

Too Jewish? Not Jewish Enough?

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Mazel tov to the second cohort of Project SuLaM. We are honored by your participation and look forward to learning with you and from you over the course of the next year (as of May 2007)

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Mazel tov to the "SuLaMites" from the first cohort of Project SuLaM. Although your program has officially ended, we hope that it is just the beginning of your path to Judaic enrichment.

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Participants listed in bold with their team members listed underneath.

“ At school, where we are watching the clock and putting out fires, there is no time for deep professional and personal growth. It is so refreshing to be the student again - to learn, share, reflect, laugh and plan.”

*Larry Kligman
Abraham Joshua
Heschel Day School
Middle School Director*



A Word from the Editor

Once again, RAVSAK places in your hands an issue that will have both immediate and long-term value. Day school culture is the subject of this Shavuot issue of *HaYidion*. All of us struggle with the issues of school culture – of being “too Jewish” or “not Jewish enough.” As one head of school humorously commented at our January conference, “I have people on the left mad at me and I have people on the right mad at me. I figure I must be doing something correctly.” Levity aside, the articles in this issue deal with the theme of how

our schools “feel” to their constituent communities. Michael Steinhardt’s article is sure to provoke thought and response. The “triage” survey will prove intriguing and stimulating. The articles on creating links, using Hebrew and rethinking and repackaging our product will be of use both to heads of schools and to boards. Shavuot is a holiday that has evolved from an agricultural festival to that that celebrates study and commitment to the tenets of Judaism. Its pivotal figure, Ruth, is a convert. The many facets of this holiday are reflected

in the papers presented in *HaYidion* this quarter. We hope you will enjoy them and benefit from them not only now but in the future.



Dr. Barbara Davis

Dr. Barbara Davis is the Secretary of RAVSAK, Editor of *HaYidion* and Head of School at the Syracuse Hebrew Day School in Dewitt, NY. Barbara can be reached at shds@twcny.rr.com.

From the Desk of Susan Weintrob, RAVSAK President

Living for over two decades in Oklahoma and Indiana, I was asked many times, “Why are you so Jewish?” In those days, I was less observant, less educated and not a Jewish professional. Yet the question persisted.

Few ask why individuals are so rich, so educated or so lucky. Yet, the question about Judaism may not be a bad one to answer. When we ask ourselves why we commit ourselves to Judaism, in whatever form we do, we should include in that question what we do with our Jewishness, just as we ask ourselves what we do with our wealth, our education and our opportunities. Do we welcome and support others? Do we model moral behavior? Do we celebrate our Jewishness? Are we part of the Jewish community?

RAVSAK helps all of us answer these questions with a “yes” by supporting those of us who are professionals in Jewish education, and by reaching out to our trustees and schools. Working with RAVSAK’s Executive Board has been a time of development for both my school and me. It has been a privilege to work with members of our outgoing Executive Committee: Bathea James, president; Jack Sparks, treasurer; Lynn Raviv, past president. I look forward to collaborating with our continuing and new executive board members, as RAVSAK continues its growth from a grass roots organization to an internationally respected network of Jewish professionals and supporters: our continuing exec. members, Bathea James, Dr. Ray Levi, Dr. Barbara Davis, and our new members - Dr. Rennie Wrubel

(high school); Rory Paul (Canada); Rachel Keller (Judaic Studies) and Dr. Bob Berk, VP of Finance.

Our new executive board has expanded in important areas to support more schools in more ways. Our new high school division will help teachers and administrators network and collaborate in programs. Our Judaic Studies Executive member will work with Hebrew, Jewish texts and the diverse topics covered under this discipline. Our Canadian division will help our important Canadian schools work together and connect with the schools from the US.



Susan Weintrob

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Leon Covitz

It's All in the Packaging – Can a Jewish Community Day School Really be Too Jewish?

During the Passover break, which I was spending with my family in London, I received an email from the RAVSAK head office requesting me to create an article on how my school has created its culture and how I grapple with the issue of how to make all involved with the school comfortable in the level of culture that has been created. If I were to give answers on one foot – a request that was made of Hillel – these would be my flippant replies:

1. The culture is still evolving after 54 years.
2. It is virtually impossible to satisfy all the constituents - even some of the time.

Like many of my fellow administrators and educators, throughout North America in Jewish community day schools, I find that there is a tension not only between the denominations but also concerning the so called Jewishness of the school. After receiving the request I prepared a survey for the parent body focusing on my school's "Jewishness." Many stated that they send their children to a Jewish community day school for a Jewish education and to strengthen their Jewish identity, yet complain that we are too Jewish. Other parents believe we are providing a strong foundation in actual "yiddishkeit in a diverse environment" while complaining that we do not focus enough on community.

I have often felt that our parents are oblivious to what is going on in their children's school. Many want their children to be in a school for Jews but are unaware that a Jewish community day is more than a mere catering service that churns out the next generation of Jewish entrepreneurs, who have only a basic Jewish background. For this they could save their thousands of hard-earned dollars and send their children to synagogue afternoon schools where

they may learn a smorgasbord of Jewish topics and experience a few Jewish festive occasions. Therefore, this begs the following questions: What really is a Jewish community day school, and to what extent should Judaism permeate the different facets and disciplines of school life?

My school, proudly, claims to be a Jewish community day school. Jewish spirituality – known as ruach – is smelt, felt, seen, touched, heard and eaten throughout the school, and within each part of the curriculum. From the time one enters the building (perhaps *Beit Mikdash* – temple - may be a more appropriate name) the walls and the sounds that are heard should awaken one's senses to the reality that we are in a place where Jews not only learn together but also absorb and experience Jewish living as a community. We do not need to be on the defensive or be in the same position as Ya'acov was in Genesis 28:16 - *Achen yesh Hashem bamakom hazeh va'anochi lo yadati* – Surely the L-rd is present in this place and I did not know. We must make sure that our students are constantly aware that they are in a Jewish environment.

From the above it is probably quite apparent that I find it hard to accept that a Jewish community day school can be accused of being "too Jewish." I am of the opinion that we are only accused of being "too Jewish" when we preach, consequently forgetting that we are here to teach. When we indoctrinate and forget that our role is to educate, then being "too Jewish" is a derogatory term which places our school in a negative light. But if we are creating a learning environment, which is both compassionate and welcoming, then this "too Jewish" claim can easily be refuted because this "Jewishness" is part of who we are, which also includes a deep love for the communal setting. So, how have I tried to create such an

environment in my Jewish community day school? First of all, cultural change does not happen overnight. It takes time and patience and is ongoing. The following are a few of the cultural changes have been introduced into our daily school life over the last few years:

1. When the students and teachers enter the school in the morning, Hebrew songs are heard in the background.
2. The morning announcements are both in Hebrew and English, and there are a few short *tefillot* and of course the Pledge of Allegiance and *HaTikva*.
3. Every Friday afternoon the whole school assemble for an Oneg Shabbat – which includes hadlakat nerot, Kiddush, singing, a short d'var Torah, grade presentations and a Powerpoint presentation - which contains what has gone on at the school during that week.
4. Each student has been assigned a shevet (tribe) based on the *shivtei yisrael* (the tribes – children of – Israel), and earn *shevet* points for "being caught doing mitzvot."
5. Each middle school grade has an in-school Shabbaton with themes based on our connection and responsibility to both Israel and our local Jewish community.
6. Each grade, from Kindergarten to 8th grade, has a family educational program based around the chagim – the Jewish festivals. Not only is this for the family but it has been a wonderful social experience for many of the parents.

