fertile field of inquiry.

Tell us about the ways that this volume breaks new ground.

The volume may be less original in what its specific chapters offer than in the variety of perspectives conveyed by the

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volume's contents as a whole. It brings together a range of voices that would not usually participate in the same conversation. The contributors—scholars and practitioners of public education and also of Jewish education in many parts of the world—ordinarily pursue discrete concerns, but within the pages of this book they all have something important to say about community both inside and beyond Jewish schools.

The first section focuses primarily on American public schools. Do you think that Jewish day schools lag behind this sector in their thinking about community and/or tapping into community resources?

Jewish day schools almost certainly lag behind public schools in this respect, and for good reason. While the rhetoric of Jewish life has always celebrated the value of Jewish education, most Jews have regarded all-day Jewish schooling as a luxury or as the concern of a small elite. It is only in recent years, as the continu-

ity of Jewish communal life has looked less robust, and as day schools have attracted a more diverse population, that the potentially transformative capacity of day schools for the Jewish community as a whole has become increasingly appreciated. By contrast, there is a lengthy tradition of viewing public schools as potential agents of social transformation that goes back through John Dewey to Horace Mann. This tradition is alive and well today in, for example, the KIPP network, the small schools movement and in the schools inspired by Ted Sizer's ideas.

The second section contains articles about Jewish schools throughout the Diaspora. What insights from them did you feel are particularly relevant for North American schools?

The most important insights relate to the impact of public funding on day school education. In America today, economic pressures have stimulated increased interest in securing public funding for Jewish day schools or in pursuing charter school options. The chapters on Jewish schools in France, the UK and Germany, where day schools are to a greater or lesser degree publicly funded, demonstrate the educational costs, as well as the benefits, of such arrangements. Schools in these places recruit a high proportion of Jewish children but their programs and practices are highly constrained by governmental regulations that extend to every aspect of school life. These regulations include limitations on the hours available for Jewish studies, on the content of the general curriculum, and on the profile of students that schools must enroll. These chapters demonstrate that public financing of Jewish schools is at best a mixed blessing.

The articles about Israeli schools paint a fairly bleak picture. Was that a conscious choice? Do you feel the book gives an accurate portrait of community relations in Israeli schools?

It was not intended to offer such a bleak view of education in Israel. I suppose that researchers are more readily drawn to the diagnosis of problems than they are to the

analysis of success. At the same time, the Israeli chapters point again towards the complexities inherent in public education systems – a Jewish one in this case – where well intentioned social change agendas are clumsily implemented in schools or where public accountability measures make education overbearingly complex for practitioners.

In particular, what does your book have to teach administrators, teachers and lay leaders of Jewish day schools?

When the book was complete, and the publisher pressed me to compose a substantial introduction, I came to realize as I reflected on the book's contents that it confirmed a long-standing sociological insight about the grounds for sustained community: community is anchored in shared mind, shared place and shared kinship. Of course not all Jewish schools must possess these attributes, but those most likely to sustain a meaningful experience of community will include a clearly recognizable Jewish student body (kinship), will be located in a Jewish locale (place), and will inculcate Jewish values, culture, or religion (mind). Community, I came to realize, does not just provide the context and content for the Jewish day school; the constituent components of community ultimately provide the strongest *raison d'être* for Jewish day school education.

What do you hope emerges from this book? Do you envision a Jewish communitarian movement of some sort taking shape?

To be honest, I think that launching such a movement would be too grandiose an objective. Besides, I believe that RAVSAK is doing a fine enough job in this very respect. I hope that the book, and any further work it inspires, enables volunteer and professional leaders in Jewish schools to act with greater self-awareness of the potential in the institutions they lead and of the complex mix of forces to which they must attend if they are to sustain an innovative mode of joint learning and living.

Community: Family, Tribe, or Something In-between?

by Allen Selis

The notion of “community” is among the most important but least well grounded ideas that many Jewish day schools invoke. While we often suggest that the “community” character of a school implies inclusivity or pluralism, this notion is murky as well. Over the last few years, researchers and school leaders like Susan Shevitz and Michael Kay have helped us move towards a clearer understanding of what we mean by pluralism (see HaYidion Winter 2009). For Jewish day schools both within and beyond the RAVSAK network to be most successful, we will need a similar update to our understanding of “community.”

It is critical that we understand community as a technical concept, because technical language comes with an underlying history of supporting ideas, a research base and (ideally) a set of institutional practices that can translate from thought into action. Once we move our discussion beyond a “feeling” or a “sense” of community, we can start to describe meaningful institutional choices about issues such as school policy, styles of pedagogy or the climate of interaction between students and faculty. By clarifying what “community” means and what it could look like we will be better prepared to make thoughtful decisions about the specific direction in which we will lead our schools.

It Starts with Culture

Ed Harris points out that “organizations do not have cultures, they are cultures.” To generate a useful description of community within schools, we need to recognize the range and complexity of interactions that take place there. While we are often keenly attuned to the religious differences that families bring to our schools, we should be just as mindful of the fact that personal status, race, gender, economic privilege and placement within social matrixes all impact the way in which people define who they are and how they connect with others. These are the core building blocks of culture which shape the experience of community within our schools.

During my own study of one Jewish day school’s attempt to create a community that included an unusually broad range of participants, I had to move beyond obvious religious differences between faculty and students. It was evident that different sub-groups within the school dressed differently, ate differently, visited different websites when they surfed the Internet and had differential access to wealth. They even spoke different versions of the English language! While many important religious issues surfaced, a focus on culture gave me deeper insights into the school and its sense of community. I came to see the school as the kind of space that ethnographers call a “contact point,” a place where different cultures, values and social norms co-exist

or compete within a defined space. We should look at our schools in same way.

Mary Douglas: Grid and Group

Fortunately, there is a body of scholarship that can help us develop more precise

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language to describe the varied cultural interactions which comprise community. Within the field of anthropology, Mary Douglas’s theory of “grid” and “group” offers one such tool. Douglas claims that we can understand the character of a community best by watching how it attends to two significant priorities: defense of the group, as seen by an expectation that individuals will be loyal to the larger community, and enforcement of a societal grid, the behavioral norms which determine how individuals will conduct themselves in relation to one another. Douglas argues that communities have profoundly different characteristics, based upon how they attend to the boundaries of grid and group.

The categories of grid and group are two powerful lenses which can push the conversation about community in helpful directions. First, these concepts remind us that religious differences are not the only ones playing out within a community day school. For Douglas, the “grid” of religious standards is merely one half of the cultural equation. We cannot speak about community unless we pay

attention to how schools create a sense of group belonging both within their own walls and among the larger Jewish people.

Second, an awareness of the balance between grid and group can help us make strategic choices about school culture. I spoke with one Orthodox faculty member at a community day school who greeted students returning from McDonald's with a kind look on his face, and then thanked them for arriving to class on time. When I asked why he did not comment on their choice of food, he explained that his most important concern was seeing these students marry Jewish partners. It was not his role to question the religious choices they made in their personal lives off-campus. The teacher made a clear choice to sacrifice attention to the grid (standards of kashrut) for an opportunity to reinforce the group (a positive feeling of connection within the Jewish community). We

have occasion to make choices like these on a daily basis, and

philosopher Kenneth Strike posits that a school community may be seen as embodying one of four models: a tribe, an orchestra, a congregation or a family. According to Strike, members of a tribe share the deepest bond of all based upon a common worldview, common beliefs and a shared pattern of behaviors. The tribe offers a powerful connection between members who know each other intimately. At the same time, a tribe is the model most likely to stigmatize or exclude individuals who break from communal norms. At the other end of the spectrum is the family, a maximally inclusive space. Since there is no choice of family (people are born into it and are rarely kicked out), it is likely that a family will include members who don't share similar values or practices. While the inclusivity of family can be a boon, Strike argues that family offers a thin model of community, one which lacks the deep mutual loyalties of a tribe.

Between these two categories are the

yourself, like a tribe, a family...perhaps an orchestra? Let's explore them one by one.

Family

I have spent an extended period of time in one school which stresses the unity of the Jewish people, offers a relatively balanced but one-size-fits-all minyan, teaches about ritual in a superficial manner without engaging questions of religious obligation and addresses issues of ideology and belief with the notion that "there are many ways to be a good Jew." If this resembles your institution, then I would suggest that you have created a "family"-style community. The advantage of this is your high level of inclusiveness.

The disadvantage is that you have not engaged students, faculty and parents in grappling with core questions that are constitutive of a postmodern Jewish identity. Just why do we bring dairy lunches? What does my individual, personal connection to G-d look like? I urge schools that have enacted the family model to go further, to dig deeper and to take chances. Leaders in this kind of community might deliberately surface issues of faith and belief that have gone unexplored by asking families to create personal theology statements. Or they might open an inquiry-based unit to explore whether the current minyan best serves the objectives of teaching ritual skills and creating space for personal spirituality. If you have not explored these kinds of questions in the recent history of your school, then move judiciously, focus on one and only one issue, and see what you learn.

Orchestra

I am familiar with another school that is committed to a high level of ritual practice, including standards of kashrut and an expansive daily minyan. School leaders know that most of their families don't observe these practices at home and are respectful of this choice. Hebrew is a core part of the school culture, and there is a significant focus on Israel as witnessed by impressive ceremonies on Yom HaZikaron and Yom Yerushalayim. Families come from a range of synagogue affiliations, ethnicities and theological points of



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

we are likely to make much more effective decisions if we think in advance about the values and purposes of our school.

Finally, Douglas's taxonomy should force us to ask important questions about our curriculum, both formal, informal and experiential. If social/developmental skills and ritual knowledge are important but fundamentally different elements of belonging to community, how do we balance them and how do we ensure that our schools address both effectively? Attentiveness to both group and grid-based content offers a valuable heuristic which can improve the quality of our programs.

Kenneth Strike: Four Models

In contrast to Douglas, the educational

orchestra and the congregation. An orchestra is a group devoted to a specific practice. They may come from disparate backgrounds and hold radically different beliefs, but as the conductor leads them, they are all deeply bound to one another by virtue of a shared musical repertoire. Once the music stops, the bond dissolves; orchestra members pack up their instruments and go their separate ways. The converse of the orchestra, according to Strike, is the congregation, a place where people come together based upon a shared faith or common values, even if they lack a common set of spiritual practices.

The implications of Strike's work are far reaching and should spark considerable debate within the RAVSAK community. I suggest that professionals and board leaders reflect upon their own schools using Strike's template. How do you conduct

view. The community enjoys this diversity, and warms to the notion of “diversity of thought but unity of action.” If this reflects your school, then you sound much like an “orchestra”-style community. Your school gains strength by balancing diversity with a core of practice that unifies Jews from different backgrounds.

However, there are several weaknesses and potential threats that you invite by choosing this model. You should explore whether you can go further to enhance the ritual life of your school. It’s your core, so you should do it effectively, including blessings before and after eating alongside a prayer curriculum that continues to teach new skills up to your terminal grade. Have you also invested in the secular rituals of Jewish day school life? Hatikvah in the morning? Greetings in Hebrew at the front door? You are a practice-based community, so make sure that even your non-Jewish staff can ask students “Mah shlomcha?” or “Mah shlo-mech?” each day. Finally, be alert to the potential for the tribal dynamics of Jewish life to impact your community. Train faculty to be atten-

education. One of these schools stresses freedom of choice with respect to Jewish ritual. Policies regarding head covering are very broad, and the school includes some girls who wear kippot while many boys don’t. Turkey and swiss sandwiches often show up in the lunch room, while kosher meals are also offered as an option. The administration affirms the legitimacy of each of these options. At the same time, the school is clear and proactive in communicating the values of inclusivity, informed choice, and social responsibility as the sacred values upon which the school rests.

If these attributes describe your school, then you are likely to be a “congregational” community. The advantage is that you have created a rich and unique Jewish experience within your school. The challenge is that you will always need to invest effort in strengthening a shared and coherent identity that unites the various segments of your school. Leaders within such a school should develop and constantly voice clear statements of belief about core values such as Jewish peoplehood, the State of Israel, the nature of

In my home community there is at least one school which teaches that certain ritual practices and specific tenets of Jewish belief are essential to being a good Jew. This school sees its mission as perpetuating these ideals broadly, since they are the right way to think and act. While a small number of students have different beliefs or practices at home, they are encouraged to adapt to the school’s standards. In rare cases, students whose public conduct is at odds with the school’s ideals have been asked to leave. If your school’s objective is for all of its students to buy into one set vision of a “good community” that is unified in belief and practice, then you could well be a “tribal” school.

The advantage is that most of your students and families will share the same language, ideals and notions of Jewish identity and religious practice. They will likely form tight bonds, and will be loyal both to your school and their peers for many years to come. The disadvantage is that you will not have as much diversity as might be healthy for the development of your students’ intellectual and social horizons. Schools with “tribal” communities should work with their most established lay, professional and religious leaders to explore ways in which the boundaries of discourse and the range of acceptable beliefs and legitimate options for religious practice can be expanded. It is particularly important for “tribal” communities to develop a nuanced and sympathetic understanding of how multiple streams of Judaism define themselves.

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

tive to and affirming of the choices about religious practice that kids make outside of school, and go out of your way to highlight and celebrate the differences of belief which your community invites. Etienne Wenger’s Communities of Practice, which describes how shared patterns of conduct create a sense of shared identity within institutions, will offer thought-provoking ideas for your school as you continue to grow your culture.

Congregation

I have visited several schools that draw students from particularly diverse Jewish backgrounds or affiliations, taking pride in their efforts to include families that might not otherwise receive a Jewish day school

Jewish continuity and the Jewish responsibility to do acts of tzedakah, gemilut chasadim and tikkun olam. All faculty, students and parents should hear this kind of belief statement and have opportunities to share it with others. Since your school does not try to make ritual practice central, it should develop other practices, customs and community rituals which are unique to the school. At the same time, you should maximize opportunities to explore questions of meaning, and should consider the role of discussion and a pedagogy that links individual learning experiences to your school’s core beliefs on an ongoing basis.

Tribe

Modeling Diversity

It is important for leaders in our field to think about community using the most effective frames of reference available. By creating a more robust framework for understanding community, we will do a better job of shaping the culture of our schools. That is particularly important if we are committed to diversity and inclusivity within the Jewish community. Our most current demographic data show that we are becoming more diverse with respect to ethnicity, family structures and religious orientation. The Jewish community that our children inherit will be complex, nuanced and pluralistic. Their

Limitations for Community Schools: Proving Dr. Obvious Wrong

by Jerry Isaak-Shapiro

After seven years (and more to the point, seven winters) in Northeast Ohio, I've finally stopped kvetching about frozen pipes and ice-skidding (walking, driving). Like every other city and region, Cleveland has its share of peaks and valleys and everything in between, and I've learned to adapt and live with—if not entirely embrace—those forces of nature that once made me long for the pretend winters of the West Coast.

There is however a much more substantive criticism I have with my adopted region, one with which I haven't made peace. There seems to be a rock-solid mistrust of regionalism in Northeast Ohio, which results in a series of contiguous miniature hamlets, each with its own fire and police departments, municipal pool, city hall and of course mayor and "city" council. Those living within a block of another city's pool are considered "aliens" if they live beyond the border (I couldn't make this up if I tried) and can only use the premises when accompanied by a resident and with payment in hand. This hyper-cantonization inhibits regional cooperation and is terribly financially irresponsible, particularly in an era in which effective inter-governmental cooperation should be on everyone's to-do list.

Wasteful and we'll-go-it-alone politics (a close cousin to NIMBY selfishness) provide a useful metaphor for community schools, albeit from a negative, don't-do-as-we-do perspective. Even granting certain positive reasons for a mini-municipality to develop neighborhood pride (but do Main Streeters really need their own anthem and flag?), the annoyance of not using their pool is indirectly connected to not being able to rely on their fire department or police; and paying taxes for the upkeep of our parks and running trails subtly morphs into a soft jingoism with regard to them (the non-taxpayers) using those same parks and trails. The fact that all this slicing and dicing of neighborhoods occurs within the same few miles of geography makes it all the more absurd.

Discussions about the limitations on the concept of community have been around as long as people have engaged in the idea of community itself; indeed, boundaries are one defining element of the territory within those borders (i.e., the "limitations"). For a community school not to genuinely probe the realities of its limitations is to evade and avoid any serious conversation about its vision and mission. This should not be misconstrued as an apologetic response to the tiresome straw-man argument—no school is the school for all students—too often flung into the conversations about community schools. Thank you, Dr. Obvious. Of course no school is the school for all students—but that is not and never has been the point of pluralist

schools. The question is not whether to draw any lines at all; the question is just where to draw them.

To discuss where to place the boundaries begs an even more fundamental question: what is the value of "community"

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in a community school? Why and how are we to delimit that community before an appreciation of its merits? This would be similar to advocating for a smaller class size (i.e., a smaller teacher:student ratio) without making the case for its value; many if not most might intuitively reach the same conclusion, but schools need to either argue the validity of the presumed value or make a strong case for its repudiation.

Community in and of itself can be a social value, and can be used to amalgamate various phenomena, including solidarity, commitment, mutuality and trust amongst its members. To this add the particularistic good that community brings to American Jewry in the 21st century: the tangible and psycho-social/emotional connectedness required by a diverse and vastly dispersed, tiny segment of the American population—if that tiny segment wishes to retain its historic connectedness (after all, it is kol Yisrael areivim zeh bazeh—not "Some of Israel is responsible for some of its fellows"). The fact that community also plays a crucial symbolic role in generating a people's

sense of belonging only underscores its value for America's Jews.

It's clear that there are universal and particular values inherent within a community model, which forces us back to the line-drawing question: what are the limits and limitations of the community school? Whoever wants in is a difficult and sometimes even painful challenge; many of our schools would lead with their institutional hearts and open the front doors for each and every student and family with an application and a percentage of the tuition in their hands. This would come the closest to providing the straw for the "no school is the school for all students" argument. The friendly amendment to that admissions criterion, the one that emanates from both heart and head, would be: whoever wants in, and whose needs can be met and who can benefit the larger community into which s/he enters.

