From the Desk of Lynn Raviv, RAVSAK President

Chaverim, Shalom!

The 2000 National Jewish Population Survey was finally released last month. While much controversy surrounds the study’s methodologies and statistical procedures, it nonetheless serves as a fascinating lens through which to view the North American Jewish community.

As comes as no surprise, most of the news generated by the NJPS 2000 is negative. One of the many alarming statistics published in the survey is that the “Jewish population in America has declined for the first time since colonial times.” Let’s consider for a moment what this suggests:

1. There are more Jews dying than being born each year.
2. Jewish families are shrinking in size. Whereas once it was common for Jewish families to have 3 or 4 children (with even larger families seen in the Orthodox communities), today most Jews have 1 or 2 children, if any children at all.
3. Jews are marrying later in life than before, contributing to low fertility rates.
4. Fewer Jewish births means fewer new students.

However, one very positive statistic stands out: “The percentage of children in Jewish day schools is the highest it has ever been.” More and more families (small as they may be) realize the important role a Jewish day school can play in transmitting core values to a new generation of Jews. Likewise, more families have come to understand that an educational setting which brings together Jewish and general knowledge can promote a strong sense of self, rich community connections, and a desire to engage in life long learning.

The day school, more than any other Jewish institution, is identified as the medium of hope for a North America Jewish future.

What an awesome responsibility we have as leaders in Jewish day school education.

Thank goodness for RAVSAK! Because of this organization, we are not in this work alone. We have the network of over 70 schools and literally hundreds of colleagues on whom to rely.

RAVSAK has been vital to my growth as a day school professional. I vividly remember my first RAVSAK conference over ten years ago (coincidentally, Tampa). I was so impressed with the caliber of the heads of school who attended this conference. I was struck by wealth of knowledge I gained. And I was grateful for the on-going network of colleagues that I began to meet at this conference and at subsequent RAVSAK events.

You will have the same experience in Tampa, January 18-21, as the 20th annual RAVSAK conference convenes to explore “Building School Community in Challenging Times.” As the head, Judaic director, or key lay leader in a Jewish community day school, this is your conference. This annual leadership conclave is designed exclusively around the needs of community schools. Even when funds are tight, even when you are working harder than ever, you need and deserve to attend the RAVSAK conference.

My membership in RAVSAK is my most important professional association. You have my personal commitment that RAVSAK will serve as your ongoing partner and support in your work to ensure that a new generation of North American Jews will grow and thrive.

Lynn Raviv is President of RAVSAK and Head of School at the N.E. Miles Jewish Day School in Birmingham, AL.
Welcome New Members!

Austin Jewish Academy—Texas
Charlottesville Jewish Community Day School (in formation) - Virginia
Hillel School of Rochester—New York
Katherine & Jacob Greenfield Hebrew Academy of Atlanta—Georgia
Maass Jewish Community Day School—North Carolina
MetroWest Jewish Day School—Massachusetts
Milwaukee Jewish Day School—Wisconsin
Jewish Community Day School of Southern Brooklyn (in formation)- New York

Book Review:
Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Leading

Today, school leaders are facing a myriad of complex issues—a tighter economy that has led to fewer donations and higher need for scholarships; a shrinking pool of qualified teacher candidates; two parent working families causing a smaller pool of volunteers; and competition from other private schools along with increasing numbers of magnet schools. The challenges have never been more intense—or the rewards so great. How can we learn to navigate leadership and help our schools grow and thrive?

The book, Leadership On The Line, is full of real life examples and solid ideas to enhance your leadership skills. Authors Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky have “a half century of combined teaching and consulting experience to show that it IS possible to put ourselves on the line, respond effectively to the risks, and live to celebrate our efforts.”

According to Heifetz and Linsky, one of the most distinguishing qualities of successful leaders in any field is the emphasis they place on their personal relationships. Great care is given to creating and nurturing networks of people whom they can call on, work with and engage in addressing the issues at hand. This particular view of leadership resonates strongly in the world of Jewish education, where ideally each of us has (or is working to develop) significant networks of professionals and lay leader who can positively influence our work.

Leadership on the Line is an encouraging and practical guide to putting yourself “on the line” while attending to the real issues of leadership. Whereas so many leadership books are about “inspiration,” Heifetz and Linsky state that their book is about “perspiration.” They thoughtfully explore many challenges of leadership and provide real world advice as to how to reduce some of the risks inherent to leadership. Leadership on the Line is neither overblown nor oversimplified. It is at its core a resource book for leaders of all kinds.