Yet our work is not, nor will it ever be, complete. Over the next few years we must bring our parents into our unique special setting. Not only will they learn about what their children are studying and experiencing but they, themselves, will hopefully feel that their children's Jewish education is just as important

and meaningful as their general studies. We need to be more transparent – parents need to be told about what is happening in the school. Communication must be open and consistent. If a decision affecting Judaics or Jewish life is made then it must be fully explained.

So how do we rid ourselves of being “too Jewish”? There is still much to be done at my school. But if the stakeholders see that what we are doing is for the benefit of their children and the community then there will be buy-in. By bringing parents into the school and allowing them to feel this *ruach*, whether it is at the oneg or at a family educational program, we are taking away the feeling that we are “too Jewish.” Exposure to our Jewish community day school is the key element to making our school a Jewish one, and not a school for Jews. Inviting parents into the school and allowing them to participate in a Jewish program or experience, without feeling pressured, allows us to break down these “too Jewish” barriers, which are impediments not only for the parents but also for students. Attitudes towards Jewish ritual and practice are often just the children mirroring their parents apathy towards traditional Jewish values and customs.

Finally, I firmly believe that if we are not affecting our students in a Jewish way then why pretend to be a Jewish community day school. Instead, we should be known as Greenfield Hebrew Academy - a Community Day School for Jews. Yet we are Greenfield Hebrew Academy - a Jewish Community Day School. As my dear wife correctly says to me, “it’s all in the packaging and presentation.” She is right, for we have a great package, that is over three thousand years old, to sell.

Leon Covitz is the Director of Judaics at the Greenfield Hebrew Academy in Atlanta. Leon can be reached at covitzl@ghacademy.org

From the Desk of Susan Weintrob, RAVSAK President

[Continued from page 3]

Those of us in educational leadership are called upon to sustain the vision of our schools, support our staff, and always place the students at the center of our daily goals. RAVSAK has created a community of professionals to support each other. I am inspired by each of you and look forward to sharing challenges and success with you over the next two years.

Susan Weintrob is the President of RAVSAK and the Head of School at the Hannah Senesh Community Day School in Brooklyn, NY. Susan can be reached at sweintrob@hannahsenesh.org.



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Dr. Barbara Davis

Balancing “Too Jewish” with “Not Jewish Enough”

I can never forget the day that I showed a group of prospective parents a short promotional video about our day school. In

a very brief image, the children were seen washing their hands and saying a blessing before popping a crouton and heading to lunch. One father slapped his hands down hard on the table. “That’s it!” he cried. “My children will never go to that school!”

His outburst amazed me but his message was completely clear: our school was “too Jewish” for him. Recently, I received a call from a current parent advising me that she had met the grandparents of a young child who said that the family was considering our school. “But they wanted to know if the kids have to wear yarmalkes,” she reported, “and when I said ‘yes,’ they said they really didn’t know if that ‘would fly.’” Needless to say, I didn’t place that family on the “likely to enroll” list.

What makes a community day school “too Jewish”? Many of us struggle with this issue. At the 2007 RAVSAK conference session on “Everything to Everyone,” many of the participants indicated that one of their major problems was being seen as “too Jewish.” Sydney Hart, of Northeastern Illinois University, has written that “one of the main dilemmas facing American Jews [today] is how to balance being Jewish enough without becoming too Jewish.” He notes that “Jews often struggle with the simultaneous experience of being too Jewish (and therefore not properly or fully assimilated) and not Jewish enough (because they and others often identify true Jews with Orthodox ritual practice). This struggle concurrently accepts and resists the notion of ‘Jew’ and ‘American’ as separate but related categories.”

At what tipping point does a community day school become “too Jewish” for some families? In addition to those that draw the line at the wearing of kippot, or those who object to ritual

handwashing, there are those who claim that a dual curriculum cannot possibly cover all the “material” that a public school does, others who object to “wasting” time with prayer and yet others who believe that a day school cannot prepare students to compete in the modern world of technology and globalization.

The interesting thing about all these objections is that there is absolutely no basis for them, other than personal opinion and “conventional wisdom.” Like an urban myth, the allegations about a day school being “too Jewish,” and therefore inappropriate, flourish in the absence of anecdotal evidence or research studies that verify their validity. In fact, the many research studies that have been done prove the contrary, but are ignored by those who cling to this antiquated idea.

“You cannot avoid having your children be American... you can prevent them from being Jewish: just don’t educate them.”

The dilemma faced by our schools – entities envisioned as independent schools – is made more complex by assumptions regarding private education. As noted by Dr. Marc N. Kramer (2000), “Stereotypes of private schools resonate strongly for many Americans: gold-crested blue blazers, ivy draped walls, English-accented headmasters, and towheaded ‘preppies’ sauntering across picturesque New England campuses. These images remain very much a part of the collective think of the American middle class, who despite a rather more complex reality, continue to envision private education in the exclusive realm of the Anglo-Saxon Protestant elite or religiously fervent Christian communities.”

The reasoning is historical. Day schools

were originally and traditionally the province of the Orthodox community and, as such, were rejected by Jews in America in favor of public schools, which were seen as the entry to American society. As Rabbi David Wolpe has written, “Public schools Americanize.... That was the traditional wisdom,” and it worked for the generations who grew up earlier in this century and sent their own children to public schools.

However, as Rabbi Wolpe goes on to note, “The traditional wisdom has betrayed us, and it is time to face the truth. First, you cannot avoid having your children be American. They live with movies and music and malls and sports and television. As long as they live in this country, they will be American. But you can prevent your children from being Jewish: just don’t educate them.”

The community day school movement is the answer for a new generation of Americans, those who want their children to be both American and Jewish. The research on the value of Jewish day school education is solid, of long-standing and validated. And the tide is changing. In a recent article, Rabbi David Elenson, author of *After Emancipation*, wrote “Day schools are at the heart of where Jewish renewal and renaissance can be.” Just as the children of Israel had to wander in the desert for forty years to develop new ways of thinking, so too do American Jewish parents have to divest themselves of the idea of “too Jewish” in order forge a new identity as both Americans and Jews.

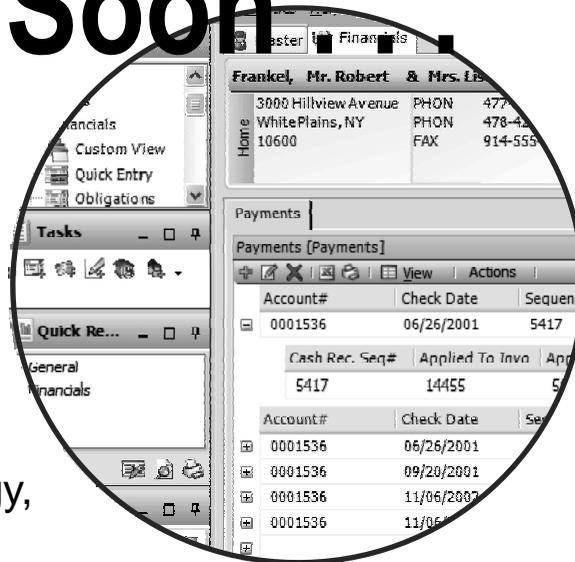
And, by the way, that father from the beginning of this article? His three children attended and graduated from our school and are very successful today.

Dr. Barbara Davis is the Secretary of RAVSAK, Editor of HaYidion and Head of School at the Syracuse Hebrew Day School in Dewitt, NY. Barbara can be reached at shds@twcny.rr.com.

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Dr. Marc N. Kramer

What if Our Schools Are Too Jewish?