The third conditional phrase is the easiest; nearly every student, irrespective of his/her learning style and cognitive capabilities and certainly with no regard to socio-economic status, will bring benefit to the student population. The who-wants-in criterion is not to be blithely dismissed either; the desire to belong to the whole (Groucho's dictum about membership notwithstanding) is powerful in its own right, and allows for the student (and his/her family) to contribute to the greater school community. The trickier piece is clearly the middle proposition: admitting the student whose needs can be met.

Here I'll posit that the limitations of our community schools are not so much in our technical or even financial constraints, but are rather aspirational. Do we genuinely believe that reaching out to the broadest segment of our community is the objective to which our schools should aspire? If so, then we need to develop our infrastructures—our financial, educational and philosophical frameworks—accordingly. Annual fund and endowment campaigns; pedagogical and curricular (and hiring) strategies; and

the purposeful development of multi-denominational approaches must be sewn seamlessly into the school's mission and vision. The limitations on our community schools are self-imposed, not externally placed upon us. How profoundly do we believe in the efficacy of a true community model—and how skilled will we be in creatively building that model? Those are the only real barriers that lie in front of us.

The problem with vision, though, is that it often remains just vision. Without being enacted, without being translated into curriculum, without curricular manifestation, visions end up in documents gathering dust on bookshelves, or in the “about us” ng translated into curriculum

Strengthening Ethics to Strengthen Community

by Erica Brown

Few people would have the chutzpah to speak of ethical ambivalence when it comes to the Jewish tradition. We are, after all, a people Isaiah called “a light unto the nations.” Even Hebrew National told us that we answer to a Higher Authority. And yet, the recent spate of Jews involved in high-profile crimes ranging from agri-processing to money laundering and Ponzi scheming has challenged our integrity as a community. For the first time in the history of our people, a former prime minister and a former president of Israel have been indicted on criminal charges. This troubling state of affairs has made educators, among others, pause and ask if we are doing enough to teach ethics.

The same Isaiah warned us to be unambiguous in setting educational expectations when it comes to the moral life: “Learn to do good. Devote yourselves to justice. Aid the wronged. Uphold the rights of the orphan; defend the cause of the widow” (1:17).

Some will argue that this is not a community problem but a plague afflicting certain individuals with a lot of press coverage. In my book *Confronting Scandal*, I argue that these are not merely isolated instances of crime but represent a fundamental shift in the way that we think about self, community, money and responsibility.

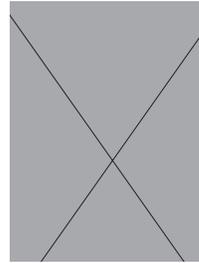
We live within a larger societal context that values the individual above the community, as demonstrated powerfully in books like Robert Putnam’s *Bowling Alone* and, in a Jewish context, Steven Cohen and Arnold Eisen’s *The Jew Within*. Our culture places great emphasis on consumerism, personal empowerment and self-esteem, trends that when manifest in the extreme often push aside the needs and wants of others by making ourselves a primal focus.

In his book *On Character*, James Wilson writes compellingly that “Modernity...involves replacing the ethic of self-control with that of self-expression.” Self-control is critical in tempering personal impulses in the presence of others; self-expression can sometimes come at the expense of others. In the past decade several books have been written about incivility but fewer about the associated ethical costs of self-oriented cultures that we are only now coming to terms with in the classroom.

The Community as Insurance Policy

For educators, imparting Jewish life to the next generation is not only or even primarily about teaching Jewish law and ritual. Most of that will be picked up mi-

metically or through books, websites and conversations. What we often mean but rarely articulate is that we hope our students will value what it means to live in community and to contribute as active



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and valued members. Many of us take the presence of community for granted until we are in situations where we acutely feel its absence. We know that it is virtually impossible to define community; one philosopher calls it an “essentially contested” concept because anything you can say about the nature of community can be debated. Another scholar of the philosophy of education believes that community is a label we give entities to mask the divisions within them. Articulating what a community is and what our responsibilities and benefits are is elusive; this is problematic if we believe that you cannot be Jewish alone.

We cannot assume that children will value living in Jewish society and around Jewish friends and neighbors simply because many of us do today. In fact, current research on the Jewish community suggests the opposite—that we are less particularistic than ever and have weakening ties to Jewish peoplehood. In other words, our commitment to living and strengthening Jewish communal life is on the decline.

From an ethical point of view this is deeply concerning if you consider one of the primary reasons to live within community is as an insurance policy for goodness. In Psalms and Pirkei Avot we are

repeatedly told not to separate ourselves from community, to be thoughtful in our choice of neighbors and to distance ourselves from bad influences. In constructing community, we are advised to choose the company we keep carefully because those around us exert a moral influence, whether we are aware of it or not, whether we seek it or not.

Ethics are the cement of a community. As Isaiah advises, they must be learned, and, as educators, we must be intentional in the way that we teach them. If it is true that nothing breaks up communities more than internal ethical fissures, then perhaps nothing strengthens community and inspires membership more than a posture of goodness.

As a result of the level of scandal in America, in Israel and elsewhere, Jews are in the unenviable position of having to prove to ourselves and to the rest of the world that to be Jewish means to live a life of goodness inherent in the Torah and inherited from those who came before us. In response to public breeches of morality, we must go out of our way to stress the centrality of ethics in Jewish life.

So What Should We Teach?

In the nineteenth century, the Mussar movement, an influential educational trend to promote spiritual self-improvement, was largely a historical response to the over-intellectualization of Judaism. It tried to refocus its adherents on the challenges of being a good person. As educators looking for some practical guidance in the fight against immorality, dishonesty and criminality, we can look back at the Mussar movement to see how it promoted personal goodness as a way to strengthen community. Speaking of fights, one of the most famous texts of the Mussar movement from Rabbi Eiyahu Dessler puts us all on the moral battlefield and can prove instructive as a “lesson plan” for educators who are struggling to teach goodness in a time of relativism.

Rabbi Dessler was born in 1892 and grew up in a well-known rabbinic family. He founded the Gateshead Yeshiva in the north of England and in 1947 moved to

Bnei Brak to learn and teach in Israel. One of his disciples, Aryeh Carmell, used notes of his lectures to form the basis of *Strive for Truth*.

Rabbi Dessler’s observations on *behirah*, moral choice, were among the most notable contributions to the world of Jewish self-improvement, pitting self-control against self-expression. Rabbi Dessler compared our moral choices to life on a battlefield. He wrote, “When two armies are locked in battle, fighting takes place only at the battlefield.” Any territory behind the lines of either army is assumed to be in possession of



We live within a larger societal context that values the individual above the community.

that army. If one army pushes the other back, then that territory, too, becomes the assumed possession of that particular army. He compares the point where the troops meet to choices that individuals make: “Everyone has free choice—at the point where truth meets falsehood. In other words, *behirah* takes place at the point where the truth as the person sees it confronts the illusion created in him by the act of falsehood.”

Most decisions we make, Rabbi Dessler argues, are not a struggle for us. For example, a person raised within a framework of strict Sabbath observance will usually not think twice about whether or not to travel in a car on Shabbat. There is no struggle for that individual; therefore, the *behirah* point is not activated. Our habitual behaviors take over. Rabbi Dessler believes that “any behavior a person adopts as a result of training or by copying others is not counted as his own.” Real choices, however, are not automatic.

The moral battlefield is one that we create and one that we largely control. We do not control what we are up against, only how we respond to it. When we battle the forces against us and make good choices, we can get to the point that Rabbi Dessler calls compulsion. We have integrated good decision making to the point where we feel utterly compelled to make the right ethical decision; it would not occur

to us to make a poor one. In essence, we have changed the battlefield.

When it comes to education, we are trying to teach people to get beyond the freedom that everything—both good and bad—are equal choices to a place of compulsion to do good instinctively, automatically and naturally. Imagine a recovering alcoholic in front of a drink. Everyday, he battles with his drinking problem. Every time he sees a beer or a glass of wine, the battle wages within him. He makes a decision: “I no longer want to be this person.” After extensive personal work with a support group and rehabilitation, he

gives up drinking for years. Even in front of alcohol, this individual no longer faces the same battlefield because he or she has integrated more healthful habits and understands the painful consequences of his past behavior. He knows intellectually that he once had a drinking problem, but he has become such a different person that he no longer emotionally sees himself as someone fighting that temptation. Rabbi Dessler calls this level of spiritual achievement “higher unfreedom.”

Compulsion is an active force, a decision, even if it is a decision for good. At a certain point of commitment, individuals do good simply for the sake of goodness; there is no compulsion at all. Doing right is simply natural. “Compulsion only applies where there is resistance. One cannot speak of compulsion to do something one loves.”

As educators, we want to help people understand their own personal *behirah* points, where they stand on the battlefield and what the forces are that press upon them in their own moral decision-making. It may be helpful to visualize this with students by asking them to draw a battlefield and actually place toy soldiers on it. Label the soldiers on opposing sides with tags where students identify the battles they are personally fighting. What will help each student move the lines of battle and feel the force of their own control in ethi-

cally demanding situations?

The more that doing good becomes instinctive, the more able we are to move the lines on the battlefield so that we possess more moral territory. When we can habitually conquer desire and selfishness through active choice, compulsion turns into freedom. Freedom turns into love. At that point, the individual has achieved Rabbi Dessler's goal: "The man of the spirit is the truly liberated man."

Jewish educators should see

“If a teacher were to tell us that her goal in teaching Exodus 19 is to promote the idea that “the Torah is the record of G-d’s revelation.

themselves on the frontlines of the moral battlefield, strengthening the moral muscle of our students (and ourselves, of course) in order to strengthen our communities. Every time we make a decision, it has consequences for ourselves and others. Helping our students make better, more ethical decisions and with greater ease of moral certainty will turn them into better, more civil, more honest and more thoughtful human beings. Those are the kind of individuals who create inspiring and morally strong, sacred communities.

“If a teacher were to tell us that her goal in teaching Exodus 19 is to promote the idea that “the Torah is the record of G-d’s revelation,” we would be justifiably concerned, for she has

Building Community While Supporting Diversity

by Susan L. Shevitz

Based on the article Shevitz co-authored with Rahel Wasserman, "Building Community in a Pluralist Jewish High School: Balancing Risk and Safety, Group and Individual in the Life of a School," in *Jewish Day Schools, Jewish Communities*, A. Pomson and H. Deitcher, eds.

Recent discussions about the importance of educational leadership and the way to strengthen it in order to improve American education have left me both pleased and very troubled. I am pleased because I strongly identify with the idea that success in education depends on high quality leadership, but troubled because the directions emphasized in the materials I have come across exhibit an understanding of leadership that is superficial in some fundamental ways. I would like to offer, not an alternative set of ideas, but a complementary perspective on the challenges of leadership and the cultivation of leaders for education.

Though my concern encompasses the challenges of general education, my more immediate worry is that the outlook I will investigate might come to dominate the Jewish community as it seeks to cultivate leaders for our educating institutions. I hope that our field will engage seriously with the complementary set of ideas that I am proposing.

I spent some nights this summer at a house on a pond in the woods. Each dawn was a surround-sound performance as all sorts of birds, some with soft, high squeaks, others with hoarse caws greeted the new day by seeking the response of their species and making their presence known to the others. Their diversity was both a visual and aural bonanza: the assertive konk-ka-ree of the red-winged blackbird doesn't sound like the towhee's drink-your-tea. The image of these different families of birds in a defined location is suggestive of schools which intentionally encourage multiple voices through their commitment to ideological and religious diversity.

Schools that are strong, educational communities are associated with excellence. Their teachers, students, administrators, staff, and families are united by a shared set of values and aspirations; participants share a common history and sense of destiny. Pluralistic schools face a special challenge in terms of being communities. They must simultaneously support forces that help the different subgroups thrive while also ensuring that the subgroups unite around this sense of history and destiny.

This means being part on a macro level of the Jewish people, while on a micro level, of the school community. To return to the ornithological metaphor: what does it mean to share a culture and be in community when people sing different songs? Can participants be faithful to their own melodies while respecting others', and will they work together for their common benefit?

While they go about it in different ways, intentionally pluralist Jewish day schools

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try to use their diversity to help people understand and define their own beliefs and practices while also entering into constructive interactions with people of other perspectives. I have elsewhere called this generative pluralism (see my article in the Winter 2009 HaYidion) The educational experiences are designed to further participants' understandings of their own and others' perspectives and to generate new approaches to the inevitable problems that need to be faced, such as how Shabbat can be observed at a grade-wide Shabbaton to whether male and female students need to have their heads covered when they study traditional texts. This conception of pluralism is captured by an image presented by a prominent scholar of pluralism, Diana Eck, as "being at the table with one's commitments." Rather than subduing or ignoring differences, people at the table learn from each other and together find ways to deal with dilemmas resulting from diversity. The scholar Susan Stone explains pluralism as

“coexistence with difference that is born out of an appreciation for diversity, multiplicity and particularity; and a recognition that distinct tradi-

person’s Jewish practice both possible and meaningful. For example, when a student whose mother was not Jewish wanted to be counted in a minyan and read from the

Over the years Tikhon has realized that to succeed in its kind of pluralism, it needs to carefully balance safety and risk in the everyday life of the school. Students need to feel safe enough to explore and articulate their own ideas and commitments while remaining open to trying to understand others’. In order to take this risk, especially when much of the adolescent experience is about fitting in and conforming to peers, students must feel safe. Tikhon does several things to enhance this psychological sense of safety. It tries to:

Although the authors and others recognize that the effectiveness of educational leaders depends heavily on their capacity to motivate and inspire the communities for which they are responsible, they fail to recognize that.

tions and opinions are nonetheless, interdependent—that they share certain goals and common projects and therefore that social collaboration and legal interaction are both possible and necessary even between groups or individuals otherwise holding mutually exclusive, conflicting viewpoints, each deemed by the other to be in error.”

Torah in a service with much of the traditional liturgy (something unacceptable to the traditional minyan) a new minyan was formed by people who were also committed to egalitarian practice and acceptance of patrilineal descent. This respected the student’s religious needs while also supporting the principles of students in the more traditional minyanim. Each was taken seriously and each was challenged to think about and articulate their understandings of the issues. Tikhon did not try to find a one size fits all “solution.” Instead, it used the diverse perspectives about Jewish practice as the energy to stoke the school’s educational engine so that differences could be examined and acted upon.

Foster close relationships between students and their teachers and other adults

These provide safe spaces to explore issues, consider alternatives, process their reactions and deal with dilemmas. Teachers are expected to watch out for and support vulnerable students. For example, because students who come with limited Judaic knowledge and experience are at a disadvantage, especially in terms Tikhon’s informal activities, a teacher made it her responsibility at the first shabbaton of the year to guide students who had never experienced a traditional Shabbat meal

An in-depth study of a pluralist high school that I call Tikhon provides a view on how this is accomplished. It is a school that has tried to put generative pluralism into action in many ways. Once a student or teacher becomes part of the school, the school is committed to making that



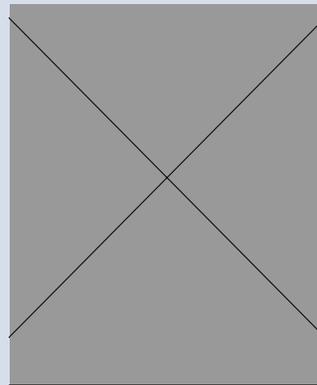
Welcome to Dr. Idana Goldberg, Associate Director

RAVSAC is pleased to welcome Dr. Idana Goldberg as the first Associate Director. This position is designed to advance strategy and planning, board development and education, and marketing and communications.

Idana has extensive experience working with both nonprofits and donors to identify and implement their strategic vision. She was at the Jewish Funders Network, first as Director of Matching Grants and more recently as Director of Strategic Grantmaking for Genesis Philanthropy Group, a Russia-based foundation dedicated to promoting Jewish identity among Russian-speaking Jews worldwide. As Director of Matching Grants, Idana helped to generate more than \$60 million in new philanthropic gifts from over 500 first-time donors.

That total included \$40 million for new gifts to Jewish day schools through the MATCH initiative. As an independent consultant, Idana brought together philanthropists and professionals for a conference on the declining participation of men and boys in Jewish life and worked with a national nonprofit to advance their mission.

Idana earned her doctorate in history from the University of Pennsylvania. Her dissertation examined the emergence of an American Jewish philanthropic and civic culture over the course of the nineteenth century. Idana also



brings experience from outside of the Jewish communal sphere. As a research associate at the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, she authored a book entitled *Crafting a Class: College Admissions and Financial Aid, 1955-1994*, which examined contemporary educational policies through

a historical lens. A graduate of Barnard College and an alumna of Yeshivah of Flatbush, Idana serves on the Board of Directors of JOFA: the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance and on the Board of Education of SAR Academy, which her children attend. She has also taught as part of the faculty of Me’ah in New York City.

or knew the zemiroth that followed. The experience of the students was not left to chance.

Employ teachers and other personnel who represent the full spectrum of Jewish life

This enables students to have access to some teachers who are committed to points-of-view like their own. This is important when difficult issues arise. When, for example, the question of establishing a gay-straight alliance came up, several traditional/halakhic teachers were there to guide traditional students who, having the minority (conservative) opinion, needed to find ways to express their viewpoints without being marginalized. Drawing from a wide array of Jewish sources and approaches, these teachers represented the issue with compassion and reason so that traditional approaches were not stereotyped but were instead thoughtful and grounded. It is also important that students interact with teachers, whether in

to new ideas, whatever their sources, as well as to create conditions where change is possible because people are not rigidly identified with a particular viewpoint. This fosters the students' and adults' continued growth. Sometimes this approach is overcome by the norms of North American Jewry, such as the school's unsuccessful attempt to avoid using the denominational labels. At other times, however, students notice that at various deliberations teachers and administrators change their minds about important dilemmas.

Provide role models who display engaged, respectful, solution-based deliberation

Students see some of the teachers and other adults at the school interacting in the ways that support generative pluralism. There is, for example, a pluralism lab that is required of all students and is co-taught by a liberal and a traditional teacher so that students see how people engage in discussion about areas of dif-

solvable problems

School leaders try to avoid dogmatic reactions or answers that they would legitimate by their attribution to one or another of the Jewish movements. They prefer to use Jewish texts to help students explore relevant ideas and then to consider possible actions. In this way, Tikhon is trying to model a way of looking at and conducting Jewish life.

