Teacher Retention & Development
What Do Teachers Want?
• by Peter Gow, page 6

Preparing Teachers
The Case for Certification in Jewish Schools
• by Dr. Wallace Greene, page 10
Finding and Creating Good Teachers: What Does the Research Tell Us?
• by Michael B. Allen and Daniel W. Bennett, page 12
Preparing and Launching Novice Judaics Teachers
• by Dr. Judy Markose and Dr. Sharon Wall, page 16
Developmental Ladder for Students and Teachers
• by Dr. Richard Solomon, page 18
Training Students to Become Jewish Educators
• by Ari Y. Goldberg and Ruth Schapira, page 22

Inducting Teachers
School-Based Induction Helps New Teachers Thrive
• by Sharon Feiman-Nemser and Vivian Troen, page 26
A Ritual for Welcoming Teachers
• by Rabbi Jill Hammer, page 28

Developing Teachers
Investing in Teacher Development Pays Dividends
• by Sarah Birkeland, page 30
Tips from the Corporate World
• by Rebecca Cole Lurie, page 34
Alternative Approaches to Professional Development
• by Joni Kolman, page 36
Professional Development in Jewish History
• by Yona Shem-Tov, page 38

Mentoring Teachers
School-based Mentoring: Principles to Live By
• by Deborah Court, page 40
Mentorship for New Teachers in RAVSAK Schools
• pages 44-50

Collaborative Development
Against Mentorship: Induction through Collaboration
• by Harry K. Wong, page 52
Action Research
• by Richard Sagor, page 54

Re-thinking Pay for Performance
• by Patrick F. Bassett, page 56

A Word from the Editor, Page 3 • President’s Message, Page 4 • Conference, Pages 24-25 • SulAm Shabbaton, Page 33 • Religious Purposefulness, Page 62 • Bookcase, Pages 64
From the Editor

by Dr. Barbara Davis

U.S. chooses ‘change” is the headline on my Internet homepage as I begin to write the introduction to this issue of HaYidion on the day after Election Day. Yet as we all know, change is scary. Nonetheless, change is the fundamental feature of education. The Latin root of the word “education” is “e-ducare” which means “to lead out.” Education always involves change, as we lead our learners out from the known to the unknown, from security to insecurity.

This issue of HaYidion focuses on a kind of change that involves tremendous insecurity: entering the teaching profession, recharging the teaching profession, reinvigorating the teaching professional—specifically within the world of community day school education. The articles that follow come from professionals in the field, researchers, practitioners, and novice teachers themselves. They range from the theoretical to the practical to the personal. All of them are enlightening and you will find in them useful information, ideas, and statistics that will assist you and your schools to make the case for professional development of both new and experienced teachers.

We know that the world we live in today is in a state of flux. The current economic situation will impact us in many ways, probably none of them particularly positive. But as educators, we know that, as King Whitney said, “Change has a considerable psychological impact on the human mind. To the fearful it is threatening because it means that things may get worse. To the hopeful it is encouraging because things may get better. To the confident it is inspiring because the challenge exists to make things better.”

Those of us who work in the field of Jewish community day school education are, by definition, optimistic and confident. As you peruse this issue of HaYidion, we know that you will be inspired to make change work for you, for your schools, for your students, and for the Jewish future.

RAVSAK Awards Small School Scholarships

Mazal tov to the following schools for being the recipients of the RAVSAK Small School Professional Development Scholarship.

These scholarships were made available to enable educators from small Jewish day schools and small Jewish communities across North America to benefit from the training, networking, and professional development opportunities of the 2009 RAVSAK Annual Leadership Conference.

- Akiva Community Day School (Nashville, TN)
- Albert Einstein Academy (Wilmington, DE)
- Aleph Bet Jewish Day School (Annapolis, MD)
- B’nai Shalom Day School (Greensboro, NC)
- Boulder Jewish Day School (Longmont, CO)
- El Paso Jewish Academy (El Paso, TX)
- Friedel Jewish Academy (Omaha, NE)
- Hebrew Day Institute (Baltimore, MD)
- Jewish Community School of the Desert (Palm Desert, CA)
- Lerner Jewish Community Day School (Durham, NC)
- Mizel Jewish Community Day School (Tulsa, OK)
- N.E. Miles Jewish Day School (Birmingham, AL)
- New Orleans Jewish Day School (Metairie, LA)
- Richmond Jewish Day School (Richmond, BC)
- Syracuse Hebrew Day School (Dewitt, NY)
- The Shoshana S. Cardin School (Baltimore, MD)

*schools confirmed at press time

This scholarship is made possible by a most generous grant from the Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Foundation.
From the Desk of Susan Weintrob, RAVSAK President

The upcoming RAVSAK conference in San Francisco promises to have joyful reunions, professional networking, and helpful workshops. Our conference is a time to learn from each other and from national experts.

Community at RAVSAK has always been important. Community is more important now than ever. During these troubled economic times, we will come together to learn how to keep our institutions strong. What can our own communities do—inside our schools, within our towns and regional areas, and as a strong and strategic national organization?

The value that our schools bring to students, families, and communities is crucial to the growth and strength of the Jewish people. Articulating this value to our families and donors now manifests the priorities of our people. We should tell every parent, “If you ever make an investment, make it in Jewish day school education. No matter what happens in the economy, you will get a 100% return for your investment. No outside factors can affect this outcome.” What other investment can give us this return?

If Jewish education is a “must have,” we must strategize now. We must plot a road that will take us to our goal: challenging education that inspires Jewish lives.

The changing dynamics offer us an opportunity to look at building sustainable institutions. We want healthy schools that continue to tell a story that is compelling and persuasive. We want our parents and non-parents to view us as a community asset and an investment in the future.

At RAVSAK, as in all of our schools, we invest in the Jewish future. Now is the time to come together, inspire each other and return to our schools with new ideas and strategies to help us remain healthy and strong.

See you in San Francisco!

Bivrachah,

Susan

The Executive Committee and Staff of RAVSAK wish you a Happy Chanukah

Susan Weintrob is the President of RAVSAK and the Head of School at the Ronald C. Wornick Jewish Day School in Foster City, CA. Susan can be reached at sweintrob@wornickjds.org.
Financial Sustainability and **Leadership** are critical parts of the equation.

Learn more:

RAVSAK Annual Leadership Conference sessions developed in collaboration with PEJE. We look forward to seeing you in San Francisco in January.


Your no-cost one-hour Leadership Line consultation. Email leadershipline@peje.org.
What Do Teachers Want? Strategies for Keeping Your Best Teachers Happy and Growing

by Peter Gow

In recent years, the media have been alive with stories about the coming teacher shortage. As the current generation of master teachers retires and fewer young people go into the profession, we are told, it will become harder and harder for schools to populate their classrooms with excellent teachers. The numbers show that there is some truth behind the alarmist tales, and teaching continues to be seen in many quarters as a “soft,” low-paying, and low-prestige profession that attracts relatively few high-achieving students.

As independent school educators we know that teaching is anything but soft and that there are tremendous rewards that compensate for the material shortcomings. The question remains, however: How will our schools attract and keep teachers who are energized by and committed to the work we do?

The answer is twofold, and neither part is easy or without cost. Nevertheless, it lies within the power of every school to create circumstances in which both new and veteran teachers are deeply engaged in the work they do and in the success of their students. In such schools teachers can find the personal rewards that will nourish them for the span of a career.

All educators desire a few basic things from their working lives. Like any adults, teachers wish to be taken seriously, to be good at their work and inspired and supported to become even better, and to find through their jobs both warm personal relationships and professional recognition. A school’s leadership should not find it impossible to promote these conditions in plenty.

There are two particular areas in which schools can help teachers find what they want and need. The first is salary and benefits, in which some basic principles can guide schools toward the creation of at least relatively satisfying offerings to complement the second and equally important area, which is school culture. Between a menu of best practices in material compensation and thoughtful and sincere efforts to create a working environment in which teachers feel both valued and professionally competent, even schools of modest means can compete for and hold onto able teachers at every career stage.

**Salary**

In 2007 the National Association of Independent Schools released results of a comprehensive teacher satisfaction survey that suggest that while the *amount* of money and benefits a school can offer matters, teachers most desire flexible benefits programs responsive to their specific needs. Younger teachers, for example, may be looking for childcare or help in paying off student loans or financing graduate degrees, while more senior teachers are likely to be more focused on issues such as pensions and tuition remission for their children. While many kinds of benefits are expensive to implement, a strong program will help schools keep teachers. Schools that involve teachers in the development of such programs are likely to have even better retention.

The era in which independent school salaries lagged far behind public school scales has passed, and the NAIS survey not surprisingly shows that teachers are most satisfied when their salaries approximate local public school salaries; being in the upper tier of local independent school pay scales also brings high satisfaction. It is also clear that teachers look for transparency and if possible participation in the design and application of compensation structures.

There is no easy answer to the question of how to pay for high salaries and extensive benefits. Schools with very limited resources might consider choosing to focus on benefit expansion as more slightly more important even than raising cash pay, and every school should be focusing...
part of its general marketing and fundraising energy on the question of teachers. “We must have the means to keep the best teachers” should be an oft-repeated mantra in any fundraising effort. Parents, alumni/ae, and the community at large should be made well aware that the school needs to sustain excellence by attracting and keeping great teachers and that offering a competitive salary structure is an essential tool in achieving this. (As a corollary, school development and communications offices should consider that prospective teachers are a significant audience for any marketing; every publication, web page, or press release has potential as a recruiting tool.)

**Culture**

More complex is the matter of school culture. The NAIS survey reveals high satisfaction among teachers who feel that their work is in tune with a school’s values and expectations and whose working conditions and school communities give the teachers an overall sense of success: class sizes allow the development of positive relationships with students, parents are engaged and supportive, teaching resources are available as needed.

School leaders have considerable control over the things that teachers desire most in their working lives, and many cost relatively little. Some reflect the style of the school’s administration, and it does not take a rocket scientist to understand that a principal or head of school who regularly engages with teachers and understands and appreciates their work is likely to be running a happy school whose teachers return year after year.

Key administrative factors in developing a positive school culture include communication, leadership visibility, recognition and appreciation of effective work, opportunities for authentic growth, transparency of decision-making, and the involvement of teachers in policy decisions. Many of these involve mutual trust; it can be a challenge for some leaders to delegate or even share authority. In the

How Important is Salary?

Earlier this year, JESNA published findings from its Educators in Jewish Schools Study (EJSS). The goal of this study was to develop a better understanding of educators working in Jewish day and complementary schools and the factors that contribute to their job satisfaction and decisions to remain in the field. Dr. Michael Ben-Avie and I collected the EJSS data and, together with the staff of JESNA’s Berman Center, analyzed the results. The findings discussed here relate to the 819 respondents working in Jewish day schools. As the study reached only those working at the time in Jewish schools, “retention” was addressed through participants’ agreement/disagreement with items such as “I can imagine myself leaving the field of Jewish education in the next several years” (taking into account the age of the participant). Participants were asked to indicate the issues involved in their decision to leave or to stay. Here are the findings about the importance of salary and benefits as factors in teacher retention.

**Salary range:** Among day school educators who worked more than 30 hours per week, the most frequently reported range of salaries was $40,000–$49,999 (reported by 22% of respondents). One-quarter of the educators who reported working 30 or fewer hours per week most frequently cited salaries in the $20,000–$29,999 range. Thirty percent reported incomes of $50,000 to $70,000, and 17% were in the highest category of over $70,000. Eighty-nine percent of day school teachers said their salaries were important to their household incomes. Only 31% of day school respondents agreed that they could develop an economically rewarding professional career in Jewish education.

**Benefits:** Unlike professionals in similar full-time positions, full-time work in a Jewish day or complementary school does not guarantee that a teacher will receive benefits. For example, less than 69% of full-time Jewish educators, whether in day or complementary schools, who responded to the Educator Survey received health insurance or a retirement plan. Less than 45% received life or dental insurance and only 35% received some type of tuition assistance for their children who attended the same school.

Jewish day school educators most frequently reported that their employment benefits included a retirement plan (63%), paid time off for professional development (59%), health insurance (57%), life insurance (38%), some type of tuition assistance for their children who attended the same day school (35%), and dental insurance (33%). The benefits received by 5% or fewer day school educators were partial or full reimbursement for housing expenses and childcare.

**Remaining in field:** EJSS data showed that salary was a very important factor for day school respondents considering whether they will remain in the field. A minority (22%) of those earning less than $50,000 felt there were opportunities to develop an economically rewarding professional career at their current schools, whereas a somewhat larger percentage (36%) of those earning $50,000–$69,999 shared this view. Not surprisingly, the belief that one could develop an economically rewarding career in his/her current Jewish day school was most prevalent among those who earned $70,000 or more annually.

**Importance of salary:** Day school educators’ average rating of the importance of salary was “3.97” on the one to five scale. Day school educators ranked administrator recognition at 3.95, the school’s response to students not thriving at 3.98, and work/home life balance at 4.12. They rated the importance of health coverage at 3.3, insurance coverage at 3.2, and pension or retirement plan at 3.4.

Dr. Jeffrey S. Kress is chair of the Department of Jewish Education at the Jewish Theological Seminary.
Let us be clear that the emphasis on mission and goals in considering professional culture and professional development is above all a consideration of students and their needs. After all, the ongoing improvement of students’ experience is the object of a school’s strategic thinking, and each school’s mission embodies—or should embody—a set of almost utopian ideals. From the mission flows the work, and strategic goals specify the means and intermediate steps in this work.

Professional development that keeps teachers invested serves institutional needs just as much as it does the individual aspirations and growth needs of teachers. To be most valuable it must also be universal (adjusted, perhaps, for existing levels of expertise); no teacher can be overlooked or excused. While good professional development acknowledges individual capacities and goals, it holds everyone to high standards of participation and implementation. Unlike the “go to any conference that suits you” model, effective professional development programs put resources where they will do the most

School leaders have considerable control over the things that teachers desire most in their working lives.

good for the most teachers, and above all for the school and the experience of its students.

Orientation

Excellent professional development programs start with the experience of new teachers in the school. Statistics show that the annual cohort of new teachers is the most vulnerable to whatever feelings of failure or disappointment cause people to leave teaching. New teacher programming should be well thought-out, comprehensive, and ideally a specific part of an administrative portfolio—in other words, someone needs to be in charge.

The school year should begin with a comprehensive orientation program for new teachers. Along with helping new teachers to develop their curricula and especially their lessons for the first days and weeks of school, orientation should have an anthropological focus that includes explicit attention to introducing new teachers to valued skills and techniques that are particular to the school’s programs, basic assumptions about teaching and learning that prevail at the school, important people and places in the school, and school idiosyncrasies. Every school, for example, has its own lingo—terms and usages with highly school-specific meanings—but many traditions, structures, and procedures are also unique to each school, and new teachers need every bit of help they can get in mastering these.

In the first year (and possibly the second), each teacher should also have a designated mentor whose task it is to create a safe environment for the teacher to share questions and concerns as well as to observe the teacher in action and offer feedback, all outside of any supervisory or evaluative role. Ideally, there would also be a series of workshops bringing together new teachers, mentors, and the new-teacher supervisor to work through a mentoring curriculum keyed to the trajectory of the school year: how to address classroom management issues, how to conduct parent conferences (before these are held), how to write narrative reports (before these are due), how to manage the mid winter doldrums or spring fever. Extensive research shows that teachers given such support through their first year of teaching are both more effective in their work and more likely to remain in the profession.
EVALUATION

While mentors of new teachers should not be evaluators, the school must have a formal mechanism for monitoring the performance of all teachers. Effective systems of evaluation are first and foremost about supporting teachers in their ongoing development, based on clearly understood aims and standards that grow, once again, out of the school’s mission, values, and goals. Classroom observations play a significant part in such systems, but observers should be trained to observe and to give effective feedback; “evaluation,” or judgment, comes last.

Most of all, effective teacher evaluation exists as an established part of a school’s professional culture. Focused on the teacher as a growing individual at every stage of a career, the language, methodology, and ethos of evaluation should be about meaningful feedback, dialogue, self-evaluation, and reflection. As much as possible, it should address all aspects of a teacher’s work and include multiple points of view, including the teacher’s. Just as teachers want transparency and involvement in decision-making, they value clarity and consistency in the application of any evaluation system, especially insofar as it is part of any determination of salary or continued employment.

As part of creating a shared professional culture, all schools should develop an explicit statement of standards for effective teaching, a document that serves a number of purposes: as a basis for evaluation, but also as a statement to the community (and to prospective faculty) that the school is intentional and clear about the work of and expectations for its faculty. The exercise of creating such a statement can itself be a powerful piece of collaborative professional development.

First-year programs designed to help new teachers succeed, standards by which to measure performance and growth, professional development to inspire and support growth, salary and benefit packages that reward performance, and above all an atmosphere in which teachers see themselves regarded as valued professionals—these are what teachers want. As a teacher experiences the high and lows of a long career, what he or she needs most is to feel that the school to which they are devoting their professional passion and expertise is responsive, respectful, and willing to offer the resources required to sustain the teacher’s growth and professional and personal satisfaction.

How will our schools attract and keep teachers who are energized by and committed to the work we do?

Teaching Israel with Excellence

What is Project ODEd?

Project ODEd is a new joint initiative of the Jewish Agency for Israel and the Israeli Ministry of Education which will bring 60 exemplary Israeli teachers on shlichut to Jewish day schools in North America for a period of three to four years.

Who can participate?

Project ODEd is intended for Jewish day schools in North America.

What makes Project ODEd “new”?

Project ODEd marks the first time that the Ministry of Education in Israel will be dedicating resources to the placement of teachers on shlichut in North American day schools. This will include financial support for selected teachers.

Teachers will undergo a rigorous selection process in Israel. These educators will be hand-picked by the Ministry of Education and the Jewish Agency as 60 of the most outstanding in the State of Israel. Candidates will be presented to schools that will then choose the most suitable teachers.

The Jewish Agency will provide and supervise extensive training prior to the teacher’s departure from Israel. The Jewish Agency will provide customized professional development programs based on the individual needs of the school and community.

What is the timetable?

The search for candidates is already underway. Selected candidates will be interviewed in Israel through December 2008-January 2009. Schools will make their selections January-March 2009. Teachers will begin their shlichut August 2009.

What does your school have to gain from Project ODEd?

Exemplary Israeli teachers hand-picked by the Jewish Agency for Israel and the Ministry of Education.

The potential for a deeper connection to Israel. Ongoing professional development through the Jewish Agency.

How does your school get involved?

Project ODEd Director
Shimon Harel
Director of School-based Education in North America

For more information about getting involved in Project ODEd please call Amriel Kissner at 212-339-6903 or email amrielk@jafi.org
The Case for Certification of Teachers in Jewish Schools

by Dr. Wallace Greene

Accreditation is the primary vehicle for quality control in all professions. Every profession requires practitioners to be certified either by the state, by voluntary accrediting agencies (AMA, Bar Association, etc.) or by both. Beauticians, embalmers, mechanics, plumbers, and barbers must demonstrate their knowledge and expertise before they can work in their fields. Jewish education is perhaps the only profession in which untrained, uncertified, and often unskilled individuals can have a career as teachers. Many of today’s Jewish educators are exceptionally motivated, passionate, and creative. Yet the Jewish community does not value their services in the same way it values other professionals. General studies teachers must be licensed. Why aren’t the same demands made for those who teach Jewish studies, who nurture and mold young minds to become literate, committed, and proud Jews?