In a certain sense, formulating this issue of *HaYidion* around the question of a school's Jewishness is something of a red herring: Very few readers of this journal would claim to be in the business of reducing the religious and cultural tenor of a school, and to be sure, no one at RAVSAK wants to see Jewish commitments decline. Those of us committed in word, deed and purse to Jewish community day school education are in it for the Jewish bit – there are secular institutions of academic excellence for our children in both the private and public sectors, there are countless schools that dream of employing educators like us, and frankly, most non-profit organizations would give their eye teeth for lay leaders like ours. In our small corner of the universe, “too Jewish” reads as an oxymoron. The analogies are easy and there to be had by all: Too Jewish is like too pretty (*di kale is schoin shein*), too rich, too smart, and too good. All we want is for our schools to be a success.

Yet.

Yet, “success” is measured by increased enrollment. The vast majority of families who seriously consider a Jewish community day school will need to traverse the rocky waters of school choice, an experience framed by one's own school experience (likely public school), what one's peers are doing with their children (likely *not* a Jewish school), what the grandparents think and are willing to pay for (a crap-shoot, to be sure), and how much the values of the school resonate with life at home (and given the conflation of “values” and “behaviors,” this seems limited and limiting). Parents almost always choose schools that look and feel like what they know. *Kippot, kashrut, Chumash, Mishnah, midot* (or worse, *midos*) – behaviors and subject areas they do not necessarily understand, have the capacity to support, engage in at home, take away from math and reading, or have anything to do with applying to

the Ivy League. Days off from school when the workplace is open. Rules about lunch that seem crafted for the rabbi's kids alone. So much attention to a language spoken in only one country on earth? Would it kill you to cut just one period a week of Hebrew bible so my daughter could have a dance elective? If we want to increase enrollment and measure success by it, then perhaps our schools are too Jewish.

Plus, “success” is understood by the bottom line. Two teaching faculties are at least twice the cost of one, and the funds expended in search of Judaic teachers are extraordinary. Multiple sections of English lit might make some sense, but three levels of Hebrew? Please. How many charities do not support religious institutions? When is the last time your football team had a major corporate sponsor? How much of the actual cost of education is the result of the dual curriculum and increasingly costly Judaic staff and leadership? I'm sure that I could sell more tables at the annual gala if it was on a Friday night and served shrimp cocktail and *good wine just like everyone else*. The local prep school just

“Would it kill you to cut just one period a week of Hebrew bible so my daughter could have a dance elective?”

opened a state-of-the-art science lab, but you want to spend even more on something called “*Neta?*” If we want to improve the bottom line and measure success by it, then perhaps our schools are too Jewish.

Yet, the real commodity of the school is where the students go next. Families, rightfully so, see day school tuition as an investment in the futures of their children. What can you do to *guarantee* my son a place at Fancypants Country Day? How many of your 3rd graders are early acceptance at Yale? If you can prove that Gemara will enhance my daughter's chance at MIT, then fine,

otherwise, she'll need AP bio, chem., and physics. Parents will pay extra for SAT prep, a geometry tutor, a college application coach, and Suzuki violin, but a Hebrew tutor... *I send my kid to a Jewish day school! What do you mean he needs help in Hebrew?* Board meetings come to fist-to-cuffs over which grade will get a robotics elective or an in-class pottery wheel – these look great on a child's resume; Rashi might open a child's eyes to a world of wonder, but until it is a pre-requisite at Choate, it may not get much support. If where a student goes after day school is our real commodity, then our schools are too Jewish.

Also, teaching the particularities of Judaism in the global village is counter-cultural and potentially counter-productive. In a day where common ground is the real *terra sancta*, teaching a unique love for Israel simply does not make sense. More so, the Berlin Wall has come down, inter-Irish strife is a thing of the past, the Balkan states at peace, so why focus on the never-ended cycle of sorrow in the Middle East? Our children need to develop the skills and dispositions to be citizens of the world, and certainly this trumps any anachronistic notion of *mentchlichkeit*. “Spanish is the new English” and untold fortunes are to be made in China and India, so what does speaking Hebrew and uncovering the treasures of Torah have to do with my child's chance at being well connected and successful? The fostering of a positive Jewish identity is simply in conflict with the meta-trends of society. If we want our children to forgo Jewish peculiarities in the name of globalization, then our schools are too Jewish.

And really, the Jewishness of the school is designed to make a small but vocal minority happy at the expense of the rest of the families. By most accounts, the majority of the families we serve (and think of all the families we *could* serve), do not care deeply about the Judaic side of the school's equation, but instead, begrudgingly accept the “religious” stuff in the name of tolerance, community spirit, or more

pragmatically, for the sake of keeping seats filled. Most of our students keep kosher only at school. Most students never discuss G-d outside of the classroom. Many students only engage in formal prayer in school. Only a small fraction of our student body lives in homes of rich Jewish commitments. Why in the world should we be exposing/imposing on the majority of our constituents this way? Couldn't the *frum* kids just have their own class? If policies of maximal inclusion are unpalatable, then our schools are too Jewish.

And most importantly, who really believes that the future of the Jewish People is dependent on one of our schools? Our teachers have an enormous task in trying to impart general knowledge in a rapidly changing world. Life is scarier and faster moving than ever before; our schools must be dedicated to giving our children everything they need to not only survive, but thrive. Is it fair to lay the burdens of Jewish continuity, religious purposefulness, a love of Israel, and more on our teachers and, to be sure, on our kids? There are only 1.5 million of them in North America, for Heaven's Sake! Unless you think that your school has something to do with a vibrant Jewish future, then our schools are too Jewish.

Too pretty, too smart, too rich, too Jewish.

Dr. Marc N. Kramer is the Executive Director of RAVSAK. He is the recipient of the 2006 Covenant Award. Marc can be reached at mkramer@ravsak.org.

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Naomi Stillman

The Language of the Hebrewman

Outside my window, it is raining cats and dogs. If you are a native English speaker, you know exactly what I mean. The rest of you may envision puppies and kittens falling from the heavens, or wonder how domestic pets got involved in a description of the weather, or even be asking yourselves just what it is I am trying to say.

This is an example of how it feels to know a language – to “just get” expressions, nuances, meaning. To know a language is to belong to the community of those who know it and to have access to the community’s culture, its values, and its humor. Secret languages are universally used by children to exclude outsiders (often adults) and to create a cozy “in” group. That is why knowing a language is a way to be at home – to share understanding. Knowing Hebrew is a way to be at home in Jewish culture.

“The limits of my language mean the limits of my world” wrote Ludwig Wittgenstein in 1922. Conversely, when you push past the limits of your language, you expand the horizons of your world. If you know Hebrew, you can say and understand the word “*davka*” – a concept impossible to express in a single English word. You can relish new Israeli words like *tidluk* (filling your gas tank) or *taklitor* (CD) because you know Hebrew grammar and vocabulary. You can smile delightedly when you encounter “*ein ladavar sof*” in the Mishna, because you learned the expression just the other day and people are still using it!

I am not claiming that you must know Hebrew to be Jewishly engaged nor is the opposite necessarily true, that Hebrew knowledge *de facto* ensures Jewish engagement. But I am asserting that when you do know Hebrew your opportunities for deep Jewish engagement grow – via the vibrant intellectual community of Jewish thinkers, both modern and ancient, text-based

or text-message-based; via reading an Israeli newspaper, or, more importantly, writing a letter to the editor in Hebrew. Students who know Hebrew are able to become active participants in and contributors to the growth of Jewish culture.