With all these efforts to explore and maintain differences, is there a sense of community at Tikhon? A visitor has only to walk into the lobby to begin to see the answer. Students sprawl on furniture as they catch up on what's new, homework, and other concerns. Teachers walk down corridors animatedly talking with students. Students' art decorates the building and the cafeteria is full of people chatting. Sometimes a school-wide learning experience, Limmud Klali, gathers everyone in the Beit Midrash meeting room where special activities happen. People use similar vocabulary, the Tikhon lingo, and have the same cultural reference points. They seem united by the commitment to respecting and supporting diversity.

“Far from being peripheral to the work of leaders, the presence of heartfelt norms and values turns out to be essential to leadership, and it is deeply disturbing that discussions.

or out of the classrooms, whose ideas and commitments differ from their own. The relationships that result often open doors to new insights because students are encouraged to think more deeply and question both their own views and their teachers'. The integrity of each teacher's beliefs means a lot to these adolescents who sometimes decide to try on (and even keep) new ways of expressing their Jewish identities. Without this meaningful interaction with teachers who embody the variations in Jewish belief and practice, this would be far less likely to happen. Relationships are often the keys to exploration and growth.

Avoid pigeonholing people

To avoid rigid stereotypes and maintain an environment where religious, as well as intellectual, growth can occur, Tikhon tries not to pigeonhole people or groups. This is intended to keep people's minds open

ference as well as about things they share. The behavioral consequences of different approaches to Jewish life are evident and ways of working together are developed. This is not lost on the students.

Help students find their niches

Being with others with whom they share values, talents or other characteristics sometimes provide students with a place where they can explore the issues of identity raised by being in a pluralistic setting. Students who get involved with the school's excellent drama program provide a clear example, since many students describe it as a place where they both literally and figuratively found their voices and learned to question themselves and others and to explore a full range of possibilities.

See the inevitable challenges as

Tikhon's emblematic activity, at least in terms of pluralism, is the de-bate midrash that occurs in the Beit Midrash. It is a real enactment of Tikhon's pluralism and decision-making. The format is straightforward: A problem, sometimes but not always related to pluralism, is presented. Students, teachers, administrators sit in one of three parts of the U shaped area: On one side are all the people who agree with the position; across from them are the people who disagree; and at the base of the U are those who do not have clear positions. The rules are simple. Anyone who is sitting in either the pro or con side (i.e. has an opinion) can talk (but only one person at a time). People change their seats as what they hear changes their minds or they want to talk from a particular perspective.

In the de-bate midrash about making wearing head coverings during Torah study mandatory for boys, there was a lot of moving back and forth and from the base of the U to pro or con sides as dif-

Service Learning or Surface Learning? Providing Meaningful Text Study in Community Service Programs

by Jason Kimelman-Block

Three years ago, I piloted a two-week program that brought Jewish teens to do intensive service projects on the Navajo reservation in the Arizona desert. This experience took participants far outside their comfort zone in a number of ways: they had to sleep in tents and cook their own meals, they were doing rigorous physical labor in the Arizona heat, and they were serving alongside Navajo teens, who not only had different economic and religious backgrounds, but communication styles that were different from those of the Jewish teens.

On the 4th day of the program, I checked in with a group leader, to see how the community was developing:

“How are things going?”

“We have some issues.”

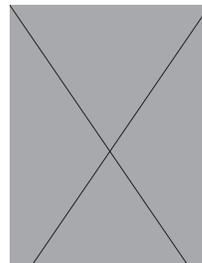
The leader expressed his sense that the group was not making a good impression on the Navajo teens they were working alongside and worried that the opportunities for cross-cultural connections and learning were being lost. “We have a joint text study session this afternoon, but what I really want to do is chew them out instead.”

I agreed that a general text study on Jewish teachings on service and justice was not in order, and probably incongruous, so we examined a binder of texts we had brought with us to the reservation. Our eyes rested on the following teaching from Midrash Tanhuma (Parashat Vayak’hel):

There are three names by which a person is called:
one which his parents call him,
one which people call him, and
one which he earns himself. The last is the best one of all.

We sat in a circle perched on a rock, Jewish and Navajo teens working together in chevruta, pairs, to understand the meaning of this ancient Jewish teaching. By the end of the hour, we learned that many of us had English names as well as traditional names. We learned that Jews tended to be named after relatives that had died, and we learned about those relatives. We learned that Navajo names connected individuals to their clan, and we learned about the clan system and its importance in Navajo

culture. We learned about some of the hopes and dreams of these young people. As the session closed, we spoke about the “name” that our respective peoples wanted to be known by. You could feel the Jewish young people beginning to step up to their responsibility as ambassadors of the Jewish people in this unique experience. Over the course of roughly 90 minutes, the bonds of community strengthened in a way that the previous



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four days had not accomplished. They began to open themselves up to each other and become closer as a group. Their hosts also began to open up more, culminating in an invitation several days later to attend one young woman’s coming of age ceremony.

This was one of the most powerful examples I have experienced of a text study strengthening a community service experience. From this experience and others like it, I propose a number of guidelines for the effective use of text study in community service contexts.

Avoid the one-liner

Many times, it is tempting to quote a one-line text to put a Jewish “gloss” on our work. “We are at this soup kitchen because Deuteronomy 15 teaches, ‘Open your hand to the needy.’” Let’s resist the temptation to say “tikun olam,” “tze-

dek, tzedek tirdof,” or Gandhi’s “be the change you want to see in the world” without elaboration. The problem with the use of these one-liner texts is that they tend to be the end rather than the beginning of discussion. The best Torah study leaves me with more questions than answers. These teachings, if utilized in the right way, could be the entry point to sophisticated understandings of how and why we do community service work. However, too often they become quick throwaway lines to label our service work as Jewish, not an opening to a longer conversation or deeper understanding.

Begin with the person

Don’t begin with a long analysis of abstract concepts such as traditional Jewish approaches to poverty or environmental responsibility (although it is important to examine these at some point). Rather, begin with the students themselves, their backgrounds, their hopes and dreams. Help them connect with their motivations for doing this work and how service fits in to their understanding of themselves.

Learn (and serve) with the community

When we talk about service helping to “build community,” who do we mean? Is it only the students, the wider school community, or a wider gathering of local residents? Ideally, service can break down the distinctions between volunteers and those being served. Instead of reinforcing class divisions of the have and have-nots, a good service project will allow the volunteers as well as the larger community feel that they are both contributing and receiving. Working with rather than for can create a sense of community across lines of race and class. As educators, we can take this wider sense of community one step further: learn Torah together! Selecting the right text, one that is both accessible and personal, can help facilitate this process.

Be prepared, but not rigid. Sticking to a standard, linear curriculum that has fixed ideas of what material is to be “covered” in each session often doesn’t work in the dynamic and often chaotic environment of community service. Instead, let the ex-

periences and dynamics of the group lead. Over-prepare – have a variety of texts and teachings available to be able to browse the various topics and teachings and see which ones speak most directly to the situation at hand. Know where you want to end up, but be flexible about the path to get there.

Community emerges from authenticity

The use of text in the community service context is successful in supporting a sense of community when each young person can understand why they are learning, how it is relevant, and has an opening to discuss things that matter to them. The best texts provide the space for them to be authentic. That authenticity can, in turn, help to make their group experience more authentic.

As Jewish educational institutions expand their community service and service-learning offerings, it is essential that we take a responsible approach to our use of text. This approach should not only be content and subject-driven, but also informed by our goals of strengthening community. ז

Creating an Alternative in Israel

by Hila Zeira-Weinstein

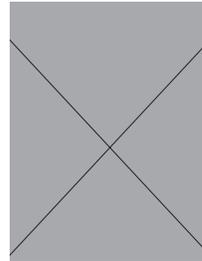
When I recently tried to enroll my daughter for gan in Jerusalem, the computer registration system replied, “Did Not Compute.” I had to enter at least two options, and my top two choices were from two separate tracks, one religious and the other secular. The system literally would not accept such an entry. In our district, as in most of Israel, when choosing a school you must identify yourself and your child as a member of either the religious community or the secular community. This has direct implications on the education your child will receive. Only recently has a third alternative emerged, one that acknowledges a more complex Jewish identity. I have the privilege of working in one of these forward-thinking communities.

Our school, Yachad Modiin, offers a unique educational track within Israel’s bifurcated system. Yachad is the realization of a dream of a group of diverse parents who, ten years ago, wanted their children to study together despite the families’ differing approaches to Jewish life. Yachad’s founders also strove to create an active community where they, as adults and families, could live a rich Jewish life together.

Ten years later this dream has become a lively, growing reality. The Yachad community has about 1,300 students in its educational system. Starting from a gan for three-year-olds, Yachad offers a complete path from elementary school through high school, including next year its first twelfth grade class. Yachad has a beautiful campus that contains the elementary school and the new high school building. The Modiin Township’s special education school, Gvanim, was also placed on campus to further express Yachad’s ideology of integrating the “other” in a full and real sense. Yachad kids share classes and activities with the Gvanim students, and this year in the elementary school’s final ceremony, students of Yachad and Gvanim performed in a special and very moving joint celebration.

The Yachad community includes over 600 families from Modiin. Members can join the many activities that Yachad offers for adults and families; in this sense, Yachad is an Israeli-style JCC. There are two minyanim on Shabbat and chagim, communal ceremonies and events for chagim and special occasions, lectures, Jewish learning for adults, and many workshops and activities such as a choir, drama group, and sports. This helps foster a sense of belonging in a suburban community where members don’t live in the same neighborhood and don’t necessarily know the other families.

The Yachad community is committed to helping others: the elderly in Modiin, schools from deprived areas, Israeli soldiers, kids from broken homes and members of the community in times of need—both on happy occasions and in times of sorrow. This is, we believe, the full meaning of living together as a



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strong community in the spirit of “kol Yisrael arevin ze laze.”

We are challenged by the unique needs of a community of families that practice Judaism in different ways. Yet we believe this challenge is an essential part of the journey for one who chooses to join Yachad—to think, ask questions and learn together as we grow. Sending a child to the Yachad school means that the family has joined the larger Yachad family. It means the kids come home and ask questions about their own family’s Jewish identity. It means that when you celebrate, you consider how to make other kids feel comfortable. In school, we invite parents to take part in events as an integral part of the educational process, so they can understand better the special Jewish language we’re trying to create: How can we help kids develop their own Jewish identity and maintain respect for their family’s practices while creating a public space where all feel comfortable and respected? Where do we draw the line between the private sphere and the public?

In order to tackle these big questions that lie at the heart of Yachad’s vision, a



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

tradition of having a community process has developed. This process finds various forms of expression, such as evening learning programs, lecture series, dialogue groups, panel discussions and open deliberation. We have found that by opening major questions—such as the structure of school prayer—to community discussion, we stimulate new ideas and eventually create stronger support for collective decisions. As Yachad celebrates its tenth year and the number of families grows rapidly, we find that this inclusiveness has become even more crucial.

As is characteristic of many such ideological communities, some new members have joined the “hard core” founders for reasons other than those that united the community from the start. We therefore find community discussions vital for two main reasons: to rethink foundational points as the community grows—assessing what is essential to Yachad’s existence and what needs to change, and welcoming new Yachad members to take an active, committed part in the community journey.

One challenge we face is that the same 200 families, already committed to Yachad’s mission, tend to attend the community events and discussions. How can we encourage the other 400 families to come? One direction we have found successful is to create an evening discussion that isn’t just philosophical, but rather has a practical impact on the children’s education at Yachad and touches upon a dilemma we feel a big part of the community is already struggling with.

For example, we recently held an evening to discuss the question of opening a new, separate track for the religious kids in the junior high school. At Yachad, as the name implies, all kids—religious, secular,

and the broad spectrum in between—have always learned together. This was the first time we considered separating kids according to their religious commitment. The matter brought into question a basic tenet of the Yachad philosophy: Is this a community of tolerance, built to include Orthodox, secular and traditional members, or does Yachad strive to encourage a wider, more pluralistic approach to Judaism?

We were happy to see that many were passionate and participated in the debate, even if the question did not have a direct impact on their own children at this stage. People came to hear and to be heard. We held a public session and then separated into smaller group discussions led by a facilitator. Next we assimilated all opinions into a chart that helped achieve resolution. (In the end, we decided to incorporate a separate track for certain subjects.) Through this process, we were able to come to a decision in a manner sensitive to the different voices that were expressed.

Looking forward, we are debating which questions should be addressed in this way. How do we use this public forum most effectively without turning to the community too often? How do we involve two other important elements of our community in these discussions, the students and the educational staff? Though parents may not feel free to speak their mind while their children are around, they are the ones for whom the decisions will apply. Students’ participation is also the right thing educationally and gives us a reality check. Moreover, we believe active participation of the educational staff in our process is crucial, as they are the ones who implement the vision day in and day out in the classroom.

Our teaching staff, like the community, represents a range of different Jewish backgrounds and practices. As no special training was available for teachers to deal specifically with our reality, we developed an in-service program, currently under my direction, with study groups, mentoring and individualized learning tracks. Moreover, in cooperation with Meytarim, a network for democratic Jewish education, we created a year-long hishtalmut (professional development program) to explore what distinguishes a Yachad class or event. We ask ourselves many questions, including, What is a Jewish language that is rich with masoret but not judgmental? How can our teachers enable an open and respectful discussion regarding questions of emunah and Jewish identity? By what name do we refer to G-d in class? What about the teacher’s personal beliefs—should she talk about them, and if so, how?

We insisted on practical application of the discussions, with model classes followed by peer feedback. In this way we continue to clarify the challenges and the opportunities and build a Jewish educational language that is appropriate for Yachad. Through the hishtalmut, we managed to distill three main points that help us assess every class and activity at Yachad:

1. Kri’ah yechefah (“Barefoot reading”): This philosophical and methodological approach puts the focus of educational activities and teaching of texts on the encouragement of critical reading and thinking. This allows the student to develop a personal approach towards the issue or text and its broader cultural, social, and identity-building implications.
2. Ribui kolot (“Multitude of voices”):

Building School Community: Connection and Conflict

by Renee Rubin Ross

All schools dream of having a tight-knit parent community. Jewish day schools tend to be places where parents play a far greater role in decision-making than other parochial and independent schools, a situation that brings opportunities but also must be managed carefully. How might Jewish day schools incorporate input from the parents in a way that builds community?

for all school families and ensured that the list was current; this list was not just distributed to all families, but families themselves could post messages. So fami-



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The good news is that there is a tremendous hunger on the part of parents to be a part of a community and to build community. At a Solomon Schechter day school in a large Northeastern city where I conducted a year of ethnographic research, which I shall call Jewish Day, parents' interest in building community motivated their interest in the school. For example, at admissions meetings, parents specifically asked about the degree to which school families formed a Jewish community. In other words, their interest in enrolling their children in a Jewish day school was connected to their interest in forming a community for themselves. Of course, families were concerned that the school offered a strong academic program. But they also came to the school looking for community, and prepared to build community. In this sense, parents did not need to be socialized to understand that building community was important; they already knew this.

Parents did not merely want to experience community; many parents had the ability to create community, and the school was able to draw on the parents' strengths and talents to do this. The school provided the basic infrastructure, and parents did much of the work. For example, the school created a Parent Association (PA) for families with a mission of involving parents, building community, and fundraising. Parents then took the initiative to shape the PA into an organization that held fundraising and social events for school families, and sent mishloach manot, baby gifts to new babies in the community, wedding gifts when people got married, and Shabbat meals when there was a death in a family.

The former PA president described how he and other parents took the initiative to expand the reaches of the Parent Association:

"After we enrolled our daughter in the school, my wife and I would attend PA meetings regularly. Eventually the PA leadership asked me to be a vice-president. We had an energetic group of five on the leadership team. We used to be thin on meetings and events; within two years there was a lot more happening. The school had always held a Shabbaton, we added a wine auction, and the listserv..."

The school listserv became a key mechanism for communication and community building. On the suggestion of the PA, the school created an email distribution list

lies could communicate with one another about anything from passing on school uniforms to announcements about life-cycle events and shivas.

My depiction of community building at this school reinforces the description of how Jewish day schools become a site of community building presented by Alex Pomson and Randall Schnoor in *Back to School*. My work also builds on a question that Pomson and Schnoor explore: in addition to creating the infrastructure, what steps might the school take to build community among parents?

I would suggest two answers that stem from the challenges of building community. The growth opportunity for all members of a community, including parents, is learning to manage conflict: to acknowledge disagreements, to work them out, and to continue to stay connected with others who share different viewpoints. Since conflict is a part of any community, the school can model tools that might help children and their parents resolve or manage conflict in a respectful manner. At Jewish Day, the school emphasized the importance of acting with *menschlichkeit*. Students and their families learned about *menschlichkeit* at the beginning of the year, and this concept

was reinforced by acknowledging students who had acted with *menschlichkeit* in the school's weekly newsletter that went to all families. The result was that *menschlichkeit* became part of the school culture for children and adults. For example, Terry, a Jewish Day parent, described how her understanding of *menschlichkeit* helped her to act a little better when she was angered by a teacher's actions:

"My son came home and said that the gym teacher spoke to him inappropriately. Initially, I was furious. But I took a minute and thought about what the school is trying to teach about *menschlichkeit* and treating others with respect. So rather than the angry words that initially came to mind, I emailed the teacher calmly explaining that this upset my son. The teacher wrote the nicest email back explaining that his tone had been misunderstood, and that my son is one of the best athletes in the class, and all of this other stuff... the outcome was good. The division head also responded and agreed that the gym teacher had spoken inappropriately. But all of the communication was done in a civil, supportive way."

Terry's words remind us that, if consistently modeled, a school can play a key role in teaching children and adults to listen to one another respectfully, thereby creating an environment of civility in which members of the community have tools to stay connected, and continue to be part of the community, even when there are disagreements.