There must be a normative national or regional standard for teaching certification. In fact, unbeknownst to many, one already exists. The National Board of License For Teachers and Principals of Jewish Schools in North America was founded in 1941 to serve as a coordinating and standard-setting body responsible for establishing the professional conditions for licensing teachers and principals, and for the type of teacher training which would qualify graduates for certification. The certification process is designed to provide recognition to qualified educators as well as to encourage those who are entering the field to pursue professional training.

The structure of the contemporary Jewish community frowns on any mandatory standards. Enforcement is difficult. However, as the world’s oldest model for universal education (see TB Bava Batra 21a, TJ Ketubot 8:11:32c; also Maimonides’ Hilkhot Talmud Torah), it behooves us to establish and adhere to standards of teacher preparation. The standards articulated by The National Board of License are voluntarily accepted by those who wish to demonstrate competence and by those communities that wish to have trained, competent teachers in their schools. Some schools will not hire a teacher without an NBL license. Some communities make their allocations contingent on the number of licensed faculty and not on the usual per capita basis.

Across the nation numerous unqualified individuals are in the classrooms of Jewish schools. Students are exposed to them because communities cannot find, hire, pay, or retain teachers with the proper credentials. They are placed in classrooms because school and community leaders are forced to lower their expectations based on economic reality and the available pool of those willing to teach. There are so many excuses and rationalizations used for this practice that the Jewish public has trouble grasping the extent and impact of this phenomenon. Precise studies have not yet been conducted in Jewish schools, but anecdotal reporting by professionals in the field has confirmed this as a fact. Israelis may not be trained in teaching Hebrew as a second language, nor do many have the knowledge base to teach beyond the primary grades. Rabbis and seminary graduates may have the knowledge base but not the Hebrew language or the pedagogic skills.

In the public schools, student achievement and teacher effectiveness can be measured because grade and subject benchmarks for mastery have been established and testing indices are available. In Jewish studies, by contrast, there is no uniformly accepted...
standard for what students should know by grade and subject nor are testing instruments generally available to gauge success. This makes it difficult to measure the success of a licensed Jewish Studies teacher as compared to an untrained teacher. However, the data from public school research makes the case.

Teachers need coursework and, more importantly, supervised student teaching experience before they walk into a classroom on their own. 69% of certified teachers (National Board Certified Teachers) surveyed reported positive changes in their students’ engagement, achievement, and motivation as a result of certification. The same study also showed that 91% said that certification had positively affected their teaching practices, and 83% said they have become more reflective about their teaching.

It is unacceptable, as a matter of Jewish communal policy, to hold students to academic standards that some of their teachers are unable to help them meet. Communities should ensure that every teacher in every classroom has met teaching standards that are aligned with learning objectives. Standards may vary between what is necessary for a day school, early childhood program, or a congregational school. However, if we want our students to meet certain standards, we must hold their teachers to high expectations.

In 1899, John Dewey observed, “What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all its children.” This dictum is still valid, and is supported by hard data. A study of public attitudes towards teaching revealed that parents want teachers to be well trained and knowledgeable about how to teach effectively and have prior experience as a student teacher. Another study showed that 82% of those surveyed about how to improve education felt that recruitment and retention of better teachers was paramount. Interestingly, in that same study, 67% wanted to require teachers to pass a competency test every year.

What concerns the general public about the lack of qualified teachers, also concerns (or should concern) the Jewish community. Sadly, the axiom [continued on page 62]
As educators (and parents), we all know instinctively from our own experience what research confirms more scientifically: students learn better from good teachers than from poor ones. But what is it that makes for a good teacher? Common sense might tell us that good teachers know their subject and have a passion for what they teach. And it might tell us that good teachers are able to manage their classroom. But “common” sense is not always common or dependable. Some principals, for example, may praise a teacher because his or her classroom is orderly, while other principals may see the same classroom as overly regimented. And how do we know what teachers really know, and whether they know enough to teach to the highest level and inspire the most able students?

Whether day schools are hiring teachers of Judaica, Hebrew, or secular subjects, finding candidates who have proven track records is certainly a good place to start. But there are seldom enough proven teachers available. And it is difficult for school principals to be confident that newly minted, relatively untested teachers are going to work out, especially on the basis of resumes, educational credentials, and an interview or two. Thus, staffing an entire school with solid teachers is a daunting challenge, particularly given the fact the effectiveness of some veteran teachers may have waned because of complacency.

Fortunately, good research can help us eliminate some of the subjectivity involved in assessing teacher quality. Empirical research is intended to get us beyond the perceptions and biases of individuals, and provide answers that are more likely to be universally applicable. And other research can point to promising schoolwide strategies for developing a highly effective teaching staff.

**Finding Good Teachers**

In 2003, Michael Allen wrote a major report for the Education Commission of the States—a national organization that serves the information needs of state policymakers and education leaders throughout the U.S.—about the research on teacher preparation. The report posed the question, What does research tell us about the characteristics of promising new teachers? Although much of the research is inadequate to give us confident, let alone definitive, guidance, it does suggest some things school principals and other administrators might well consider in hiring new teachers. Some of the conclusions and the implied lessons seem fairly obvious, although one might be surprised at how often principals frequently ignore the obvious in making staffing decisions.

1. Teachers need to have strong knowledge of their teaching subject. This is not an easy asset to assess, especially on the basis of a transcript or resume. A major in the subject isn’t necessarily required, and a minor may not be sufficient. And the fact that a person took a number of courses is no indication of how much or precisely what the individual learned from them.
Implication for administrators: Err on the side of caution. Don’t think a teacher with a thin academic background in a subject can do an adequate job teaching that subject unless you have independent confirmation that the teacher really knows his or her stuff in spite of having little formal preparation.

2. Teachers need not only to be well grounded in their teaching subject but also to have a good grasp of how to present that subject effectively to students.

Implication for administrators: Knowledge of a subject is necessary but not sufficient, and it really would be a good idea to see how well a candidate can present a lesson in his or her teaching field. Work with a department chair or a trusted veteran teacher in a field to assess a prospective teacher’s content knowledge and pedagogical skill in their teaching field.

3. Teachers need to have the ability to manage a classroom effectively, including the ability to assess students’ grasp of the material.

Implication for administrators: Think about what kind of classroom(s) the prospective teacher is going to face and what kinds of skills the teacher will need to be successful. If a prospective teacher has had some real-world experience in the classroom, he or she is likely to be better able to manage the class you’ll assign, even more so if he or she has taught students similar to those who make up your school.

4. Teachers who graduated from a fast-track teacher preparation program are often just as well prepared as teachers who graduated from more traditional programs.

Implication for administrators: You can’t assume that a prospective teacher who graduates from a program that looks quite thorough on paper is better prepared than one who graduates from a program that is less comprehensive. Many other factors enter in, including how selective the program is, how much field experience the program includes, and how well the prospective teacher did.

[CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE]
Preparing Teachers

In many cases, a new teacher with less confidence and skill than other teachers catches up after a year or two, especially if the struggling teacher is highly intelligent and has the support of a good induction and mentoring program.

Implication for administrators: You need to weigh both the short term and the long term in hiring a new teacher, but intelligence is a difficult asset to overvalue. Especially if you have good induction and mentoring available for your new teachers, differences in the quality of their preparation or experience are less important than they otherwise would be.

Creating Better Teachers

Research also tells us that whatever skills and knowledge new teachers bring to their initial teaching job, it is only with experience that they become truly accomplished. But what is it about that experience that contributes to teachers’ improvement? Is it simply repeated practice, or is it some sort of deliberate staff development? And if professional development is the key, what sort of professional development is effective?

Old school theory was to hire the best, require re-accreditation, and budget enough to send teachers to seminars and conferences to recharge their batteries and learn new techniques. What we now know is that this seldom works, and that teachers generally utilize very little of what they learn at these in-service opportunities even within months of returning to their schools.

Instead, we are coming to recognize the important role in teacher development played by ongoing peer-facilitated professional growth opportunities where both new and veteran teachers become their own learning community. In this model all learning takes place on site and a staff training expert (from outside or within the school) collaboratively builds the program and trains teachers on staff to be instructional coaches, or peer coaches. Experts are brought in to model pedagogy or skills, a staff training expert works with teachers to be peer leaders, and over time staff transforms to a professional community where collaboration is the rule, self-examination is seen as strength, and teachers are excited to improve and pass on their new skills and insights to their colleagues.

Daniel Bennett heads the Colorado Agency for Jewish Education, which recently concluded a four-year pilot program in three area Jewish day schools with funding from the Rose Community Foundation in Denver. Under this Reflective Practices Day School Initiative, not only did teachers become better, but they felt better about their success with students. The project was complex, and it took time before teachers completely accepted its goals and the changes required for improvement. But once it took hold, Reflective Practices demonstrated that so long as administrators are committed to the path, teachers—and ultimately schools—become better.

See facing page for results of this initiative.

Effective school administrators need far more than knowledge of the research, of course, to make good hiring and staff-training decisions. They need good judgment, a solid understanding of the needs of their school and its students, and ideally a wealth of relevant experience they can draw upon. But the research and knowledge of its practical application in Jewish day school settings can serve as a starting point for those who have less experience at their disposal, and can provide reassurance to help dispel doubt and uncertainty about what course of action to follow in both finding and creating good teachers.
The initial evaluation of Reflective Practices shows the following:

- All teachers took an active role in on-site staff professional development.
- Principals documented greater collaboration among teachers and heard increased dialogue by them about professional development.
- Teachers reported that better defined goals and expectations led to increased student satisfaction and improved student learning and behavior.
- Expectations that their teachers engage in professional development and providing the means and opportunities for them to do so created a culture of teachers as learners marked by:
  - increased dialogue among teachers
  - more faculty driven initiatives for professional development
  - improved quality of teaching
  - increased investment of effort and finances for curriculum development
  - improved professional satisfaction
  - increased attention to curriculum scope and sequence
  - as teachers began to interact more professionally with each other, they began to think of themselves as better teachers and better professionals; this led to:
    - increased collaboration on curriculum and on addressing students’ behavioral, learning and/or social challenges
    - better lesson planning and evaluation
    - increased responsibility by teachers to address the needs of all students and to differentiate among learning styles
    - decreased feeling of professional isolation
- Instructional coaches expanded their role as educational leaders by helping to set the agenda for staff professional development and by encouraging colleagues to engage in professional learning.
- Shared leadership empowered the coaches to acquire new skills and knowledge and made them more conscious of the need to develop increased internal capacity for sustaining a school-wide, comprehensive program of professional development.
- Teachers reported that they found themselves
  - viewing themselves as adult learners
  - more attentive to students’ needs as learners
  - more focused on how students learn, rather than on what they are supposed to teach
  - relying less on administrators as problem solvers
- A number of other resulting changes provided yet additional opportunities for teachers to thrive:
  - changes in school structure, procedure, and budget for the purpose of teacher development
  - additional time for professional development provided by principals during the school day and through late start and/or early release.
- Improvement by teachers led to the ultimate goal of student success. After the completion of the pilot stage, students reported
  - that they felt better about themselves as learners
  - that they had a more positive attitude toward school
  - that they felt more valued as learners
  - that the school was more responsive to their educational needs
  - that they were more receptive and less threatened by teachers’ innovations and changes in teaching styles
Preparing Teachers

Preparing and Launching Novice Judaics Teachers

by Dr. Judy Markose and Dr. Sharon Wall

Being a first-year teacher is challenging; being a Judaic studies teacher often brings added challenges, such as lack of curriculum, unclear standards, and less buy-in from students and parents. Training institutions, the Jewish community, school administrators, school boards and parents all claim they want the very best Jewish studies teachers. Yet are we doing what it takes to achieve this?

Through the Pardes Educators Program (PEP), a two-year Jerusalem-based training program for Judaic studies teachers in day schools, currently in its ninth year, valuable lessons have been learned about the training of Judaic studies teachers and what schools can and should do to insure their success in the field. Through its work with its graduates, Pardes has seen models of excellence in the support that schools provide, and has observed serious shortcomings with unhappy consequences.

Following is a description of the elements of a program which are critical to the development of Judaic studies teachers, and recommendations regarding ongoing support that schools must provide to assure a successful outcome.

Background and Vision

PEP was conceived in cooperation with and funded by the AVI CHAI Foundation. With the rapid growth of community day schools in the 1990s, the Foundation was concerned with developing a pool of Judaic studies teachers for these non-denominational schools. As Pardes is an open institution where Jews from a wide range of backgrounds meet over the study of Jewish text, it provided a good training ground for teachers who would teach text to students from diverse backgrounds, in schools whose mission is to accommodate and celebrate diversity. Other critical aspects included the centrality of serious, long-term, in-depth text study (tailored to the level of the individual student), the importance of Israel and Hebrew language, and an emphasis on Jewish community. These are essential components of the training of Judaic studies teachers, beyond the educational theory, applied pedagogy, reflective practice, and subject matter expertise integral to any serious teacher training program.

There is a real concern on the part of the North American Jewish educational community as to how to teach Israel and how to make it a part of one’s Jewish identity. Spending two years in Israel allows educators to get to know Israel both as idealistic homeland and challenged state, and to struggle with their own relationship with Israel in preparation for facilitating discussion in day school classrooms. Israel also provides a natural venue for learning Hebrew. Living in Jerusalem allows future Judaic studies teachers to participate in varied prayer frameworks, to face the secular-religious divide, and to experience the Jewish calendar of Shabbat and holidays in an intense and all-encompassing manner.

Taking participants out of their normal environment makes it possible to structure a program that has maximum impact. Being part of the larger Pardes community exposes the educators to many different kinds of Jews. Planning various prayer options (or a no-prayer option), participating in a community Shabbaton, and learning with a havruta partner who had different beliefs and observances helps students broaden their

Dr. Judy Markose is the director of the Pardes Educators Program. She can be reached at judy@pardes.org.il.

Dr. Susan Wall is the director of the Pardes Educators Alumni Support Project. She can be reached at susan@pardes.org.il.
understanding of “the other.” Informal education is modeled and experienced regularly through tzedakah projects, ti-yulim (hikes), holiday events, visits to teachers’ homes, and even the weekly community lunch. Collegiality is encouraged through varied cohort interaction, including shared Israel experiences and peer collaboration and critique.

In terms of content knowledge, the program seeks to achieve balance between “depth” and “breadth” in the study of texts. The Pardes approach of in-depth learning, using the havruta method, allows students to develop a passion for text study in a Beit Midrash setting, guided by teachers who themselves have a passion for both text and teaching. At the same time, PEP recognizes the importance of exposing students to a broad range of text study, and thus survey courses and independent study are added to the program. In response to feedback from the field, opportunities are provided to develop expertise in areas such as tefillah and holiday programming, preparing our future teachers to take on leadership roles in their day schools.

In 2008, the Jim Joseph Foundation began to fund the Pardes Educators Alumni Support Project to provide more deliberate assistance to PEP graduates, to identify successful models of practice and to learn how to keep novice teachers in the profession. The Alumni Support Project offers a fall retreat in North America and a two-week Summer Curriculum Workshop, in Israel, for novice teachers to develop units and courses (open also to non-PEP novice teachers). Additional support currently includes school visits, conference calls, individual assistance and intervention, a listserv, and a professional newsletter.

**THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL IN NEW TEACHER INDUCTION**

There are schools that are models of excellence; they truly “get it” in terms of what novice teachers need. These schools stand behind their first year teachers (even in the face of initial parental concern) and do everything possible to help novices succeed.

That support begins with the composition of the classes they are asked to teach; the number of courses, preps, and duties assigned; as well as the physical space in which they teach. We have seen schools that make sure that first year teachers have no more than two or three different subjects to prepare (as opposed to five preps) and fewer overall courses to teach. The extra expense of fewer courses in Year One may be very cost effective in the long run, helping novice teachers to succeed.

New teachers are sometimes inadvertently undermined by being in rooms that make classroom control challenging. New teachers may be given the most difficult classes that none of the more veteran teachers wanted to tackle. What are the chances these novices can succeed beyond their more experienced colleagues?

Most of the schools promise mentors to novice teachers, but surveys revealed that the school’s definition of what mentoring was, and the quality of mentor provided, varied from institution to institution. What is the requisite scenario? Novice teachers need mentors whose schedules allow them to meet with and observe their mentees teaching on a regular basis. These mentors need to be trained and paid and should not be the novice’s supervisor. Mentoring should continue beyond year one. Novices need the opportunity to continue to grow as teachers, certainly well into their second year of teaching.

Most schools are working to develop a Judaic studies curriculum, which will offer stability even in years of staff turnover. As novice teachers go out to teach, few are given goals, enduring understandings, standards and benchmarks, suggested assessments, and so on—elements that are standard protocol for general studies teachers. Some are given total freedom to develop units and courses. The latter may sound attractive to new teachers, who cherish the sense of independence and initiative. That sense disappears very quickly. In hiring and preparing new teachers, schools must understand that all teachers, and especially novices, need ample advance time to prepare, and benefit from the support and expertise of experienced professionals in developing good curriculum.

We want novice teachers to feel confidence, but at the same time, it is important to warn them that they cannot be “great” in their first year.

New teachers are sometimes inadverently undermined by being in rooms that make classroom control challenging. New teachers may be given the most difficult classes that none of the more veteran teachers wanted to tackle. What are the chances these novices can succeed beyond their more experienced colleagues?

Most of the schools promise mentors to novice teachers, but surveys revealed that the school’s definition of what mentoring was, and the quality of mentor provided, varied from institution to institution. What is the requisite scenario? Novice teachers need mentors whose schedules allow them to meet with and observe their mentees teaching on a regular basis. These mentors need to be trained and paid and should not be the novice’s supervisor. Mentoring should continue beyond year one. Novices need the opportunity to continue to grow as teachers, certainly well into their second year of teaching.

Most schools are working to develop a Judaic studies curriculum, which will offer stability even in years of staff turnover. As novice teachers go out to teach, few are given goals, enduring understandings, standards and benchmarks, suggested assessments, and so on—elements that are standard protocol for general studies teachers. Some are given total freedom to develop units and courses. The latter
Here is abundant empirical and documented evidence that we need more highly competent Jewish educators in both Judaics and Judaic-specific pedagogy for our day and supplemental schools. To this point in time, the Jewish community has not created a comprehensive, longitudinal and institutionalized structure for recruiting, developing and retaining Jewish educators. However, there is an obvious and elegant solution to this challenge: the implementation of an eight stage career development ladder for students and teachers in our Jewish day schools. This developmental ladder would begin in kindergarten, continue through middle and high school, extend through college and graduate school, and be fully implemented in our Jewish day schools.

Before explaining the career development ladder, here are some relevant research findings on the efficacy of cross-age mentoring where older students tutor and teach their younger classmates.

**Research Findings on the Effects of Cross-Age Tutoring on Academic Performance**

In his analysis of school-based cross-age mentoring programs, Michael Karchner explains that there is increasing evidence that these programs have positive effects on both mentors and mentees (the students being mentored). More specifically his study indicates that when older students are trained and supervised to tutor and teach younger schoolmates both the mentor and the mentee achieve significant results including: improvement in school academic performance; higher personal aspirations; improved self-confidence and self-control; enhanced cooperation within both the school and the family and increased trust and respect for adults.