How can we bring Hebrew into our schools? In contrast to the precipitating pets above, the key to Hebrew in the school is that it be meaningful, authentic, and necessary. People learn and internalize knowledge they need – knowledge that makes a difference in their lives. It is not enough for students to memorize lists of Hebrew vocabulary words, or to know how to order a meal or ask directions to the central bus station. A small phrase book will suffice for that. Students must find that they need Hebrew to say things they can’t express fully in English, or to get through a day of school or even to get a good grade in an important subject. We all know that when something is matters, you learn it. That’s why immigrants famously know many languages – the languages they needed to survive.

To foster meaningful communication, the students must be involved in meaningful Hebrew communication daily. We must make plain by our daily school routines and standards that we value Hebrew or students will know we are asking them to “do as we say, not as we do.” We cannot simply tell students that “Hebrew is important and useful”; educational integrity demands that we demonstrate its importance and usefulness daily. Important school announcements should be made in Hebrew, Hebrew songs and plays should be part of the school culture, Jewish Studies teachers should be teaching in Hebrew, and all conversation in Jewish Studies and Hebrew classes should be in Hebrew. A school-wide commitment to Hebrew brings unparalleled Judaic richness to the school without entering the “too Jewish/not Jewish enough” fray.

The classic concern about this approach is that the students will not understand. More pointedly – and poign-

antly- educators say “When we get to the important part we switch to English so the kids won’t miss the important content.” This viewpoint creates a cycle of Hebrew ignorance; - students don’t know Hebrew, so important things are not discussed in Hebrew; important things are not discussed in Hebrew, so the students don’t learn Hebrew.

Breaking this cycle is very difficult, but it CAN be done. We must talk about important things in Hebrew – or the kids will understand that there is no real reason to learn Hebrew! Naturally, it would be best to start off with Hebrew in the preschool and early elementary years - but it is not too late even in high school. There must be a plan for introducing active Hebrew in the school; the level of Hebrew (i.e. vocabulary, syntax, length and complexity of sentences) should be appropriate and manageable to the majority of the students. Profound ideas can be discussed in easy Hebrew – but the teacher must be attentive to the level of Hebrew being used. If Hebrew is used, matter-of-factly, in the public discourse of the school (announcements, graduation speeches) as well as in classrooms, hallways, and offices, then the school and its students have become part of Hebrew and Jewish culture and community. A Hebrew-speaking school is a school with a Jewish consciousness.

“Language shapes the way we think, and determines what we can think about.” (American linguist Benjamin Lee Whorf, 1897-1941)

Hebrew, in particular, allows us to think Jewish thoughts in authentic ways, to encounter age-old Jewish dilemmas, to capture Jewish cultural ideas in communal shorthand, to explore Jewish ideas independently. What better entrée to Jewish culture can we offer our students?

Naomi Stillman is the Associate Director of NETA in Newton Centre, MA. Naomi can be reached at nstillman@hebrewcollege.edu



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Michael H. Steinhardt

My Vision of a Secular Jewish Day School

Editor's Note: Renowned philanthropist Michael Steinhardt has recently challenged the Jewish community to consider

building secular Jewish day schools. For many, "secular" and "Jewish" are at inextricable odds, while others wonder what aspects of this concept might well inform the work of community day schools. We invited Mr. Steinhardt to share his vision with HaYidion's readers and are honored that he accepted.

For all the much-touted accomplishments of the Day School movement in the past two decades, the fact remains that they currently appeal to about ten percent of non-Orthodox Jews. Why have we not succeeded in convincing the larger Jewish community of the benefits of day schools?

The obvious answer is the community's ever-widening rates of assimilation. If parents do not see Judaism as a living and breathing source of daily sustenance, it is no surprise that they refuse to invest in rigorous Jewish education for their children. After all, day schools today are essentially religious institutions in an age when religion is in decline.

Some say the problem is the high costs of day school tuition. Although affordability is certainly a factor, recent data suggests that high tuition may not be as strong a disincentive for the non-Orthodox as some might think. After all, many Jewish parents send their children to private schools - even to schools with a Catholic background.

Unfortunately, our day schools have generally not succeeded in offering the kinds of superlative-quality offerings, both in terms of educational excellence and top-notch facilities, as non-Jewish private schools. If the main goal among today's parents is not religious instruc-

tion for their children, but acceptance into the finest colleges, it is no wonder they choose the best schools in the non-Jewish realm.

But the main reason is the issue of values. The inert, Bible-based Jewish concepts taught in Orthodox and Conservative schools do not resonate among most American Jews. If we want to expand enrollment beyond a paltry ten percent, we need to create a school that speaks to the values of contemporary Jews. From this perspective, the question of whether current schools are "too Jewish" or "not Jewish enough" is off target. In an overwhelmingly secular age we must refashion our education system to reflect what is meaningful today. For all the time that is spent studying the words of Rashi, how much time do day schools invest in secular role models from Emma Lazarus to Hank Greenberg to David ben Gurion? My feeling is far too little.

"If we want to expand enrollment beyond a paltry ten percent, we need to create a school that speaks to the values of contemporary Jews."

This is particularly relevant given the overwhelming Jewish embrace of democratic values in America. Many Jewish parents who do not send their children to day schools perceive the idea of day schools as a violation of the universal values they cherish. They want to believe they are not segregating their children from life in the open society, and they often perceive day schools as parochial and as a step backwards in their families' integration into America.

Ultimately, we must transform what is taught in our day schools. I have long dreamed of creating a secular Jewish day school that will impart the finest and most compelling Jewish values. It will teach Hebrew, the historic and contemporary language of our people. It will teach Jewish history, including the Bible and its attendant religious texts, but it will also teach the extraordinary secular blossoming in every field Jews have entered in the past 300 years. It will teach the amazing contributions Jews have made to our contemporary secular reality - from Baruch Spinoza's philosophy to Albert Einstein's science to Milton Friedman's economics - and it will explore the Jewish undercurrents of their work.

A secular Jewish day school will not remove the existence of God, or indeed deny the importance of God in the formation of Jewish tradition. But it will emphasize tangible Jewish values that have guided our people for centuries: for instance, the primacy of education in Jewish history not only to impart knowledge but as a means of individual and collective liberation; or tzedakah, in all its forms, as an expression of our responsibility for our fellows; or the priority Judaism places not on living for the sake of eternity, but on our embodied, mortal lives in the here and now; or our history as idol-smashers and outsiders providing independent critiques of contemporary society and conventional wisdom.

A secular Jewish day school that is proud but not doctrinaire about our history, culture and religion has the potential to dramatically increase the enrollment of Jews in day school. That is a goal I think we can all get behind.

Michael H. Steinhardt is the Chairman of the Jewish Life Network/Steinhardt Foundation, based in New York, NY.

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Nancy Bossov

Liberal Jews Want Jewishness, Too

When a Jewish family who identifies as "Reform" chooses to send their child to a day school, what are they hoping for, expecting, and needing from the school? What is their role in their home synagogue? How is the con-

tent of the curriculum coordinated between day school, synagogue, home, youth group, and summer camp? Are there potentially contradictory messages being sent? Where are the consistencies and inconsistencies? I think it is important for our formal and informal educational arms to focus on both questions and answers for all students, especially day school students.

During my visits to Jewish early childhood schools, day schools, congregational schools and professional conferences and meetings, I have observed

many wonderful educational processes. I also witnessed one unsettling discussion teetering on fear, about being "too Jewish." I'm not quite sure what that means, but I am sure that if you ask ten people you will hear ten different definitions. I have also cringed when people defined Reform settings as the ones that "do less" in the Jewish observance arena. It is disturbing to me to be among those defined by what "we don't do" rather than by "what we do." It is, moreover, ironic, because much of what Reform Judaism's identity rests upon is action and social justice.