Second, one way to handle conflict, disagreement, and the fact that members of the school community are "only human" is to create a culture of openness. At Jewish Day, this began with the school: at parent events and in the weekly newsletter, school administrators shared ways in which the school operated in a professional, thoughtful manner, while continuing to grow and improve. The school was not presented as "perfect" but rather as a work-in-progress. In the newsletter, administrators drew on this image of growth and improvement to facilitate communication between home and school:

"[At a back-to-school night,] Debby, the

admissions director, launched into the longest speech of the evening: If parents have an issue, they should call their children's teacher. After that, speak to the division head. But 'if you feel you just need someone to talk to, if you need to...,' she searched for the right word for a few seconds, then said, 'vomit out something, feel free to call me.' She looked around the room. 'We know that there's no such thing as the perfect school. Being together in the school community is a human process. We're always working on it, correcting it, and working to do as well as we can.'"

Debby's speech makes several points. First, the school is not perfect; mistakes will be made. Second, she acknowledges that parents are quite concerned about their children's experience in the school; parents may have strong feelings when they feel that something has not been handled correctly. And lastly, she encourages parents to be aware of their strong feelings (the complaints that they want to "vomit out") and to use those concerns as a way of staying connected and in communication, rather than letting concerns distance them from the school. Interestingly, a number of Jewish Day parents responded to this approach by describing the school as a "diamond in the rough." Parents understood that there were many excellent aspects of the school, and that some areas needed improvement. Since the school was open about its weaknesses, parents perceived problems with the school as opportunities to improve it, rather than opportunities to disconnect.

The case of Jewish Day raises important questions for all schools. What tools might a school offer to manage conflict among not just the children who attend the school, but also the larger community of teachers, administrators and parents? How might a school communicate not just areas of strength, but also areas of growth? It is messier, and slower, to acknowledge that conflict and imperfection are part of any community that we are going to build.

Interestingly, St. Cornelius, a Catholic school I have studied, also had a strong

parent community, but their model for building community was very different. A high percentage of parents were involved in planning social and fundraising events, but they were not at all involved in decision making for the school: there was no board of directors, no education committee. The school focused on building social connections, but did not emphasize areas in which it was still a "work-in-progress."

When we compare St. Cornelius with Jewish Day, we might think about the extent of parent participation that we're seeking. Can we have community in a Jewish school without active participation in decision making? And are there areas in which parents should not participate? Ultimately, if we think about the kind of Jewish communities we want to build now and into the future, we must pay attention to our humanness and create ways for all of us to stay connected in the face of conflicts and differences. ז

Mosquitoes, Elephants and Mermaids: Building a Strong Faculty Community

by Susan Cook

New school, new faculty, opening meeting. One of those first impression opportunities. “How many of you have ever been bitten by an elephant?” I ask. A quick check around the room—no one raises a hand. “How many of you have ever been bitten by a mosquito?” No checking necessary—all hands are up. How do I convey to these “been there-done that” veteran teachers that I care about their professional lives in the building? That I will try to clear away the obstacles so that they can do their best work? And that I will listen to the challenges they face to meet the needs of their students in the “hurry up and learn” environment of a Jewish day school?

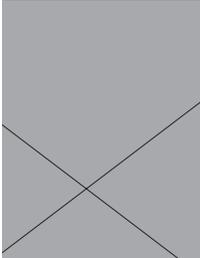
“It is the rare person that gets bitten by an elephant,” I say. “In fact, we would have to go out of our way for the opportunity. But mosquitoes are another matter. They are annoying little beasts that can ruin a good picnic or a walk in the woods. Mosquitoes are those pesky annoyances in our work life that get under our skin and itch to distraction.” On Post-it notes, teachers tell me their mosquitoes. The copiers never work. The mailbox is inconvenient. The schedules are never right the first time. Mosquitoes become the metaphor for the little irritations that loom large in high pressure environments. I swat them off my to-do list one by one.

What about the elephants? On a poster board we generate a list of the essential conversations we need to have as a faculty this first year of my leadership. What do we want to accomplish together? What do we want to learn? What is working and what is not? These are the big pachyderm-sized questions. We will explore them together.

A school leader who hopes to build a strong faculty community understands this doesn’t happen by accident. And any student of human nature knows that our best hopes for creating community often come in conflict with the complicated hopes and fears of the individuals who inhabit it. Where to begin? I believe that all good work flows from relationships of mutual respect and trust. Relationships come before the work. A school leader who ignores the tasks of relationship-building and jumps to goals and expectations may find him- or herself driving a train with no passengers.

A faculty that comes together with a strong sense of purpose and a shared vision

is on its way to building a strong community. And such a school community enhances and energizes the life of the people in it. A strong faculty commu-



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nity is more than one where the teachers get along. It is by definition a learning community, where teachers talk regularly about teaching and learning, where they feel safe to observe one another, to share with a spirit of generosity, to plan together and to evaluate their work critically. A strong faculty community embraces the opportunity to expand its professional capacity in the company of colleagues and is energized and sustained by it. And according to Roland Barth, founder of the Harvard Principal’s Center, there is evidence to suggest that since students tend to model the collaborative behaviors of their teachers, the quality of the lives of children in schools are directly proportional to the quality of the adult relationships in the building they share. Academic achievement can be positively impacted as a result.

We can look to our Sages to outline a powerful imperative for school leaders to foster trusting relationships around learning communities. In Pirke Avot, Rabbi Joshua ben Perachyah says, “Provide yourself a teacher, get yourself a companion, and judge all men charitably.” I have come to think of this as more than just three separate, declarative state-



Interview with Rebekah Farber, Member of RAVSAK's Board of Directors

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

In addition to the obvious points about day schools promoting Jewish continuity and of providing a Jewish lens through which our children may view the world, I believe community day school education provides one extremely important additional value—tolerance. Community day schools are a microcosm of the larger Jewish community, and I believe they teach our kids that there are many different ways to be a Jew and many ways to be a student. If from an early age, our kids learn that they are part of a larger global Jewish community, with different kinds of families, backgrounds and experiences, they will have the knowledge and the courage to be tolerant of those who are different from themselves.

One of my greatest pleasures is when my kids have reached the 7th grade and begin to go on the bar/bat mitzvah “circuit.” Throughout the year they attend between 50 and 80 bnai mitzvah celebrations, and it is fascinating to watch

their eyes open to the multitude of styles, formats, and approaches families take to acknowledging this milestone. By the end of the year our kids have learned that there are many, many ways to be a member of the Jewish community. But most of all, they have learned who they are, who their family is, and where they stand in the spectrum. This could only happen in a truly pluralistic day school environment.

What strengths do you bring to the RAVSAK board?

I am an educator by training and my entire professional and lay careers have been spent in the world of arts and education. I come to the board able to wear many hats—that of a professional curriculum developer; as a member of numerous governing bodies; as a builder of Jewish day schools; as a nonprofit budget analyst; as a skilled fundraiser; and as a parent. I am able to work with the board in an objective and impartial way to ensure its success as a separate and unique entity best poised to achieve its

mission of supporting community Jewish day schools in North America.

Do you have a favorite Jewish teaching?

My favorite Jewish teachings are those that come from each week's parasha. The cycle of the Torah is infinitely intriguing to me. I measure time and personal duties by the cycle of the Torah so I look to it each week for guidance and learning. The parasha never fails to teach and inspire me. י

Building Community While Supporting Diversity

[continued from page 24]

different people spoke. One very traditional teacher spoke early on in favor of making kippot mandatory for boys. By the end of the event the teacher not only moved to the other side of the U—that it should not be required of anyone—but also attributed the reason he moved to what one of the students had said. He has been listening and the student's interpretation persuaded him. It is this kind of ongoing clarification of one's own positions and listening to others' that generates new individual and group understandings. It is generative pluralism in action.

One view of Tikhon is that it consists of individuals who learn to explore and articulate their views on religious and other issues. On a macro level what uni-

fies them is their sense of being a living thread in the tapestry of the Jewish people. But in terms of the school culture and community, the bond is more pronounced.

Dealing with diversity in a community is not unique to Tikhon. Most other units of Western society, whether government or families, also confront this challenge. Living with diversity requires, in the words of researcher Gail Furman, both “acceptance of otherness and cooperation within difference.” Rather than imposing, however gently, the views of the dominant group and downplaying the needs of the others, people in the community are expected to find responsible ways to deal with difference. As an intentionally pluralist school, Tikhon is orga-

nized in a way that supports—even favors—this kind of engagement. It aspires to be a community in which people are united by being different, by learning to respect others' positions and by working with all sorts of Jews. As long as students feel themselves to be in some way part of the Jewish people they belong at Tikhon and Tikhon can expect them to explore what this means to themselves and others. The paradox is that diversity, often a centrifugal force, becomes the centripetal force. Working with this diversity in Tikhon's pluralistic environment unifies Tikhon's students, teachers and administrators in a shared quest for self-definition, acceptance, challenge, debate and generativity. י

From Egg-Carton School to a Community of Teachers

by Carol K. Ingall

When I was in charge of the day school teacher preparation program at the Davidson School of the Jewish Theological Seminary, I often steered our pre-service and newly hired teachers away from the teachers' lounges in certain schools. Over the years I found them to be petri dishes of discontent and divisiveness, where teachers badmouthed administrators and disparaged those who didn't share their content or linguistic expertise.

These were extreme cases, but in every school, it is crucial for administrators of Jewish day schools to work toward minimizing adversarial situations, emphasizing instead common concerns: a desire to work with children, a commitment to Jewish cultural literacy, and a dedication to the Jewish people, past, present, and future. Strengthening a community of teachers can help create a renewed sense of purpose and raise morale in difficult times.

Community-building doesn't just happen. Metaphors and similes like "Lone Rangers" and "soloists" (rather than members of an orchestra) dot the research literature on teachers. Dan Lortie's book *Schoolteacher* is more than three decades old, still in print, and still describes individualistic and conservative teachers working in egg carton-like institutions. How can a head of school break down this isolationism without putting more burdens on the already overloaded members of her faculty? How can attempts to build community feel nourishing rather than noxious?

One suggestion for a first teachers' meeting is to dust off the mission statement of the school and revisit the fundamental question, what are we doing here? There is something elevating about the exploration of core values and vocation. Parker Palmer, citing Frederick Buechner's definition, doesn't describe vocation in terms of altruism, self-abnegation, or duty. Instead, he describes vocation as "the place where your deep gladness and the world's hunger meet." To paraphrase, having a vocation means that a teacher does what makes her happiest while meeting the most pressing needs of her community. Such an exercise not only feels good, but it introduces teachers new to the school and to the field to the *raison d'être* of the school.

How can that flame of vocation be fanned? One strategy is to make the school into a learning community. The use of the term has exploded like mushrooms after a spring rain. Peter Senge is credited with introducing "the learning organization" to the lexicon of the business community. A learning organization is one in which people "expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new

and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together."

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This sounds like the goal of professional development to me.

Like the little girl with the little curl in the nursery rhyme, when professional development is good, it's very, very good, and when it's bad, it's horrid. Steven Rothenberg, the director of the Concord, New Hampshire, Regional Technical Center, carefully chooses one professional development event for his staff, to which they go as a group. He leverages the shared experience to try building a set of core beliefs, a common vocabulary, and then shared practices. The practices provide an identity for the group and a foundation for more collaboration and learning.

Most teachers are learners. They don't resent professional development; what they resent is wasting their time. In an era of tight budgets, taking one's teachers to a group learning experience and using it to build community might not be feasible. Professional development need not be about bringing in the expert who comes from afar with the brief case and promise of a big check; it can begin small and at home. Heads of school can recognize the talent that exists within the school by offering an opportunity for a best practices audit, asking teachers to present their most dynamic, student-stirring lessons.

Professional development can happen on an impromptu basis, when the head of school identifies a school issue, one that he truly hasn't decided how to solve for himself. It can happen in subgroups, when a teacher reads a book or an article that has bearing on school life and invites colleagues to discuss it, or the head of school or one of the division heads wants to create a biweekly study group around rabbinic texts and how they relate to contemporary Jewish life. The expression "work with the willing" comes to mind.

A much more ambitious kind of professional development is the professional learning community, an ongoing approach to improve curriculum, instruction and assessment within a school. There are two types of professional learning communities or PLCs: one that is teacher-led and free-flowing, characterized by collaborative practices like critical friends protocols, peer observation, and analysis of student work. As David Jacobson notes, the plus side of this kind of PLC is creating teacher leaders who can take ownership of the process and build inquiry skills. The downside is that the free-flowing nature of the enterprise can lead to a loss of focus and ineffectiveness. Dividing the school into teacher-led teams can often dilute the sense of community rather than increase it.

The second type of PLC is one that is more goal driven with the agenda set by the head of school. The plus side is its results-oriented approach; the downside is that it can lead to a top-down implementation and a diminution of teacher enthusiasm. Jacobson recommends a "common priorities" approach to instructional improvement in which teams of teachers come up with learning goals, prioritize them, develop common assessment of these goals, and collaborate on designing lessons based on the goals. They would then teach the lessons, analyze student work and compare results.

Besides making the school a learning community, heads of schools must support their teachers. Teacher support includes creating induction programs for new teachers for several years, not only their first year of teaching. It would also require the training of mentors who would work

with these teachers in order to keep them teaching. Support for teachers means balancing the care and feeding of parents with the care and feeding of staff. In an age of the helicopter parent, the teacher needs as much protection as possible. Supporting teachers means rewarding learning outside the auspices of the school. Teachers who take courses that extend their subject matter or pedagogic competence or who complete academic degrees should be rewarded with raises.

Schools must attend to the nourishing of the personal as well as the professional. Teachers are people whose personhood is inseparable from their professions. (Watch the way teachers introduce themselves to strangers.) As Alex Pomson has noted, administrators have to be cognizant of the fact that Jewish schools are vehicles of meaning not only for students, but also for teachers. School communities must celebrate and mourn together, to recognize the successes of teachers in the wider community beyond the school, like running in marathons, coaching a winning soccer team, or being honored for their volunteering. School boards should be encouraged to recognize teachers in various ways, from teacher appreciation breakfasts to giving book certificates on Hanukkah, or plants on Tu BiShvat.

By attending to teachers' health and well-being, by nurturing their intellectual and professional growth in meaningful professional development activities, heads of school can foster community. They can also succeed in making teachers mindful of what Patricia Houghton calls "all that is beautiful and glorious about being a teacher."

Community in Our Schools

The programs that a school presents make a profound statement about the way it conceives of and values community. Who are the people included in the program? How much preparation are they given and leadership are they allowed? Is the program allotted the resources—in time, staffing, space, money—for it to succeed? Has the program taken root in the culture of the school? Are participants given proper acknowledgment? Does it build relationships that extend far beyond the confines of the program itself? We asked schools to describe programs that both cement and define the communities within their schools. Here are five such programs that engage a variety of school stakeholders.

Creating Community through a Multi-Generational Reading Program

בְּנֵי שְׁלוֹם בְּיַד הַבַּיִת, גְּרִינְסְבוֹרוֹ, נְיוֹרְקַא

Several years ago, we were approached by Barbara Teichman, a member of the local Hadassah chapter, about implementing Hadassah's "Read*Write*Now" program in our school.

In an era where reading often takes a back seat to computer games, the idea was enticing. We knew that with busy working parents, our students would clearly benefit from regular one-on-one reading time with an adult. What we did not realize, however, was that this intergenerational experience would have a multitude of side benefits. We coordinated with our reading specialist, and soon our first cadre of ten Hadassah volunteers arrived for training.

Each adult was matched with a child in first or second grade for the duration of a year, arriving weekly to spend an hour reading and being read to. Along the way, each pair developed a relationship, discussing siblings, outings, school and friends along with the topic of the book. The homeroom teacher and the reading specialist worked with Barbara to ensure that each pair worked successfully.

We certainly did not realize the impact the program would have. Many of our students do not have grandparents who live in the community. The mentors became surrogate grandparents, often

serving as the student's guest on Special Friends Day if a relative could not attend.

Relationships between the seniors and the children extended well beyond the weekly reading sessions. Students and adults saw each other at shul. The kids talked to their parents about their mentors and families invited mentors into their homes. In many cases, the roots deepened and the connection made through the program persisted after the school year. One volunteer continued to meet with a child in the local public library long after he left B'nai Shalom!

Over the years, our program has grown and now over twenty volunteers participate. I asked one senior to join after his companion passed away, knowing that spending time with the children would bring a smile back to his face. His first reading partner will graduate from eighth grade this year, as he enters his sixth year in the program. A young man with Parkinson's disease joined this year after Barbara arranged for him to be picked up by another mentor. A young woman who could not find a job joined as well.

The reading mentors are honored at the end of each year with a special party hosted by the children, complete with cards, little gifts and treats. We're not sure who benefits most, the kids or the adults, but

we love the multigenerational learning that occurs as each reading pair shares their thoughts about books and life.

Parents are “Teachers for a Day”

ז Akiva School, Montreal, Quebec

The bell rings. The school day begins. And yet, all the teachers are absent! Is this madness? The opposite: it's an opportunity created by parents and administrators for all staff to enjoy a two-day professional development retreat.

And who's in the classroom? Parents who have planned and implemented a day of unique educational activities for each and every class. (The second day is a schoolwide day off.) Welcome to The Akiva School of Montreal (K-6), a school that personifies the parent-teacher-student partnership.

What began as a “what if” moment four years ago has become a welcome tradition, and, for many, a high point of the year. A team of parents, guided by administrators, chooses a theme; past themes have included safety, the environment, chesed and health and fitness. It develops programming at all grade levels that are educational, unique, engaging and fun. The planning committee of about 20 swells to 75 for the event itself, with every classroom manned by 3 or 4 parents (and grandparents!) and others acting as “specialists,” “floaters,” and organizers. Every participant is required to attend a training session in advance with the school's administrators, where he or she is coached on issues such as fire drill routines, managing lunch time, and being a sensitive, discreet disciplinarian. All this to enable the teachers, administrators, and all other staff to collaborate, learn and plan at the Jewish community's retreat center, 70 miles away.