These results are best realized when the following conditions exist: (a) mentoring has an academic or instructional focus; (b) the mentor and the mentee are properly matched, not randomly formed. The mentor is highly motivated, knowledgeable in the content area needed by the mentee and be at least two years older than the mentee; (c) the mentor is trained and supervised by a seasoned teacher or supervisor who knows the strengths of the mentor and the instructional needs of the mentee; (d) the mentor-mentee relationship is carefully and regularly monitored and evaluated and (e) scheduled time for instructional mentoring is provided by the school.

Accordingly, beginning in kindergarten students who require additional support would be tutored by trained upper elementary, middle and high school students. While in the eighth grade, selected students would be trained to serve as madrachim or teaching assistants and role models in the classroom. During high school a cadre of highly motivated and academically strong eleventh graders would receive instruction in Judaics and Judaic-specific pedagogy. They would then become student and co-teachers in their senior year. A more elaborate explanation of the eight stage career development ladder follows.

**The Eight Stage Career Development Ladder for Students and Teachers**

**Stage One: The tutor stage**: The student tutor assists younger students who...
need additional assistance. High performing, knowledgeable, motivated, upper elementary school students with good interpersonal skills work with younger students to strengthen their general and Judaic academic skills (i.e. reciting the Hebrew alphabet, saying the prayers, practicing conversation Hebrew, etc.). These student tutors are trained and regularly monitored by the classroom teacher (mohor or morah) or supervisor to assess the performance and progress of the tutor and the student being served.

Stage Two: The madrich or madricha stage: The madrich or madricha is an 8th, 9th or 10th grader who is invited by a classroom teacher (i.e., the madrich teacher; refer to stage six) to serve as a teaching assistant and role model in the madrich teacher’s classroom. The madrich teacher is expected to have received enhanced training on how to utilize the services of the madrich/madricha in order to maximize learning in the classroom.

During stage two the madrich/madricha will be mentored to perform these kinds of administrative responsibilities: Setting up the classroom, taking attendance, collecting tzedaka; distributing supplies, books, and other materials, preparing snacks, correcting students’ work; managing progress charts, preparing materials for upcoming activities, reorganizing the classroom at the end of the day; temporarily taking charge of the class if the teacher is indisposed, teaching a five minute mini-lesson to a small group or the entire class and participating in and leading portions of a prayer service.

As madrichim these teaching assistants and role models would assume these types of interactive responsibilities: Greeting students as they enter the classroom, helping students with art projects and assisting students with class work, leading students in small-group activities, explaining transitions between activities; reading stories to the class, and mentoring students who have difficulty focusing during instruction.

The madrichim would also perform these examples of creative responsibilities: Creating bulletin boards, making samples for upcoming art projects; developing costumes, scenery or puppets for class performances; editing student-centered newspapers and providing musical accompaniment to prayer services.

During the 11th grade selected madrichim would receive coursework in Judaics (i.e., Tanakh, Jewish History, Tefillah, Chagim, Israel, Hebrew, Middot, etc.) and Judaic-specific pedagogy (e.g. lesson planning, models of teaching, classroom management, student behavioral management, traditional and performance assessment, learning styles, multiple intelligences and reaching all students, etc.). This coursework could be taken within the regular school schedule as a service learning or mitzvah project, or be a component of a mentoring or independent study program. Alternatively, madrichim could receive this specialized instruction after school and earn college credit. For example, seniors at Barrack Hebrew Academy can earn college credit through Gratz College for receiving coursework in Judaics and Judaic instruction.

Stage Three: The student teacher stage: At the end of the 11th grade, a select group of madrichim who have successfully passed the coursework in Judaics and Judaic pedagogy are invited to become student teachers during the twelfth grade. During the first semester of their high school senior year, in addition to performing the duties of the madrich/madricha, each student teacher will have an enhanced responsibility. He or she will now be observing, reflecting and doing some small group teaching in the classroom of a trained mentor teacher (see stage seven). This first semester student teaching experience is designed to prepare the teacher candidate to become a co-teacher during the second semester. Accordingly, the student teacher is beginning to acquire the knowledge base and skills to perform these kinds of teaching responsibilities: planning lessons, determining content and curriculum (i.e. what should be taught); creating a positive classroom environment, developing multiple ways of delivering instruction and using traditional and performance assessments to determine what students have learned; managing student behavior, and collaborating with other members of the instructional staff (i.e., madrichim, co-teachers, teachers, and administrators).

Once again this student teaching experience can be folded within the service learning, independent study, career exploration or mentoring programs already present at certain day schools.

Stage Four: The co-teacher stage: During the second semester of the 12th grade, if deemed successful, the student teacher is invited to take on the role of a co-teacher. The co-teacher is a teaching intern who will now gradually assume many of the responsibilities of the...
Preparing Teachers

[CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE]
classroom teacher. Accordingly, at the beginning of the second semester, the co-teacher and his/her mentor teacher will be engaged in co-planning, co-instructing, and co-reflecting upon their learning activities. They may be engaged in team teaching where they alternate instructing the whole class, or may divide the class into small learning groups which each one directs. Upon successful completion of this stage, the co-teacher should receive a teaching certificate from the sponsoring institution indicating that he or she has met the requirements to teach at a supplemental school while attending college.

Again, this co-teaching experience can be included within the service learning, independent study, career exploration, or mentoring programs already existing at certain day schools.

Stage Five: The beginning teacher stage: The undergraduate student is now serving as a moreh or morah at a supplemental school located near his or her college. Ideally he or she is being coached by a mentor teacher during this critical novice teaching period.

Stage Six: The madrich teacher stage: A skilled and seasoned moreh or morah with at least three years of superior performance evaluations is additionally compensated for inviting the madrich/madricha to serve as a teaching assistant, student leader and role model in his/her classroom. It is expected that the madrich teacher has received staff development training or coursework in how to mentor the madrich or madricha.

At the end of the 11th grade, a select group of madrichim who have successfully passed the coursework in Judaics and Judaic pedagogy are invited to become student teachers during the twelfth grade.

Stage Seven: The mentor teacher stage: A madrich teacher with at least five years of superior teaching performance evaluations will be compensated additionally to invite and train the student and co-teacher to learn the art and science of being a Jewish educator. The mentor teacher should have received training in the core knowledge base of Judaics and Judaic instruction. In addition, the mentor teacher needs to acquire the knowledge base and repertoire in mentoring pre-service and in-service teachers (i.e., interpersonal communication, observational techniques, clinical supervision, professional reflection, the developmental stages of pre-service and in-service teachers,

Seeking Participants

When is the last time your teachers had a chance to reflect on how the Jewish past is presented to your students? What if they were given the opportunity to collaboratively re-envision how the Jewish historical experience is presented to students across the curriculum in consultation with leading scholars of the Jewish past?

Re/Presenting the Jewish Past is an innovative 18-month program designed to support teachers in transforming the teaching of Jewish history in their schools, bringing it into alignment with the school mission and enabling students to understand themselves as part of the larger arc of the Jewish experience in history.

School teams receive custom-tailored support in the form of site visits, monthly meetings with a school liaison and participation in an intensive summer workshop at NYU. Teachers have opportunity to network with colleagues from schools across North America and with scholars of Jewish history and Jewish education, as they commit to improving the teaching of Jewish history at your school.

Funded by a generous grant from the Avi Chai Foundation, Re/Presenting the Jewish Past is a project of RAJSAM in collaboration with the Network for the Teaching of Jewish History of the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development at New York University.

To find out more about how to participate in Re/Presenting the Jewish Past, please contact Yona Shem-Tov at yshemtov@ntjhistory.org.
adult learning principles, etc.).

Stage Eight: The expert teacher stage:
The expert teacher is a paid professional who trains the moreh or morah to become a madrich teacher and mentor teacher and coordinates a committee of madrich and mentor teachers in the day school. The expert teacher should have extensive experience as a teacher, administrator and/or staff developer with expertise in Judaics, and the theory, research and best practices in instruction, curriculum development, supervision and staff development for Jewish educators.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF THIS EIGHT STAGE DEVELOPMENTAL LADDER?

The eight stage development ladder described in this article is a transformational construct that requires vision, creative thinking, an openness to change, a willingness to see beyond conventional and institutional thinking, leadership, training, and the financial resources for implementation.

With the implementation of this transformational model, there are several potential beneficial outcomes that can be realized.

In competition with high performing public schools, the Jewish day school must not only provide an excellent academic and Judaic studies program, but also offer other initiatives not generally available in the public schools. Accordingly, this model offers day school students an opportunity to serve as peer tutors, peer mentors, teaching assistants, and student teachers.

In an age with a multitude of choices, this model offers teenagers and young adults an opportunity to remain affiliated with the Jewish community during a critical period in their personal and professional development. Talented, knowledgeable, and motivated eleventh-grade high school students in a Jewish day school will be trained in Judaics and Judaic-specific pedagogy. These teaching candidates who successfully complete student teaching in their senior year can be certified to teach at a supplemental school while attending college. Moreover, this additional training can only enhance their credentials when applying to college.

This model provides a new differentiated staff development track for Jewish educators who wish to be trained as madrich teachers, mentor teachers, and expert teachers. With increased responsibility, these educators can expect to receive additional compensation.

At a time where there is a shortage of well trained and knowledgeable Jewish educators, this eight-stage career development model provides a comprehensive, longitudinal, and institutionalized vehicle to recruit, develop, and retain excellent teachers and administrators for our day schools.

Conclusion

For some time, parents, school administrators, educators, researchers, and related Jewish institutional representatives have been searching for a vehicle to keep our students connected to the Jewish community. Concomitantly, there is a compelling need to find, nurture, promote and retain more highly competent teachers trained in Judaics and Judaic-specific pedagogy in our day and supplemental schools. This article suggests that we can meet these challenges through implementing an eight stage developmental ladder.
Training Students to Become Jewish Educators

by Ari Y. Goldberg and Ruth Schapira

Many college students hold teaching positions in Jewish supplementary schools. These eager young people are enthusiastic, have fresh ideas about Jewish education, and are instant role models for younger students. They build their resumes with real work experience in a field they may enter in the future and earn salaries well above what their friends are earning for what seems to be far fewer hours. A more perfect match could not be possible. So, what is the problem?

Too often, the majority of these students have little preparation for this endeavor other than their own experience as young students in a religious school classroom. Lacking the pedagogic foundation for their work, they may flounder unnecessarily. Once hired and on the job, there may not be any training to fill in those gaps. In a worst case scenario, if the experience has been less than enjoyable and fulfilling, that young person will not likely seek another teaching position. This experience may reinforce every negative memory they themselves have had in a similar environment. In addition, the overriding message to the wider community is that there are no “real” requirements beyond personal experience to enter the field of Jewish education.

JESNA’S recently released Educators in Jewish Schools Study (EJSS) empirically demonstrates what Jewish school administrators have known for quite awhile, namely that there is currently a shortage of fully qualified educators in Jewish day and supplementary schools in North America. If current trends continue, we may face a critical teacher shortage (in terms of absolute/actual number of teachers) in the next 10 to 20 years… [W]ithout a sufficient pool of qualified educators it will be impossible to create and deliver the effective, innovative Jewish education that Jewish community leaders and parents are demanding and that the Jewish community needs to develop and thrive.

The recent upsurge in communal recommendations and initiatives to improve recruitment and retention of professionals to enter the field of Jewish education responds to this issue. In particular, pre-service programs which encourage young people to enter the field offer a practical response to the issues mentioned earlier. While most of these initiatives are relatively recent, Gratz College, as the first trans-denominational Jewish college in the United States, boasts a long history of preparing high school students for careers in Jewish education and other positions of Jewish communal leadership.

Since the inception of the Jewish Community High School of Gratz College (JCHS) over 20 years ago, JCHS has offered a Teaching Certificate Program which has graduated well over 1000 students. These students must fulfill core requirements in Hebrew and Judaica, as well as a college-level Introduction to Jewish Education course. Since JCHS is a division of Gratz College, academic credit is offered for all courses, and Community Teaching Certificates have the integrity of being part of a serious program of academic studies.

We consistently receive feedback that our Teaching Certificate recipients have been tremendous assets as teachers in religious schools nationwide. It is not surprising that a good number of these undergraduate students have ultimately chosen career paths in Jewish education and communal service.

Of particular interest to readers of HaYidion is JCHS’s 20+ year relationship with the Barrack Hebrew Academy (formerly Akiba) in suburban Philadelphia. These students have received a stellar Jewish education at Barrack and as such have fulfilled the Judaica and Hebrew requirements for the Community Teaching Certificate. At Barrack, the yearlong Introduction to Education course is offered to seniors as an extracurricular course under the auspices of JCHS. While the students take the course on-site at Barrack, they connect with local synagogues for
the course practicum. By the end of the year, these students have a sufficient familiarity with educational methodology to prepare them as entry-level teachers in Jewish supplementary schools.

The advantages of this are manifold: Students

1. participate in a college-level course of study which provides a pedagogic foundation for their work.

2. gain practical experience in a synagogue school setting, providing real application to their classroom studies.

3. report their experiences in a supportive classroom setting, and gain crucial feedback in improving their work.

4. network and share with other teens, expanding their knowledge of other synagogue environments.

5. connect with Education Directors at the host synagogue, who may then provide guidance and recommendations for work in the future.

6. strengthen their pluralistic outlook, since the synagogues in which they are working represent several Judaic movements, and the students gain knowledge about how this plays out in a classroom setting as well.

The overriding message to the wider community is that there are no “real” requirements beyond personal experience to enter the field of Jewish education.

7. may be paid for their work in the synagogue, depending upon the custom of the community.

8. are role models. By taking the education class leading to a Teaching Certificate, we make the statement that one needs to study in order to teach.

9. earn a JCHS Community Teaching Certificate which is an asset for the students’ college resumé.

10. may transfer the course credits earned for college credit. Colleges and universities that accept these credits are listed at www.gratz.edu/jchs.

Though the Introduction to Education course practicum, as well as the teaching experience while in college, will be in a supplementary school setting, we are setting the stage for these young people to have more meaningful and successful educational experiences which may well lead them to careers in a Jewish day school. To paraphrase the The Lion King, this can be the Jewish educational circle of life for your day school graduate!

William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education

Master’s and Doctoral Programs

Are you looking to deepen your knowledge of Jewish Education?

Do you want to enhance your credentials and engage with your colleagues?

Study with the largest Jewish education faculty outside Israel.

THE DAVIDSON SCHOOL—the preeminent institution in Jewish education in North America—has MA and EdD programs to suit your needs and fit your schedule.

The Master’s Program offers three concentrations:
- Day School Education
- Synagogue School Education and Administration
- Informal and Communal Education

The Doctoral Program for aspiring scholars and professionals working in the field:
- Full-time doctoral program
- Part-time doctoral program
- The executive doctoral program

For more information on The Davidson School, please contact Ofra Backenroth at (212) 678-8812 or ofbackenroth@jtsa.edu.

Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education
www.jtsa.edu/davidson
From the White House to our house, for better and for worse, change is upon us. The major impact the down-turned economy is having on our schools could continue for years. Come to the RAVSAK Annual Leadership Conference—the only major day school gathering this year—and take away gigabytes of concrete information about what your school can do not only to weather change but to thrive.

**Conference Highlights**

**Day School Economic Summit**
Featuring presentations by leading economists, financial planners, investors, and funders

**Admissions and Retention**
Strategy sessions

**Financial Models for Schools**
Workshops

**Critical Examination**
Of Hebrew and tefillah education

**Small School Symposium**

**Special High School Sessions**

**Live Telecast of Presidential Inauguration**

**Early Bird Registration Extended!**
Register now: www.ravsak.org/conference
**Presenters Include:**

- **CHARLOTTE ABRAMSON**, Project Director, AviChai Jewish Day School Standards & Benchmarks Program
- **ERIC AMAR**, Consultant, former day school administrator, and PEJE coach
- **RABBI NACHUM AMSEL**, Director of Educational Programming, Destiny Foundation
- **NORA ANDERSON**, Head of School, Westchester/Fairfield Hebrew Academy
- **MICHAEL BLACHER**, Esq., Associate Attorney, Liebert, Cassidy, Whitmore
- **JONATHAN CANNON**, Head of School, Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School
- **MATT CHANOFF**, Co-Director, Profounder LLC
- **RABBI JOSHUA ELKIN**, Executive Director, PEJE
- **RABBI STEVE FREEDMAN**, Head of School, Hillel Day School of Metropolitan Detroit
- **DR. SCOTT GOLDBERG**, Director, Fayna Gottesfeld Heller Division of Doctoral Studies, Yeshiva University
- **ESTEE SOLOMON GRAY**, Founding Partner, Congruity
- **MARIASHI GRONER**, Director, Charlotte Jewish Day School
- **AIMEE GRUBER**, Field Staff, Secondary School Admission Testing
- **FELICIA HERMAN**, Executive Director, Natan
- **DR. JOEL HOFFMAN**, Director of Education, Temple Israel of Northern Westchester
- **MICHAEL KAY**, Director of Judaic Studies, Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School
- **ANNE-MARIE KEE**, Executive Director, Canadian Educational Standards Institute
- **LARRY KLEIGMAN**, Middle School Director/Assistant HOS, Abraham Joshua Heschel Day School
- **DR. MARC KRAMER**, Executive Director, RAVSAK
- **SACHA LITMAN**, Principal Consultant, Measuring Success
- **JIM McMANUS**, Executive Director, California Association of Independent Schools
- **RANDALL R. MAYCOCK**, Partner, Roof Eidam & Maycock
- **DAN NILES**, CEO, Neuberger Berman
- **JEFF PAIKIN**, Chair, Canadian Educational Standards Institute
- **DR. ALEX POMSON**, Senior Lecturer, Melton Centre for Jewish Education
- **DR. WENDY ROSEMAN**, Director of the Berman Center of Research and Evaluation for Jewish Education at JESNA
- **FRAN URMAN**, Project Director, Day School Leadership Training Institute
- **BETTY WINN**, Head of School, Abraham Joshua Heschel Day School

**Hot Topics Include:**

- **Leadership and Change**
  - The Paradox of Pluralism: Crafting Community Amidst Diversity
- **Weathering a Crisis: Lessons Learned**
  - The Next 10 Years: Where the World is Taking Us
- **Education as a Commodity and How This Changes Everything We Think We Know About School Leadership**
  - Changing How We Give Feedback
  - Evaluation as a Driver for Change
  - Changing How and What We Think About Tefillah
- **Admission’s Changing Landscape**
  - Judaics Directors: Are You Delivering a Product or Leading a Process?
  - Facilitating a Change Process in Your Board and School
- **Special Needs and the Future of Day Schools**
- **Using Logic Models to Support Educational Change**
- **This is Your Brain on Hebrew: How Children of All Ages Learn Languages**
- **Technology and How We Teach Today and Will Teach in the Future**
- **Multiyear Financial Aid Plans**
  - Video Conferencing in Jewish Education
  - Legal Issues, FMLA and Crisis Management
  - What Young Funders Want
    - Benchmarks/Standards for TaNaKh
    - How Evidence Can Sustain Change in Your School
- **From Whole New Mind to Whole New School**

**Hot Topics Include:**

- **Leadership and Change**
  - The Paradox of Pluralism: Crafting Community Amidst Diversity
- **Weathering a Crisis: Lessons Learned**
  - The Next 10 Years: Where the World is Taking Us
- **Education as a Commodity and How This Changes Everything We Think We Know About School Leadership**
  - Changing How We Give Feedback
  - Evaluation as a Driver for Change
  - Changing How and What We Think About Tefillah
- **Admission’s Changing Landscape**
  - Judaics Directors: Are You Delivering a Product or Leading a Process?
  - Facilitating a Change Process in Your Board and School
- **Special Needs and the Future of Day Schools**
- **Using Logic Models to Support Educational Change**
- **This is Your Brain on Hebrew: How Children of All Ages Learn Languages**
- **Technology and How We Teach Today and Will Teach in the Future**
- **Multiyear Financial Aid Plans**
  - Video Conferencing in Jewish Education
  - Legal Issues, FMLA and Crisis Management
  - What Young Funders Want
    - Benchmarks/Standards for TaNaKh
    - How Evidence Can Sustain Change in Your School
- **From Whole New Mind to Whole New School**
School-Based Induction Helps New Teachers Thrive

by Sharon Feiman-Nemser and Vivian Troen

By necessity, Jewish day schools pay a lot of attention to teacher recruitment, but the other side of the coin, retention, gets short shrift. In fact, when it comes to teacher retention, Jewish day schools are like leaky swimming pools: we keep pouring more in at the top, while neglecting to fix the hole in the bottom. Years of research have shown that, in public schools, 30% to 50% of teachers leave the classroom after their first three years. The 2008 JES-NA Educators in Jewish Schools Study confirms that Jewish schools aren’t doing much better in keeping our most valued teachers. What are we doing wrong? Or, perhaps more appropriately, what are we not doing at all?