From my perspective, it doesn't matter if you replace the word Reform with Reconstructionist, Humanistic, or Conservative. There are many ways of living Jewishly, of practicing Judaism, of developing a relationship with G-d, of interpreting Torah, of prioritizing according to Jewish values, of making choices according to our traditions,

and understanding our rich past in order to plot out the future.

In the past few years, leaders in the Jewish Early Childhood Education community have been working to identify and bridge gaps when our families transition from their years in early childhood and move into elementary education. Serious dialogue has begun to focus on creative programming to engage families before exit and entrance points in their Jewish community involvement. Often the relationships developed in the early years are personal and very close and the trust developed between child and teacher, director and family can have enormous influence on the next steps in a family's Jewish life.

Early Childhood Education Directors offer guidance about choosing schools for kindergarten and elementary education. Imagine the increase in these offerings if they had a full breadth of

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הסוכנות היהודית לארץ ישראל
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understanding and a personal/professional relationship with the local day schools as well. Also, a day school may better understand the needs of the incoming family by having interaction with the leaders of the local early childhood education professional staffs. What are these families looking for Jewishly? How can a partnership be established with the synagogue so that all their communal and spiritual needs can be met? How can the two institutions provide a balanced set of choices for the families? "We could get far more learning, engagement and enthusiasm if we thought more about coordination. Jewish institutions are disconnected from one another, and would operate better if they were linked," wrote Jack Wertheimer in "Linking the Silos: How to Accelerate the Momentum in Jewish Education Today."

Certainly the intensity of the Jewish experience and exposure offered in a Jewish early childhood setting varies greatly from school to school. We know from recent research that the Jewish aspect of a school is not the reason why

parents choose an early childhood program for their children but it does become an important part of the family's home and synagogue life and influences their religious practices. Ruth Pinkenson Feldman's study of Philadelphia Jewish parents showed that when parents enter their preschool children into Jewish-content child-care programs, the Jewish observance level of the entire household becomes more extensive.

It does seem that one needs a really good recipe to make a school appealing to families. The ingredients must be carefully measured and the ratio between them balanced in order for the product to be savored by the consumer. The challenge however, is that each and every consumer has different tastes different dietary restrictions and different vitamin needs. It almost seems an impossible task.

There is, however, a common denominator: relationships and community. Throughout the Torah, we see separation from the community as the consequence for mistakes or punishment for

wrongdoing. When children in a classroom disregard another's space or are disrespectful of their safety or dignity, they must be separated from the group until they are able to function as a productive member of the community. The corollary is that being a welcomed member of a community where your presence makes a difference and is valued is the greatest gift we can provide to our families.

Each congregation, early childhood school, religious school and day school has the potential to meet people's social needs by creating an extended family. They can reach out to one another, and link arm in arm for a larger and stronger community. And Wertheimer wrote, "It doesn't help a community grow if these schools all act independently. It's important for all schools to support one another."

Nancy Bossov, R.J.E. is the Director of Early Childhood Education at the Union of Reform Judaism in New York. Nancy can be reached at nbossov@urj.org

Introducing RAVSAK's 2006-2008 Executive Committee

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Rabbi Jay Moses

The Hidden Reflection: Board Leadership and the Shaping of School Culture

I spent five years as an associate rabbi in a large congregation. Somewhere around my third year, the executive committee of the congregation decided that too many board members were disconnected from the congregation's lifeblood despite being charged with fiduciary responsibility for it. They sent a letter to the board announcing that board members would henceforth be expected to demonstrate their leadership by, minimally, showing up to services on a regular basis.

One gentleman who had been on the board for decades and who was strictly a High Holy Day Jew, sent back a letter which was short and sweet. It read: "Is this sufficient commitment for you?" Enclosed was a check for \$50,000 (which was this individual's annual pledge to the synagogue). The letter and check were received by the synagogue's leadership with a smirk, a shrug, and quiet acceptance.

Of course, very few Jewish schools or other non-profits would be prepared to jeopardize the support of angels who make our work possible through their generosity. And yet, a question remains: what does it say about an institution when seats on its board of directors are reserved for people who do nothing more than write a check? What are the messages conveyed by how our boards function and what is expected of them?

The fact is that in the setting of Jewish institutions, the way a board operates is a reflection of an organization's culture and in turn influences that culture—whether we are aware of it or not. So we might as well be very aware of it.

All Jewish institutions—and Jewish day schools are certainly no exception—have important financial, legal, policy,

and other "business" which must of course be the board's purview. And yet, if these important technical details come to be the sole focus of the board, then a disconnect inevitably arises between the board and the institution it is governing.

Nowhere does this potential tension stand out in starker relief than in the context of a Jewish day school. Because the central mission of schools concerns the education of children, adult board members may be particularly susceptible to acting as if their work on the board is somehow separate from the culture of the school itself.

Day school boards might consider asking themselves some of the following questions. In each case, start by assuming that the culture of the board and the culture of the school are mutually reinforcing phenomena that have subtle but real impacts upon one another.

"A board that studies Torah together will make wiser, more compassionate, more thoughtful policy decisions."

What are the school's core Jewish values? If your school has a mission statement or a code of ethics or behavior for students, does the board hold itself and its behavior to the standard articulated by them? A board which fosters or tolerates interactions that would not be acceptable in the classroom or the faculty lounge will be far more likely to make decisions that in turn lead the school itself astray from its values.

Does the board study together? Leadership is about integrity—and for the leadership of an institution devoted

to Jewish learning, integrity means engaging in regular Jewish learning together. A board that studies Torah together will make wiser, more compassionate, more thoughtful policy decisions. This means more than a three-minute d'var Torah at the beginning of meetings. Boards of Jewish schools should be learning in an ongoing way, both Jewish study and the study of leadership trends and techniques.

Does the board feel like a community? One of the great strengths of Jewish day schools is their success in creating a sense of community that many liken to an extended family. This can be reinforced or contradicted by the board's culture. Does the board have fun together? Do board members care for each other in the way that we hope students and their families do? Are Jewish holiday and life cycle celebrations part of the discourse and relationship among school leaders?

What does the board "training" consist of? How are board members' responsibilities communicated to them? How are new board members welcomed? Are board members "mentored" or thrown into "trial by fire"? How does this training connect back to the school's mission and core values?

What is the atmosphere of board meetings and functions like? Is it Competitive? Supportive? Tense? Collaborative? Reflecting high standards? Boring? Spiritual? Whatever it "feels" like to serve on the board, that feeling tone will be subtly reflected in both the board's policy decisions and in the way students, staff, and faculty relate to those decisions.

Would students in the school be proud at how the board conducts itself? This might be the ultimate test. Boards might consider how they would lead

[Continued on next page]

School Culture Audit: A Tool for School Improvements

We all know it when we see it: a school with a powerful culture. People just seem “to belong,” to know what is expected and to do it. There is consistency in the values expressed by the words and actions of all the people involved—from the children to the teachers, board, parents and administrators. Some school cultures support productive teaching and learning and clearly convey their Jewish and educational philosophies; others do not do this, at least not consistently.