The variety and creativity of activities, the caliber of special guests and facilitators, and the meticulous precision of the planning combine to create truly magical days. On Chesed Day, the main hall of the school was transformed into a soup kitchen, where children of all ages made sandwiches and fruit salad to donate to homeless shelters throughout the city. Representatives of these organizations, from diverse commu-

nities, addressed the children about the needs of the hungry and were moved beyond words at the energy and enthusiasm of the children and parents. On Safety Day, instructors in all kinds of safety taught the older children how to protect their identities on-line, firemen taught about fire prevention and actions to take during a fire; younger children learned about bicycle safety and street smarts. On Health and Fitness Day, children engaged in numerous physical activities but also learned about the Special Olympics and the Canadian organization known as Right to Play, as they concentrated on the tzedakah component to find ways to help others through sport.

Included each time has been an art activity, conceived and run by another group of talented parents. Each year, the teachers return to a new and special theme-related student creation that decorates the walls of the school. There is also always a Judaic component, where the local rabbi teaches the children about a Jewish concept related to the theme, or with a tzedakah project that highlights mitzvot in a concrete and meaningful way.

For the children, the opportunity to have their parents in school for the day, leading activities and sharing the routines, is very special. They enjoy having the role of advisor, telling the parents how they hang up their coats, eat their lunch, or get dismissed. And they love the special activities, so different from a regular day, yet so full of learning and excitement.

For the parents, the opportunity to see their children in school is priceless. They recognize, too, the enormous effort and skill needed to be a teacher, and uniformly marvel at how the teachers find the energy to lovingly and enthusiastically do it daily.

And the staff has two full days, without distraction, in a comfortable setting, to bond,

strengthen their craft and gain new insights. They return with renewed commitment to their profession and to the students, and with a stronger sense of community. They love hearing from the parents how challenging it was to “take their place” for just one day and that their appreciation for the teachers' skill and hard work has deepened. The teachers simultaneously hear from the children all that they missed and they wish they could have been there too.

In the end, who wins most? The children, of course. And isn't that what it's all about? ז

Dor I'Dor Program

ז Rockwern Academy, Cincinnati, Ohio

Judaism respects wisdom and experience, remembers its history both personal and communal, and celebrates all aspects of life. As Jewish day schools, large parts of our mission are centered on these concepts. All too often, though, aspects of how we function become abstract and academic rather than rooted in people and the cycles that help define us, and we miss opportunities not just to teach but to do real good, create connections, and build fuller Jewish communities. At their best, community day schools are microcosms of our larger communities and perhaps incubators of their futures.

Almost 11 years ago, sensing a growing disconnect between seniors and young children in our community, a sort of generational segregation, lay and professional leaders sought a way to reconnect these age groups. This generational disconnect had negative outcomes for both ends of the continuum. Our children

were missing the connections with their own history in its most tangible form, and, in an increasingly youth-oriented culture, coming to view seniors as “other.” Many of our community’s seniors lived in age-segregated communities and had little contact with anyone other than fellow seniors and caregivers. Not surprisingly, all of them want to be part of the larger community and all have value to contribute. Our Dor I'Dor Program was created as a response to this disconnect and its success is evidenced by its longevity and the enthusiastic responses from all participants.

Every year a wide variety of seniors are recruited to work alongside regular teachers in Rockwern classrooms from preschool to grade 5. The participants range in age from 75 to 98 and represent a wide background of Jewish experience, knowledge and talents. Not a few of them are retired teachers. Some

of the volunteers are grandparents of children in the school, but the majority is not. What they all have in common is that they are Jewish elders who still want a vital connection with the future of our community and have time and talents to share.

Each volunteer spends an average of 4 hours each week in the school. Five to ten volunteers participate each. A PTO volunteer coordinates the program, recruiting seniors, matching them with classrooms, and arranging transportation. Volunteers function as reading instructors, storytellers, tefillah leaders, teachers’ aides and mentors. Three of the volunteers have been with us since the inception of the program.

The program is simple to set up and run, brings huge rewards to all participants, and has become a key definer of klal Yisrael in our school and community. ז

Annual Faculty, Staff, Trustee Dinner

ז The Abraham Joshua Heschel School, New York, New York

Nearly a decade ago, our then board president Shira Nadich Levin, was eager to create a sense of connection between two of our most important—but least interactive—constituencies of the school: our teachers and our trustees. Each group relied heavily upon the success of the other, yet they rarely interacted. Shira drew upon the experience of her esteemed father, Rabbi Judah Nadich, z'l, the late head rabbi of the Park Avenue Synagogue, who himself had organized lay-professional encounters that further strengthened the renowned sense of community of the shul. It was then that we

established the annual Faculty-Trustee Dinner.

Initially focused on faculty and soon expanded to include all staff, the dinner brings together nearly a hundred people for an evening of conversation, collaboration, and celebration. Faculty and staff are seated together with trustees at a catered sit-down dinner. Following opening remarks from the board president and a dvar Torah, a member of the faculty addresses the gathering to speak on behalf of the entire faculty and staff. Head of school Roanna Shorofsky then presents

ten-year and twenty-year service awards, noting the special contributions these long-time educators have made to our school.

Although the event ends early in the evening (it is a school night, after all!), the joyful spirit and sense of shared purpose last throughout the year. In joining together, we build community around our distinct purposes and common goals. Teachers, administrators, support staff and trustees alike say that the Faculty-Trustee Dinner is for them a highlight of the school year. ז

Jewish Life Pathing

ז David Posnack Jewish Day School, Plantation, Florida

Jewish Life Pathing (JLP) is a program designed to use the talents and passions of our older students to enable our younger students to explore new avenues of experience. This program brings the athletic talents of our high school students into our elementary school.

Each student fills out a questionnaire to discover the areas in which he or she feels confident to share with the younger students. Twice a month on Friday afternoons, we shorten our day and send our high school students out to our other campuses.

At the helm of the organization are three juniors supervised by faculty advisors and

guidance personnel. They assign mentors, mentees, and team leaders for teams in our middle school and our two elementary schools. For example, for boys baseball, there are three teams, each equipped with high school mentors.

The team leader lets us know what supplies are needed a week ahead of time and makes sure he or she has enough coverage. Leaders report to the three captains. The captains report to the faculty coordinator. Captains coordinate venues with the three principals for the activities. After each session, the captains meet to discuss the occurrences and plan for the next session. At the end of the year, they choose and train their replacements.

Our school is consolidating into one campus this year. After the transition, we anticipate expanding JLP to more than just a few hours, since upper and lower school students will have more access to each other. Our graduates are so proud of their accomplishments in JLP that they write about the program on their college applications. Our younger students still feel close to those older students they see.

JLP is entirely student organized and student led. It is a simple, inexpensive program that bonds the entire school and benefits every part of the school community. ז

Securing the Jewish Present

by Shaul Kelner

Editor's Note: This article, which first appeared in the Spring 2008 issue of HaYidion, is reprinted here because it effectively argues for the pivotal impact that day schools make on their Jewish communities.

Chadesh yameinu kekedem. "Renew our days like those of yore." Sung plaintively as the Torah scrolls are returned to the ark, this appeal captures one particular Jewish orientation to time. We venerate ancient days and hold forth their image as a model for a messianic era yet to come. From this perspective the present seems of little significance in its own right.

It is simply a mile marker on the road from the past we lost to the future we strive to reach.

There is another orientation to time in Jewish tradition, however—one represented by the Shehechyanu prayer. Praising the One who has "given us life, sustained us and brought us to this day," the Shehechyanu is rooted in the moment, affirming the blessings of the here and now.

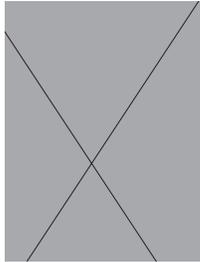
In making the case for Jewish day schools, we often highlight their potential for transmitting the inheritance of our past to the bearers of our future. It is a potent appeal, one that has inspired much support. But in basing a fundraising strategy on the Chadesh yameinu kekedem claim about day schools' potential contributions to the future, we all too often neglect the Shehechyanu case that is already proving itself right now in the present.

How are Jewish day schools strengthening Jewish life not twenty years down the road but at this very moment? Like the Shehechyanu prayer which speaks in the first person plural, the answer is to be found by looking at the impacts that schools have, not necessarily on individual students, but on communities as a whole. Based on my experience with the Akiva School in Nashville, Tennessee, where my children are enrolled, I offer here five ways in which the community day school contributes vitally to the overall health of the Jewish community of which it is a part:

1) Strengthening Local Federations

The financial relationship between community day schools and local Jewish Federations is typically thought of as a one-way flow of funds. Consider, however, that

Federations must increasingly demonstrate to their donors that they are planting "the seeds for Jewish renaissance and renewal." A Federation's support for an independent day school signals to donors that Federation is committed to Jewish education. This support can become an important element in the case Federation makes when appealing for the annual gift. Moreover, the vibrancy of the day school serves as evidence of broader communal health, something which helps justify further investment in the communal system. A strong community day school re-



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turns dividends to the bottom line of the Federation campaign.

2) Bridging Synagogue Communities

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

Like a JCC and Federation, a community day school brings together people from many different synagogue communities. More than a JCC and Federation, however, the school builds bridges around aspects of religious life—precisely those areas where differences tend to run most deep. By serving as a venue and as a catalyst for cooperation among local

synagogues, independent day schools help strengthen the community as a whole.

3) Recruiting and Retaining Jewish Communal Professionals

Jewish communities now compete nationally to recruit and retain the best talent in the Jewish sector's professional workforce. Jewish communities with strong independent day schools are able to compete more effectively to attract and keep the best young rabbis, communal service workers and educators. The presence of a day school is a key selling point to potential recruits. The absence of it is often a deal breaker. The reason is obvious: Those who choose careers in the Jewish sector often place high value on providing a rich Jewish education for their own children. The long-term health of a community's synagogues, JCC, Federation, and agencies is directly bound up in the presence of a successful day school which can meet this demand.

4) Retaining Jewish Professional Couples

A portion of the Jewish communal workforce in any city is likely to include a number of Jewish communal professional couples. Particularly in smaller communities, the ability to provide employment for both spouses is important for retention of either one. The jobs that day schools often provide to one half of these Jewish communal couples help synagogues, JCCs, Federations, and agencies retain the other halves in their employ.

5) Attracting Committed Lay Leaders

The American Jewish population is becoming more geographically mobile every year. Young families move first and foremost for work, but often have choices about where they will move. Every Jewish community in the country should see itself as competing against every other to attract committed lay leaders. Just as a community day school is vital for attracting professionals to work in Jewish communal institutions, so too it is vital for attracting committed young Jewish lay leaders, and for the same reason.

Day schools are not only investments in the future. They are investments sustaining the health of local Jewish communities now, in the present. In a situation where Jewish communities



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

increasingly find themselves competing against one another for mobile populations of communal professionals and lay leaders, a community either rises as one or falls as one. Such a situation demands systemic thinking. Does the community work well across institutions? Attract and retain the most talented professionals? Engage the commitment of devoted lay leaders? Exude the confidence that inspires even more participation? Communities that can answer yes to these questions will have the competitive edge that will enable them to go from strength to strength. More and more, the only communities that can hope to give such an answer are those with strong Jewish day schools.

We can still look with hope to the future that day schools promise, but we should encourage supporters to recognize that the schools are more than agents of children's education. They are indispensable elements of an integrated strategy for communal vitality and institutional well-being. They are not just building a better Jewish tomorrow, they are building a better Jewish today. ?

The New Coalition: Rethinking Family-School Collaborations

by Claire Smrekar and Lydia Bentley

Adapted from "From Control to Collaboration: Mapping School Communities Across Diverse Contexts" in *Jewish Day Schools, Jewish Communities*, A. Pomson and H. Deitcher, eds.

This article is designed to provide a roadmap for school leaders in Jewish community day schools who are contemplating new parental roles meshing with the realities of family lives, and who are interested in establishing a new set of engaged community partners in the larger quest for academic excellence and organizational effectiveness. Following a brief overview of three models of school-community relations (co-optation, management, and engagement), a fourth model—coalition—is explored in greater detail because it represents the most robust and potentially rewarding set of relationships between families and schools.

Models: Practices & Priorities

Cooptation model

The Cooptation model is derived from studies of public schools located in urban contexts characterized by high-poverty and social isolation. In these settings, schools often establish control as a goal in their association with families and community members, preempting other more collaborative two-way approaches. The relationship is defined by a provider-receiver arrangement in which a school assumes the role of provider (of educational services); families, in turn, are assigned the role of receiver. The essential outcome of the family-school relationship in this context resembles a contract. The contract may take the form of a school-wide, codified discipline policy, for example, and tends to delimit the nature of family-school relations to functions specified in a set of obligations that exist between parents and school officials.

For Jewish day schools, it may be more instructive to consider alternative models that move schools from cooptation to collaboration. Mary Henry suggests substituting the contemporary or "corporate" model in which "autonomy, separation, and distance" are valued with a more "democratic" one. The new model moves school communities to develop new priorities and processes that diminish conflict and distance between families and schools.

Management model

The extant research on school-community relations suggests the predominance of a Management model across public schools in the US. Schools in this domain emphasize certainty and structure as essential goals in their associations with families and external community members. The relationship is defined by a co-production orientation. Schools produce particular information resources and in-

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volvement opportunities for parents to embrace both at home and at school, with the expectation that parents will respond to these invitations in predictable and reliable ways. This model reflects efforts to provide specific categories of community involvement. Johns Hopkins University researcher Joyce Epstein illustrates this in her framework designed as a template for school administrators; in effect, the types of interactions and involvement identified by Epstein become the predictable categories of interactions with families and external community members that are (or should be) man-

aged by school officials. Her framework includes six distinct strands of involvement, the first five of which pertain to school-parent interactions. The last strand extends beyond the school and family relationship to collaboration with the community, which includes the obligation of schools to identify and integrate community resources and services in order to enhance school and family practices and promote student achievement. Unlike the Cooptation model, the Management model presumes two-way communication across a more robust array of differentiated tasks.

The Management model provides an instructive note for Jewish day schools by underscoring the value of school communities and the importance of “bringing community back” to the discussion surrounding families and schools. Why does community matter? For general support and fundraising? For help with homework? Why is community valuable to parents? Our studies point to the importance of building networks of trust, respect, a sense of ownership, and familiarity in the construction of school communities. The next section explores the Engagement model in which a robust school community is fully realized in the context of public choice and Catholic schools.

Engagement model

Evidence suggests that public choice schools and many private (religious) schools develop an Engagement model with parents and external community members. Relationships in this model emphasize mutual respect, shared values, and a product-oriented goal of consensus. The process of consensus-building rests on relationships built upon shared commitment and sustained cooperation—across school families and between families and school officials. Mary Driscoll observes that “the concept of school community reflects the needs that are derived from shared activities and territory but also embodies the culture of sentiments, traditions, and practices that link its members and from which they take meaning.” The need for schools to address both of these elements simultaneously—shared space and shared meaning—forces educators to take account of

the distractions triggered by work lives and family lives that render actual patterns of family engagement far short of promised (and optimal) levels in terms of magnitude and quality.

This principle of shared space and shared meaning provides the pivot point for Jewish day school educators to consider the distractions within every day

In outlying areas and smaller cities throughout the US, the typical day school’s access to outstanding educators is severely limited. Through the medium of video.

work lives and family lives that render the realized patterns of involvement and sense of community in choice schools—public as well as private—far short of promised (and optimal) levels in terms of magnitude and quality. How can Jewish day schools knit together the elements of community fractured by the constraints imposed by competing work, school, and family demands? What new social scaffolding may be bolted to the infrastructures of working families? Our next model provides a blueprint for considering new social structures that promote authentic communities.

Coalition model

Coalition models—while rare—may be found in the relationships defined as partnerships between public choice schools and their corporate sponsors. Embedded in a school culture framed by focused instructional designs and sustained by a goal of collaboration with members of their corporate community, workplace schools highlight the orientation to familial functions among public school teachers, private corporate employers, and their employees. These schools produce an outcome closely approximating authentic community.

Among the multi-case studies of family-school-work integration, the Midwestern Downtown School (all school and business names listed here are pseudonyms) provides one of the most illustrative examples of the value of locating a school close to where parents work rather than where

they live. The Downtown School reflects a partnership among a group of businesses that share a physical (downtown or business park) address and a school with whom all partners share an educational philosophy anchored to the value of authentic communities.

In the 2008-09 school year, The Midwestern Downtown School enrolled 268 kids

from ages 5-11 years-old in a non-graded, year-round instruction program directed by a faculty comprised of 15 full-time teachers. No transportation is provided for students; parents simply walk their child to school on their walk to work. Over 90% of the parents are employed and most of these work in downtown Midwestern City in occupations that range from attorney and financial analyst, to waitress and data entry clerk. The school has grown from the original 5000 square feet of office space on the second floor of 501 Hill Street, to include additional nearby office and former commercial properties.

The Downtown School embraces its urban geography. The teachers and students incorporate the city neighborhood as their school without walls. This “sense of place” pays rich dividends to teachers, parents, and community members who nurture the notion that the school’s location is much more than an address. For teachers, the freedom to be innovative in the production of knowledge is a manifest element of the Downtown School ethos. This translates into an integrated, seamless connection to the physical and cultural landscape enveloping the school. For a study of physics, employing the project method¹, teachers “borrowed” the skating rink at the Veterans’ Auditorium two blocks away. Lessons were followed by demonstrations of ice-making and melting, and of course, ice skating. Nearby, the highly regarded Midwestern City Art Museum, where a handful of parents of Downtown School children work, provides a free and readily acces-

[continued from page 47]

sible material lesson in art history, architecture, and sculpture. The City Library is the school's library—and the collection is impressive. An invitation issued by the Jefferson Hotel (an architecturally distinctive landmark listed on the Historical Registry) last October involved students in a pumpkin-judging contest. The four minute walk down Hill Street gave teachers the opportunity to pepper students with questions regarding their earlier lessons on “pumpkin math” (geometry of pumpkin cutting), appropriate standards of aesthetic quality, and other essential measurement criteria. The students' artwork is regularly displayed on the walls of the skywalk, the corridors of American Equities Group, and in the windows of the Convention Center. Each year, students from the Downtown School make the five -minute skywalk trip to the Bank of America where bank officials (some of whom are parents of Downtown students) relate the concepts of mathematics, currency, and investment strategies to the children. For teachers, these events are considered “field work” (not an isolated “trip”) and are wrapped around the curriculum in fundamental ways that are designed to capture the downtown neighborhood as canvas for students' learning and expression.