We have traditionally assumed that new teachers arrive in the classroom fully formed, even though common sense tells us otherwise. In reality, many of the important things new teachers need to know can only be learned in the context of teaching. Who are my students? What am I supposed to teach? How will my teaching and their learning be judged? But most day schools are not set up to support teacher learning, and new teachers usually struggle alone.

This is a failure on several levels. The amount of money invested in education, preparation, and recruitment that flies out the window every time a teacher leaves the classroom is about 33 percent of the first year’s salary for each replacement, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. But the greater failure is immeasurable—and our children pay the price. Those teachers who struggle on, in spite of the obstacles, often survive on a combination of grit and determination (and sometimes economic need), but not often enough on the basis of strong teaching practice. Under those conditions, mediocrity can become an acceptable norm.

Altering this norm is central to the mission of the Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education at Brandeis University, dedicated to improving the quality of teaching and learning in Jewish educational settings. The Center generates knowledge that can directly improve practice, developing model programs for Jewish educators, and shaping public and professional discourse in the field.

The DeLeT Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program prepares college graduates and mid-career changers to teach general and Judaic studies in the elementary grades in Jewish day schools. It consists of two summers of study on campus and a yearlong internship in a local day school under the guidance of an experienced mentor teacher.

The first DeLeT graduates entered Jewish day school classrooms in 2003, and before long follow-up surveys revealed that even some of the best students were struggling, despite their strong initial preparation. Many of the problems the graduates experienced stemmed from problematic working conditions: the wrong teaching assignment, no curriculum, no explicit basis for teacher assessment, limited access to more experienced colleagues.

This motivated us to launch an induction partnership with partial funding from the Covenant Foundation to help a group of local day schools put in place the elements of strong school-based induction while studying the factors that support or constrain this change process. We theorized that the best way to institutionalize strong induction in Jewish day schools was to build institutional capacity.

We identified the elements of strong, school-based induction and designed an intervention that combined capaci-
ity building and documentation in each school with opportunities for cross-school interaction. Based on the literature, our own experience as researchers and school-based teacher educators, and what we learned through our collaboration with Induction Partnership schools, we identified six elements of strong, school-based induction.

- A proactive school leader committed to new teacher success
- Early, information-rich hiring practices
- A summer orientation
- Complete curricula
- Formal and informal opportunities for new teachers to learn with and from colleagues
- Formative teaching assessments that inform mentoring and rehiring decisions

We also developed a model that required schools to identify an “induction leader” and assign a mentor to each new teacher and that required the Center to provide each school with an on-site coach/documenter and to offer regular workshops to induction leaders and mentors. Over a two year period, the coach worked with the head of school, the induction leader, and the mentors while gathering data about the school’s efforts to move toward strong school-based induction practices. The Partnership convened induction leaders on a monthly basis and provided workshops for mentors each year.

Now in its fourth year, the Mandel Center Induction Partnership includes five Boston-area Jewish elementary day schools (which have all hired graduates of the DeLeT MAT program), and one high school.

From working in a range of school cultures and organizational structures, we realized that each coach has to adjust her strategy to the realities of the particular school. In one school, for example, the coach worked mostly with the induction leader, co-leading discussions with beginning teachers and with mentor teachers, while in another, the coach began by interviewing new teachers to find out how they were faring and to help school leaders develop a plan to address the new teachers’ learning needs.

- Regardless of starting points and strategies, coaches’ practice was guided by a set of shared understandings about
  - the school’s mission and vision of good teaching
  - the nature of teaching as complex, intellectual work and the belief that

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 63]
Inducting Teachers

A Ritual for Welcoming Teachers to Community Day Schools

by Rabbi Jill Hammer

One of the most important moments of transition is entry into a new community. This is one of the reasons Jews, and cultures all over the world, have rituals to welcome babies into the human family, and to welcome adolescents into the realm of adulthood. Creating ritual to address new situations has occurred throughout Jewish history, and has been one of the gifts of contemporary creative Jewish life. In that spirit, RAVSAK invited me to invent a ritual for welcoming new teachers into day schools. I’m very pleased to explore this ceremonial opportunity in the pages of HaYidion.

When a new teacher enters a learning environment, that person brings new resources for the students and other teachers: warmth, knowledge, connection and leadership. There is also anxiety, both for the person entering and for the people who are accepting this new member of their tribe. Ritual can celebrate all the gifts that arrive with each new teacher, and soothe the nervousness of new and unfamiliar faces. A formal welcome serves as a doorway: a distinct moment in time when a newly hired teacher transitions to being a part of the school community.

For this reason, it is wise for a community day school to invest time and effort in creating an opening ceremony that welcomes new teachers. This ceremony could be a part of a larger ritual welcoming new students, or it could stand on its own. The following is one example of such a welcoming ritual, but there could be many ways to welcome new teachers into a school with celebration.

My experience in creating ritual is that a good ritual is relatively simple, has a clear message, and draws on traditional ideas and symbols but also contains newness and surprise. An effective ritual has a beginning, middle, and end, during which the people being celebrated, and the larger group, undergo a transition. A good ritual invites the participation of the community so that every person present has a stake in the ritual’s outcome. These are principles I’ve tried to follow in the ritual below, and which you can use to create your own ritual if the one below doesn’t suit your school or community.

A note about timing: most teachers will be entering Jewish day schools around the time of the new year. A school may want to enhance the drama of this presentation by beginning the assembly with the blowing of the shofár. Apples and honey at the end of the ritual are also a nice allusion to the new year.

This ritual is brief, on the order of twenty to forty minutes. If you’d like to expand the ritual, a drash on teaching and learning, followed by Kaddish deRabbanan, would be appropriate. Or, if you’d like to shorten the ritual, some elements can be removed.

Having learned so much from my own teachers, I offer this ceremony to honor them, as well as all the new teachers that soon will be welcomed into schools. May the new instructors who enter our communities bring us blessing, and find blessing through learning with us.

Welcoming Ritual:

(An opening song such as Hineh mah tov would be appropriate.)

Leader:

Pirkei Avot, the teachings of our sages, tells us that Moses passed down Torah to Joshua, and Joshua to his students, and Joshua’s students to their students. Each teacher has a unique gift of knowledge to offer our students, and each of our students has unique gifts to offer our teachers. Whenever a teacher enters a classroom, there are new opportunities to learn.

We welcome _________ (names) who
May you, our new teachers, kindle the light of learning brightly for every one of your students, and may their conversations with you bring all of us new light.

(Light one candle to represent each of the new teachers. Students can do this, in order to fulfill the passage above.)

**A VETERAN TEACHER:**

In Jewish tradition, a mezuzah scroll containing wisdom from the Torah is placed on a doorway so that those entering and leaving will be mindful of sacred truth. We want to present each of you with this mezuzah as a reminder that each of you will be a doorway for others to learn, and each of you will be opening doors for your students, colleagues and fellow teachers.

It is said that the teaching of the mezuzah is that “nothing lasts forever except knowledge of the Eternal.” May you give the lasting gift of knowledge that is the most precious and lasting thing we can pass on to our students.

(New teachers are introduced to the school by a teacher or administrator and are presented with the mezuzot as gifts. If desired, this mezuzah can be used for the new teacher’s classroom. If there is time, this is a moment for the new teachers to say a few words.)

Note: If a mezuzah is not a desirable gift because of expense or for some other reason, teachers can be given a spicebox or a bag of fragrant spices with the following statement:

In Jewish tradition, we use spices at the end of the Sabbath to acknowledge that a new week is beginning. Just as each spice adds a new fragrance to the whole, so may your teachings add new wisdom to our community.

**COMMUNITY RECITES:**

May all of our teachers be blessed with peace, kindness, good relationships with students, parents, and colleagues, good health, sustenance, and a long life of learning and discovery. May they and all of us find joy in the work of study, and may we support one another fully as a community of learners. May we be a blessing to one another. (based on Kaddish deRabbanan)

**LEADER:**

The Shulchan Arukh tells us that “every community must appoint teachers, for the world exists only through the breath of schoolchildren.” (Shulchan Arukh, Yoreh Deah 245:7)

Your presence in our school helps us to fulfill our commitment to study. We hope your example will inspire our students to justice, kindness, and the fulfillment of their full potential as human beings. The Talmud advises us to get ourselves a teacher and acquire for ourselves a friend. We know you will be both.

There is a custom of presenting new students with honey on the first day of school so that their learning will be sweet. We conclude our ritual with sweetness, in the hope that our learning together will be sweet.

(Teachers should pass out apples and honey if it is the new year, or some other appropriate sweet if it is a different season.)

**CLOSING SONG:**

Debbie Friedman’s Kaddish deRabbanan, which begins “For our teachers and their students, and the students of their students, we ask for peace and loving-kindness…” would be an ideal closing for this ceremony, but any joyful closing song or niggun would be appropriate.
Board Members Take Note: Investing in Teacher Development Pays Dividends

by Sarah Birkeland

One of the most powerful investments a school can make is in developing its teachers’ skills and knowledge. Ample research confirms what we all know from experience: some teachers are more effective at helping students learn than others. In fact, a recent study showed that the quality of a teacher’s instruction is the most important factor in a student’s academic achievement, more important even than that student’s past achievement. Said differently, even students who have struggled in the past can make great learning strides with a highly skilled teacher.

Effective teaching requires knowledge of the content one is teaching, but it also requires practical knowledge—knowledge expressed in doing. Research further demonstrates that what teachers gain in preparation programs only carries them so far. Teachers learn how to teach by doing it, experiencing a steep learning curve during the first five years on the job. The opportunities for professional learning available to them during those first years profoundly affect the kinds of teachers they become. When new teachers receive intensive on-the-job support they improve more rapidly and ultimately become more effective teachers than when they do not.

Since student learning is at the very heart of our schools’ missions, promoting the development of teachers’ practice should be school leaders’ primary concern. Yet many Jewish day schools maintain outdated practices of professional development, behaving as if brand new teachers should be expert from their first day on the job, and treating ongoing teacher learning as an afterthought. One aspect of the problem is the way school communities understand and value teacher learning. Another is the way teacher professional development typically is structured and funded. As leaders in their communities, day school board members are in a powerful position to affect both.

Here are three recommendations for board members who wish to invest in the development of excellent teaching at their schools.

Recommendation #1: Spread the Word

It may seem counterintuitive, but one of the most important investments a board can make in the quality of its teachers is a non-economic one—good news in the current economy! Board members can deeply influence the quality of teaching in their day schools, over time, by promoting a school culture that acknowledges the intellectual complexity of teachers’ work and the importance of regarding teachers as learners. While many readers may find those values easy to embrace, they are deeply countercultural, challenging long-held assumptions in society about the profession of teaching and the people who enter it.

In the Mandel Center’s Induction Partnership Project at Brandeis University, we have spent the past three years helping Jewish day schools attend to the ongoing learning of their teachers while simultaneously studying the results. Again and again, we have been struck by the ways in which individual schools’ cultures mediate teachers’ growth. We have come to believe that teachers thrive in schools where all community members understand that teaching is complex work, learning to do it well takes time and guided practice, and faculty members are all responsible for helping one another learn.

We have seen that in such schools teachers are likely to work hard on improving their own instruction and invest in developing the skills of their newly hired colleagues. Administrators are likely to cast themselves in supportive roles, marshalling available resources to help teachers who...
are struggling. And parents are sometimes willing to see novice teachers’ early missteps as important learning opportunities rather than cause for immediate dismissal. The presence of these shared understandings about teacher learning are powerful not only because they affect how teachers, administrators, and parents behave, but also because when leaders in the school community deeply value teacher learning, the resources necessary to create powerful learning opportunities tend to follow.

Board members are in a unique position to foster these shared understandings. Board members are chosen as decision makers because they hold others’ respect; their words and actions help set the tone for a school community. As a board member, you can make a small but critical difference in your school by consistently communicating to other members of the community that teaching is complex work, learning to do it well takes time, and school policies should be designed accordingly. Help the people around you appreciate the fact that excellent teaching requires a vast store of skills and knowledge. Remind them that master teachers are not only deeply familiar with the content they teach, but they understand how to break it down into ideas that are accessible to children. They anticipate common misconceptions and address them before they cause confusion. They develop strategies for conveying concepts in pictures, words, sounds and movement to accommodate different learning styles. They continually assess student learning and adjust instruction accordingly. And that is only the tip of the iceberg: every day, excellent teachers engage in community building, public speaking, conflict resolution, and data analysis. They are ambassadors, detectives, counselors, and traffic cops.

Common sense tells us that a person could not learn and integrate all of those skills overnight or on one’s own. It is a long, sometimes painful learning curve. If your community members remain unconvinced, ask them to consider other complex endeavors like conducting an orchestra or flying a jumbo jet. We wouldn’t put an inexperienced conductor alone in front of a symphony orchestra, just as we would not ask an aerospace engineering major with no flying experience to pilot a plane full of passengers. We would expect them to learn over time, with guidance from experienced colleagues and many, many opportunities to practice. Why should teaching be any different? When we expect novice teachers to perform just like their experienced colleagues, we are usually disappointed. And when we leave our teachers to sink or swim on their own, ultimately the students suffer.

[CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE]
Recommendation #2: Invest in an Array of Supports for New Teachers

Because the first few years on the job represent a vulnerable period for teachers, as a time when they are both teaching and learning how to teach, it is critical to provide them with intensive support. New teachers need help navigating their new environments, learning to use the school’s curricula or preferred instructional approaches, designing coherent lessons, and delivering those lessons effectively. Therefore, a thoughtful investment in new teachers’ development may require budgeting for a thorough orientation to school policies and practices; targeted professional development in the school’s curricula or teaching philosophy; access to curricula and materials for every course they teach; and mentoring from experienced colleagues.

Mentoring is often implemented as a support for novice teachers, and it can be a very powerful mechanism for their learning. However, like so many other things, mentoring is not worth doing if not done well. Simply assigning an experienced, effective teacher to each novice is not enough. Mentors need training in how to observe someone else’s practice and give feedback about instruction. They need ongoing support in navigating the challenges of shepherding another person’s practice, for example, in the form of a mentor study group.

When we leave our teachers to sink or swim on their own, ultimately the students suffer.

Teaching is traditionally an isolated endeavor, and if we want mentors and mentees to work together on improving classroom instruction, then they must have frequent, regularly scheduled opportunities to see one another teach and discuss what they see. Schools are busy places and teachers’ work days are often hectic; if school leaders do not protect space for those observations and discussions they simply will not happen. Creating regular release time for teacher collaboration can be accomplished, to a point, with creative scheduling. However, ultimately it often requires hiring additional personnel, at a cost.

These supports for new teachers, from a well-planned orientation to an effectively structured mentoring program, are a natural expression of the beliefs that teaching is complex work, learning to do it well takes time, and faculty members are all responsible for helping one another learn. Putting such supports in place can also help develop those understandings in a school community by signaling the value that leaders place on the ongoing development of teacher practice. Therefore, rather than waiting for schoolwide beliefs about teacher learning to take hold and then creating induction supports, it makes sense to invest in both simultaneously: spread the word and invest in induction. The results will reinforce one another, increasing the yield on your investment.

Recommendation #3: Invest in Ongoing, Job-Embedded Learning for All Teachers

While research shows that teachers’ learning curves typically rise steeply for five years and then flatten out, there is nothing to indicate that such has to be the case. Anyone with classroom experience can tell you that excellence in teaching is a lifelong pursuit; even well-seasoned teachers can refine their practice, incorporate new strategies, and enrich their understanding of the content they teach. The fact that teachers do not tend to improve much after the first five years very likely says more about the kinds of learning experiences they encounter than about their potential for professional growth.

Professional development that honors the complexity of teaching, promotes ongoing learning, and encourages teachers to

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 66]
Weaving invisible Jewish threads
SuLaM Shabbaton

Phase II of Project SuLaM is about weaving the rich threads of Jewish learning undertaken by participants in Phase I into the living tapestry of the school. Original participants selected one lay and one professional colleague from their school as teammates in plotting a course to invigorate their schools with a new level of Jewish purposefulness. The new cadre of participants convened in Plantation, Florida, in late October for a chance to bond and strengthen each other in carrying out the important work of the program.

The theme of the Shabbaton was Jewish Peoplehood. Through study of sources from a wide range of historical eras and perspectives, Sulamites jumped into lively conversation over issues that are crucial to contemporary Jewish identity and the vision of community day schools. They explored biblical and Talmudic teachings on peoplehood, considered non-Jewish viewpoints and Jewish counterpoints, and dwelt upon the place of Medinat Israel within the totality of Am Yisrael. Between learning sessions, Sulamites worked in their school teams to draft an Institutional Action Plan, charting ambitious goals to accomplish during the program year. Shabbat was a time for prayer, singing, inspiration, good food and soulful connection.

Participants

**STEVE ADLEBERG, STEWART BROMBERG**
Gesher Jewish Day School (Fairfax, VA)

**NORA ANDERSON, DR. TALI ALDOUBY-SCHUCK, SARI DWEC**
Fairfield Academy (Greenwich, CT)

**SUZAN COHEN, FANNY SERNIK**
Hebrew Day School of Central Florida (Maitland, FL)

**DR. JANICE JOHNSON, DONNA TROI**
Dr. Janice Johnson, Donna Troisi, Amir Eden
Jess Schwartz College Prep (Phoenix, AZ)

**MERRILL HENDIN, JERRY SADIS**
Portland Jewish Academy (Portland, OR)

**DR. DEBORAH STARR, RACHEL WESLEY**
Heritage Academy (Longmeadow, MA)

**MARILYN SHERMAN, GAYLE GREEN, RACHEL KELLER, TAMMY FAYNE**
David Posnack Hebrew Day School (Plantation, FL)

**MIRIAM WEISSBERGER**
Hebrew School of Monterrey (Monterrey, Mexico)

Mentors

**MARIASHI GRONER**, Director, Charlotte Jewish Day (Charlotte, NC)

**RABBI ACHIYA DELOUYA**, Principal, Addlestone Hebrew Academy (Charleston, SC)

**RABBI TZVI BERKSON**, Principal Middle School Judaic Studies, Donna Klein Jewish Academy (Boca Raton, FL)

**SUSAN KOS**, Lower School Principal, Melvin J. Berman Hebrew Academy (Rockville, MD)

SuLaM is about seeing the Jewish invisible threads, connecting each other so we can support one another doing that which many would call the impossible...Jewish education.