When we are part of a culture we take it for granted; it is “just the way we do things here.” How often, when in a familiar place, do we question the obvious? It is when we are in an unfamiliar, foreign environment that we become aware of the seemingly commonplace: how formal people are, their habits and customs. Culture is transmitted to new people and shapes everything that goes on. This is true in schools, as well. Unless there is a dedicated effort to stop and think about the culture and what it is conveying, it perpetuates itself; its core beliefs continue to be expressed though in ever evolving ways. To use an example: consider the individualism that is deep within American society in our understanding of identity (the individual is the unit whereas there are societies where the group is the basic unity), how we organize our space (members of families expect to have separate bedrooms), who our heroes are. Think about the triumphant individual, whether he is John Wayne coming into town to restore order, the batter who breaks an important record, or the scientist who receives a major award for an important discovery; in all

these cases we can imagine an alternative situation where it is the group that might have been the unit to share space, handle civic problems or be rewarded for the work that was carried out by many people in a particular lab. For a wide range of reasons, based on political theory, patterns of settlement, historical circumstances and much more, the “I” usually trumps the “we” in this society. But until we stop to think about this, we take it for granted and organize ourselves placing heavy emphasis on the individual.

The same dynamic operates in schools. Basic assumptions about the nature of learning, Judaism, children, teaching and much else form the core of the culture and are repeatedly expressed in what the school does. Unless the school stops to assess its culture, these patterns are replicated in many different ways. Schools need to periodically assess their cultures to be sure they are moving in the directions they want. They need to grapple with the questions: what values and beliefs are being expressed, directly and indirectly? Are they the ones we want to be expressing or are there changes that we can make in our culture that will improve the quality of the education we offer and the community we forge? And if there are modifications that the school wants to make, how can it go about achieving them?

PEJE has developed a protocol to help schools answer these questions. It is a straight-forward approach to investigating the school’s culture. Members of the school community become, in a sense, anthropologists. Through observation

and analysis, they come to recognize the values the school is expressing and how its culture both fosters and constrains its decisions and actions. This awareness is the starting point for the school to become more intentional about its culture and to use it to support improvement.

Schools would do well to think about their culture at specific times: in its early years as its patterns are being formed, during transitions when the culture may be more malleable, or when, despite many attempts, it can’t seem to solve a basic problem. It is best used when there is stability and a commitment to improvement.

The PEJE protocol, now in its preliminary form, can be done in 2 or 3 sessions with a facilitator and a group consisting of a cross section of the school’s stakeholders. PEJE will be piloting the protocol during the 2007 -08 school year in a limited number of schools. For more information about using the protocol, be in touch with Susan Shevitz (shevitz@brandeis.edu) or Bonnie Hausman at PEJE (bonnie@PEJE.org).

The conceptual framework for this approach to school culture is derived from the work of Edgar Schein, Seymour Sarason and Terrence Deal.



Dr. Susan Shevitz

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[Continued from previous page]

differently if there were a child from the school present. If that’s hard to imagine, then consider actually inviting a student or a group of students to at least part of a board meeting. It will be a strong statement and an important

reminder of the interconnectedness of a school and its lay leadership.

The relationship of a board to the school it governs is an integral, reflective one. The reflection is sometimes hidden. But we must shed light on it, for only then can the light be reflected

in the glow of Torah in our children’s eyes.

Rabbi Jay Moses is the Director of the Wexner Heritage Program in New York, NY. Rabbi Moses can be reached at jmoses@wexner.net.



Christopher R. Wagner

Assessing and Improving Your School's Culture

A central office administrator recently told me that one of his schools was becoming more like Iraq everyday. Relationships were ragged, achievement was on the decline, there were a number of tribes within the school who hated each other, and the leader was in hiding! He had correctly determined that the problems were not caused by a lack of curriculum development, poor teaching modalities, or "bad" teachers, students and parents. The problem was that the culture of the school was in disrepair.

Assessing and improving a school's culture is fast becoming a significant strategy in the arsenal of school improvement efforts. For school leaders who have assessed their school's culture, there is often the realization that it should have been the first improvement strategy to be implemented. How can we quickly and accurately assess a school's culture, and then, how can the culture be improved is the major thrust of this article. First, some background on culture research.

What is the connection between culture and schools?

The origin of the study of cultures in a formalized manner began in the academic discipline of social anthropology. Understanding the rituals, traditions, stories, and shared beliefs of past and contemporary societies serves as the foundation for all cultural research. Historic research on cultural topics, e.g. religion, art, language, law, leadership, business, industry, etc. have continued to emphasize the connections between culture and organizational development. While the study of culture in educational organizations is a much more recent development, those educators who have embraced the concept have been conditioned to perceive school through a much different set of lenses.

What is measured when assessing a school's culture?

Studies by the National School Improvement Project, the Center for Improving School Culture, and over 30 independent research projects on school culture have narrowed the many facets of organizational culture – in this case, school culture – into three significant behaviors. They are:

Professional Collaboration:

Teachers and other staff meet together regularly to solve instructional, organizational, and/or curricular issues; Collegial Relationships: Evidence of people working together, supporting one another, feeling valued and included, a sense of family and belonging;

Efficacy/Self-Determination:

People are in this school because they want to be. They work to improve their skills as professionals. They do not see themselves as victims of a large uncaring bureaucracy.

What is learned by measuring these "culture behaviors?"

Where these behaviors exist in a school to a great degree as measured by the School Culture Triage Survey (SCTS), the culture of the school is usually healthy. Where these behaviors do not exist to a great degree as measured by the SCTS, the culture is usually toxic. The research is clear and has revealed stunning correlations between the health of a school's culture and student achievement, staff job satisfaction, and parent engagement. We have found this to be true in every study to date, including the participation of over 5100 elementary, middle, and high schools across the U.S. and Canada. Perhaps the most important finding in our study of school culture is that it is dynamic and can be changed.

What is the best way to administer the survey?

We encourage you to use the SCTS in your school but, PLEASE, don't just "give" the survey without using the following tips for its administration:

1. At a faculty meeting, simply administer the School Culture Triage Survey Without The Scoring Sheet. We just ask teachers to complete the survey without any explanation. Have someone other than the school secretary or administrator collect the surveys. To ensure the best results, there must be an iron-clad guarantee of anonymity (no names).
2. Gather a small group of teachers to tabulate the results making an item-by-item analysis. I use an EXCEL program to make charts and graphs. Teachers, especially left-brain, linear thinkers, LOVE to look at and analyze the results.
3. At the next faculty meeting, show the faculty the results of the survey. Be sure they all have copies of the survey items to use as a reference.
4. Call attention to and celebrate high scoring items. Divide into groups for the purpose of establishing school culture goals for the next few months based on identified areas that need improvement. Come to group consensus on two or three (maximum) of the items suggested for improvement.
5. Develop an action plan to improve the areas identified. Include a timeline, people responsible and a vision (the best it can be) for each area.
6. If you plan on administering the survey in the fall, let everyone know that you will be conducting the survey again about mid-year and again toward the end of the academic year.

[Continued on page 21]

SCHOOL CULTURE TRIAGE SURVEY

Directions: Please circle a number to the right of each statement that most closely characterizes the practice in your school.