I recommend this book highly to Heads of School, Judaic Directors and Lay Leaders. All of us can learn from the political and practical wisdom in this book. We all have talents and skills to enrich our schools. Enhancing our leadership skills will allow us to tap into those gifts and move our schools ahead into the 21st century.

Judy Miller is the head of school of the Hillel School of Tampa and the 2004 RAVSAK Conference Chair. Judy is a regular contributor to the RAVSAK Newsletter.
During the week of July 7-11, 2003, teachers from RAVSAK schools attended a Facing History and Ourselves Summer Institute for Jewish Educators. Facing History & Ourselves is a national organization, committed to helping teachers and their students link the steps that led to the Holocaust to issues related to civic responsibilities and the moral choices that they face in their daily lives. Facing History supports teachers as they guide their students in a rigorous study of history while also thinking about what causes people to act as perpetrators, bystanders, resisters, victims and rescuers in situations in which hatred arises. The Jewish Education Program of Facing History is specifically dedicated to teaching about the Holocaust within the context of Jewish History, identity and Jewish ethics.

This summer institute was the product of a partnership between RAVSAK and Facing History and Ourselves. Thirty-seven teachers participated in the week of learning held at the Facing History and Ourselves International Office in Boston. RAVSAK teachers came from The Jewish Community Day School of Boston, The Emery/Weiner School in Houston, Tucson Hebrew Academy, The Heschel School in New York, Hebrew Day School of Central Florida, Hannah Senesh Community Day School in Brooklyn, and The London Community Hebrew Day School in Ontario, Canada.

The weeklong learning that took place at this Facing History and Ourselves Summer Institute for Jewish Educators was particularly interesting not only because of the different communities represented by the teachers, and the content area being examined, but also because of the religious diversity present in the room. This diversity led to interesting and important discussions regarding stereotypes of different denominations, the place of religious texts in the teaching of history and the relationship between the establishment of the Modern State of Israel and the Holocaust. It was rewarding for all involved to be part of a community in which such difficult issues were discussed with respect and tolerance for the diversity of positions represented.

One RAVSAK participant shared in her evaluation of the institute, “I appreciated the high level of discussions and the willingness of other participants to share experiences and ideas. I feel that I’ve made some great connections to other educators, and hope to keep up these connections through the school year.” It is this sharing of ideas and experiences that created the sense of community throughout the institute. Teachers were able to network with other educators and connect with others teaching in similar settings.

Participants were introduced to the content and methodology of Facing History as well as the various resource materials available through sessions facilitated by Facing History program staff. The opening sessions of the institute considered individual and group behavior, asking the questions of how is our identity formed? How do we acquire membership in a group? What does it mean to be a Jew in the Diaspora? Who is in our “universe of obligation”? In the sessions that followed participants examined Jewish life in Poland before World War II, the dilemmas of the ghetto life, and the choices that Germans and others made in the 1920’s and 30’s. Participants considered the ways that these choices undermined democracy, and thought about the ways that hatred, indifference, denial, and opportunism, can shape a period in history. The closing sessions considered questions of judgment, and legacy. Participants were encouraged to think about issues of prevention by returning to themes developed in the opening sessions.

A RAVSAK teacher shared the way that Facing History has influenced her teaching after attending the summer institute, as well as how she has integrated some of these materials into the course that she teaches. She writes, “I have incorporated much of what I learned to my already existing Holocaust Unit. The two books [Holocaust and Human Behavior and Jews of Poland] are excellent for readings. The online resources are absolutely great, and so is the possibility of getting other materials from Facing History.” Teachers who attend summer institutes receive ongoing support from Facing History staff, and have access to our resource library (videos and books) as well as our website that houses many other invaluable materials.

Facing History and Ourselves is very excited to be offering another Summer Institute for Jewish Educators this summer at Hebrew College in Boston. The institute will be held the week of July 11-16, 2004. We are hoping that teachers from RAVSAK schools will participate in this exciting week of learning. For more information about the institute and Facing History and Ourselves please contact Jan Darsa, Director of the Jewish Education Program of Facing History and Ourselves at (617) 735-1608 or email jan_darsa@facing.org.

Leora Schaefer is on staff at Facing History and Ourselves. She can be reached at leora_schaefer@facing.org.
School Terrorism Preparedness: Aware and Prepared, Not Scared

“FBI probes suspicious incident at Jewish girls middle school.”

While this may sound like a lead into a TV movie, it is actually a Maryland newspaper headline about a Middle Eastern couple being investigated after an alert parent spotted them videotaping outside a Jewish girls middle school.