Rabbi Achiya Delouya, Principal, Addlestone Hebrew Academy

Project SuLaM is an extraordinary opportunity for anyone who is committed to Jewish education. My SuLaM experience helped transform me from a school administrator, who happens to be Jewish, to a Jewish leader. By having the chance to study and to share experiences with colleagues, who subsequently have become friends, I have become a more knowledgeable leader and have been able to affect positive change at my school.

Gayle Green, Middle School Principal, David Posnack Hebrew Day School
Differentiating Teachers’ Performance: Tips from the Corporate World

by Rebecca Cole Lurie

Talented people are what differentiate great companies from weak ones. The same is true for schools. When parents are choosing among various schools for their children’s education, they assess the talent of the teachers as well as the environment the teachers and administration create for the students. As a result, managing teachers’ performance needs to be a top priority. It is essential both to reward and recognize exceptional teachers as well as to address performance problems of those teachers who are not meeting expectations. Below are some helpful tips on doing both.

The first step you must take in managing different types of performance is to differentiate your people. You need to know which teachers fall into the following categories:

1 Star: Performance is exemplary. Consistently exceeds all expectations by a wide margin.

2 Star: Performance consistently meets all expectations. Many expectations are exceeded.

3 Star: Expected level of performance is demonstrated. Consistently meets expectations.

4 Star: Performance expectations have not been met. Significant performance problems exist.

Many companies fall short in one crucial area: letting 4 star employees know that they are the top talent. While this may seem obvious, many companies choose to be vague in discussions with the most valuable team members, out of concern that the rest of the group will feel slighted. The worst case scenario is that your best teachers leave because they didn’t know how valued they were. If you want to create an environment that truly values great performers, all of the non-4 star teachers should know against whom they should model themselves to become the best.

Letting your best teachers know that they are your most valuable players is only the first step in engaging and retaining your top talent. You need to create opportunities to recognize their performance. While an easy way to do this is to differentiate their compensation, most schools do not have the funds available (although it is worth considering whether you should funnel the majority of your dollars for annual raises to your 4 star performers and create a sliding scale for the remaining teachers). The smallest gestures of appreciation and recognition go extremely far. Consider acknowledging innovative teaching ideas publicly at staff meetings. Every time a parent praises a teacher, write that teacher a note expressing your pride that he or she is a part of the school community. Schedule individual meetings with your top teachers to hear their suggestions for improvements and to understand their long term career goals. Hopefully you will be able to create a path for them to advance their careers within your school.

A crucial group of people who often get overlooked are the 2 and 3 star players. If you are successful at creating an open environment where teachers know where they stand, you should make it clear what is keeping certain teachers from being 4 star. Provide concrete feedback that they can work on and offer resources to assist them. The goal for this group of teachers is to help them move from 2 and 3 star players to 4 star. And if teachers in this group leave your school for whatever reason, you should look to replace them with 4 star teachers.

Rebecca Cole Lurie works in Human Resources for Staples, Inc. These comments represent her own views and not those of Staples. Rebecca can be reached at Rebecca.Lurie@Staples.com.
Just as it is essential to recognize your top talent, it is equally important to deal with underperforming teachers. It is not fair for your best teachers to feel as if they are getting the same praise and opportunity as those teachers who are barely getting by. It is your responsibility to clearly communicate job standards and expectations to your teachers and provide ongoing constructive feedback. When necessary, you must identify and discuss performance deficiencies. Below is a sample process you can consider following to address underperformance. It is recommended to follow this process only for teachers who have been employed by the school for 90 days. Any earlier is too soon to assess underperformance.

First counseling: This is your first conversation letting a teacher know that her or she is not meeting expectations. This can either come as a result of a specific situation about which you are concerned or a general, persistent performance problem. This should be a private conversation between you and the teacher, and you should articulate the feedback very specifically and constructively. You should spend time brainstorming how you can work together to improve performance. The teacher should be told that if the performance problem continues, a second counseling session with written backup will need to take place. You should end the conversation by agreeing to regroup in a given timeframe to see how things are progressing.

Second counseling: If the performance problem persists, you should conduct a second counseling session. It is recommended that you document the issues and review them at this meeting. The documentation should include the following information:

- Explanation/illustration of the performance problem, citing examples, dates and times, and attaching documentation, if applicable
- Clear performance expectations, including a time frame in which improvement must occur
- Support you will provide to assist the teacher in meeting the performance standards (such as regular touch-base meetings to discuss how things are going)
- Consequences if performance expectations are not met or performance problem continues

If you see improvement after the second counseling step, then you should conclude the performance counseling process. However, if the teacher’s performance dips below expectations at a later date, you can go right to the final counseling (no need to repeat steps 1 & 2).

Final counseling: At this meeting, you should provide the teacher with a document which does the following:

- Refers to previous counseling sessions, including the 1st and 2nd counseling notices, if applicable

It is not fair for your best teachers to feel as if they are getting the same praise and opportunity as those teachers who are barely getting by.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 61]
Toss the Toolbox:
Alternative Approaches to Professional Development

by Joni Kolman

When most administrators hear the term “professional development” they picture their teachers sitting in a room learning about the latest and greatest pedagogical techniques and curriculum from “experts.” The hope is that the teachers will bring back ideas from the outside world and apply them in their classrooms. This typical image is not surprising given the way professional development has historically been enacted. Many scholars consider this approach to be a narrow conception of professional development, ignoring what is known about how adults learn and what teachers need to know and do to be effective teachers. (My analysis is based largely on the work of Cochran-Smith and Lytle, Relationships of Knowledge and Practice: Teacher Learning in Community.) Here I will propose new ways of working with teachers on professional development days, to make them more apt leaders and instructors.

The “toolbox” approach is the most common form of professional development for teachers. Under this model teachers go out and gather the “best practice” strategies for developing curriculum, handling difficult classroom management situations, and pedagogical ideas for classroom application. The major assumption is that what gets put in a teacher’s “toolbox” can be applied in any classroom, with any group of students, and by any teacher who can follow a set of directions. This approach ignores much of what we know about adult learning, namely that generic staff development does not acknowledge the backgrounds, experiences, and knowledge bases of teachers and thus is often not useful, is boring, or is even patronizing.

At one professional development seminar I attended in a day school, focused on applying the Multiple Intelligences theory in the classroom, the speaker did not even acknowledge that most teachers in the room had some experience with the theory, which resulted in the great majority of the room being bored. When schools encourage a “toolbox” approach to professional development, they are not supporting their teachers in acquiring the knowledge necessary to be effective teachers and leaders. Furthermore, as the previous example demonstrates, this approach neglects the contexts in which teaching happens.

Learning theorists David Kolb, David Boud, and John Dewey argue that experience plays a fundamental role in learning in adulthood and that learning from reflection on those experiences is the most effective way for a teacher to become a better practitioner. From this perspective what teachers need to know is how to respond to the particulars of everyday life in their classrooms and schools. This sort of learning cannot happen in a toolbox professional development seminar but can be coached by expert pedagogues based on real classroom experiences. The goal is to help teachers explore how to combine pedagogy and content in a way that helps a particular group of students learn. A prefabricated program that is isolated from the actual classroom experience does not reflect how expert teachers go about varying their practice to meet the needs of the students in the classroom. It is something that can only be understood in the moment. Teachers under this model require professional development that gives them the opportunity to understand the non-explicit knowledge that expert teachers possess.
Professional development based on this conception could involve bringing in expert consultants to work with teachers within their classrooms, sending teachers out to observe expert teachers in action, or engagement in practical inquiry. Practical inquiry is a way for teachers to improve their practice by examining their day-to-day work in the classroom and then reflecting on its utility and effectiveness for meeting the needs of a particular group of students in a classroom. The ultimate goal is for teachers to become more expert in how they teach students as opposed to becoming more adept at gathering materials and reading out of teacher’s guides.

This experience-based approach to professional development is particularly useful with novice teachers and non-professionally trained teachers. Jewish day schools, because of the dual curriculum, often hire people who are inexperienced as teachers but have content knowledge. This approach would provide these teachers with the tools to think about teaching as a non-generic process that requires adaptation and reflection. Moreover, it would help them structure their lessons more effectively and to learn how expert pedagogues think through how to teach content.

Under another conception of teacher knowledge, teachers are seen as “co-constructors of knowledge and creators of curriculum... informed by their stance as theorizers, activists and school leaders” (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 276). From this perspective, teachers are more than just experts in curriculum and pedagogy and do more than just teach children content; they are there to support changing the way society treats minorities and are key players in the fight for equality. To do this, they must look critically at what goes on inside their schools, curriculum, and pedagogy to reveal how these elements can be discriminatory. It has been argued that much of the mainstream, generic curriculum serves to ensure that people from the dominant group (white, male, middle- and upper-class, Christian) are seen as superior, and all others as inferior. Knowing this, teachers examine the curriculum to reveal how it may be supporting societal biases, and look at how they unintentionally privilege certain viewpoints in their classroom and how that can serve to discriminate against certain students. Without teachers having knowledge of the power struggles embedded in curriculum and pedagogy, and without exploring its effect on their students, schools and communities, teachers will not be able to teach students effectively. Because of the importance given in the Jewish community to working against discrimination, I believe that professional development in this area is particularly important for teachers in day schools.

If school leaders see an importance in teachers taking a critical stance and working toward social justice, then the implementation of school collectives would serve as a valuable professional development tool. This kind of professional development would allow for teachers to construct local knowledge by taking critical perspectives on theories of learning and the research of others and applying it to their particular community. One example of school collectives is inquiry communities. Inquiry communities get teachers together to examine their assumptions, theory, and prefabricated curricular materials to see the ways these impact how and what students learn and how students are treated. This work also connects the teachers to the larger social and political issues in the particular communities around them. This approach raises awareness that teaching practices and curricula are not neutral; teachers should be examining within their own communities how what they do and what they teach impacts their particular students. Many scholars at major universities work with schools on enacting professional development for teachers that is true to this conception.

Regardless of which approach schools choose to take, the departure from typical professional development opportunities allows teachers to engage with their practices and become better teachers and school and community leaders. Indeed, teachers do require their arsenal of curricular materials in order to run a classroom, but there is much greater value that comes from the other approaches to professional development presented. Without teachers being expert pedagogues and leaders, they will never construct a curriculum that meets the needs of their students. Give the teachers their tools, but use professional development time as an opportunity for teachers to adapt those tools, become excellent practitioners, critical thinkers, and activists, not just vast catalogues of prefabricated methodologies.
Professional Development
in Jewish History

by Yona Shem-Tov

High school history often gets a bad rap. When we think of history class, too often we imagine kids slumped over their desks, wondering, “What’s this got to do with me?” It’s hard enough to try and get our students to imagine what life was like before Facebook, let alone trying to get them to imagine what life was life 50, 100, or—or dare I say it—1000 years ago. And yet, I would argue, history, of all the subjects in the school’s curriculum, has the potential to stir students in significant ways. History after all is a great story—especially Jewish history. For the so-called “me generation” teenager attempting to construct a meaningful identity in a world of competing influences, historical context can be powerfully compelling.

The way in which we narrate the Jewish past to students can help them contextualize and make sense of their own modern Jewish experience. Especially at a time in their lives when they are busily, if not unconsciously, constructing their sense of selves, educators have a responsibility to carefully craft that story so that our students find it accessible, compelling, exciting, and meaningful.

It is through history that students can learn of the uniqueness of this Jewish moment in time in which they are living, when there is a Jewish State in the land of Israel, when there are still Holocaust survivors alive to share with them stories of loss and survival from the destruction of much of European Jewish society, and during a “Golden Age” of Jewish life in the United States and Canada. At the same time, students can also learn that there has always been a diversity of opinion in Jewish society, that their ancient and medieval coreligionists also disagreed with one another about how to best carry out God’s word, and that they are not the first to wrestle with preserving a Jewish identity and Jewish life in a majority non-Jewish society or to challenge prevailing interpretations of Jewish law. This can be liberating and exciting for students: to learn not only how they came to be modern Jews living in 2008 with all the complexity and opportunity that may entail, but also that they too are actors in the Jewish story.

If we do this carefully, Jewish history can contextualize why students learn Tanakh, Rabbinics, Talmud and Hebrew. It can nurture a sense of awe and appreciation that Rashi, Rambam, and other commentators are not just lines to memorize, but real live people, Jews living in a time and place both different than, and similar to their own; that Herzl’s ideas were not new and that they grew out of a reaction to living in a par-
It is for these reasons that RAVSAK and The Network for the Teaching of Jewish History (NYU) joined forces to create Re/Presenting the Jewish Past, an 8-month program designed to help teachers improve the teaching of Jewish history at their schools. This year’s participants included twenty-four outstanding educators from seven high schools across the USA and Canada. School teams worked collaboratively in revisiting their school’s mission statement and reflected on how the Jewish past is presented in the life of their school. Teachers came together over five days last summer for an intensive workshop, where they met with leading scholars of Jewish history and were exposed to new research in both Jewish history and education.

School teams were facilitated by exceptional graduate students in the fields of Jewish history and Jewish education, who helped educators outline concrete plans for representing the way the Jewish past is presented in their curriculum—be it integrating the Jewish narrative into general history or revising course structures from chronological to thematic approaches. Teachers had opportunity to meet with colleagues wrestling with similar issues in other schools, to share resources and strategies, and to consider new approaches. Each school team identified a goal for improving the teaching of Jewish history in their school and will meet monthly with their Re/ Presenting the Jewish Past liaison to discuss challenges and successes towards this end. By May 2009 seven schools will have instituted significant changes in the way the Jewish past is presented to their students.

There are no quick fixes for meaningful change in how we present the Jewish past to our students. Jewish history is taught and learned well beyond the walls of the history classroom. It permeates our schools, from how we teach about fast days to why there is, or is not, an Israeli flag in the classroom. This year, we challenge you and your faculty to critically examine the narrative of the Jewish experience your school is presenting to your students, and to ask yourselves how it may be shaping who they will become.

In your efforts to do so, consider:

- **Time for Reflection**: Time is a rare commodity in the day school. At your next professional development day, consider giving history teachers in your school time to meet with one another to reflect on areas of improvement, to look critically at their curricula and to consider what meta-narrative students are consuming. What is working? What could use some improvement? What is the minimum you want every graduate of your school to know about Jewish history? How can you align these objectives?

- **Connecting to Scholars**: Teachers need time to be learners. Consider partnering with a scholar at a nearby university to present to teachers and to discuss issues that teachers may be wrestling with, or with an educational leader who can address new pedagogical approaches.

- **Cross Departmental Collaboration**: Are there ways you can foster collaboration between teachers of history and Judaic studies in your school? How do “general” history and Jewish history intersect in your school? Making time for colleagues in different departments to identify places in the curriculum to coordinate their efforts is a valuable investment.

Jewish history is taught and learned well beyond the walls of the history classroom.
School-based Mentoring:
Principles to Live By

by Deborah Court, Bar-Ilan University and the Lookstein Center

“Mentor” is defined by most dictionaries as “a wise and trusted counselor or guide, especially in occupational areas.” “Tutor” and “coach” are usually listed as synonyms, but there are some subtle differences between the three terms. A tutor is generally a private teacher whose job is to give individualized instruction in a specific area like French or chemistry. A coach may also be a kind of private tutor, someone who prepares a student for an academic examination or an athlete for a sports competition, and of course the common understanding of a sports coach involves the ongoing preparation and training of a team for sports competitions. In the last twenty years the term ‘peer coaching’ has gained popularity in education and business. Charles Slater and David Simmons (“The Design and Implementation of a Peer Coaching Program”) define peer coaching as “a confidential process through which two or more professional colleagues work together to review current practices; expand, refine, and build new skills; share ideas; teach one another; conduct classroom research; solve problems in the workplace.” Peer coaching is clearly different from mentoring in that peer coaching involves a relationship of equals, learning from and with each other.

Mentoring, on the other hand, carries with it the idea of a (perhaps) older, more experienced person who is wise in the ways of the field in which the mentoring will take place. “Mentoring” is a robust conception, less narrowly focused than tutoring or coaching, less equal a relationship than peer coaching, arguably the richest and most complex of all these related enterprises. In school settings we can talk about more senior school staff members mentoring new teachers and new administrators. It is also quite legitimate to talk about mentoring senior teachers and administrators as they take on new roles and acquire new knowledge. In these cases it is often appropriate to find high level mentors outside the school.

Mentoring in the Lookstein Principals’ Program

The Lookstein Center Principals’ Program is a year-long professional development program for day school leaders. While the program is multi-faceted, it centers on the planning and execution of an action research project through which participants undertake a change initiative in their schools, collect data from different stakeholder groups during the project, adjust the plan according to what the data tells them, and examine and reflect on their own leadership and the ways in which their acting and interacting affects the progress of change. This process is guided by a Lookstein mentor. Our mentors work with participants during a ten-day summer seminar in Israel to plan the action research project. They maintain twice-monthly phone and e-mail contact with their mentees, and they make two site visits to mentees’ schools, meeting staff, board members, and the rest of the administrative team, offering practical guidance on data collection and analysis, understanding school culture, working with stakeholders, and moving the change initiative forward in the light of information gathered.

The mentors go over drafts of the interim and final action research reports that participants submit to Lookstein, offering guidance on how best to present this information. Our mentors have spent considerable time fleshing out a shared conception of what mentoring means, what it means in our particular context, and what ethical and practical guidelines need to be developed and shared with mentees so that everyone is “on the same page” about the nature of the mentor-mentee relationship and the work to be done. From our experience.
Mentoring: Principles to Live By

1. Define the Goal(s) and Boundaries of the Mentoring

Mentoring carries with it the idea of a (perhaps) older, more experienced person who is wise in the ways of the field in which the mentoring will take place.

If, however, mentoring is to take place in some formal capacity, for instance, the assignment of mentors to new teachers, the goals and boundaries of that relationship need to be defined. Is this relationship to last a year? Two years? Is the mentor available at every time of day or night? Will he or she help with personal areas such as a clash with another staff member, or even problems at home, or is this relationship strictly about helping the new teacher develop good instructional strategies and effective classroom management? There will be fewer misunderstandings and a more productive experience for both parties if these issues are thought through, discussed, written down and agreed upon.

2. Define the Rules of Engagement

What are both the mentor and the mentee taking on as obligations? Are there specific tasks the mentee is to accomplish and/or report on, at specific times? Are there specific kinds of help and feedback that the mentor will give, in specific areas, at specific times or intervals? What are the consequences of either party failing to meet his or her obligations? How often should the parties meet and talk? Whose obligation is to initiate contact? If there are problems with the relationship that cannot be worked through together, who is the responsible person to whom the mentor or mentee can turn?