Rating: 1 = Never 2 = Rarely 3 = Sometimes 4 = Often 5 = Always or Almost Always

Professional Collaboration

1. Teachers and staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues. 1 2 3 4 5
2. Teachers and staff work together to develop the school schedule. 1 2 3 4 5
3. Teachers and staff are involved in the decision-making process with regard to materials and resources. 1 2 3 4 5
4. The student behavior code is a result of collaboration and consensus among staff. 1 2 3 4 5
5. The planning and organizational time allotted to teachers and staff is used to plan as collective units/teams rather than as separate individuals. 1 2 3 4 5

Affiliative Collegiality

1. Teachers and staff tell stories of celebrations that support the school's values 1 2 3 4 5
2. Teachers and staff visit/talk/meet outside of the school to enjoy each others' company. 1 2 3 4 5
3. Our school reflects a true "sense" of community. 1 2 3 4 5
4. Our school schedule reflects frequent communication opportunities for teachers and staff? 1 2 3 4 5

5. Our school supports and appreciates the sharing of new ideas by members of our school. 1 2 3 4 5
6. There is a rich and robust tradition of rituals and celebrations including holidays, special events, and recognition of goal attainment. 1 2 3 4 5

Self-Determination/Efficacy

1. When something is not working in our school, the faculty and staff predict and prevent rather than react and repair. 1 2 3 4 5
2. School members are interdependent and value each other. 1 2 3 4 5
3. Members of our school community seek alternatives to problems/issues rather than repeating what we have always done. 1 2 3 4 5
4. Members of our school community seek to define the problem/issue rather than blame others. 1 2 3 4 5
5. The school staff is empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do. 1 2 3 4 5
6. People work here because they enjoy and choose to be here. 1 2 3 4 5

The lowest triage score is 17 and the highest score is 85. After utilizing the triage questions in several program evaluations, our data suggests the following:

17 – 40 = Critical and immediate attention necessary. Conduct a full-scale assessment of your school's culture and invest all available resources in repairing and healing the culture. **41 – 59** = Modifications and improvements are necessary. Begin with a more intense assessment of your school's culture to determine which area is in most need of improvement. **60 – 75** = Monitor and maintain making positive adjustments. **76 – 85** = Amazing! A score of 75 was the highest ever recorded.

School culture is of such importance that it requires constant monitoring. Yet before engaging in an elaborate and extensive analysis of the school culture, this quick assessment of current status can assist in determining the wise allocation of time and resources.

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Ezra Kopelowitz

Israel in RAVSAK Schools

Editor's Note: No discussion about the Jewish character of a community day school would be complete without exploring the role of Israel and Zionism education. This brief article is followed by a quick survey, which we encourage you to use in your schools.

In Fall, 2004, RAVSAK and the Jewish Agency commissioned an Internet survey of the place of education about Israel in the life of Jewish Community Day Schools in North America.

The resulting report, "Towards What Ideal Do We Strive? A Portrait of Social and Symbolic Engagement with Israel in Jewish Community Day Schools in

the United States," argues that there are two basic types of Israel education - symbolic and social.

Symbolic education involves Israel as part of the overall strategy for establishing the "Jewish look and feel" of the school. In contrast, social education goes beyond the symbolic level and encourages students to form an ongoing relationship and commitment to Israelis and Israel.

All schools participating in the survey are engaged with Israel at the level of symbolism – for example all hold Israel Independence Day ceremonies, fly Israeli flags and hang maps of Israel. However, 22 of the 48 RAVSAK schools participating in this survey go beyond the level of symbolic engagement and encourage their students to

engage socially with Israelis and Israeli society. Of these 22 schools, a minority pursue the path of encouraging aliya, and a majority encouraging their students to participate in People to People programming. We also saw that the commitment to a strategy of social engagement with Israel corresponds with a wider educational ethos in the school that includes increased symbolic, informal and formal educational activity along many measures of Jewish culture and religion, including Israel.

The complete report is available at: <http://www.researchsuccess.com/default.asp?id=273>

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Is Israel explicitly mentioned in your school's written vision and/or mission statement?

- a. No
- b. Yes
- c. There is no written vision or statement

Does an Israeli flag(s) hang in your school?

- a. No
- b. Yes

If Yes: In which of the following areas are flags hanging in your school?

- c. In every classroom
- d. In classrooms in which Judaic studies are taught
- e. In public areas such as the auditorium or lobby
- f. In front of the school building

Is there a map(s) of Israel hanging in your your school?

- a. No
- b. Yes

If Yes: In which of the following places are maps of Israel found in your school?

- a. In every classroom
- b. In classrooms in which Judaic studies are taught
- c. In public areas such as the auditorium or lobby
- d. In front of the school building

Are there occasions in which students in your school sing the Israeli national anthem Hatikvah?

- a. No
- b. Yes

If Yes: When do students in your school sing Hatikvah?

- a. Daily
- b. Weekly
- c. At all school wide assemblies or programs
- d. At school wide assemblies that specifically relate to Israel (ie. Israel Independence Day)
- e. Our students sing Hatikvah, but not on a regular basis

Some North American Jewish institutions have created partnership projects with Israeli institutions. Is your school involved in a partnership project with an Israeli institution (e.g., with an Israeli gan)?

- a. No
- b. Yes
- c. Not sure

Survey continued on next page.

To what extent does your school encourage students to participate in each of the following events or activities at school?

	Not at all	Somewhat	To a great extent	Did not take place
Events sponsored by your local Jewish community				
Shavuot Learning				
Daily prayer				
A commemoration ceremony in honor of victims of terror in Israel				
Yom Hazikaron - memorial ceremony for the IDF soldiers who have fallen in battle				
Yom Haatzmaut - Israel Independence Day ceremony				
Organizing/participating in an Israel Day Parade				
A ceremony on Holocaust Remembrance Day				
A ceremony in honor of Yom Yerushalayim (Jerusalem Day)				
A Tu Beshvat seder				
Planting trees in Israel on TuBeshvat				
Donations for families of terror victims in Israel				
Donations to Israel in general				
Having a connection with an Israeli School				
Having connection with Israeli youth				
Demonstrations supporting Israel				
Supporting Aliya to Israel				

[Continued from page 18]

- Celebrate improvements and recognize successes, continue to monitor. (Some schools administer the SCTS three times per year.)

A school's culture is much like a personal relationship. It takes constant maintenance to make it lasting, vibrant

and meaningful. The enculturation of a philosophy of continuous improvement begins with an environment that values every member of the organization, celebrates successes, holds on to the "good" traditions and discards the "bad" traditions, but mostly, one that encourages and supports strong professional and personal relationships within the learning community."

Please visit our website, www.school-culture.net for more information.

Christopher R. Wagner, Ph.D. is a professor of Educational Administration at Western Kentucky University and director of the Center for Improving School Culture. Christopher can be contacted at Cschoolculture@aol.com.

Membership has its privileges.

To renew or start your membership, visit us on the web, at www.ravsak.org.

Questions? Please call Robin Feldman, Director of Member Services at **212-665-1320**



Advocating for Community Day Schools

Jewish Funders Network International Conference

RAVSAK Executive Director, Dr. Marc N. Kramer, spoke on behalf of Jewish community day schools at the recent Jewish Funders Network International Conference in Atlanta. Participating on a panel on "Turning Jewish Engagement to Jewish Commitment," Marc focused on the unique roles that RAVSAK schools play in the Jewish communal marketplace: a primary portal to the rest of the Jewish community, a laboratory for Jewish living, a gathering place of Jews from across the spectrum of Jewish life. To hear a complete recording of this presentation, go to: <http://www.jfunders.org/programs/2007-jfn-international-conference/2007-conference-audio> and scroll down to last item on the page.

The Conference for Change

Sponsored by Lynn Schusterman and Angelica Barrie, The Conference for Change was a two-day event for 100 thought-leaders from across North America to explore issues of inclusion and advancement of Jewish women, Jews of color, and gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender Jews. Dr. Kramer, who has frequently highlighted the need for equity in the Jewish workplace, spoke proudly about the many ways in which Jewish community day schools are already places of maximal inclusion and advocated for closer working relations between day schools and organizations dedicated to broadening and strengthening our notion of what it means to be a part of the Jewish People. Inspired by the passions and ideas generated at this think tank, the RAVSAK staff will explore the creation of a Jewish Diversity Bookshelf, promote best-practice models for enrollment and employment equity, and work to ensure that all future committees and panels will strive for greater gender balance. RAVSAK was the only day school organization represented at the Conference.