Terrorist Threat to Schools

Terrorists strive to conduct their strikes with the highest visibility and greatest psychological impact. Terrorist attacks upon schools and school buses have occurred overseas for decades. An attack upon a school in the United States would easily produce mass fear and instill a lack of confidence in leadership.

Heightened Security and Preparedness

Educators and school support staff are the “first responders” to acts of campus violence. They must be properly trained and prepared. Prepared schools:

1. Train teachers and support staff on security and emergency preparedness issues.
2. Assess and refine their security measures to adapt to changing threats to school safety.
3. Exercise emergency plans to make sure what is written on paper would work in a real emergency.

School emergency plans should be developed with an “all-hazards” approach accounting for both natural disasters and man-made acts of violence. Yet school officials cannot ignore the broader context of the threat of terrorism. In fact, school leaders can reduce the fear of terrorism through education, communication, and preparation strategies.

Schools can heighten their security in a number of practical, cost-effective ways:

1. Verify and log the identity of service personnel and vehicles.
2. Eliminate security-sensitive information, such as school floor plans, from your web site.
3. Conduct a status check of emergency communications mechanisms such as PA systems, two way radios, and fire alarms.
4. Establish procedures for evacuations, lockdowns, and shelter-in-place.
5. Evaluate food and medical supplies.

Keeping Perspective

School leaders must keep the appropriate perspective. The key: Be aware and prepared, but not scared.

Kenneth S. Trump is President of National School Safety and Security Services in Cleveland, Ohio. For additional information on school terrorism preparedness, training, and security assessment services, see www.schoollsecurity.org.
Justice, Justice You Shall Pursue
RAVSAK Partners with Jewish Fund for Justice to Provide Fully-Funded Professional Development Programs

Last month, RAVSAK and the Jewish Fund for Justice convened two, day-long professional development seminars—one in New York City and one in San Francisco—to explore ways to infuse Jewish community day schools with a heightened sense of social justice. These two remarkable sessions brought 25 middle and high school teachers from RAVSAK schools across America together to think, discuss, learn, and plan.

Through our outstanding partnership with the Jewish Fund for Justice and the incredible generosity of connected supporters, RAVSAK was able to provide this cutting edge professional development free of charge. Funding covered all travel, lodging, meals, training, and materials, making this opportunity available to member schools without tapping into professional development funds. We are thrilled to have been able to offer this as a membership benefit to participating schools.

One participant, Linda Schwartz, a Judaic Studies teacher at the Goldie Feldman Academy of Sarasota, FL, reflected on her experience at the RAVSAK/JFJ training and how this professional development has already impacted her work.

I feel very privileged to have been able to participate in the RAVSAK/Jewish Fund for Justice conference in New York on October 20, 2003. I had heard a great deal about RAVSAK before, but this was my first time partaking in a RAVSAK event. It was enlightening to meet with other Jewish educators from the eastern half of the U.S.

The JFJ is the only Jewish organization solely committed to fighting the injustice of poverty in America. Barbara Deinhardt, Associate Director of Education and Outreach for JFJ was the dynamic facilitator of this program who introduced the curriculum while taking us through the lessons step by step.

Upon my return to Sarasota, I was anxious to implement this curriculum with my eighth graders and to get them excited about the concept of giving back to the community. One of our lessons dealt with the definition of a “tzadik” (one who is righteous). I gave my students two examples of different ways a person can be righteous. I told them about my 23 year old son, Jeremy, who is a Yeshiva University student. He is shomer shabbes (Sabbath observant), prays three times a day, and observes the dietary laws of kashrut. I also told them about my 21 year old daughter, Melanie, who is a student at the University of Central Florida. She does not strictly observe all of the Jewish laws but participates in a weekly program to feed the hungry, built houses with Habitat for Humanity, and leads fund raising drives to aid the needy. These contrasting examples of righteousness prompted students to engage in a thought provoking, lively discussion on the various ways in which one can be a tzadik. They realized that each person must search out his or her individual path.

We then invited Rose Chapman, LCSW and President of the Jewish Family and Children’s Services to visit our school and talk to the students about helping contribute to their food pantry which serves needy families in our area. Our eighth graders are looking forward to organizing our school food drive and implementing this as an ongoing project. This is such a wonderful way to make a real difference in our community, as the families who are nourished by the food pantry are also counseled by the JFCS.

Thank you, thank you to RAVSAK and the Jewish Fund for Justice for this opportunity!