3. Define the Ethical Parameters of the Relationship

The most important ethical basis for any mentoring relationship is confidentiality (see Lois Zachary’s excellent book The Mentor’s Guide for a full discussion of confidentiality in mentoring). Both parties, but especially the mentor, must commit to keeping confidential any information that is shared. The mentor and mentee need to define together what confidentiality means for them, and what its boundaries are. What, for example, if...
an instance of child abuse is shared by the mentee? The mentor has an ethical obligation to report this. Are there other possible competing ethical frameworks that may arise? Try to plan for these as much as possible. What qualities should pervade the relationship? Honesty, respect, support, encouragement? When honesty might be painful, should it override encouragement? Of course it is impossible to predict what will happen as the mentor and mentee work together, but discussing and writing down some general ethical principles will provide a framework within which to solve problems that may arise.

4. Once You Begin, Be Wholehearted

The mentor-mentee relationship, like any meaningful relationship, will not always be an easy road. There may be misunderstandings, hurt feelings, periods of poor communication. Deal with these, and forge ahead. The mentor-mentee relationship offers rich opportunities for learning by both parties, and a chance for the mentor to apply his or her knowledge and experience in a whole new way, not as a practitioner, but as a counselor and guide. Plunge in; be wholehearted; talk, ask, discuss and advise. Think together. The sum of two people’s deliberations really is greater than its parts. This is not only a chance for two people to learn and grow, it is a substantive contribution to education, a real way to make schools better. The mentor-mentee relationship can touch the best of what it means to be educators, to be professionals and to be human.
RAVSAK  
Jewish High School Network

Moot Beit Din

April 23-26, 2009  
29 Nisan – 2 Iyar 5769  
Denver, Colorado

For more information please contact  
Dr. Elliott Rabin at 212-665-1320 x302  
or erabin@ravsak.org.

---

**Moot Beit Din Update**

Word is out about this cutting-edge high school program in advanced Jewish studies. As participants say, The Moose is loose! The Moot Beit Din this year is off to a tremendous start, with far more schools participating than ever before. We’ve grown from 10 to 17 schools in one year! Mazel tov to the schools that have committed their students to the rigor and excitement that only this program can provide:

- American Hebrew Academy (Greensboro, NC)
- Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School (Rockville, MD)
- Gann Academy (Waltham, MD)
- Herzl/RMHA at the Denver Campus (Denver, CO)
- Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy (Merion Station, PA)
- Jean and Samuel Frankel Jewish Academy of Metropolitan Detroit (West Bloomfield, MI)
- Jewish Community High School of the Bay (San Francisco, CA)
- Kehillah Jewish High School (Palo Alto, CA)
- Milken Community High School (Los Angeles, CA)
- New Community Jewish High School (West Hills, CA)
- San Diego Jewish Academy (San Diego, CA)
- Shoshana S. Cardin School (Baltimore, MD)
- Solomon Schechter Day School of Essex and Union (West Orange, NJ)
- Solomon Schechter School of Westchester (Hartsdale, NY)
- Anne & Max Tanenbaum Community Hebrew Academy of Toronto (Toronto, ON)
- Tarbut V’Torah (Irvine, CA)
- Doris and Alex Weber Jewish Community High School (Atlanta, GA)

Mentors have been assigned, teams are now forming, and soon students will be preparing a challenging case by studying precedents from the Mishnah, Talmud, and poskim (rabbinic decisors). They will be convening in Denver after Pesach for a Shabbaton in the Rocky Mountains and a competition to decide the winning presentations. Thanks to the host school Herzl/RMHA for making this extraordinary opportunity possible.
From Mentee to Mentor: One Teacher’s Journey

by Shelley Fogelson

Eighteen years ago I began my first teaching job in a Jewish day school in the United States. I was very green! I had spent the previous six years living in Israel, working with preschoolers on Moshav Neve Ilan. Prior to that, I was involved in a variety of informal educational settings in England. But back in 1990, as I took the position of a first grade Hebrew teacher, I was about to enter a whole new league and I wasn’t familiar with the rules of the game.

I have no doubt that during that first year there were some highlights and moments of satisfaction, but I have more vivid memories of feeling bewildered, overwhelmed and even demoralized. So how did I survive that year and why am I still teaching almost twenty years later?

I think that some of the contributing factors to my perseverance and growth as an educator were the incredible mentors I encountered along the way. I was blessed during that first year to work alongside a creative and highly talented Israeli teacher, Miric Snir. I also worked for a principal, Cheryl Finkel, who had the wisdom to allow me to observe and assist this teacher for half of the day and then teach my own class for the other half. Miric shared curriculum, modeled teaching practices, and provided constructive feedback. The combination of having an excellent mentor and the institutional support to spend time with her allowed me to learn and develop my own skills.

The following year I had the opportunity to participate in the pilot study for the first grade Tal Am Hebrew program. Working closely with the director of the program, Tovah Shimon, I learned how to analyze curriculum and reflect on my own teaching practices. I developed my understanding of research on brain-based learning and multi-sensory approaches to teaching. I left the pilot program a much stronger teacher and I will always be grateful for the input and encouragement I received from Tovah.
I've learned that the mentor-mentee relationship isn't always easy. It takes patience and generosity on the part of the mentor. The sensitive mentor anticipates the needs of the novice teacher and provides a combination of encouragement, practical advice, and survival tips along the way. The mentee, on the other hand, needs to be open to learning and to receiving feedback. Also, mentees have the responsibility to actively learn about the school culture and think of the questions they should be asking. Novice teachers also need the qualities of patience and perseverance as it takes practice and experience to become a skilled educator.

Over the past few years, I have had the opportunity to work as a mentor with teachers just starting out. I like to look at this as a way to “pay it forward,” to pass on some of the sage advice I received from my mentors over the years. Recently, I had the chance to provide an intensive training course for a teacher in another state who “inherited” a class and a new curriculum midyear. My current position as the Professional Development Coordinator gives me the means to support all faculty members to enhance their skills and knowledge.

I look back with gratitude to my mentors who helped me to become the educator that I am today, and I am committed to helping teachers new to our profession find their way.

Shelley Fogelson is the first grade teacher of Hebrew and Judaica and Professional Development Coordinator at the Amos and Celia Heilicher Minneapolis Jewish Day School. She can be reached at sfogelson@HeilicherJDS.org.
Expectations and Adjustments of a New Teacher

by Shana Dege

Beginning the first job of my career path of choice has been an amazing experience. Starting any new job can be filled with lots of expectations and emotions, but those expectation and emotions can be amplified tremendously when the job holds so much meaning and is so important to you.

Initially, I was nervous about working in a religious environment with which I am not affiliated or even very familiar. The staff at B’nai Shalom has made me very comfortable and provided me with great tools and confidence in learning about life in a Jewish day school. The students have demonstrated so much respect, discipline, and ambition that I feel certain this position is a good one for me. My college classes and internship training in public schools could never have prepared me for what I have seen at this school. The focus, attitudes, and sheer energy of these students have taught me what Jewish values and day school education produces.

I also expected a great deal of pressure in dealing with the students’ behaviors and attitudes as head of my first solo classrooms. I anticipated a challenge in engaging students and keeping them interested and active during lessons. In actuality, I am delighted at how dedicated the students are to their school and their schoolwork. I have realized that by providing lessons with high standards, students remain engaged and willing to participate. The students at B’nai Shalom have such a high independence level because a lot is expected of them; yet, they all seem to welcome, embrace, and live up to the challenges. The students’ drive to learn and participate is owned by them, and not much extrinsic motivation is necessary. The students’ ambition and determination, however, have transferred to me, which I did not expect. I find myself wanting to impress, mentor, and set a successful example for them. I want to teach them to be even better people and succeed at whatever they do.

Additionally, I was nervous about being overwhelmed with work. I teach all the
children from pre-school through eighth grade, and I also serve as the athletic director and coach for five sports. I thought it would be really difficult to keep on top of my duties. Instead, I am finding that enough planning time is provided to allow me not only to stay on course but also to get ahead. With this benefit, I feel valued as an employee and staff member.

Finally, I expected that dealing with parents might be stressful since B’nai Shalom has an open door policy for visits. Instead, the school’s open door policy has created much more of a family atmosphere. The level of involvement with parents is high, reflecting the strong sense of concern that these parents have for their children. The parents are wonderful communicators, and the frequent open houses have made it very easy to stay in touch with them.

While my initial concerns have been laid to rest, some circumstances have required greater adjustment. Having been a collegiate diver and gymnast, I am not completely familiar with all of the sports I am coaching; for example, flag football is completely new to me. I find that relying on parent volunteers combined with personal research helps me work through uncertainties and learn from the expertise of others.

Not always knowing the right person to contact for information or help has also been challenging. As a way of supporting the school, I offered to coordinate ordering new school spirit wear, and I have had to find my way through the business administration to learn the process, including which departments need to be contacted, which approvals are needed, and how to interact with vendors. This experience will be valuable in learning the steps required to deal with funds and forms.

Unfortunately, in the beginning of my first year, I sustained a personal injury on a day off. After much anxiety and apprehension about returning to work, I learned that it is acceptable and encouraged to ask for help. B’nai Shalom truly is a family atmosphere where each staff member is an individual with needs particular to him or her. I have to learn to trust that my needs will be met.

It has been very challenging to make sure that behavior expectations are at the right level and to follow through with consequences when necessary. I believe that once I have some experience under my belt and get to know the students personally, I will be able to make these judgment calls better. Every day I am learning more and more about how to develop class management skills which support student achievement.

Learning about Judaism so that I can help explain traditions, holidays, prayers, and kosher rules has also not been easy. Through reading and discussion with people in the school, I am learning as much as I can about the religion of the school in order to have better rapport with students and Jewish staff members, as well as support the mission of the school.

In closing, even though I have just started this position, it has already been an amazing journey and any feelings of nervousness or apprehension have been replaced with excitement, confidence, and ambition to excel. On a personal level, I have a strong desire for my teaching to truly make a difference for my students.

Shana Dege teaches physical education and health, is the athletic director, and coaches five sports at B’nai Shalom Day School in Greensboro, North Carolina. She can be reached at sdege@bnai-shalom.org.
Giving Room for Growth

by Tamar Rabinowitz

During a pre-observation session, I noticed that despite the tremendous enthusiasm and creativity in her lesson plan, my mentee’s instructions were unclear and incomplete. I had to decide whether to correct her or let her become aware of it during implementation.

This scenario raises the issue, What is the mentor’s role? If the mentor notes a clear problem in a lesson plan, a disciplinary technique that is not working, or a pedagogical decision that will frustrate students, what should she do? What approach should she take to allow her mentee to be successful without being judgmental or preventing the mentee from growing from her own experience? To push this idea even further, how does a mentor ensure that she does not project her own pedagogical method, disciplinary approach, or educational philosophy onto her mentee? How does the mentor allow her mentee to come into her own as a teacher, even if that might necessitate the mentee experiencing difficulties in the classroom?

Experiencing difficulty is an effective learning experience, and having to deal with the ensuing confusion is important. However, when the mentor discusses a lesson plan that has potential problems, the mentor should help her mentee see the problems by asking her to model the manner in which she would instruct the students. If the mentee does not become aware of the problem, the mentor could then raise questions that would aid her mentee to reflect on the pedagogy. The mentor needs to be able to engage her mentee in a manner that allows her to evaluate what could go wrong and find ways to improve her lesson plan, in a non-judgmental, non-threatening manner. The mentor should find “openings” which could lead the new teacher to improve her practice.

The interaction must be positive and directional without accusation on either side. Both mentor and mentee have to be vulnerable and open themselves to the process. Doing this in a collaborative fashion allows the mentee to feel part of the process and willing to implement the revised version in her class. Positive and non-judgmental interactions aid both mentor and mentee in the reflective process and ensure that mentor, mentee, and students benefit.

When defining the mentor’s role, one must be cautious about imposing one’s own style on the novice teacher. The mentor needs be aware of the power she holds. The mentee sometimes unknowingly adopts the mentor’s approach because she is still trying to define her own role. The job of the mentor is to allow her mentee to find her own voice within the framework of what we know about good teaching and learning. The mentor should welcome her mentee to observe the mentor’s and other teachers’ classrooms in order to sample a multiplicity of teaching techniques. Afterwards, the mentor should enable the mentee to reflect on the pedagogical and discipline approaches she saw.

It is important to encourage the mentee to raise her own questions; this will help foster a dialogue of reflection which is not imposed by the mentor. This also ensures that the dialogue that ensues is one in which the mentee is invested. The role of the mentor is to encourage these questions and ensure that the reflections that follow are incorporated into her mentee’s understanding of her own teaching style and philosophy.

The mentor has agreed to be her mentee’s “educational companion” on this professional journey. This term reflects the fact that as mentors, we are also learning about ourselves and our teaching through this process. Even if a mentor might have many more years of experience over her mentee, she too is engaged in the learning process and is growing from every reflective interaction with her mentee, possibly adapting her own lesson plans and pedagogical decisions as a result. Mutual growth is the cornerstone of effective mentoring. When both mentor and mentee reflect on their practices and their struggles and incorporate their reflections into their teaching, this makes for effective mentoring.

Tamar Rabinowitz has been teaching Tanakh to middle and high school students for the past 7 years at the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School in Rockville, Maryland. She can be reached at trabinowitz@cesjds.org.
The following is a composite of many stories that have been shared with me:

When I started teaching eighteen years ago in a private Jewish school, I was given my class schedule, curriculum, materials and best wishes for a successful year with my middle school students. My direct supervisor had expressed confidence in my ability to achieve my professional responsibilities. He didn’t want me “wasting his time with unnecessary meetings prior to my first day in my classroom.” When I asked how often we’d meet to discuss curriculum and my overall progress, he looked at me strangely and gave me a vague answer: “Other than your formal observation (which I am required to have before ninety days), we’ll meet here and there, as needed, which hopefully WON’T be too often…”

Over the next few months, I tried navigating through this new school as a driver would in a foreign country without a map, constantly wondering, “What do I not know that I need to know?” I felt as though I was playing a board game, rolling the dice, hoping I’d make my way through the maze of my first year without “failing the game.”

I myself had wonderfully supportive supervisors and colleagues who guided me through my first year. However, I often wondered about the dedicated, hard-working teachers who weren’t as fortunate as I. Why wasn’t there a formal plan to support teachers entering our profession or a new school? When I reflected on the countless number of support plans to ensure student success and retention, I found it ironic that nothing along these lines was in place for teachers.

During the summer of 2007, I was asked to join the third cohort of educators to mentor a graduate from the William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education embarking upon a first formal position in Jewish education. Each mentor would be matched with a mentee working in the same geographic area, but in a different school. The training involved two intense days in August and a one day follow up session, midyear, at JTS. We were trained by Dr. Lois J. Zachary, a specialist in adult development and learning, and principal of Leadership Development Services. Zachary methodically explained to us the process and commitment involved to achieve our mentoring goals. Fran Urman, the mentoring program director from JTS, advised me when I encountered difficulties along the way.

Once matched with a mentee, I began implementing the “four-step mentoring cycle” that I learned from the program:

I. Preparing: “Getting to know each other” helped to clarify both sides’ expectations of this relationship and to establish an atmosphere of trust between us. We shared our thoughts of what and who inspired us to enter the field of education. We spoke about how our personal and professional joys and responsibilities impacted each other.

II. Negotiating: We established clear working guidelines and boundaries. My role was to be a supportive sounding board for collaborative reflection and brainstorming. I made it clear that I was not a supervisor, advocate, or therapist. We established the frequency and mode of contact: face to face every other week (Starbucks 7:00 - 8:00 PM, every other Thursday). I made sure to give our time together a prime time feel; I never multitasked during meetings, and we stuck to our prepared agenda, so that we maximized our time together. Additionally, we established ground rules about confidentiality, clarifying rather than assuming what can and can’t be shared with others. We set SMART goals together (Specific, Measurable, Action-oriented, Realistic and Timely), which helped us work productively.

III. Enabling: This was the meat and potatoes of our collaborative work. We met regularly, reflecting on my mentee’s professional growth by reviewing and challenging the SMART goals. I observed my mentee teach and tried to give specific constructive feedback. I logged one recommendation per month.

IV. Closure: Once each goal was achieved, we evaluated success by discussing the tools [CONTINUED ON PAGE 66]
Mentorship for New Teachers in RAVSAK Schools

Broadening the Base of Support for New Teachers

by Rabbi Elana Kanter

ast year, our school hired some incredible new teachers. These teachers were seasoned professionals who had taught in other high schools for many years before joining our faculty. They understood and related well to adolescents, and they were outstanding instructors in their respective academic disciplines. About mid-way into the year, I received feedback from some of these wonderful teachers about how lost they had felt at the beginning of the year, how much more guidance they wished they had had when they started at our school. The fact that they were not new to the teaching profession did not take away from the fact that they were still new to our school, our curriculum, and our community, and had needed much more support when they began with us:

As Director of Curriculum and Instruction, I had this feedback in mind as I listened to a recent presentation on the subject by Brandeis Professor Vivian Troen. Troen spoke about the need for comprehensive support for new teachers in almost every area, including curriculum, instruction, grading, classroom routines, discipline, parent communication and more. If teaching is “at least as complicated as neurosurgery” (in the words of Jon Saphier, who runs a workshop on “The Skillful Teacher”), one understands why being a new teacher is so overwhelming and why broad-based support for new teachers is so critical. How much more so, if a teacher is both new to a school, and new to teaching.

With that in mind, we changed our support structures this year to include a revised new teacher orientation, a buddy system, mentoring, and regular new teacher support meetings.

New Teacher Orientation: Our new teacher orientation became a more formal combination of “nuts and bolts” discussions and professional development on instructional skills. When teachers arrived the morning of orientation, welcome bags filled with goodies and supplies, prepared by student government, were waiting for them at the seats. Included in each bag was the name of the teacher who was designated as their “buddy” (more about buddies below).

We began with a walking tour of the places and people of Jess Schwartz College Prep. New teachers met the “behind the scenes” staff, including advancement and business office staffs, custodial staff and others, while also scouting out supply clos-

Buddies: Each new teacher was given a buddy, a peer/colleague who sought them out at the all-teacher orientation, checked in with them the first day and other days during the first week of instruction, and offered assistance, informal guidance, and encouragement. We chose buddies for our new teachers from outside of their academic discipline (departmental meetings allow them to get to know colleagues within disciplines very quickly), and the buddies continue to check in at regular intervals with their new teachers.

Mentoring/New Teacher Support Meetings: In my role, I am a mentor to each of the new teachers. I observe classes and meet with teachers individually about curriculum, instruction and other issues. I also facilitate the weekly meetings for new teachers (and buddies) as a group. My initial goals were twofold: 1) to make sure new teachers had all the basic mate-

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 61]
Recruiting New Cohort

With the most generous support of the AVI CHAI Foundation, RAVSAK welcomes you to apply for a life- and career-changing professional development opportunity — Project SuLaM: Study, Leadership and Mentoring.

This unique, fully funded course of study is designed for professional leaders of Jewish day schools who are established educators awaiting a meaningful Judaic studies experience of their own.

Project SuLaM also provides the rare opportunity for Judaically knowledgeable heads to serve as peer mentors. Open to 18 participants and 5 mentors from Jewish day schools in the US and Canada, Project SuLaM will empower heads and other key administrators more deeply to engage in and advocate for the Jewish life of the schools they lead. Open to 18 participants and 5 mentors from Jewish day schools in the US and Canada, Project SuLaM will empower heads and other key administrators more deeply to engage in and advocate for the Jewish life of the schools they lead.