When the workplace and the neighborhood are fused, as in the Midwestern Downtown School, the “coalition” is fully formed, and the concepts of functional and value communities (and new geographical communities) merge into something new. The Coalition model explicated in the workplace school community creates new collaborative agreements between schools and employers/employees in terms of more fluid communication, more natural and organic interaction, and greater financial and cultural interdependence between schools and workplaces. To be sure, these are unusual structural and social arrangements forged between corporate/workplace sponsors and public school districts (fewer than fifty in the U.S.). These unique and distinctive partnerships render this model a bit more remote conceptually and perhaps more distant from the realities of Jewish day schools. Neverthe-

less, the intent here rests with identifying mutually adaptive strategies and concepts designed to link families, schools, and communities within the realities and practicalities of families' work lives.

The social scaffolding rooted in conceptions of authentic community helps form relationships intentionally more familial and interdependent than the social fabric interwoven in the Engagement model. These relationships among parents and between the workplace partners and school officials promote the shared expectations that form the uniformity and interconnectedness of functional communities. What are the implications of such seamless coalitions for issues of authority and control? Whose values and what priorities are privileged in these new workplace schools? Indeed, how far can the “corporate community” (or governmentally-sponsored orga-

nization and interdependence of school, family, work, and community? John Goodlad has labeled this interdependence “the new ecology of schooling.” From our vantage point, this “new” interdependence is well established and firmly rooted in a recognition that the integration of work life and family life is a cultural priority in an era of competitive labor markets, dual-career families, and the social pressure to materially succeed in both work and family (including schooling) endeavors.

In the 21st century, the family has been made visible in the social milieus of work life and school life. Moving forward, Jewish day school leaders are obligated to define the “sense of place” that characterizes their school's community and to move all members along the continuum of social integration—toward engagement and coalition designs. This challenge involves leaders rethinking school

“ In outlying areas and smaller cities throughout the US, the typical day school's access to outstanding educators is severely limited. Through the medium of video.

nization) move into the discreet sphere of Jewish day schooling without violating cultural norms and sensibilities? Is this coalition model—conceptually and practically—a smart move for Jewish day school leaders? Who benefits? Who loses?

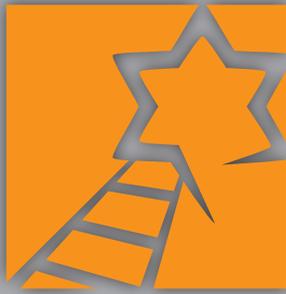
Summary

The school community models described in this paper (Cooptation, Management, Engagement, Coalition) are examined against the backdrop of contemporary social conditions and realities of family, work, and school demands. The findings provide a framework for considering how these comparative school contexts may increase school leaders' understanding of community building in Jewish schools. These school leaders must now consider which models (or hybrids) best “fit” within the cultural priorities and organizational constraints of Jewish day schools. To what degree do (or should) Jewish day schools reflect movement across the continuum toward greater social integra-

culture and organizational priorities to produce a more robust model of school community. The rewards are immense, including a committed, cohesive, and connected parental community. This is your roadmap for action, alignment, and renewal.

?

PROJECT



SULAM

Study • Leadership • Mentoring

a RAVSAK program • funded by AVI CHAI

SuLaM Cohort Three Attends Second Summer Institute

In their second summer institute, participants in SuLaM's third cohort showed how their dedication to the program has paid enormous dividends. Between the demands of serving as school administrators, they have carved out time to study Jewish sacred texts on an ongoing basis. At the same time, they devoted themselves to applying their new knowledge and understandings into school practices, whether writing *divrei Torah* for the school newsletter or displaying Hebrew in every public space in the building. The Sulamites look forward to the challenging work of Year 2, in which teams of lay and professional leaders create projects designed to exercise a profound impact on the Jewish life of their schools. *Yasher kochem!*

What I have gotten most out of SuLaM is a taste of the joy of Judaism. The level of spirituality that I have found within our studies is something that had been missing and I see now how it can be filled. My connection to Torah has been strengthened in a way that could not have happened in any other context.—Natalie Friedman, Donna Klein Jewish Academy, Boca Raton, FL

The second summer of SuLaM was tremendously valuable to continue my learning while allowing for greater depth of conversation about day school leadership with the incredible people of Cohort 3. Our

text learning was more focused, with a higher level of meaningful analysis, all of which related to ethical issues we face inside and outside of our roles as school leaders. Finally, being able to share my success stories with peers and mentors, as well as envisioning my Year Two project, created excitement for the upcoming year and the possibility for even longer lasting impact to my school community. It was a profound experience that only added to my growth through the program. —Todd Clauer, Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy, Overland Park, KS

It is interesting to read about a program and then watch it come to life as described. This is what happened this summer. The mentees grew by leaps and bounds in their knowledge and comfort with Judaic text and traditions. The atmosphere of learning and professional collegiality permeated the program. I found the 13 days to be like an island in time, enabling growth as a school administrator and, most of all, as a link in the chain of thousands of years of Jewish educators. I have no doubt that the benefits of the summer institute will be felt by the thousands of Jewish children who will be educated in a Judaically enriched atmosphere as a result of this program. —Rabbi Michael Druin, The Jewish Academy, East Northport, NY

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School and Shul— Conflict or Synergy?

by David Prashker

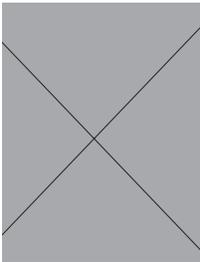
Karen Bloom (the name's made up but the story's real) gave up going to synagogue the day after her brother's bar mitzvah—she was eleven at the time. Mom and dad had done their duty by their son, a girl doesn't need a bat mitzvah, and in the retail trade in a predominantly non-Jewish neighborhood, who can afford to close the store on Shabbat or High Holy days?

End of meaningful Jewish life for Karen Bloom? Not exactly. She went to Israel with her high school—a Christian tour of the Holy Land true, but still the Holy Land. There were lots of Jewish kids and counselors at her secular summer camp, even more at university. Not that she did much that was obviously Jewish, but retained a sense of Jewish identity, and felt that it mattered, even though she didn't know how. Then she met Jonathan, similarly Jewish—which is to say similarly estranged yet similarly connected—and went to synagogue for the first time in fifteen years: to get married. Synagogue was nice, in the sense that it was a lovely ceremony, a chance to wear white and make her vows in a properly formal way; the rabbi was very supportive, and tried very hard to convince Karen and Jonathan to become members, even offered free Hebrew classes at the synagogue and an opportunity to join his weekly Torah chavurah. Learn your way back in. Find a community. Jonathan and Karen declined. They still weren't sure what they meant by Jewish, but they knew this wasn't it.

Two years later Karen took maternity leave from her law firm, and six months after Taylor was born she became a regular in the Mommy & Me class at the local Jewish day school, chosen because of its reputation for care and quality, not because it was Jewish. But three years of Early Childhood Education that just happened to include Judaica at every available point, joining the Parent Association "Apple & Honey" distribution before Rosh HaShanah, learning to make latkes so she and other moms could make them in class for Chanukah, watching her little Taylor singing Hebrew songs at Kabbalat Shabbat (at 10:30 am on a Friday it's true) and waving her Israeli flag on Yom Atzma'ut...it wasn't a difficult decision to sign Taylor up for the full K-8 program at the day school, and two years later Karen's president of the Parent Association, and six-year-old Taylor's teaching mommy and daddy aleph-bet and persuading grandpa to join the fundraising committee for the new Torah scroll, and four-year-old Daniel ("We really should have given Taylor a properly Jewish name"; "Well, her Hebrew name's Batya, and that's what her Hebrew teachers call her, so why don't we ask her if...")—four-year-old Daniel's teaching his older sister Batya how to play Hatikvah with just one finger on the electronic keyboard...

No need to tell more of this story. It's one that every Jewish head of school could tell, in a hundred variations, but all of them on the same theme: and no, not the

theme of Jewish day school being, for many people, a way back into traditional Judaism, though it's often that too. Much more significantly, it's the theme of Jewish day school becoming the center of Jewish life, replacing the syna-



David Prashker is Director of Education at Temple Sinai of North Dade, Florida, which hosts a religious school, ECE, day school and summer camp. He is President of PARDeS, the Progressive Association of Reform day schools, and serves on the Lifelong Learning Commission of the Union of Reform Judaism. He can be reached at david.prashker@tsnd.org.

agogue. Because Karen and Jonathan still aren't interested in joining a synagogue, though let's give credit to the rabbi who hasn't stopped trying, and who knows that in just a few years time bnei mitzvah will bring the Blooms in, at least for a little while, and then, maybe, he can sign Batya and Daniel up for youth group, and who knows, maybe...But we know the rabbi is over-optimistic. At least, as far as Karen and Jonathan are concerned. At least, for as long as they still have kids in Jewish day school.

What is it that makes the day school so attractive that it can fulfill their Jewish needs where synagogue can't? Partly it's the negatives of synagogue—endless repetition of the same ceremony, the same prayers, in the same order, sitting next to the same people, and very little else offered at the shul by way of meaningful Jewish life. But at day school, they love the joyful celebration of Kabbalat Shabbat in school, with kids dancing on the bimah and wearing costumes for their home-made play about Abraham and Sarah, even if you do have to elbow your way through the lines of paparazzi parents to get your dozen photographs and your quota of nachas. They love the

tzedakah presentations, complete with Power Point, every grade showing off what they've done for tikkun olam, this one raising money for blind kids in Israel, that one recycling batteries, a third visiting the Jewish elderly at the Moshe Cohen retirement home on Thursday afternoons. They love the Pesach food drive (they always volunteer to drive the kids with the grocery boxes to the food bank), and the Yom HaZikaron video conference with the 8th graders who are in Hod ha-Sharon on their graduation trip, and that extraordinary old man who's been talking to the 6th grade every year about his experiences in the Holocaust. They love the way the math teacher uses Hebrew letters rather than Roman numerals for problem-solving games, the way the art teacher manages to get Chagall and Soutine and Modigliani into the 20th century artists curriculum, the way the social studies teacher, required to teach the American system of government, does it by comparison with the modern and ancient Israeli systems. They love the fact that their kids daven every morning, recite Birkat every lunchtime, sing Hatikvah alongside the Star-Spangled Banner. They love the fact there's Judaica in everything their children do, meaningful and practical Judaica, with a sense of the entire secular universe being linked in with the Jewish universe, and vice versa, so that Batya and Daniel can grow up knowing what it means to be Jewish, fully capable

synagogue since the great day, and with your fundraising skills could we get you on the committee that's helping us replace the Aron ha-Kodesh...but Karen's sorry, she's just been appointed vice president of the school board—she would have done it sooner, but Jonathan's been serving as board treasurer and they don't allow both husband and wife at the same time. But maybe, maybe we'll come to the Rosh HaShanah oneg this year.

How typical is Karen and Jonathan's story? We simply don't have the statistics to answer that, but anecdotally—it's very typical. And if it is typical, several questions of considerable importance are inferred. How can we build stronger bridges between shul and school, so that the great strengths of each can further reinforce the other? Can and should day schools function as portals to the larger Jewish community? Should day schools guide parents toward synagogue membership? Or toward other organizations and events in the Jewish community? Should day school students also be leaders in synagogues and youth groups?

The answer is an obvious "yes" to all of these, because both shul and school have everything to gain and nothing to lose from "yes." But it also needs to work the other way around. Should synagogues be advocating for their congregants to send their children to Jewish day schools rather

tionably yes. And most importantly of all, should synagogues be finding new and better ways of delivering the traditional rites and ceremonies, so they can get the same excited response that day schools are getting, and have people lining up to get their membership the way some day schools with wait lists do?

The danger behind Karen and Jonathan's story is that it tends to set up day schools in one corner and synagogues in the other, combatants in a modern-day Penuel, in which neither side is quite sure who's Jacob and who the angel; but since the result's going to be stalemate anyway, it probably doesn't matter. But Penuel's the wrong analogy. Synagogues and day schools need to be in synergy, not in battle. There is no absolute definition of a meaningful Jewish life, but even if they don't go regularly to shul, everything else in Karen and Jonathan's story, and even more the case in Batya and Daniel's, suggests a thoroughly meaningful Jewish life. And yes, they now keep a kosher home. Yes, grandparents now join them every Friday evening for a Shabbat meal, and the children lead the brachot over the wine and candles. And Batya's going on March of the Living next summer, and Daniel to Jewish summer camp. So many centers. If we can agree that all centers are equally valid, and then join them into a glorious Venn diagram, how much more meaningful Jewish life could be for every one of us?

That last sentence, of course, appears to be grammatically incorrect—I closed with a question mark, not a period. But it is a question, because it requires action, both by schools and shuls, both of whom need to reach out to each other in ways that are positive. How do we do it? If the school and shul are on the same campus, and under the same board, it's much easier. Our temple clergy teach in our schools as well as leading tefillah, the temple's leadership development program identifies and trains candidates for the school board as well as the temple board, our school and shul committees for mitzvah days and tzedakah projects and social action overlap. Where the school merely rents space from the synagogue it's more complex, but there's

[continued on page 52]

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

of leading any service from the bimah if they choose that route, fluent in Ivrit and knowledgeable about Israel if they wish to make aliyah, immersed in culture, history, social action, values, comfortable in their Jewish bodies.

And when the rabbi calls Karen, three months after Daniel's bar mitzvah, to say how sad it is that we haven't seen you in

than non-Jewish schools, public or private? Should synagogues offer reduced membership dues for those who attend day schools? Should other organizations and event organizers in the Jewish community be reaching out to day schools for support? Should synagogues and youth groups and camps be positively marketing inside day schools, for counselors and faculty as well as customers? Yes. Unques-

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still no reason why those same structures can't be in place.

And for the stand-alone school—how many times a year do your local rabbis lead tefillah, teach class, attend your fundraising events? When did you last invite a rabbi, with no personal connection to your school, to attend a curriculum night, or simply take a tour during the school day, so he/she knows and understands and appreciates the quality of your school's work? When did the local cantor last come into a music class, or help with the singing for your school play? When did the president and senior lay leaders of your local synagogue last come round, to tour, to be your graduation speaker, to participate in a focus group or your strategic planning? When did you last take a busload of kids to visit the local shul, just for a historic tour or an excuse to use their Torah scroll for Hebrew instruction?

on Daniel's Bar Mitzvah at Temple Jerusalem next month. We would love to invite your family to join us in school tefillah on the Thursday before, so that all Daniel's friends and teachers can celebrate with you, we can give you an aliyah, and he can have a free public rehearsal into the bargain..."). There are literally hundreds of ways in which shul and school can become not a single unified center, but an overlapping Venn diagram. In the end it depends on two things: recognizing the intrinsic value of both centers, and getting out of the closed box that focuses inwards all the time and never outwards. י

Far from being peripheral to the work of leaders, the presence of heartfelt norms and values turns out to be essential to leadership, and it is deeply disturbing that discussions.

Karen and Jonathan see no reason to attend the shul; but if their kids are singing from the bimah one Friday evening or Succot morning...but if the shul's strategic planning committee reaches out to school leadership...but if the school's tzedakah projects are tied in with the shul's...but if the local rabbi is such a regular visitor to the school that parents start forming relationships...but if the synagogue religious school starts doing shabbatons with the day school, and its youth program director sees regular attendance at the day school as key to his/her recruitment drive...but if the school's weekly newsletters include information about activities in the shuls, and photographs of day school students actively involved at shul ("I didn't realize so many of your friends were doing it already..."), and school and shul are working collaboratively on bnei mitzvah ("Dear Mr. and Mrs. Bloom, mazal tov

Making a Community Board Work for a Community School

by Gale Osborne

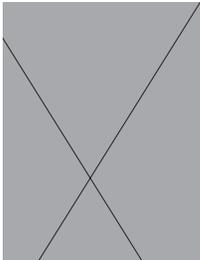
It has been twelve years since Charlotte Jewish Day School became a community school servicing children in grades K-5. This was the result of a herculean effort on the part of the community and a very successful Chabad Day School. After an exhaustive study by the Federation, which included a demographic study, the Chabad school transitioned to become a “community school.” The new school was to operate under a community board of directors, receive Federation funds and relocate to a new facility on the JCC campus. (It had previously served children from all Jewish denominations but received no community funding.) One of the first challenges was to build a “community board” to direct the school and help foster acceptance in the community.

A community board is a very broad term. Does the board belong to the community, representing the issues and interests of the other institutions, or does it belong to the school, whose constituents are also members or stakeholders of the shuls or community centers? As the newest organization in Charlotte, we were very cognizant of the other institutions. We wanted the board to reflect the community and felt there should be representation from each of the primary organizations. We believed that by having a representative from each synagogue, the Federation and the JCC, we would establish a line of open communication. We recruited individuals primarily based on their affiliations with little regard to the real focus and management of day school business. Our overwhelming concern was acceptance by the community. We wanted to be able to show that we had a community board made up of people from all areas of the community.

The first board was composed of a very committed group of parents of current day school students, and an equal number of non-parent community representatives. Most of the non-parent board members were “friends” of the day school, in the fact that they didn’t vehemently oppose our very existence. These trustees were valued for their existing affiliations and chosen accordingly. Our board “functioned” primarily driven by the parents and addressed the immediate day to day needs of the school in incredible detail. I don’t think the word “strategic” was uttered in a board meeting for the first three years.

Our discussions were challenging, to say the least. The passionate parents, and I was certainly one of them, were often stymied as we wrestled with some community issues. Some of the board meetings were venting opportunities rather than productive discussions guided by a strategic vision. Our board functioned slowly. We made decisions, but we had many trustees who simply attended the meetings and didn’t contribute. These trustees weren’t engaged in the activities of the day school, but we really didn’t ask them to be. They didn’t understand the issues, or perhaps they didn’t care to understand them, because they were only there as representatives of other organization and their primary interests lay elsewhere. We gave them little to no

guidance about their role on the board, imagining that miraculously they would become as passionate about the school as the rest of us. Consequently, they did not facilitate communication among the institutions. So the single thing we were trying to accomplish never got off the ground. We were a community board on paper, but not in functionality.