Linda Schwartz is a middle school Judaica teacher at the Goldie Feldman Academy in Sarasota, FL.
RAVSAK
The Jewish Community Day School Network

Annual Conference 2004
Building School Community in Challenging Times

Tampa, FL * January 19-21, 2004

We look forward to welcoming each and every one of you to sunny Tampa for four exciting days of learning, networking, growing, and sharing. Below you will find a working agenda for our time together. If you have not made your reservations, you can register for the conference online at www.ravsaq.org or fill out the blue conference registration form enclosed with this newsletter. See you in Tampa!

CONFERENCE AGENDA
(Subject to revision)

Sunday
10:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m. Arrival, check-in and conference registration at the DoubleTree Westshore Hotel
11:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m. Tampa Bay Area Judaica and Israel Fair—Open to the entire community (see page 16 for more info) Sponsored by RAVSAK
2:00 p.m. Welcome Reception for First Time Conference Attendees
3:00 p.m. Formal Program Begins
3:00 p.m. What is Jewish About Fundraising & The Lay-Head Partnership in Making “the Ask” Presenter: Rae Ringel, Motivational Speaker and Trainer
6:00 p.m. Poolside Cocktail Reception
7:00 p.m. Opening Night Banquet
8:00 p.m. Re-Imagining the Board-Head Partnership Presenter: Cheryl Finkel, De’ah
9:30 p.m. Evening Reception/ Hospitality Suite Hosted by American Hebrew Academy
Monday

7:15 a.m.  Shachrit
8:00 a.m.  Breakfast
8:30 a.m.  Workshop I:  Strategic Marketing & Recruitment  
Presenter: Jennifer Miller, Make Your Mark
Workshop II:  Decision Making and the Hebrew Language Program  
Presenter: Dr. Vardit Ringvald, Brandeis University

10:00 a.m.  Coffee break
10:15 a.m.  Workshop I:  Strengthening the Leadership Team, or, How Not to Lose Your Head!  
Presenter: Dr. Pearl Rock Kane, Teachers College-Columbia University
Workshop II:  Tefillah, Spirituality and New Resources  
Presenter: Dr. Henry Schreibman, Brandeis Hillel School

12:00 p.m.  Lunch  
Presenter: Steven Krauss, JESNA

1:00 p.m.  Workshop I:  National Issues in Board Leadership  
Presenter: Jeff Moredock, NAIS
Workshop II:  Judaic Roundtable: Consolidating Resources, Networking, and More  
Facilitator: Dr. Marc N. Kramer, RAVSAK

2:00 p.m.  Workshop I:  Thinking Out of the Box About Fundraising  
Presenter: Jeffrey Richard, New York University
Workshop II:  Fostering New Leadership in Jewish Studies  
Facilitators: Sara Glenn, Tzivia Garfinkel & Rachel Keller

3:30 p.m.  Farewell to Lay Leaders

4:00 p.m.  Transportation to the Tampa Bay Holocaust Memorial Museum  
Private docent tour

5:30 p.m.  Dinner at the museum

6:30 p.m.  The Middle East Crisis, Terrorism, and What All This Means for a Jewish Day School  
Presenter: John Loftus

8:00 p.m.  Transportation to the DoubleTree Westshore Hotel

8:30 p.m.  Evening Reception/ Hospitality Suite  
Hosted by Oramin Educational Initiatives

(Conference agenda continues on next page)
**CONFERENCE AGENDA CONTINUED**

**Tuesday**

7:30 a.m.  
*Shachrit*

8:15 a.m.  
**Breakfast**  
Sponsored by Babaganewz and JSkyway

9:00 a.m.  
**Workshop I:**  
*Structuring Induction*  
Presenter: Dr. Henry Schreibman

**Workshop II:**  
*Teaching Jewish Values Using Babaganewz*  
Presenter: Babaganewz Staff

10:30 a.m.  
**Coffee break**

10:45 a.m.  
**RAVSAK Annual Meeting**

12:00 p.m.  
**Lunch**

1:00 p.m.  
**Workshop I:**  
*Distance Learning for Teachers*  
Presenter: Heather Martin, JSkyway

**Workshop II:**  
*Making the Most of Donated Technology*  
Facilitator: Michael Gamson, Hillel School of Tampa

**Workshop III:**  
*Creating Your Own Siddur*  
Presenter: Rabbi Brad Horwitz, Minneapolis Jewish Day School

2:30 p.m.  
**Coffee Break**

3:00 p.m.  
**Effective Teaching**  
Presenter: Dr. Leon Weissberg, Jewish Education Commission of South Beach

4:30 p.m.  
**Workshop I:**  
*Issues in School Law*  
Presenter: Claire Saady, Esq.