Phase II focuses on strengthening the Judaic studies curriculum, overt Jewish culture and religious purposefulness of the school. Participants identify one lay and one professional colleague from their school community to participate with them in all aspects of Phase II, from Judaic learning and Shabbatonim to site-based program implementation.

Participants are awarded a $1,000 honorarium upon the successful completion of Phase I. In addition, they are provided with a $500 professional development fund for use at their discretion to support ongoing Judaic learning. Participant schools in Phase II are provided with a $1,500 grant for use in implementing Judaic change. All expenses related to Project SuLaM, including travel, are paid in full by the program.

Don’t miss this extraordinary opportunity for personal, professional, and communal growth!

For more information on being a participant or a mentor, contact Dr. Elliott Rabin at erabin@ravsaq.org.

“Through the various components of Project SuLaM, participants will engage in study that will enhance their ability to serve as articulate and passionate advocates for rich Jewish learning. We encourage school boards that recognize the importance of a well-grounded Judaic school environment to empower their heads of school to take part.”

Arthur W. Fried, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, The AVI CHAI Foundation
Against Mentorship: Teacher Induction through Collaboration

by Harry K. Wong

he Y Generation, born from 1977 to 1986, are products of an increasingly global economy, where knowledge is power and laptop computers often provide the quickest means to attaining both. Many of today’s young teachers not only have access to millions of digital resources, they also have at their fingertips thousands of professional and social networks. They are receptive to working in teams, and they are good at it. They do not blink at the mention of blogging, Googling, and Wikipedia, or the use of social networks like Facebook, MySpace, and YouTube. Indeed, learning communities are their forte.

The most successful schools have developed comprehensive induction plans to integrate Gen Y teachers in the culture of their faculty peers. New teachers want to contribute to a group. Induction programs provide that connection because they are structured around a learning community where new and veteran teachers are treated with respect and their contributions are valued. Surround Y-Generation teachers with a community of creative thinkers and the solutions will abound everywhere. Collaboration is the most effective way for all teachers to learn, whether they are new or established. Collaboration is how schools become effective.

For example, at the Yavneh Day School in Los Gatos, California, all teachers, new and old alike, participate in organized team building and information sessions prior to school and at times throughout the year. There is an articulated curriculum and the Hebrew, Judaica, and general studies teachers all work together to build a thematic approach to learning so that themes and areas of learning are studied across disciplines.

A Collaborative Instructional Team

This past June 2008, 98.5 percent of the Islip School District seniors graduated with a New York Regents Diploma. To graduate with a prestigious Regents diploma, students must take a rigorous academic curriculum and pass five state exams with a score of 65 or better.

Islip does it with a comprehensive induction program, under the leadership of Assistant Superintendent Linda Lippmann, in which teachers are trained to be effective. The three year induction program features collaborative study group activities and networking. Study teams focus on skill-building strategies such as conducting parent conferences, managing classrooms, crafting lesson plans, and implementing cooperative discipline. The groups constantly work on team-building and problem-solving techniques. They use model lessons and hold sharing sessions in which teachers learn from each other and build respect for one another. Teacher turnover is negligible and new teachers are immediately ushered into a team-like culture.

The major focus of the Islip induction program is to immerse new teachers in the district’s culture and to unite them with everyone in the district as a cohesive, supportive instructional team. New teachers quickly become a part of the district’s “family.” Induction fosters a sense of belonging among teachers, which in turn fosters a sense of belonging among students.

Effective and Ineffective Schools

We’ve all heard the adage, “Give a man a fish and you feed him for today. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” The Y Generation takes that one step further: “Teach him to share that information with others and everyone will benefit from collaborating on new and innovative ways to catch fish.” This concept is how effective schools bring out the best in their new teachers.

In most companies, employees work in teams. This is because teams produce results. People who work in isolation do not produce results. However, that is the way most schools are organized. Teachers view themselves as independent operators, encouraged to be creative and
expected to do a good job behind closed doors. There is no cohesiveness to the school’s curriculum, goals, or culture. Collaboration is rare.

Worse yet, new teachers seldom see another classroom in action. Loneliness and lack of support further exacerbate the frustrations of beginning teachers. To ask a Generation Y teacher to go solo in a networked world is writing that teacher’s epitaph, which might as well read, “Doomed from the start.”

Effective schools have a culture where teachers work collaboratively with other highly motivated teachers in an orderly, focused school atmosphere. Effective teachers do not work alone; they work in teams. Effective schools are committed to being a community of learners, where teachers work together, assess together, and learn together so that student achievement improves.

That some teachers are ineffective may not be their fault. It takes three to five years to produce an effective teacher. In some schools, new teachers are ushered into a classroom to sink or swim and teach in isolation. There is no comprehensive induction program with a laser focus on training teachers to be effective.

In the private and nonprofit sector, new employees are generally trained in a structured program, with the training continuing until the employee leaves the company. Most people understand that businesses continue to train workers in teams with specific outcomes in mind. Likewise, schools will see improved student learning if they harness the collective intelligence, creativity, and genius of their teachers in teams. Regretfully, in many schools—and we do not even want to consider those schools that do nothing to train their teachers—all the new teachers get is a mentor.

MENTORING VS. INDUCTION

Mentoring and induction are not the same. Mentoring is what one person does. Induction is a comprehensive process. Mentoring does not produce effective teachers.

(Continued on page 61)
Contemporary school leaders often praise the virtues of collaboration and the use of data for decision making, yet it seems the more things change the more they stay the same. While it may appear that educational leaders are fixated on improving academic performance and promoting excellent teaching, the reality is that at most schools student performance is static and most classroom teachers fundamentally teach the way they did when they began teaching.

Why this contradiction? Why the disconnect between rhetoric on the importance of data for decision-making and the need to change instructional strategies, and most schools continuing to operate as though everything was just fine? The two most significant factors, which explain why teachers and schools consistently resist change, are:

1. Teachers see no compelling reason to change their practices.
2. Most school cultures are hostile to meaningful collaboration.

Both of these obstacles can be addressed by school leaders by encouraging and supporting engagement in collaborative action research by teachers and faculty teams.

What is Action Research and Why is it Important?

The term “action research” has been in the literature for more than 60 years and is now utilized in one form or another in virtually all professions. I have defined action research as “any inquiry conducted by the people taking the action, on their own action, in an effort to improve their future actions.”

The fundamental difference between the conduct of action research and traditional empirical studies lies in the position of the researcher and the focus of the inquiries. In traditional research the separation of the researcher from the phenomena under study is seen as a virtue (it is assumed that distance enhances objectivity). I have heard it said this makes “action research” soft science. I had agreed with that assessment until I reflected on another profession where we demand the best scientific knowledge, medicine.

It struck me that the best doctors I have encountered use action research as a routine part of practice. When a patient goes to a doctor with a perplexing problem, what transpires? When confronted with a patient in distress, the doctor considers the medical knowledge base, any information garnered through tests and physical examinations, as well as his/her experience with similar patients. Then the doctor diagnoses the problem and develops a treatment plan. The doctor’s reasoning and treatment plan are, in reality, no more than educated hypotheses. The doctor (and patient) carries out the treatment plan and collects data (usually involving periodic examinations for re-testing). Finally, the doctor concludes that his/her hypothesis was correct or adjusts the treatment plan in accordance with the patient’s response.

That is action research, pure and simple. And I am very pleased that my doctors work in that manner. I certainly wouldn’t want my doctor to assume that I will respond as every other patient had. Very often the unique context (individual patient attributes) has as much to do with the success of a treatment as the pharmaceuticals prescribed. Any doctor who treats every patient as identical would be judged as grossly incompetent.

The problem-solving process necessary for doctors is even more applicable for educators and schools. Students differ radically in skills and attitudes, teachers differ dramatically in style and experience, and the content and skills being taught can vary from physical education to Talmud. Clearly, the solutions to school problems...
require the sensitivity and wisdom of those most attuned to the context.

**How is Action Research Accomplished in Schools?**

The model of action research that I have used with schools conceptualizes the inquiry process as containing four sequential stages:

- **Stage #1: Vision Setting/Identifying Achievement Targets**
- **Stage #2: Articulating a Theory of Action**
- **Stage #3: Taking Action/Collecting Data**
- **Stage #4: Reflection and Reporting**

Action research can be conducted by an individual teacher, by faculty teams, or even by an entire school staff. The focus for action research can range from teaching tefillah to mastering math, from learning conversational Hebrew to understanding science. In a learning organization all staff members should be engaged in studying some aspect of their work that relates to the school’s overall vision. To show how the action research process might be employed by teachers in a Jewish day school, I will use a use a hypothetical illustration: students learning about and coming to embrace tzedakah.

**Stage #1 Vision Setting/Identifying Achievement Targets**

The action research cycle begins by the participants (e.g. the individual teacher, the primary grade faculty, the entire staff, etc.) engaging in dialogue regarding actualizing the vision/targets. The goal here is to turn a vision into concrete measurable outcomes. Collegially the participants will develop answers to questions such as, What precisely do want a student to understand about tzedakah? How do we want the child to feel about tzedakah? What behavior changes do we hope to see in the students?

This results in the creation of a rubric that will be used to measure changes in knowledge, attitude, behavior and/or skill regarding the target (in this case, embracing tzedakah). Once a rubric has been created, it serves numerous purposes. Not only does it clarify the achievement target for the researchers, but it communicates to other parties (students, parents, colleagues) precisely what is expected.

**Stage #2 Articulating a Theory of Action**

It is only worth conducting action re- [continued on page 60]
Each year at the Institute for New Heads, I give the school leaders some sardonic advice: “If something goes terribly awry, and you need to buy time to rectify it before your parent body finds out, suggest a change to the dress code. This tactic will keep parents embroiled for at least 18 months, so you can fix the problem you need to hide while the parent body is distracted.” Next July for the new group of heads, I’m going to add a similar strategy for the faculty: “If you need to implement a change that will, like all change, cause gnashing of teeth and drawing of battle lines, do it after you form a task force to study changing the compensation system to a merit pay model. The faculty will be so annoyed and preoccupied by trying to ameliorate that offense, the other change will seem minor by comparison.”

By now, we know why what is standard practice in the business world, basing pay on individual performance, is anathema to most faculties. Because...

...effective schools are dependent upon a climate of collegiality, a climate faculty members assume will be undermined by head-to-head competition for a limited resource, performance pay.

...faculty evaluation systems, even those created by the faculty themselves, become suspect as subjective if used to determine pay rather than their rightful purpose, professional growth and development.

...many faculty members assume that no administrator is remotely qualified for or objective and fair about assessing the performance of the craft of teaching.

...the one most objective yardstick of teacher performance, student performance, is not easily tied to the singular factor of a teacher: Some of the best student achievement occurs when teachers simply get out of the way of brilliant students. Some of the worst student performance occurs despite the heroic efforts of great teachers, because other factors derail students. And much of the salubrious impact of teachers is delayed, sometime by decades.

...as Andy Guess notes, “Not everyone agrees what exactly ‘merit’—or ‘performance,’ or ‘incentive pay’—entails.”

Kimberly Merriman writes that while 85% of Fortune 1000 companies base at least part of employees’ pay on group or team performance, based on the theory that this compensation strategy will increase the effectiveness of teams, in fact, individuals prefer individual pay systems because they don’t trust their colleagues to be effective and think it unfair that their pay be tied to someone else’s performance. So even team-based performance pay, which some schools also use, doesn’t quite achieve what management intends for it to achieve: boost performance of individuals and teams and reward achievement, since it often engenders distrust and exasperation rather than trust and teamwork. (And in fact non-compensation rewards seem to work better for teams: praise and spotlighting team success.)

James W. Guthrie and Patrick J. Schuermann observe that despite historic and gigantic resistance, performance pay initiatives in the public school sector have taken off in the US in the last three years, with more than $500 million allotted for this year along for performance pay plans, affecting at least 10 percent of teachers nationwide. While enthusiasm among policy-makers and pundits grows, the research jury is still out on whether or not such systems in the public schools achieve either of two typical goals: increasing student achievement and attracting a broader base of talent into the profession.
So why would and should school leaders wade upstream against the tide of faculty resistance? Because downstream a storm is brewing:

1. **Board Demands for Strategic Accountability**: Boards, typically consisting of a good number of business leaders, rightfully insist on maximizing their investment in salaries and benefits and increasingly understand that fixed scales remove any incentivizing levers for change and progress. Instead of pay scales on a step system that favors years of experience and advanced degrees (neither of which necessarily correlates with superior performance), enlightened boards ask school leaders to develop a compensation philosophy, one that addresses the key desired outcomes for pay: a) attracting and retaining talent; b) incentivizing change and thereby moving the institution forward; c) rewarding initiative and performance.

2. **Higher Benchmarks for Salaries**: Starting salaries for public school teachers have a new national benchmark: $42,500 for 2008-09, established by the Denver Public School system, and rooted in a pay for performance model supported by the teachers union, ProPay. Since all independent school teachers (and their spouses who have an interest at stake) benchmark their salaries against public school norms (national or local, whichever is high-

Despite historic and gigantic resistance, performance pay initiatives in the public school sector have taken off in the US in the last three years.

3. **The War for Talent**: The competition for talent is heating up, significantly. The baby boomer teachers, largely highly talented women, are about to retire. Since women of that generation had few career options other than teaching or graduating from college now have introduced some incredibly difficult challenges to the workplace. If the research on the Millennials is correct (and early experience with them in the marketplace seems to indicate it is), this next generation of teachers will be much more demanding of higher salaries, more rapid advancement, and more options for creativity and leadership. (This is why they all want to work for Google.) So a traditional step system of compensation that only rewards, slowly, years of experience and advanced degrees is less likely to attract the talent we’ll need and want. What we can anticipate from the new work force is that it will be less institutionally loyal, and more transient. The bright side of the change to the Millennials: They are incredibly idealistic, task-oriented, ambitious, and risk-tolerant.

4. **Accommodating the Millennials**: Our own children and students being chosen into a very, very selective program.

5. **A New Value Proposition for Schools**: NAIS’s call over the last several years for re-engineering school finance in the name of financial sustainability has migrated beyond being “relevant” to becoming “urgent.” Both NAIS and ISM (Independent School Management) for years have been noting that schools can only have two of the three following factors simultaneously in play: small classes, high salaries, and modest tuition increases. NAIS’s take on this equation is that “small classes” is a proxy for “individual attention”; “high salaries” is a proxy for “high quality faculty”; “modest tuition increases” is a proxy for “access and affordability.” For the last two decades, independent schools have committed to the first two factors at the cost, literally, of forsaking...
the third. What our trend lines have intimated, the current economic crisis has punctuated: Many schools have hit or passed the “price-break” point where demand has softened because price has put their service out of reach of all but the most affluent. So the future calls for choosing a different pair of factors: high salaries and modest tuition increases, with larger classes (or at least more efficient ratios of students: faculty and students:total staff, however achieved). Since the research is compelling that class size up to 22 – 25 has no bearing on student or school success and achievement, at least in independent schools and probably in all schools (except for LD programs), most schools have some significant wiggle room in changing the equation. And the bright spot here: we can change the equation for the next generation of teachers more easily than for the current generation about to retire.

So, once school leaders find themselves in the pay for performance stream, up to their elbows in the rushing waters, what are the “lifeline” strategies they can safely grab onto?

Salaries: Higher Starting, Lower Top, Compressed Middle: One rather evident opportunity is to flatten the scale and range of salaries, since most attrition happens at the front end (three-to-five years as a teacher, leaving the profession) and mid-career. The simplest “pay for performance” shift is to compressed pay scale. The “new take” will be that the range of pay is not so widely disparate because everyone does about the same work and because one’s position is the variable, not one’s pay. That is to say, if an individual teacher is not performing to the high standard that the relatively high pay demands, then “counseling out” becomes a more compelling management obligation.

Leadership Opportunities: A systemic weakness of teaching as a profession is that there are no advancement possibilities, unlike virtually all other professional careers. We should change that immediately by creating more leadership opportunities that allow teachers to stay in the teaching track (and not forsake teaching to jump to administration just to have leadership and higher pay options). I’m imagining schools where beyond “department chair,” we’ll have many more leadership options that even young teachers will have a shot to fill: grade-team leader, curriculum specialist, new teacher mentor, grade dean of students, lead coach, etc. These leadership options would include title (i.e., status), recognition, and additional compensation.

Hybrid Systems: By posting a query on any school leader listserv, one can find scores of schools that have experimented, many successfully, with the various “pay for performance” options to a fixed scale, namely three alternatives:

- “bonus” systems (the corporate model of rewarding outstanding in-
- “overlapping bands” (the professions model of flexible and overlapping ranges based on workload and skills)
- “faculty rank” ladders (the university model of ascending ranks where “up or out” forces quality assessments at various career stages)

NAIS encourages school leaders and the task forces they form to imagine alternatives to these three basic models, including hybrids. The least divisive and most acceptable first step may well be a hybrid approach, incorporating the essence

As I frequently observe (and occasionally experience), “No change agent ever goes unpunished.”

We should create more leadership opportunities that allow teachers to stay in the teaching track.
of all three models in a “more pay for more work” approach, a more consciously driven transitional stage of doing what schools have done informally from the beginning: find ways to reward the “stars” in the system outside of luring them into administration and out of teaching. This works as the administrative team annually assesses the “high performance/good attitude” members of the faculty and invites them into a newly created leadership role or heavier schedule, in addition to the teaching responsibilities, not in place of them. Who, at whatever age and stage in their career, can teach larger classes, take on more sections (e.g., six sessions meeting four times a week rather than five sections meeting five times a week), take on additional leadership roles, coach more athletic and other extracurricular teams, adopt more technologies into their classrooms, invent more creative lessons, etc.? This change strategy has always worked in the past because base salaries progress with the system in place and don’t jeopardize the system that other faculty members favor, but “rewards” gravitate to the all-star performers who are identified and recruited by school leaders. And those rewards and additional assignments are annually determined rather than permanently incorporated into base salary, so renewals of the rewards are dependent on performance.

Change Leadership Strategies: The greatest impediment to any change in schools (and in many churches, synagogues, and mosques) is the cultural attachment to consensus. For complicated cultural and psychological reasons, even schools and religious institutions that are deeply liberal in social issues tend to be deeply conservative about organizational change, so the decision-making process tends to be inherently weak, since consensus is the enemy of change. One “change management” strategy is to proscribe what decisions get to be made consensually, and what get to be made administratively. Just that one cultural and operational change would take schools upstream on any number of issues, without the same two costs of consensus decisions: a) initiative regression to the mean (“watering down” to the point of acceptability and thereby removing the most salient elements); b) the change curve downside: collateral damage to collegial relations among faculty, including anger, hostility, sadness, mourning, depression, subversion by those who oppose the change in the discussion and resist it in implementation and practice by their colleagues. So how about a new pay-for-performance system that is voluntary, at least during a pilot, transitional period, targeting early adopters and forsaking the one-size-fits-all approach of most consensus-based policy changes? For example, a school could require all new hires to be on the new pay-for-performance system and give current employees a choice: Choose security at a fixed annual cost-of-living increase to salary, or choose pay for performance, with one’s raise attached to the school-defined performance criteria, essentially a “pay-at-risk” option that would punish poor performance with no pay increase (and probably probationary status) but reward good performance with a pay increase well beyond COL.