Gale Osborne has been a Charlotte Jewish Day School board member since its inception and now serves as Development Director. She can be reached at gosborne@cjdschool.org.

In hindsight, I am sure that many of the trustees were curious as to why they were given the honor of sitting on our board. In most instances their board attendance was less than 50%. When they did come, they didn’t really contribute to any discussion. Thankfully, they never created an obstacle or objection over actions that the board was deliberating; they merely voted with the majority of trustees. But think about what we missed! We really needed issues examined from a different point of view. We badly required the active participation and experience that an attorney would lend to our bylaw revisions. We ached for the leadership of a strong community visionary who could temper our passion and bring perspective to our discussions.

Our trustees who were chosen because of their affiliation created no warm and fuzzy feelings with their respective institutions. What did we expect? They really had no interest in day school education, but accepted the position because they were curious, or they “couldn’t say no” to the passionate parent who asked them to serve time at the day school. What we learned is that it is not enough to just have a “community board.” Don’t get me wrong, this

Obstacles and Opportunities for Collaboration within a Jewish Community

by Bob Greenberg

Necessity is the mother of invention,” the adage says. An equally strong case can be made that “necessity is the mother of collaboration.” But just as transformative invention depends on the cultural characteristics of an historical time period, in which individuals and society are prepared to accept change and embrace something new, collaboration requires an institutional culture that is open to the opportunities and risks of partnership.

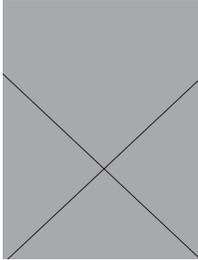
As head of school of the only Jewish day school in Birmingham, Alabama, I can't imagine a day without partnership. Within the Jewish community our day school, Federation, Family Services, and Community Center reside on the same campus and work to create mutual accountability as recipients of Federation dollars. Rabbis from all synagogues come to our school to lead Kabbalat Shabbat, teach special topics, or consult on sensitive religious subjects. It is not uncommon to hear an out-of-town guest state, “I've never seen this kind of cooperation before.”

However, this is no story of Shangri-la, with only opportunity and feasting at the community table. All families have their arguments, and all collaborations have their “stress points.” Below are a few examples of opportunities and obstacles based on the school of hard knocks.

Funding Opportunities: Shared physical space and programming adds weight to your efforts and richness to your story when fundraising collaboratively. I recently spoke to a local foundation director (non-Jewish) about a joint fundraising effort our day school and Jewish community center were conducting to renovate an assembly hall/gymnasium. The link with the JCC, and the community events held in this special multi-use facility, created a tremendous sense of value in the project. He was immediately excited. Having several institutions partnering creates a strong sense of purpose and value to potential donors.

Funding Obstacles: Fundraising especially creates immense potential for turf wars. To whom does a donor “belong”? How is the money divided up? Who controls the project? Focus on these “limiting” questions misses the more important questions: What does the donor want? Will this “rising tide” lift every ship? Who is best suited

to manage the project? The way to overcome the turf issues is to clarify details about money and management in advance, and work hard to trust the leaders in the partnering organization. The only obstacle I have seen which prevented success of collaboration was a truly unreliable partner—and that is a roadblock which cannot be surmounted. Trust and



Bob Greenberg has been Head of School at N.E. Miles Jewish Day School in Birmingham, Alabama, since 2005, as well as a social studies educator and school administrator for almost 30 years. Bob can be reached at bgreenberg@nemjds.org.

reliability are critical.

Staffing Opportunities: As a small K-8 school, we have less than 100 students. We do not need a full time guidance counselor, but our re-accreditation process several years ago called for counseling services. This is not an easy “part-time” role to fill. However, by calling the local Jewish Family Services director, we were able to contract to bring in one of their counselors twice a week to work with students and help teachers manage student issues. When seeking Judaic staff, we have also recently reached out to a local synagogue engaged in a staffing search. Through this process we are now “sharing” an experienced Judaics educator. Particularly in a challenging economy, shared staffing may become the “necessary” invention we employ.

Staffing Obstacles: Boundary setting is important when sharing staff—keeping contracts separate can help maintain au-

onomy for partnering institutions, and creating clarity around work hours helps the staff member. Communication in an ongoing relationship ensures conflicts are avoided in advance. An obstacle that I have seen impede successful shared staffing is creating two almost full-time jobs for one person. Being realistic and flexible—and not greedy—is critical to ensure the staff member succeeds in both institutions.

Program Opportunities: Our community tried something valiant. In order to create a “one-stop financial aid resource for Jewish life,” we began a collaborative project with all synagogues and service organizations—including the day school. Titled Project Abraham, its purpose was to determine financial aid from all agencies through a single mechanism run by the Jewish Family Services. It was valiant, because we set a lofty goal of bringing a bit more dignity and privacy to the financial aid process. Project Abraham “folded,” in part, because of the challenging economy. It did have a positive impact on numerous day school families, who were appreciative of the confidential and centralized aid process. However, there were numerous fairly predictable issues which we did not address early on.

Program Obstacles: First, the cultures of the synagogues and agencies differed widely regarding financial aid—some were highly generous, others highly limited. This created financial disagreement from the beginning. While the verbal buy-in was high from all, there was a natural inclination to place institutional financial needs above the broader purposes of easy access to Jewish communal services. Many of the boundaries were not determined in advance. Interestingly, this points to other general obstacles. Are too many organizations involved (in this instance, three synagogues and three service organizations)? Is the project simply too big or complex to manage given the resources of the community? These are limiting issues which deserve attention.

Intangible Benefits: One clear benefit to all collaborative efforts is a sense of feeling good about relationships. The Federation Director in Birmingham has noted

that there is “a positive esprit de corps” among agencies and staff that partner on shared goals. This reflects the Jewish value of community connection. Additionally, avenues of communication are opened and enhanced through collaboration, creating new opportunities that might have otherwise never been noticed.



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

Intangible Obstacles: As noted earlier, if the culture of an institution has created negative talk around other agencies—the “they” mentality takes over. “They” aren’t like us, “they” can’t be trusted. I have heard this time and again, and it is a mindset that will mire a school in a negative attitude and failure. While it is important to be skeptical, and place the school’s needs first, understand that partnering with others creates opportunity: opportunity for financial benefit, opportunity for spiritual connection (the “Jewish community becomes more connected”), and opportunity for an improved sense of institutional self. Collaboration can be both a necessity and a choice. Understanding the obstacles helps to avoid the wrong choice, entering into unproductive partnerships; understanding the necessity allows us to seek out and capitalize on the opportunities. ז

Building a Strong Relationship with Local Rabbis

by Allison B. Oakes

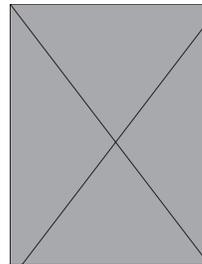
The Eleanor Kolitz Academy (EKA) is the only Jewish day school in San Antonio. As such, our mission is to serve the entire Jewish community; for the benefit of the school and the community, we cannot afford to do anything less. However, carrying out this mission is not easy, nor has the school always been wholly successful. Like many schools in small Jewish communities, our large mandate has bumped against the realities of denominational politics and school culture. Working closely with all of the local rabbis, we have developed a new strategy designed to meet the needs of the different factions in our community. Our hope is that the new regime will strike the right balance between advancing the religious pathways of our diverse student body while preserving the sense of unity, of klal Yisrael, so central to our mission.

In the past, our school's solution to conflicting expectations from different sides of the Jewish spectrum was to create a "safe" curriculum that would not offend anyone's sensibilities. Over time, due to professional leadership and rabbinic pressure, that safe curriculum shifted more and more to the right, taking on a very traditional / Orthodox appeal. This alienated much of the Reform, Conservative, and unaffiliated communities and resulted in a decrease in their representation at EKA. Without a large enough Orthodox population in the city solely to support the school, enrollment decreased.

Just over a year ago, I was appointed head of school to take the lead in working with San Antonio's rabbinic leadership to create a program that would meet the Judaic academic needs of the majority of the San Antonio Jewish community. We determined that a dual track Judaic Studies program (Orthodox and pluralistic) was our best option.

Just like day schools in other cities, the EKA is looking for methods of sharing resources. The San Antonio Jewish community cannot support two schools, Orthodox and pluralistic. Our belief is that one community school can be successful if dual Judaic Studies learning tracks exist while all of the professional and materials resources are shared within general, special, and Hebrew language studies. This is the vision I was charged with bringing to fruition, and community collaboration is the only way it could happen.

My first task was to meet with the lead rabbis from local congregation, to listen to their assessment of the school and the direction they feel it needs to go in order to meet the needs of their congregants. As relationships developed, I sought to gauge their interest in the dual track program and request a promise of support.



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I promised to apprise them of the program's development and offered plenty of opportunity to provide feedback, since I was depending on them to promote the school to their congregants. Each rabbi agreed enthusiastically. This was a tremendous step forward for the EKA because in recent years the rabbi of the largest synagogue in San Antonio publicly lost confidence in the school representing his community as the school drifted further to the right.

One rabbi expressed his enthusiasm by pushing hard for the immediate start of the program. My knowledge of the failure of similar programs in other cities provided me the tools to convince him that we needed at least one school year of committed work in building the program and promoting it so that current and prospective EKA families would be confident that both Judaic tracks were equally rigorous and that a possible rift in the school community will not occur.

In consultation with the rabbis, the Judaics director and I developed several drafts of the program over the course of the

year. Each draft was distributed to the rabbis for comments and revised with their suggestions in mind. The culmination of months of hard work was the presentation of a final draft at a meeting at the school that all lead rabbis attended. I applauded their dedication and

also directed us to build mutual respect between students and families so that the program is not divisive but offers a substantial lesson in diversity and relationships. To this end, we are implementing a version of a schoolwide Derech Eretz program borrowed from the Charlotte

built upon, and made strong.



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

partnership and we discussed the final details, such as going into the community to fundraise the substantial sum needed to pay for two new teachers and classroom materials. Each made an individual commitment to assist in the fundraising. This final vote of confidence in the program and the school is tremendous for the future of the school and Jewish education in San Antonio.

Jewish Day School that extends beyond the school walls into the homes of the students.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that forging a positive and working relationship between heads of schools and their local rabbinate is difficult. My success in San Antonio is due to the willingness of all the rabbis to work with the school and each other for the community's benefit. Through frequent communication, transparency and openness, this all too important relationship can be created,

The rabbis showed concern not only that their congregants' beliefs and values be reflected in the new curriculum. They

JCAT Takes Off in RAVSAK Middle Schools

This fall, more than 125 students in eight RAVSAK middle schools embark upon JCAT: Jewish Court of All Time. JCAT is an interactive, online program where students get to act as real-life characters from Jewish history, interacting with other characters in both public forums and personal conversations. Teachers from participating schools convened at an all-expense-paid training seminar at Ann Arbor, Michigan, in June to learn the about the program and the website. Professors from the University of Michigan walked them through the site's virtual platforms and corridors for creative student expression.

Teachers who have used a similar program discussed classroom exercises and described the transformative impact the program has on students. Graduate students showed how they engage the students in online conversation, encouraging them toward greater insight, discovery and imagination. Faculty at the University of Cincinnati introduced an action research project that will enable teachers to reflect upon this experience and harness it for other educational practices. Perhaps most importantly, the teachers relished the special attention and training, developing bonds to each other and the faculty while growing noticeably excited at the possibilities that JCAT will open up for their classes. Even as the school year drew to a close, these teachers could not wait

for the new one to begin.

To learn more about JCAT or apply for next year's cohort, contact Dr. Elliott Rabin at erabin@ravsak.org.

Learning by Giving: Jewish Teen Philanthropy

by Stefanie Zelkind

Jewish teen philanthropy takes many forms, from dropping coins in a tzedakah box to schoolwide mitzvah days, from bnei mitzvah service projects to youth group dance-a-thons, and from individual giving accounts to giving circles. Yet all have something in common—they all are built upon a traditional Jewish mandate to give and a desire by young people to help others. Most philanthropy programs focus on fundraising; this article will focus on Jewish teen foundations, a relatively new programmatic model that focuses on grantmaking, or giving away funds in an intentional and strategic manner.

Through Jewish teen foundations, young people learn about philanthropy by doing it—they experience both the challenges and thrills of giving money away to support issues close to their hearts.

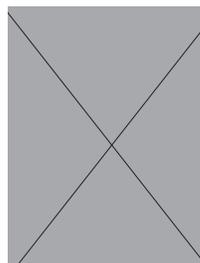
Here's a brief sketch of a fictional, but typical, teen foundation. At the start of the school year, a group of twenty 8th-10th graders comes together as a foundation board. They serve a year-long term, and as with many "adult" organizations, each board member accepts a responsibility to "give or get" a financial contribution to the board. The teens each agree to contribute \$180 of their bnei mitzvah gift money or summer job income to a shared pool, creating a total of \$3,600. An adult donor in the community partners with the program, providing a 1:1 match, which leverages the teens' funds and brings the sum to \$7,200. This money (not an insignificant amount, especially for a group of teenagers) serves as the grantmaking pool of the teen foundation.

In order to determine how and where to give away the money, the teen board members create a mission statement for their foundation, identify issue areas of shared concern, and set out to learn about nonprofit organizations that work within their declared mission focus. They write and distribute a Request for Proposals to organizations interested in applying for grants, research organizations through site visits and presentations, and work through consensus to reach group decisions about how to allocate their funds. All the while, the teens look to Jewish texts, traditions, and values to inform guiding principles, prioritization, and decision-making. They mark the end of the program with a community-wide celebration, where they present checks to the grantees they selected and reflect on their experiences working and learning together as a board.

While Jewish teen philanthropy is, on the surface, about giving money away, it is at its core about education and engagement. In a 2008 survey of Jewish teen philanthropy programs conducted by the Jewish Teen Funders Network, Jewish teen foundation organizers identified their top three goals as (1) to educate participants

about basic philanthropic principles, (2) to teach Jewish values involved in philanthropy, and (3) to examine need in the US and the world (at large, as well as "Jewish" need).

Nearly 40 Jewish teen foundations exist today, running out of day schools, synagogues, federations, community foundations, summer camps, JCCs, Boards



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of Jewish Education, and other Jewish communal agencies throughout North America. These programs join more than 300 "secular" youth grantmaking programs in the United States and several other countries. The field of teen philanthropy is still rather young: the earliest Jewish programs emerged in the mid-1990s, about a decade after the launch of "secular" programs. Yet, already several evaluations and studies, along with compelling anecdotal evidence, have demonstrated that teen philanthropy offers a unique approach towards strengthening community and leadership—not only for teen participants, but also for the adults involved and the community at large.

In "Best Practices in Youth Philanthropy," Pam Garza and Pam Stevens identify the underlying strength of youth philanthropy as its "integration of philanthropic tradition and values with the principles of youth development and community development to create new options for developing young people and enhancing community life." Jewish teen philanthro-

py, in particular, has the power to build community on multiple levels. We can illustrate this with an image of five concentric circles, starting with the individual teen as the center and moving outward.

1. Individual level (teen)

“All young people need opportunities for contribution and opportunities to make decisions with real consequences,” according to a framework prepared by the Youth Development Institute of the Fund for the City of New York (Garza and Stevens). Jewish teen philanthropy provides authentic opportunities to develop skills, knowledge, confidence, and leadership abilities in an area central to Jewish life and community. The grantmaking process of a Jewish teen foundation is not a simulation exercise played with Monopoly money or a theoretical question of “what if you had thousands of dollars to give away?” It is a real-world experience, taking place in real time, with real money, and with real implications. As she takes on the significant responsibilities required of a grantmaker, a teen starts to see herself as a leader who can make a difference in her community.

2. Group level (teen-to-teen)

A distinguishing feature of Jewish teen philanthropy programs, in contrast to many other educational initiatives, is that young people participate at a decision-making level. As a board, teens chart their own course, from creating the foundation’s mission statement to deciding where their money will go. The work of a teen foundation exemplifies the type of challenge, exploration, and risk-taking found at the core of high-quality Jewish experiential education, which enables young people to “grow towards a more complex participation in Jewish life” (Joseph Reimer and Dr. David Bryfman, “What We Know about Experiential Jewish Education”). Furthermore, the collective nature of the program creates a space for participants to experiment with different leadership roles and communication styles as they figure out how to work together towards a common goal.

3. Organizational level (teen-to-adult)

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Jewish teen foundations are not entirely youth-driven; adults are involved as advisors, facilitators, and guest speakers. Teens also interact with (adult) lay leaders, executive directors, and other senior staff of nonprofit organizations as they conduct site visits and interviews with potential grantees. Jewish teen philanthropy turns the typical power dynamic between teens and adults on its head. Here, the teens hold the decision-making and grant-making power, while adult nonprofit representatives work to “make the case” for the teens’ support of their organizations. Teens eagerly welcome the opportunity to sit in the power seat, and once empowered to do so, stretch themselves to meet all sorts of leadership demands. Teens also learn first-hand about the challenges of bureaucracy, the pressures of deadlines, and the frustrations of teamwork; they gain an appreciation for the hard work performed in nonprofits and foundations. For the adults involved, this new power paradigm changes the way they perceive and interact with young people. They come to realize that these teens—poised, thoughtful, and brimming with creative ideas—are not only tomorrow’s leaders, but leaders in the here and now.

4. Community level

While Jewish teen philanthropy’s primary constituency is the teen set, its impact extends well beyond teen participants. Families benefit as parents trade in the usual carpool talk for conversations with their teens about giving priorities and their family values. Jewish organizations benefit from the involvement of thousands of young people in Jewish communal life. At a time—after bnei mitzvah and before Hillel or birthright Israel—when so many young people are uninterested and unengaged in Jewish life, teens often beg their teen foundation advisors for permission to stay involved after the program has ended (what a wonderful problem for schools, synagogues, and other host organizations to face!). Communal leaders are thrilled to have a new cadre of smart, caring, and energetic people to call upon for leadership positions, public speaking events, fundraising meetings, and service opportunities. Nonprofit organizations,

whether or not they are awarded grants in the end, appreciate the unique opportunity to educate young people about their work. And while Jewish teen foundations are not “all about the money,” they are directing significant funds to support communal organizations. In 2009-10, Jewish teen foundations gave away over \$570,000—strengthening community through philanthropic dollars.