**Workshop II:**  
*AVI CHAI Judaic Benchmarks and Standards Project*  
Facilitator: Charlotte Abramson, Project Director

6:00 p.m.  
**Dinner**

7:00 p.m.  
**Evening Program**

**Wednesday**

7:30 a.m.  
*Shachrit*

8:15 a.m.  
**Breakfast**

9:00 a.m.  
**Curriculum Mapping**

11:00 a.m.  
**Evaluation and Conference Wrap-up**

11:30 a.m.  
*L’hitraot— Good-bye and safe travels*
Art and Torah Education:
Using Aesthetics to Support Your School’s Judaic Vision

The first thing we learn about G-d in the Torah is that G-d is a Creator (Bereishit bara E-lohim et ha’shamayim v’et ha’aretz—In the beginning of the creation, G-d created the heavens and the earth). A few verses later, we learn that all people are created b’zzelem E-lohim, in G-d’s Image. It stands then that art and creative self-expression allow an individual to engage in something very close to the Divine experience…creation!

So do we give our students enough chances to express themselves creatively and do we help them see that creative expression is, in fact, a gift from G-d that every one of us has?

ATID, the Academy for Torah Initiatives and Directions in Jewish Education, in conjunction with Yeshiva University Museum offered a thoughtful program for educators on November 09, 2003 that explored the potential for meaningful connections between Jewish studies and art. The focus of this program was “Creative Spirituality, Jewish Education and the Arts” and educators came from all around to learn from renowned educators including Rabbi Chaim Brovender, Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm, Rabbi Shalom Carmy and many others dedicated to improving the lives of our students through art.

According to Rabbi Brovender, “beauty was created by G-d for us to gaze upon” and this beauty is “the way truth is and was revealed.” When the world was created, G-d needed to make it aesthetically pleasing in order for mankind to fully appreciate its intensity. Therefore, the importance of this message of aesthetics needs to be transmitted to the student for them to fully comprehend the deeper meanings of Torah. Of course, bringing art education into the Judaic classrooms has pedagogic, in addition to spiritual, implications as well. For a student better able to express him or herself in pictures than in words, a closeness of art and Judaics could result in murals depicting Biblical events, a picture expressing the personal joy one feels when doing an act of chesed (kindness), or even a comic strip showing the unfolding of an event in Jewish history. More so, art can give a new language to all learners who at times lack the words they need to express themselves otherwise.

The ATID Conference raised many questions and while falling short on practical solutions, inspired attendees (including me) to think critically about how Jewish education can be better infused with the arts, and that this blending of disciplines enhances—not reduces—Torah learning.

Marla Rottenstreich is the Project Coordinator for RAVSAK. She can be reached at marlar@ravsak.org
The National Jewish Outreach Program was established by Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald in 1987 to address the critical issue of the spiraling losses of Jews from Jewish life. Through exciting free programs such as the Hebrew Reading Crash Course, the Crash Course in Basic Judaism and the Model Seder Program, NJOP reaches out to unaffiliated Jews, offering positive Jewish experiences and meaningful educational opportunities.

Chanukah Workshop Program:

Parents/adults should be invited to an interactive workshop where they will study and discuss eight intriguing questions and answers including source material in Hebrew/Aramaic and English, enabling them to develop a stronger sense of the underlying meaning, sources and customs of Chanukah. NJOP's Question Guide containing the same eight questions (no answers) can then be distributed to children in the school. Parents who've participated in the workshop will now be in a position - perhaps for the first time - to teach their children and help them answer their homework questions!

For more information, please contact Larry Greenman at lgreenman@njop.org or 1-800 44 HEBRE (W) or (646) 871-0113.
RAVSAK Associate Members Are Here to Support YOU!

In addition to serving Jewish community day schools across North America, RAVSAK has a special category of membership for Jewish and educational organizations, consultants and companies which share our vision of excellence in Jewish day school education. We encourage you to take advantage of their services and share the commitment to community day school education.

Oranim Educational Initiatives
5432 Mayfield Road, #205
Lyndhurst, OH 44124
Phone: 888-281-1265 or 440-720-0222
Fax: 440-720-0202
E-mail: info@jewishadventures.com
Website: www.jewishadventures.com
President: Shlomo "Momo" Lifshitz

Oranim Educational Initiatives provides customized travel programs for schools and Jewish youth. Oranim's educational adventures are rich in Jewish atmosphere and provide travelers a chance to meet new friends and have the experience of a lifetime. The programs encompass sites throughout the world and are specifically planned to be educational, inspirational and fun. Since 1986, Oranim has provided a wide range of innovative services and programs to a varied clientele with a "can do" attitude and a commitment to excellence and flexibility.