As I frequently observe (and occasionally experience), “No change agent ever goes unpunished.” So the risk for leaders is one that they knowingly signed up for: to lead. Leadership requires change because change in the external and internal environment is inevitable and constant. Standing still in the stream means getting behind. To avoid change leadership is to manage rather than to lead, to be the caretaker and not the visionary. Since compensation is the driver of all school budgets and will be forever, change leadership is in the arena of compensation strategy is no longer an option.

---

Senior Educators Program
of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Melton Centre for Jewish Education

- Explore Innovative Approaches to Jewish Education
- Probe Critical Issues in Jewish Thought
- Generous Stipends for Study and Living Expenses

The Senior Educators Program offers Jewish educators from all over the world, representing every stream of contemporary Jewish life, a unique opportunity for professional development and personal enrichment. The one-year program is held at the Melton Centre for Jewish Education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The program accepts only five North American candidates a year.

Applications Currently Being Accepted for the 2009 Academic Year

For more information, contact Jonathan Fass at jonathan.fass@gmail.com, Mandy Huglin at mandyh@savion.huji.ac.il, or go online at sep.huji.ac.il

The Senior Educators Program is a program of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Jewish Agency for Israel
search on issues where we feel it is possible to produce significant improvement.

Stage #2 requires much rigorous and disciplined thinking. Building a theory of action requires applying all that is known about teaching and learning (our profession’s knowledge base), adding the wisdom gleaned from our practice, and filtering this through what we know about the local context. What emerges from this dialogue is what is called a “graphic reconstruction.” A complete graphic reconstruction looks like a poster sized flow-chart or a mind-map. It reflects everything that must occur to produce the desired outcome (e.g., high scores on the tzedakah rubric). I call graphic reconstructions “implementation roadmaps” because they visually display the best route to a desired destination. The finished graphic reconstruction is a helpful instrument for alerting students, parents, and one’s colleagues precisely what you are planning to do to realize your goal.

Stage #3 Taking Action/Collecting Data

Even the most sound and clearly articulated theory of action remains a hypothesis until tested. Our goal as action researchers is to validate or invalidate the specific hypotheses contained in our theory of action. For this reason, it is important that action researchers be disciplined about collecting data on two things: our actions and intended student outcomes.

Let’s assume we are very successful. If all our students score at the top of the tzedakah rubric, how will we know what accounted for this success? We will only be able to answer this question if we can document exactly what transpired. This is why when conducting action research it is critical to follow the theory of action as written and/or document all changes made during the implementation.

Note: Teachers must be free to make changes when and if things aren’t working. Students shouldn’t be victimized by a teacher feeling compelled to follow through on an experimental protocol. Through the use of a journal the teacher-researcher is able to document what truly transpired. Those records lead to insights into which actions should be continued, modified, and/or deleted in the future.

The other area requiring disciplined deliberation pertains to intended student outcomes. Intuitively we vest more confidence in data that is corroborated by multiple sources. To provide a valid and reliable report on student performance we should triangulate our data collection (make use of multiple sources). Let’s imagine to assess our theory on helping students embrace tzedakah, we decide we want to understand changes in the students’ attitudes towards tzedakah. To accomplish this we might elect to do three things: interview students, survey parents, and review behavior data. These data sets will produce a far more comprehensive picture than would any one of them alone.

Stage #4 Reflection and Reporting

Two minds are inevitably better than one. If I am seeking to understand a phenomenon, the more sets of eyes that help me review my data, the greater the likelihood I will be alerted to nuances and unexpected findings. This is why conducting action research in teams is so powerful. Equally important, many of the goals we choose to pursue are not ours alone. In the case of tzedakah, as with much of the curriculum at Jewish day schools, success ultimately rests on the ability of the faculty as a professional community to work together to provide a coherent and cohesive program. In schools where the ethic of action research has been internalized, faculty meetings become venues for action research teams to disseminate their learning. Faculties that work this way know that, as with all science, they will learn as much from the thoughtful initiatives that didn’t work as planned as from those that succeeded.

Conclusion

It has been said that teaching is the world’s second most private act. In too many schools, teachers work in isolation. Cultures of isolation breed unhealthy attitudes towards data. Needing to believe they are doing good work, isolated professionals will intuitively avoid considering data that might bring their competence into question. Absent a willingness to confront disconfirming data, neither learning nor change occurs.

However, in schools where the ethic of action research has taken hold, the attitude towards data and school change becomes fundamentally different. These schools have transformed themselves into “professional communities,” places where student success is no longer attributed to teacher charisma, but is viewed as evidence of alternative theories of action worthy of consideration.

There are many positive things about teaching in schools that collaboratively attack problems of teaching and learning. Not only does engagement in collaborative action research make the act of teaching far less lonely, but in schools where teachers learn and grow, students tend to prosper and improve. With each successful locally developed school improvement the faculty’s sense of community deepens, as does its commitment to the process of professional learning.

Throughout the millennia it has been the nature of the Jewish people to study together as a community, to gather together to debate, in an effort to generate deeper and more profound understandings. When the teachers at a Jewish day school elect to study their work collaboratively and do so in full view of their students, the students observe their teachers demonstrating a major tenet of our culture: our learning is never complete.
Against Mentorship: Teacher Induction through Collaboration

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 53]

THE MAJOR ROLE OF AN ADMINISTRATOR

In Judaism, the weekly observance of Shabbat and annual celebration of holidays such as Rosh Hashanah and Passover with family and friends are ways children become acculturated to the traditions associated with their religion. Studying together with others in Jewish day schools, bar/bat mitzvah classes, and in synagogue is another example of how a group of people establishes, nourishes and creates continuity of learning over time. Just as Judaism guides its adherents in both practice and belief, a comprehensive induction program is structured to guide the new teachers in both the practices and beliefs of a school.

The major role of a head of school or principal is to establish, nourish, and disseminate a school’s culture. You can see this has been accomplished because an effective school has a discernable culture, whereas an ineffective school is a building with teachers who have only the parking lot in common.

Study after study has shown that most new teachers would forego more money in favor of a good administrator, the chance to work collaboratively with other highly motivated teachers, and an orderly, focused school atmosphere.

GEN YS LEARN BEST BY COLLABORATION

Gen Ys live in a global society where everyone is on the same playing field sharing information and solutions to produce outcomes. The Gen Ys are output oriented, success oriented, and thus student-achievement oriented. Gen Y teachers want to be involved in a collaborative way. They are a generation of great team players, and by channeling their talent for working together, we will see improved student learning. Education is a collaborative endeavor; no one individual has all the answers. We depend on each other for the creative solutions to our problems and the collective inspiration to design lessons that will improve student learning.

Gen Yrs like structure and want schools to give them clear rules and procedures to follow. They need to see clearly the value of their work. They want their work to be relevant, have impact, and offer them a diversity of experiences. They are receptive to the wisdom of older, seasoned teachers and administrators. They also want their valuable contributions appreciated—they want their ideas to be heard by expert listeners.

This next generation of teachers is the most intelligent, talented, competitive (and compulsive) group this country has seen. It’s a Renaissance generation with much potential if we put the future in their care. They are more interesting, more confident, less hidebound and uptight, better educated, more creative, and even unafraid. The grandeur of the future is in their capable hands. Let them work together.

Broadening the Base of Support for New Teachers

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 50]

...rials, information and problem-solving support they needed for classroom teaching; and 2) to do training on instructional skills that the rest of the faculty had done in prior years, as a way of introducing new teachers to our school’s professional development language.

We have dealt with a range of issues thus far. Logistical issues of hardware needs and classroom space were tackled during the first two weeks of school. Basic needs were taken care of, and since then, we have done problem-solving for issues in particular classrooms, as well as studying and analyzing parts of instructional skills.

In the formal written feedback, as well as through informal comments, new teachers have reflected back to us their feelings of being supported, and their appreciation for the many ways in which they have been helped, guided and welcomed. The ultimate indicator of success will be how well teachers were able to teach, and how much and how well our students were able to learn. So far, the results look promising.

Rabbi Elana Kanter is Director of Curriculum and Instruction at Jess Schwartz College Prep in Phoenix, Arizona.

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 35]

- Clearly states that failure to meet and maintain acceptable standards may result in termination
- Establishes a specified time frame in which improvement is required

Termination: If the teacher’s performance does not improve to the desired level, you should consider termination. Termination is usually appropriate if a teacher has received notice of performance problems and has failed to make acceptable progress toward correcting them.

The expectation for stellar performance has to come from the head of the school. If a school values high performing teachers and wants to do everything possible to help the staff become 4 star players, then you will create a school not only where parents want to send their children but where teachers want to work.
The following is the beginning of an article on the theme of the last issue, Religious Purposefulness, that presents current research on the subject. The full version of the article appears on the RAVSAK website: www.ravsak.org/hayidion.

Currently, most, if not all, Jewish schools approach religious and spiritual growth in a non-systematic way, uninformed by the wisdom of the fields of psychology, sociology, and general religious education. When Jewish schools do approach this topic, the outcome is often a program or seminar, as opposed to a more global understanding that is infused into all aspects of school functioning. Parents, students, and educators need guidance on how to inspire religious purposefulness in adolescents in an age when various media, and society in general, compete for an adolescent’s attention.

RUACH (Religious Understanding in Adolescent Children), a project of the Institute for University-School Partnership at the Azrieli Graduate School, is addressing these issues in a unique collaboration between school and university. This initiative is bringing together eight teams of high school administrators and teachers over the course of two years to learn about the latest research related to religious purposefulness, to implement practical strategies to increase it amongst students, and to gather data on student and school-wide changes so others can learn from these experiences. As senior fellows of the Institute for University-School Partnership, we are leading this project, which has been generously funded by the AVI CHAI Foundation.

Scott J. Goldberg, PhD, is the Director of the Institute for University-School Partnership, Azrieli Graduate School, Yeshiva University. David Pelcovitz, PhD, is the Gwendolyn & Joseph Straus Chair in Jewish Education at the Azrieli Graduate School, Yeshiva University.

The Case for Certification of Teachers in Jewish Schools

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11]

about Jews having higher standards in education than the general society is no longer true. We have always prided ourselves on being well educated, and showed the highest respect to teachers and scholars. Unfortunately, this is not the case today.

The following story (related by Dr. Miriam Klein Shapiro, a”h) illustrates this point all too well. The scholarly shamash (sexton) of a synagogue was feted at a dinner when he retired after many decades of service. He made the following remarks: “When I first came here people valued study and knowledge. We were still truly am haSefer, The People of The Book. Now, that has been totally replaced by other values, including Zionism. We are now am ha’aretz!” (In case the play on words was missed, am ha’aretz, lit. people of the land, also means an untutored ignoramus. He was offering a witty criticism which they didn’t understand.) Suffice it to say that this was greeted with wild applause. Just as this congregation didn’t “get it,” so too the Jewish community as a whole (with some notable exceptions) doesn’t fully comprehend the state of teacher preparedness for Jewish schools in this country.

We have an obligation to our children to build a high quality teaching profession in which teachers can thrive. The Jewish community’s challenge includes developing a sustainable and rewarding professional career system for all teachers. Licensure for all teachers in Jewish schools is part of a larger plan, which includes mentoring, incentives, and quality professional development. The following steps are recommended as part of a strategy to meet this goal:

• Set and maintain high standards for entry to all teaching positions in Jewish schools.
• Adopt National Board of License criteria for licensure with some modifications for a multi-tiered and entry-level system.
• Make data on teacher licensure public.
• Collect and use data on student achievement and teacher licensure.
• Enact incentives and support for certification.
• Allocations to schools should be based on a per capita of licensed teachers.

The Jewish community must sharpen its focus on educational practices, standards, and accountability. We must keep sight of the impact that quality teaching and professional development have on student learning. This requires a persuasive, effective, and continuous system of professional development.
New teacher induction goes beyond mentoring. It needs to be school-based and comprehensive. New teachers require formal guidance and support from more experienced colleagues, but they also need reasonable teaching assignments, orientation to school policies and procedures, viable curricula, and a clear understanding of the standards upon which their performance and their students’ learning will be judged. Creating comprehensive, school-based induction usually requires making cultural and structural changes. Structures such as mentoring and summer orientations help but must be embedded in a professional culture that promotes teacher collaboration and a sense of shared responsibility for teacher and student learning.

A beneficial side effect of successful induction practices for new teachers is the impact on other teachers in the school. As mentors, new teachers, and induction leaders learn to observe and discuss one another’s teaching, to co-plan lessons and analyze student work, the school increases its capacity for productive collaboration among teachers. As schools articulate a vision of good teaching and create systems of teacher assessment, all teachers have an opportunity to explore shared standards and deepen their understanding of what it means to be a teacher in their school.

The Mandel Center Induction Partnership model calls for two-years of on-site coaching. As coaches withdraw their assistance, we plan to maintain ties by means of an evolving “distance learning” model. This year we are experimenting with an on-line community of practice (CoP) focused on new teacher induction and co-sponsored by the Partnership for Excellence in Jewish Education (PEJE). Eventually, we hope to support a far-reaching induction network that relies less on embedded coaches and more on the induction “toolkit” that we are developing for Jewish day schools.

Currently, our online Induction Community of Practice reaches out to local participants in the Induction Partnership as well as to leaders in more than a dozen Jewish day schools around the country. As this model is refined and expanded, it may evolve into a nationwide induction education network. And we will have taken the next step toward institutionalizing strong induction practices in Jewish day schools.
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


Ingall, C. K. Down the Up Staircase: Tales of Teaching in Jewish Day Schools. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, '06.


Articles/Studies/Chapters


Guess, Andy. “Debating the Merits of Merit Pay.” Inside Higher Ed, 10/10/08.


Websites

www.nationalboardlicense.org: website of the National Board of License for Teachers and Principals of Jewish Schools in North America

www.all4ed.org: website of the Alliance for Excellent Education

http://newteacher.com/

http://admirablefaculties.blogspot.com: Peter Gow’s blog “about professional culture and professional development in independent schools.”

---

Training Institute in Jewish Social Justice

With the generous support of the Jewish Funds for Justice, RAVSAK conducted a training institute in Jewish social and economic justice for middle school educators on November 5th and 6th. Participants came from all over the country to a hotel in New Jersey for the unprecedented opportunity to develop their own teaching and their schools’ chesed curricula. The passion and creativity of these educators truly shone through their activity in the institute. They learned Torah together and brainstormed ways of connecting study to action. They shared programs that they run, compiling lists of ideas that they can consider trying with their students. They created action plans that will guide them in transforming their programs from where they are to where they would like them to be. And they collaborated on the planning of new programs, in the process reflecting upon the world of possibilities that can make a program a rewarding and enriching learning opportunity.

Participants also had the occasion to learn from leading figures in Jewish nonprofits advancing social and economic justice. Rabbi Jill Jacobs, rabbi-in-residence at the Jewish Funds for Justice, led them through an eye-opening lesson on talking about race and class in the classroom. Rabbi Brent Spodek, the director of Jewish communal relations at the American Jewish World Service, spoke to the ways that caring for the poor around the globe is an inescapable and essentially Jewish concern. As much as they imparted important information, these speakers conveyed their immense passion for their work and the pursuit of justice so central to their understanding of Jewish identity.

Participants spoke of their appreciation for taking precious time to develop their skills, and their joy in learning from teachers and from each other. “I feel challenged.” “The program gave teachers a chance to collaborate outside their institutions, a common language to discuss issues of social justice, and time to think of a vision and programs.” “This experience makes me more prepared to evaluate my own goals for my students and make additions to my curriculum that will raise the level of critical thinking and application.” “It was great to have such an OPEN group here—open to sharing and open to process and open to learning together.” Mazel tov to the teachers and their schools for participating in the institute:

- Bryna Bass and Miriam Clerman (Rockwern Academy, Cincinnati, OH)
- Rabbi Janet Ozur Bass and Tamar Rabinowitz (Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School, Rockville, MD)
- Rena Citrin and Eric Keitel (Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School, Chicago, IL)
- Jan Cohen and Jacob Garmaise (Abraham Joshua Heschel School, New York, NY)
- Ora Gittelson David and Cindy Schlesinger (Gideon Hausner Jewish Day School, Palo Alto, CA)
- Sue Einhorn (Greenfield Day School, Miami, FL)
- Janie Orstad and Honora Teitzman (David Posnack Hebrew Day School, Plantation, FL)
- Julie Rezmovie (Gesher Jewish Day School, Fairfax, VA)
- Rabbi Adam Schaffer (Abraham Joshua Heschel Day School, Northridge, CA)
- Melissa Worthington (Akiva Community Day School, Nashville, TN)
Mentorship: Sounding Board for Teacher Retention

[continued from page 49]

used and stumbling blocks overcome, and developing resources to help preserve the accomplishment. We also discussed ways in which this goal could be taken to the next level. At the completion of the formal mentoring relationship, we scheduled a meeting to reflect on the past year and negotiate what could happen to our relationship now that the formal mentoring part was complete.

Karen Feller, my head of school at Donna Klein Jewish Academy, is a great advocate of this program. Karen and the entire administration encouraged me to adapt the JTS program into a pilot plan for mentoring teachers at Donna Klein. Under Fran Urman’s continued guidance, I have started implementing this plan with the school’s incoming teachers, as well as current teachers who need additional support. The goal underlying this effort is the retention of quality teachers whose success benefits the greater school community.

Amer Randell has been teaching for thirteen years at Donna Klein Jewish Academy in Boca Raton, Florida, and is a recipient of the 2008 Grinspoon-Steinhardt award for Excellence in Jewish Education. He can be reached at RandellA@dkja.org.

Investing in Teacher Development Pays Dividends

[continued from page 32]

take responsibility for developing one another’s practice looks different than professional development we typically see in schools. It is not the usual fare of one-off workshops on trendy topics. Rather, powerful professional development for teachers consists of frequent, regularly scheduled opportunities for novices and veterans to observe and discuss teacher practice and student learning. It empowers them as joint-problem solvers, peer educators, and stewards of excellent instruction in the school.

A thoughtfully structured mentoring program marks an elegant contribution to the ongoing professional learning of seasoned as well as novice teachers. Mentors in our Induction Partnership Schools comment again and again about how much their own teaching has improved since they began collaborating with novice colleagues and fellow mentors. They bring renewed energy to their practice and new life to their schools. Why not allow all teachers—not just the mentors and novices—such an experience, drawing all faculty into carefully facilitated collaborative activities such as examining student work or structured observations of teaching practice? The result will only reinforce the kind of culture in which teachers thrive.

Conclusion

Though one of the recommendations above involves only leadership through words and actions, the other two come with price tags. Structuring a school’s professional development in order to provide for teachers’ serious learning is expensive. It means creating a good deal of additional time for teachers to interact, while investing in the kinds of training that will allow them to use that time effectively to improve instruction. It means continuing to send teachers to workshops on relevant curricula or teaching approaches, when relevant. It means paying for a new teacher orientation, for curricular resources, and for mentor supports such as study groups. But the payoff, in terms of teachers’ improved practice, school-wide energy, and faculty stability, can be enormous.
You can’t see **Israel** from a tour bus. You’ve got to **breathe it, eat it, hike it, dance it, sing it, live it, love it.**

**Experience Israel with Young Judaea.**

**A CENTURY OF COMMITMENT. A LIFETIME OF CONNECTION.**

For more information on all of our programs, visit us at www.youngjudaea.org or call 800.725.0612.
Bridges to Tomorrow: 
Preventing For A Changing Reality
Jewish Day School Economic Summit

RAVSAK Annual Leadership Conference
January 18 – 20, 2009 • San Francisco, CA
See pages 24-25 for more information.