Joint Task Force on Reform Day Schools

Dr. Kramer also participated in the Reform Movement's Joint Task Force on Reform Day School education. PARDeS, the Reform day school network, participated in this past year's Annual Leadership Conference to the great satisfaction of both organizations, suggesting that future collaborations were both possible and desirable. At the Task Force meeting, Marc promoted RAVSAK schools as a highly desirable option for Reform-affiliated families, particularly in communities without a Reform day school option. He also aired the concern that many Reform rabbis continue to advocate against day school in favor instead of public education. Marc was joined by former RAVSAK president Dr. Zena Sulkes, who is serving as a consultant to the Union for Reform Judaism.

Associate Member Quarterly Update:

Israel Guide Dog Center for the Blind

Israel Guide Dog Center for the Blind will be hosting its second week long summer camp, pairing blind and sighted youths of 15 years and older. For more information about the Israel Guide Dog Center for the Blind or our Mitzvah Project, go to www.israelguidedog.org or e-mail paul.igdcb@nni.com.

Israel Phones

IsraelPhones is the largest cellular rental company in Israel with offices in the US, Israel, Canada, UK, South Africa and Australia. RAVSAK members that work with IsraelPhones and EuropePhones are provided with: phones for their staff to use while escorting the group, the ability to send a text message to the entire program from any computer or Israeli cellular phone, online access to IsraelPhones database to view real-time list of student's cellular numbers, a dedicated service representative and door-to-door service for all staff and student needs, during and after the program. To discuss how IsraelPhones can service your program, please email info@israelphones.com or call Lisa Green from the sales team at 1-866-244-8949.

Keshet Israel

Keshet is now expanding its educational programs to include Outdoor Training Activities such as low and high ropes course elements. Within these group-building workshops we both integrate Jewish values and programs to help strengthen an individual's Jewish identity.

Melitz Israel

Melitz is producing an 'Israel @ 60 Celebration Kit' including instructions for Memorial and Independence Day ceremonies, interactive programs for all ages, suggestions for Israel based programming, a DVD of a popular Israel movie and much, much more. Kits cost \$175 when ordered before June 30th 2007, \$200 afterwards. E-mail Helen melitz@JCFB.org for more information or to order kits.

Oranim Educational Initiatives

Oranim Educational Initiatives is beginning to take requests for next years Israel programs. We would love to hear from you regarding any and all travel programs. Please call Micky Zoldan 216-496-5505 or drop me an email at Micky@JewishAdventures.com.

PANIM: The Institute for Jewish Leadership and Values

PANIM has announced our 2007-2008 dates for Panim el Panim and Jewish Civics Initiative seminars! Log onto www.panim.org to sign up for next year's seminars before they fill up! Also, let your students know about our two outstanding summer programs, Summer JAM www.dccjam.org and PanimWorks www.panim-works.org.

Young Judea

Summer programs offering 3 & 5 1/2 week adventures for teenagers with optional excursions to Spain and Italy and 3 college credits. Year Course (370 registered participants!), our first-year college in Israel program combines volunteering and academics (31 college credits). Learn about our newest program to France, Great Britain, Prague, Morocco & Ethiopia. Call 800-725-0612 with questions and for a free dvd and brochure.

Development Matters

Annual Campaign

RAVSAK: The Jewish Community Day School Network would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their generous contributions to our 2006-2007 Members Campaign. With your help we have already reached 98% of our goal for the year. We are especially proud to say that, once again, we have received 100% participation from our staff and Executive Committee.

Anonymous	Paul Levitch and Family
Abraham Joshua Heschel Day School	Dr. Alice and
Aimee Adashek	Howard Manloff
Rabbi Joel Alter	Shelley and
Debra Altshul-Stark and Brian Stark	Barry Meyers
Rabbi Alexis and Dr. Robert Berk	Elinor and
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Sue Ann Einhorn	Dr. Joan Gusinow and
Janet Scheer and Dr. Gerry Elgarten	Jerry Pollack
Fran and David Elovitz	Lynn and Arie Raviv
Robin and Jon Feldman	Jeffrey Richard and Family
Karen Feller	Marla and Mitch Rottenstreich
Mitch Flatow	Ingrid and Dr. Harry Schoenburg
Sara and John Glenn	Shalom School
Tamira Elul and Dean Goldfein	The Shoshana S. Cardin School
Rabbi Reuven Greenvald	Karla Sternberg Smith
Heritage Academy (Longmeadow)	and Neil Smith
Edward Heyman	Dr. Jack Sparks
Bathea and Sam James	Dr. Debora and Howard Starr
Jewish Community Day School	Ayelet Koren and Daniel Steiner
of Rhode Island	Dr. Jacquelyn and Charles Stern
Carol and Ron Goldman	Leslie Crary and Andrew Stoloff
Joanne and Gary Gottlieb	Dr. Zena Sulkes
Katherine & Jacob Greenfield	Julie and Robert Tornberg
Hebrew Academy of Atlanta	Frances Urman
Ellyce and Gil Kimmelman	Deann Forman and Sidney Vidaver
The King David High School	Shaul Wachsstock
Lisa and Ralph Kleinman	Dr. Jane West Walsh and
Irving Klothen	Rabbi Ariel Walsh
Susan and Rabbi Saul Koss	Phyllis Weinstein
Jennifer Kramer	Susan and Neil Weintrob
Dr. Marc Kramer and Family	Betty and Ross Winn
Caren and Laurence Kutler	Dr. Jonna Gaberman and
Eleanor and Mark Lainer	Bruce Wintman
Dr. Miesha Leibson	Marlene Fishman Wolpert and
Dr. Raymond and	Bruce Wolpert
Virginia Levi	Lesley Zafran



We are only \$500 away from meeting our goal. There is still time to make a contribution before the year closes at the end of June. If you have not yet made a gift to the 2006-2007 RAVSAK Annual Campaign, please send a check today to:

RAVSAK
120 West 97th Street
New York, NY 10025
You may also donate online at www.ravsak.org

Naming Opportunities

RAVSAK: The Jewish Community Day School Network has recently launched a Capital Campaign for our new International Center for Jewish Education.

All donations to the campaign will be acknowledged on a dedication wall in the new center as well as in *HaYidion*, the RAVSAK quarterly magazine, and on the RAVSAK website.

Naming Opportunity	# Available	Dedication
RAVSAK's International Center for Jewish Education*	1	\$750,000
Executive Leadership Office	1	\$40,000
Development Office	1	\$30,000
Member Services Office	1	\$30,000
Conference Room	1	\$30,000
Lobby & Reception Foyer	1	\$25,000
Technology Office	1	\$25,000
Administrative Office	1	\$20,000
Security System	1	\$18,000
Office Furnishings	5	\$15,000
Telecommunications System	1	\$10,000
Workstations	3	\$8,000
Wall of Honor Artwork	1	\$5,000
Pantry	1	\$5,000
Computers	11	\$2,500
Mezuzot	6	\$540

* The underwriter of the new RAVSAK International Center for Jewish Education will initiate a change to the RAVSAK logo and all print materials including letterhead, website and business cards.

For more information about the RAVSAK Annual Campaign, Capital Campaign and other opportunities for giving please contact Deann Forman, Director of Development and Operations at 212-665-1320 x302, or by email at dforman@ravsak.org.

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RAVSAK
Annual
Leadership
Conference



Houston, Texas • January 20-23 • 2008 • More information @ www.ravsak.org

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