The Jewish Teachers Corps
45 West 36th Street
New York, NY 10018
Phone: 212-244-7852 or 888-582-6777
Fax: 212-244-7855
E-mail: info@jtcorps.org
Website: www.jtcorps.org
Director: Rabbi Uri Gordon

The Jewish Teachers Corps, an initiative of Edah in partnership with the AVI CHAI Foundation, was established in response to a shortage of Judaic studies personnel in day schools in North America. Modeled after the highly successful Teach For America, The Jewish Teachers Corps seeks to attract the most talented graduates of yeshiva high schools and then of general and Jewish universities, and place them in day schools around the country. The Jewish Teachers Corps appeals to a heightened sense of service among the best and brightest in the Jewish community, providing the Fellows with the opportunity to teach for one or two years in day schools that otherwise would have great difficulty attracting such talented and literate young Jewish educators.

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Collaborations in Philanthropy
200B Main Avenue
Passaic Park, NJ 07055
Phone: 972-249-8111
E-mail: yisraelf@hotmail.com
Contact: Yisrael Feuerman

“Collaborations in Philanthropy” aids schools in human capital management development. Yisrael Feuerman’s expertise includes:

- New gifts campaign
- Tuition management and collections
- Public relations

His fundraising initiatives are individually tailored to each school structure. “Collaborations in Philanthropy” focuses on the idea that tuition collection and management is based on engendering connection and cooperation as opposed to compliance. The fundraising process should serve as one of learning and Yisrael Feuerman helps to make this a reality.
Countless studies have evidenced that the behaviors, attitudes, and actions of the head of school are the foremost influences on a school’s culture. Who the head of school is, what the head of school knows, and how the head of school embodies the vision of the school directly impacts the curriculum, staffing, daily school life, and student outcomes. To recapture the old adage, “what the head knows, the body knows.”

This is, of course, more than a statement of “monkey see, monkey do.” In question here is the influence the head of school has in transmitting Jewish knowledge, comfort, and capacity to another generation of North American Jews. Keeping in mind that the vast majority of children enrolled in RAVSAK schools come from homes where neither parent attended a Jewish day school themselves, the school is presented with the additional challenges of educating the family while promoting a vast body of knowledge (including a system of values, foreign language, Text learning traditions, and ritual practices) which may be difficult to support at home. While the day-to-day responsibilities of this laborer (from one generation to the next) education lies with the classroom teachers, the maintenance and promotion of Jewish learning and life as central to the school’s raison d’être is the work of the head of school.

**A head of school with a rich Judaic background is ideally able to utilize knowledge and experience to promote a Judaic culture and curriculum to permeate all aspects of school life.**

While an understanding of this complex relationship between the head of school and the school itself is essential for all schools, lay leaders of Jewish community day schools face particular challenges in hiring and supporting professional leaders. A head of school with a rich Judaic background is ideally able to utilize leadership and experience to promote a Judaic culture and curriculum to permeate all aspects of school life. A head of school who brings outstanding general leadership without his or her own Jewish connections, must rely heavily on other professionals and Jewish communal leaders to ensure Judaic quality. More so, what one Jewish community day school sees as a core Jewish value may be outside of the operating assumptions of another—and equally wonderful—pluralistic school.

Working closely with a leading philanthropic partner, RAVSAK has undertaken a multi-year study of selected heads of Jewish community day schools affiliated with RAVSAK to understand their own educational backgrounds and current Jewish connections and dispositions.

A 1999 study of the “pathways of preparedness” of the heads of 50 Jewish community day schools suggested a complicated trend in community day school leadership: With notable exceptions, headships were held by educational leaders with little to no formal Jewish education and limited personal participation in traditional Jewish communal life. “Judaic” skills and knowledge of these heads were largely oriented around Jewish history, with fewer than 20% of the heads indicating and evidencing substantive knowledge of and comfort with Jewish sacred text, traditional ritual practice, or Hebrew prayer.