5. Field level

Jewish teen philanthropy bridges the domains of Jewish education, teen leadership, and philanthropy—and in so doing, Jewish teen foundations have established a new field in Jewish life. Local program leaders are eager to share their expertise and experience with others, modeling an all-too-rare degree “open source” sharing. Following the wisdom of Ralph Waldo Emerson, who wrote that “our best thoughts come from others,” Jewish teen philanthropy curricular materials, “best practices,” and how-to guides created by leaders in the field are posted in a central program bank (www.jtfn.org) for the benefit of other educators and communal leaders.

As Jewish teen philanthropy pulls from the most promising practices and strategies used in Jewish education, teen leadership, and philanthropy, it produces a whole greater than the sum of its parts. By trusting and empowering young people to set their own priorities and make their own decisions, Jewish teen philanthropy provides teens with an opportunity to explore Judaism in ways that are both relevant and meaningful. By calling upon adults to facilitate and support (but not direct) teens in challenging group work, Jewish teen philanthropy transforms the way in which adults and teens relate to one another. And by structuring programs that operate in the “real world” with real money, Jewish teen philanthropy gives young people voice in communal conversations—a benefit not only for teens, but for the Jewish community as a whole.

Perhaps the best case for Jewish teen philanthropy can be made by the teens themselves, who aren’t shy about the impact these programs have on them. As Kari, a

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16-year old teen philanthropist in Phoenix, put it, "It might sound corny, but the work I've done has really made me a different person. I feel like rather than watching from the sidelines, I'm jumping right in and helping to make a difference. Being trusted to give \$10,000 away is a great responsibility, and having done so, I feel like a trusted member of the community." י



Far from being peripheral to the work of leaders, the presence of heartfelt norms and values turns out to be essential to leadership, and it is deeply disturbing.

Youth Philanthropy Tightens Bonds Within School and Beyond

by Barbie Prince

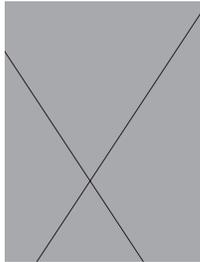
As Jews, we have a long history of taking care of others. What we don't have is a mechanism to teach our students how to be philanthropists in order to sustain the culture of giving. Students need to learn how to choose which organizations to support, how to ask others to join them in supporting organizations and how to raise money effectively. Project ROPE (Roots of Philanthropic Education) is an excellent educational vehicle through which our students can grow in philanthropic knowledge and implementation.

The 2009-2010 school year was the first that the Shoshana S. Cardin School participated with other high schools around North America in Project ROPE. The core goals of Project ROPE, as articulated in the teacher's manual, are "to teach teens the Jewish roots, values and imperatives of philanthropic giving; to give them an understanding of fundraising fundamentals including the grantmaking process; and to provide them with the hands-on learning experience of running a fundraising campaign for a cause of their choice and responsibly allocating the funds raised."

However, in my experience over the course of the year, a fourth, unwritten goal of the program also became apparent, which was to strengthen the student community, the school community and the larger Cardin community around philanthropy. In *Best Practices in Youth Philanthropy*, the Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth identifies five categories of best practice for youth philanthropy, one of which is connecting to the community. Participating in Project ROPE encouraged students to connect to the greater community, including the greater Baltimore non-Jewish philanthropic community. The Project ROPE committee volunteered at a downtown Baltimore soup kitchen and learned first-hand about the needy people served by this organization. Committee members had to articulate their mission to many different constituent groups: their peers, the faculty and the board of trustees. Students also had to approach various individuals in the larger community, from fundraising professionals to donors. Each of these connections strengthened the community around the Project ROPE goals.

To initiate Project ROPE and ensure faculty support, I explained the program to the faculty during teacher week in June 2009. Teachers were asked to nominate 10th and 11th grade students who they felt would be the most appropriate participants in Project ROPE. I also contacted Matt Freedman, chief strategy and development officer at the Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, to explain Project ROPE, enlist his support and tap his expertise. Matt gave me suggestions for Baltimore philanthropists beyond the Cardin school board to whom the students could speak. I sent invitations to the selected students for an informational luncheon, where Project

ROPE and the commitment involved was explained. Of the 19 students selected, 18 responded and came to the lunch during orientation week prior to the start of the 2009-2010 school year. After hearing about Project ROPE and learning together, 12 students chose to participate. Thus began the "hidden agenda" of community building around Project ROPE.



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It was very encouraging to see that over 60% of the students invited to participate chose to do so, inasmuch as today's teens are not known for looking beyond their own personal needs and desires. Indeed, American society (or at least Madison Avenue) promotes materialism and self-serving behaviors in many ways, bombarding teens with the message that they need each subsequent generation of iPhone and other technological devices, regardless of the condition of the ones they currently own. Rarely does even the fine print of promotional email or advertisements encourage teens to give their slightly used electronic item to someone else when they trade-up for the newest and best. As educators in Jewish day schools, we have the obligation to stress the positive aspects of the larger society in which we live, but in a way which is at the same time consistent with our own core Jewish values and beliefs. This requires us to teach our students the Jewish values of *tzedakah* and *tikkun olam*, in order to enable each student to assimilate these core values as an integral part of him- or herself.

The Project ROPE committee met weekly to develop a mission statement; learn Jewish text about tzedakah and the year's theme, disadvantaged youth; research organizations in Baltimore to which the students might want to donate the money they raised; plan fundraising activities, and learn from community professionals and lay leaders. As a cohesive group, the students developed their own understanding of disadvantaged youth and refined the goals they would look to when choosing a local organization to support. After much research and debate, they wrote and sent requests for proposals (RFPs) to three local organizations that met the strict criteria they had developed.

Online research to discover organizations in the Baltimore area that served disadvantaged youth proved to be a daunting task. Students were taken aback after putting "disadvantaged youth Baltimore" into Google yielded over 45,000 hits. While this became a teachable moment for using search engines, the committee was forced to re-group and reevaluate the specific criteria the students were interested in for their philanthropic efforts. The committee refined its criteria and began to research organizations in earnest. It was interesting to watch each student become a passionate advocate for these local organizations based just on what he or she read online. (I noted the same passion displayed by the Israel Committee students from each of the participating schools after the students studied the RFPs and heard by phone from leaders of each Israeli organization.)

Students were encouraged to call the organizations and ask specific questions about their work with disadvantaged youth. Many students were frustrated by their inability to speak directly with leaders at certain organizations and this experience brought the group together once again to discuss strategies in dealing with professionals in nonprofits. Students spent quite a bit of time on this preliminary research and then had to advocate for the organization before the entire committee. Committee members asked challenging questions, and much time was spent discussing,

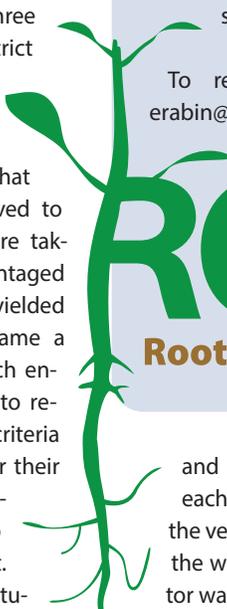


Join Project ROPE or RAVSAK's Youth Philanthropy Network

Calling all RAVSAK high schools! Sign up your students for Project ROPE, the most rigorous and exciting program in Jewish youth philanthropy. Receive a Teacher's Manual and two Curricula for FREE when you join.

NEW THIS YEAR! High schools have the option of signing up for part of Project ROPE, the Israel Committee. Students passionate about Israel have the opportunity to study and help the country in an entirely new way, as they learn about social issues and the organizations that work to alleviate them. A few students from each participating school join together to form the Israel Committee, speak with informed experts, perform social research, clarify philanthropic values, raise money, interview nonprofit leaders and make grantmaking decisions. Sign up now! First meeting in December.

To register or for more information, contact Dr. Elliott Rabin at erabin@ravsak.org.



ROPE

Roots Of Philanthropy Education

and arguing about, the value of each organization and whether it fit the very specific criteria developed by the whole committee. A decisive factor was making personal visits to each of the organizations. Ultimately, three RFPs were sent out and one was returned to the committee.

Students also developed a PowerPoint presentation so that they could explain the importance of Project ROPE to their peers and to the board of trustees. The committee spent hours practicing and preparing the presentation and it was well received by the entire student body. Students not involved in Project ROPE, as well as faculty members, asked probing questions, and the committee members were passionate and informative with their responses. The Project ROPE community was strengthened and the number of participants increased with each presentation the students made.

The Cardin student community has a strong commitment to tzedakah and tikun olam. Students have initiated social-

action minyanim and JUST Cardin, a student-led social-action committee. Project ROPE added another layer to the participating students' burgeoning commitment to these core values. Committee members needed to become informed advocates in order to ask others to support their work. They were successful in rising to the challenge of articulating to their peers why supporting Project ROPE's goals and ideals was important to the school and the community.

Nothing in the RAVSAK manual or in the training process prepared the students for the anxiety associated with contacting and speaking with individual donors. Students paid careful attention to Shoshana Cardin herself as she explained what a donor listens to and looks for when approached to make a financial commitment. Matt Freedman spent time with the committee explaining about passion and knowledge when making the "ask." Matt explained to our teens that they are already experts in asking for things; they should simply channel the emotions engendered by, and prior

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Creating an Alternative in Israel

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Discussion of ideas in an open-minded way that broadens the spectrum of thought and therefore the complexity of the matter, whether theoretical or practical. This is achieved by bringing varied opinions, people, texts, and activities that allow for the expression of diverse voices in order to present different options as legitimate to the discussion and parshanut. This educational tool is an expression of Yachad's ideology, emphasizing the legitimacy of different ways of thinking about our Jewish lives and identities.



Far from being peripheral to the work of leaders, the presence of heartfelt norms and values turns out to be essential to leadership.

3. Relevance: The principle of turning the educational experience into a prism through which the student will evaluate and experience social and ethical behavior in their day-to-day life and in building their personal, familial, and community identities.

These communal and educational processes are creating a common Jewish pluralistic language that Yachad's community as a whole strives to speak and live by. The phenomenon of mixed religious and secular communities and schools is growing in Israel. We believe that such language and education respectful of different ways and choices of living our tradition will impact broader Israeli society, engendering a more tolerant, vibrant and complex Jewish education and culture.

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Community: Family, Tribe, or Something In-between?

[continued from page 14]

schools should be no less diverse and inclusive. By using the templates which Douglas and Strike offer, we can reflect critically and, if needed, re-envision our schools to become models for the kinds of communities that we want to see in the future. י

Philanthropy Tightens Bonds Within School and Beyond

[continued from page 65]

experiences learned in, asking their parents for money! This really struck a note with the students but did not adequately prepare them for speaking to potential donors.

Luckily for our students, Baltimore has a compassionate and educated community which understands that these teens are starting out upon the road to lifelong philanthropic endeavors and need to be assisted along the way. Many of the donors used the one-on-one asks as teaching opportunities, and the students gained valuable insight into making the next ask better. The committee debriefed each encounter with donors and developed new strategies for the next ask. For example, how to reengage the donor who handed a student's father a \$100 bill and asked

him to tell his daughter how proud the donor is of the students in Project ROPE, in order to let that donor know that while his donation is appreciated, the students would like the opportunity to sit down and speak with him individually about what they are doing.

Of course not all of the experiences were positive—the time the very, very nervous student made an appointment with a donor and the donor never showed up comes immediately to mind—but there was an immeasurable growth curve for each of the students who participated in this aspect of the program. The donors who came to school to meet with the students (in my absence) were impressed with Project ROPE and had suggestions for the students and for me. In general, the donors had positive things to say;

however, there were some scathing criticisms that I then turned into learning opportunities for individual students and for the committee as a whole.

Youth philanthropy through Project ROPE allowed our students to join broader communities while strengthening each larger circle. Project ROPE enabled Cardin students to expand these connections by working together with other Project ROPE committees in communities throughout North America.

What is the ultimate goal of youth philanthropy? Ensuring that we have teens who understand how and why it is important to perpetuate a culture of philanthropy now and for the future. Project ROPE has shown itself to be an important and most worthwhile means in achieving this goal

Global Day of Jewish Learning

RAVSAK is proud to announce that it has become a supporting partner of the Global Day of Jewish Learning (www.1people1day.org). In addition to this tremendous opportunity for our students to learn with Jews all over the world, RAVSAK has made special arrangements for select high school students to learn with the great scholar, teacher, and model of Jewish erudition Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz himself.

On Sunday November 7th, Jewish communities around the world will be uniting in the study of Jewish texts. The event marks the completion of the historic Steinsaltz Talmud commentary. On that day, Rabbi Steinsaltz will symbolically write the final lines of his monumental work, bringing to a close a 45 year project that comprises 45 volumes.

To mark this once in a lifetime event, we encourage each of our middle schools and high schools to participate in the planning of events. To date, over 80 communities across North America, and many more beyond, are already engaged in Global Day activities. Leading up to the date, many people are preparing the talmudic

tractate Ta'anit. Schools may wish to study a perek (chapter) of Ta'anit, or another unit of study, in order to celebrate a siyyum (concluding ceremony) on November 7th with Jews worldwide.

RAVSAK also will be distributing lesson plans prepared by Global Day to schools interested in using them. Twenty-one lesson plans will be available, three each for seven themes: Environment, G-d, Love, Leadership, Miracles, Prayer, and Tzedakah. The lesson plans will be available starting in August. Please let us know if you are interested in receiving some or all of them.

We have an additional opportunity just for RAVSAK high schools: Rabbi Steinsaltz has generously agreed to spend time the week following November 7th to learn with our students over videoconference. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to learn with one of the greatest Jewish teachers of our generation. Sign up now to participate. For information, contact Dr. Elliott Rabin at erabin@ravsak.org.

Bookcase

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

Books

Arthur, James, and Bailey, Richard. *Schools and Community: The Communitarian Agenda in Education*.

Benitez, M., Davidson, J., Flaxman, L., Sizer, T. and Sizer, N. *Small Schools, Big Ideas: The Essential Guide to Successful School Transformation*.

Brown, Erica. *Confronting Scandal*.

Charney, Ruth. *Responsive Classroom*.

Cohen, Anthony P. *The Symbolic Construction of Community*.

Cohen, Steven, and Eisen, Arnold. *The Jew Within*.

Dessler, Eliyahu and Carmell, Aryeh. *Strive for Truth!*

Epstein, Joyce. *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action*.

Frazer, Elizabeth. *The Problems of Communitarian Politics: Unity and Conflict*.

Furman, Gail. *School as Community: From Promise to Practice*.

Gafni, I. *Center and Diaspora: The Land of Israel and the Diaspora in the Second Temple, Mishna and Talmud Periods*.

Garza, Pam, and Stevens, Pam. *Best Practices in Youth Philanthropy*.

Kegan, Robert, and Lahey, Lisa. *How We Talk Can Change the Way We Work*.

Lortie, Dan. *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study*.

Meier, D. *The Power of Their Ideas: Lessons*

for America from a Small School in Harlem.

Ibid. In *Schools We Trust: Creating Communities of Learning in an Era of Testing and Standardization*.

Palmer, P. J. *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*.

Putnam, Robert. *Bowling Alone*.

Selis, Allen. *Holding the Center: How One Jewish Day School Negotiates Differences in a Pluralistic Community*.

Senge, P. *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*.

Sergiovanni, T. J. *Building Community in Schools*.

Smrekar, Claire. *The Impact of School Choice and Community: In the Interest of Families and Schools*.

Smrekar, Claire, Guthrie, James, Owens, Debra and Sims, Pearl. *The March Toward Excellence*.

Toennies, F. *Community and Civil Society*.

Wenger, Etienne. *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity*.

Wilson, James. *On Character*.

Articles

Cohen, Steven. "The Power of Peoplehood." Available on shalomdc.org.

Driscoll, Mary. "Thinking Like a Fish: The Implications of the Image of School Community for Connections Between Parents and Schools," in P. Cookson & B. Schneider, eds., *Transforming Schools*, 209-236.

Eck, Diana L. "The Challenge of Pluralism." *Nieman Reports* 47(2).

Furman, Gail C. "Postmodernism and Community in Schools: Unraveling the Paradox," in Gail C. Furman, ed., *School as Community: From Promise to Practice*.

Harris, Ed. "Towards a Grid and Group Interpretation of School Culture." *The Journal of School Leadership* 5(6), 617-646.

Houghton, P. "Sustaining Teachers' Health and Well-being." *Phi Delta Kappan* 83(5), 706-711.

Jacobson, D. "Coherent Instructional Improvement and PLCs: Is It Possible to Do Both?" *Phi Delta Kappan* 91(6), 38-44.

Pomson, A. M. "Making the Best of the Worst of Times: Thinking of Schools as Vehicles of Meaning for Teachers." *Jewish Education News* 33(3), 59-61.

Reimer, Joseph, and Bryfman, David. "What We Know About Experiential Jewish Education." Available on JESNA.org.

Smrekar, C. E., and Mawhinney, H. B. "Integrated Services: Challenges in Linking Schools, Families, and Communities," in J. Murphy and K. Seashore Louis, eds., *Handbook of Research on Educational Administration*.

Stone, Suzanne Last. "Tolerance Versus Pluralism in Judaism." *Journal of Human Rights* 2(1).

Strike, Kenneth. "Community, Coherence and Inclusiveness," in P. Begley and O. Johansson, eds., *The Ethical Dimensions of School Leadership*.

Online Resources

Cfleads.org Community Foundations for Youth

Jtfn.org Jewish Teen Funders Network

RAVSAK

The Jewish Community Day School Network
120 West 97th Street
New York, NY 10025

NonProfit Org
US Postage
PAID
Mechanicsburg, PA
Permit 63