An informal survey of Judaic knowledge, attitudes toward Jewish ritual practice, and interest in Judaic learning opportunities was taken in 2003 to further clarify this trend. While additional research is necessary to determine individual and composite levels of knowledge, what emerged from this survey is a clear sense that seated heads of Jewish community day schools both need and desire Judaic knowledge as they see it as essential to meaningful school leadership.
Fewer than 10% of the heads surveyed attended a Jewish day school themselves, and while nearly 60% indicated that they attended some form of pre-bar/bat mitzvah supplementary school, only one-third continued in a Hebrew high school program of any sort. Nearly three-quarters of all heads surveyed took at least one university level course in Judaic studies. Still, just over 25% indicated that they currently or in the recent past participated in a Jewish adult education program or learn with a chevra (regular study partner).

When asked to reflect on one’s own level of subject/content knowledge in the four areas of curricular interest of this program, the following data emerged:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Expert/Mastery</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Beginner</th>
<th>Novice or no experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chumash (p'shat)</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish Ritual Practice</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish Ethics (Midot)</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish Liturgy</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These data suggest that the typical head of school self-identifies as having some basic Judaic knowledge but generally does not consider him/herself to be an expert in, or even an advanced student of, these various subject/content areas in Jewish studies. There are, of course, notable exceptions. Importantly, these data also suggest that the typical head of school surveyed has the basis of understanding more advanced studies, should the opportunity arise. More so, nearly all respondents indicated a desire to enhance his/her Judaic knowledge and to dedicate a portion of their learning time to exploration of how this knowledge can strengthen the schools they lead.

In keeping with our commitment to providing outstanding professional development for heads of schools, RAVSAK is in the process of developing a rigorous program of Judaic studies for our current heads of school. Our vision is that heads of school who are committed to enhancing their own Jewish knowledge and comfort will be supported in a program that will include the opportunity to learn from master Jewish teachers, work in partnership with peer mentors, reflect on questions of authentic Jewish pluralism, and immediately begin to implement an enhanced Judaic vision in concert with their Boards. Such a program would take place in highly focused summer sessions, through distance learning, and school-based projects.

Based upon input from several heads of schools and a panel of experts, we are working toward a program that will be fully funded, not require time away during the school year, and provide for additional Judaic learning even once the program has been completed.

At this time we are seeking additional feedback from heads of schools and board presidents. We will be convening a number of telephone focus groups in December and January and invite your participation. In particular, we are looking for participation from:

- Board presidents who would like to include their head of school in such a program
- Heads of schools with strong Judaic backgrounds
- Heads of schools with limited Judaic backgrounds that they wish to enhance

If you are interested in helping to shape this exciting program, please send an e-mail with your contact information to: MKramer@ravSAK.org.

Please stay tuned for more information.
National Reading Trends Vary
By Grade and Region for 2002
National Center for Education Statistics Report

The recently published NCES- National Center for Education Statistics study on reading demonstrates notable differences in student achievement on standardized reading scores since 1992 in grades 4, 8 and 12. The study also shows significant variation in scores by geographic region.

Considering national averages since 1992, students in grade 4 show a very slight increase in score on the NAEP reading test from 217 to 219 (based on a 500 point scale). This increase is not considered to be statistically significant. Eighth grade students demonstrated a four-point gain in score from 260 in 1992 to 262 in 2002. Grade 12 students, however, show a five-point decline from a high of 292 in 1992 to 287 in 2002. This decline in score is of particular concern in light of new accommodations.

State-by-state data suggest regional trends. Students in grades 4 and 8 in northeast and northwest states had higher average scores than the nation. Students in the south and southwest had average scores comparable to or below national averages. When scores are divided into categories of achievement (below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced), Vermont, Massachusetts, Maine and Kansas have the highest percentages of students in the proficient and advanced groups while New Mexico, Nevada, Mississippi, Hawaii, and California have the lowest percentage of students scoring the in the proficient and advanced groups.

Student achievement also varies along gender lines. While scores for fourth and eighth grade boys and girls did not change in statistically significant ways since 1992, twelfth grade scores declined 2 points for girls and 8 points for boys. Female students have scored higher than male students in all grades in 1992.

No explanation for scores or variations were offered in the study.

It is important to note that this was a study done of public schools in the United States, the District of Columbia, Department of Defense Dependents Schools, and US territories. RAVSAK schools which also administer the NAEP should consider this when comparing student performance to national figures. Schools which do use standardized tests may find student achievement useful information for use in marketing, outreach, and recruitment.

To learn more about this and other National Center for Education Statistics reports, visit them on the web at: http://nces.ed.gov.

RAVSAK Remembers

On the first yartzeit of founding director, Ada Michaels, z”l, we invite you to honor her memory by making a donation to the Ada Michaels, z”l, Scholar-in-Residence Fund. Contributions support the presence of outstanding scholars and presenters at the RAVSAK Annual Leadership Conference. Your tax-deductible gift should be sent to the RAVSAK National Office:

RAVSAK
752 West End Avenue, Suite 10-K
New York, NY 10025
Attn: Ada Michael’s Fund

RAVSAK salutes its newsletter sponsors: The Craft Shop, Kol Echad, eAcademy, Kosher Cornucopia, Remark Book Service, and The Jewish Theological Seminary Distance Learning Program. Please support our supporters!
We’re Loosing Our Heads!
RAVSAK Helps Fight the Crisis of School Leadership

In the past two years, over 20% of RAVSAK schools have experienced a transition in professional leadership. Factors ranging from retirement to termination to family relocation to contract expiration have left Jewish day schools searching for their next head of school. A number of member schools are in the second (or third) year of their searches. Some schools which placed a new head of school a year ago are again in search mode. Currently, several schools are operating with Interim Heads, “lame ducks,” or no head of school at all.

Many experienced heads of school are nearing retirement. Others are leaving the field of headship, citing “burn-out” and the desire to work in less stressful work environments. At the same time, the graduate schools of education and Jewish education are producing far too few new professionals prepared for day school headship. In short, the need for heads of schools far outstrips the pool of viable, qualified candidates.

In service of this looming crisis of leadership, RAVSAK is proud to offer the following five services to member schools:

**Head of School Placement for Schools**
RAVSAK will work closely with Boards of Directors and Search Committees in conducting a thorough search process for a new head of school or Judaic studies director. We will assist in clarifying the position and expectations, identifying viable candidates, gathering references, and (ideally) solidifying placement. The fee for this service is a requested donation to RAVSAK of $1,800. In that search firms charge 10-times (or more) for the same services, we will no longer be working with outside firms. Our interconnected goals are to help match the right professional leaders with the right schools while saving schools money in the process.

**Position Identification for Jewish School Leaders**
RAVSAK will work closely with Jewish educational professionals who are seeking their next leadership position in a Jewish community day school. We will assist in identifying open positions in Jewish community day schools, sharing information about the school’s expectations, and making connections to the schools on your behalf. There is no fee for this service but we do ask that a donation be made to the Ada Michaels, z’l, Scholar-in-Residence Fund in appreciation for our work.

**Board of Directors Retreats and Consultations on Clarifying the Board-Head Relation**
RAVSAK will travel to member schools and provide a half-day or full-day training for lay leaders on best practices for board-head relations. We will help clarify roles and responsibilities, facilitate conversations between lay and professional leaders, and provide access to significant resources to help maintain healthy and productive working relations. On-site and telephone consultations are available as well. The fee for these services are based on the scope of consultation requested.

**Internet Posting of Available Positions in Jewish Day Schools**
As a free service for member schools, RAVSAK will post job descriptions for the following positions: head of school, Judaic studies director, general studies director, classroom teacher, or other administrative positions. In addition, RAVSAK will send your job postings to a number of Internet-based professional networks and affinity groups favored by Jewish and educational community professionals.

**Liaison Work with Graduate Schools, Seminaries, and Professional Development Programs**
RAVSAK works closely with most of the graduate schools of Jewish education and Jewish communal service, as well as Jewish colleges and seminaries to identify future leadership and link emerging professionals to the field of Jewish community day school leadership. We will, upon request, present available positions to department chairs and program directors in service of recruiting new professionals. There is no fee for this service.

If your school is preparing for, or is engaged in, professional searches, please contact Dr. Marc Kramer, Executive Director of RAVSAK directly at 646-698-3662 or by e-mail at MKramer@ravsak.org. Please note that all initial conversations are strictly confidential.

RAVSAK will neither encourage nor support opportunistic recruitment practices. RAVSAK is an equal opportunity employer and kindly requests the same of its member schools.
• Looking for the perfect wedding gift?
• On the lookout for Israeli products?
• Need something special for Purim or Passover?
• Hope to spend a wonderful day with the Jewish community of Tampa Bay?

Join us

Tampa Bay Area Judaica and Israel Fair

Gifts
Israeli Jewelry
Ceramics
Kosher Food
Books
Judaic Arts and Crafts
Educational Materials
Raffle & Door Prizes

Sunday ★ January 18, 2004
11:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m.

DoubleTree Tampa Westshore ★ 4500 West Cypress Street

Free Admission!

Hosted by RAVSAK in conjunction with our Annual Leadership Conference