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COMMISSION ON JEWISH EDUCATION IN NORTH AMERICA

OCTOBER 23, 1989

9:30 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Commissioners
2. Senior Policy Advisors  
Consultants & Staff
3. Background Materials
4. Minutes of June 14  
Commission Meeting
5. Agenda

COMMISSION ON JEWISH EDUCATION IN NORTH AMERICA

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**COMMISSION  
ON JEWISH EDUCATION  
IN NORTH AMERICA**

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**BACKGROUND MATERIALS  
FOR THE MEETING OF  
OCTOBER 23, 1989**

**Convened by the Mandel Associated Foundations,  
JWB and JESNA in collaboration with CJF**

## From Decisions to Implementation: A Plan for Action

### I. Introduction

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As the Commission approaches its fourth meeting, the outline of a plan for action is emerging.

The proposed action plan includes the following elements:

1. **Mobilizing the Community** (leadership, structure, finance) for implementation and change.
2. **Developing strategies for building the profession of Jewish education**, including recruitment, training and retention.
3. **Establishing and developing Community Action Sites** to demonstrate what Jewish education at its best can be, and to offer a feasible starting point for implementation.
4. **Implementing strategies on the continental level and in Israel** in specific areas — such as the development of training opportunities or recruitment programs to meet the shortage of qualified personnel.
5. **Developing an agenda for programmatic options and an approach for dealing with them.**
6. **Building a research capability** to study questions such as the impact and effectiveness of programs.
7. **Designing a mechanism for implementation** that will continue the work of the Commission, as well as initiate and facilitate the realization of the action plan.

## II. Toward an Action Plan

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### A. Background

The content of the proposed plan has been shaped by the discussions of the Commission and through interviews with commissioners to date. When the Commission began its work, a complex set of problems and areas of need were identified and subsequently translated into options. The commissioners determined that the initial focus would be on the enabling options: dealing with the shortage of personnel for Jewish education, and dealing with the community — its leadership, structures and finance. At the same time, commissioners urged that programmatic options be dealt with. A principle that has guided the Commission is that its recommendations must be implemented. This led to the clear need for an implementation mechanism and the endorsement of the Community Action Site concept. There was also the realization that some problems could only be resolved by a combination of local efforts and continental bodies. The commissioners recognized that a single approach — establishing Community Action Sites — would not address the complexity of problems and therefore suggested that additional strategies be considered.

The proposed plan is an effort to reflect the Commission's goal of effecting across-the-board change. It also offers concrete recommendations for implementation, initiating change simultaneously on a number of fronts and a feasible way to begin.

As work on the plan proceeded, it became clear that some research was necessary. In order to base recommendations on the best available data and analysis, a research program was prepared and a number of papers commissioned (see Appendix 1). Preliminary findings have already found their place in this report.

*The work of the Commission could result in two major products:*

- I. A final report, including an agenda for Jewish education
- and
- II. A method of implementation, including a detailed action plan.

Recommendations on the community, personnel and programmatic options are beginning to emerge. They are being developed through consultations with commissioners and other experts, as well as current research. A draft of findings and recommendations is being prepared and will be offered for consideration at a later meeting of the Commission.

At the meeting of October 23, 1989, strategies for implementation will be offered for discussion.

## B. The Action Plan

The plan includes elements for action and a strategy for their implementation. They are briefly described below:

1. Mobilizing the Community (leadership, structure, finance) for implementation and change.

In order for needed changes to occur, Jewish education must become high on the communal agenda, and the community must make greater resources available for the implementation of quality programs. A systematic effort to affect the climate in the community as regards Jewish education is needed to bring this about. A three-pronged approach is suggested:

- a. *To recruit top leadership to work for Jewish education.*

This Commission includes a group of outstanding leaders who have provided leadership and wisdom for the Commission's work, lent status and credibility to its deliberations, and increased the potential to mobilize the necessary financial resources for implementing the program. In some communities, local commissions for Jewish education/Jewish continuity have involved top leadership in their efforts, demonstrating that the task is feasible. Many more leaders will have to be recruited to meet the challenge. In addition, Community Action Sites will require the recruitment of outstanding leaders if they are to be successful.

- b. *To develop and improve community structures for Jewish education.*

There is consensus that we have not yet developed community structures adequate to effect the necessary improvements in Jewish education. On the local level, these structures include congregations, JCCs, camps, schools and agencies under communal sponsorship, Jewish community federations and bureaus of Jewish

education. On the national level, these structures include CJF, JWB, JESNA, the denominational and congregational bodies, training institutions and associations of educators who are engaged in formal and informal Jewish education. Existing structures and any new ones will need support that will allow them to rise to their full stature and work toward major improvements in Jewish education.

*c. To generate significant additional funding — both private and communal.*

Within this Commission there is a belief that if we accomplish our mandate — offer a design for dealing with the major issues in Jewish education and suggest a feasible way to start work on a number of fronts — then the community will be more likely to rise to the occasion and mobilize the financial and human resources needed to bring about significant change.

However, communal mobilization takes time. The implementation of Community Action Sites, the expansion of training opportunities, the development of research capability, the attention to programmatic areas all require the investment of significant funds. Here the public/private partnership of this Commission could yield results. While steps are being taken by the community to prepare itself and to build consensus, private foundations and endowment funds may help provide resources and serve as catalysts to launch the process of change.

**2. Developing strategies for building the profession of Jewish education, including recruitment, training and retention.**

There is a shortage of committed, trained personnel in all areas and for all programs of Jewish education. Strategies for recruitment, programs for training and approaches for dealing with the problem of profession-building and retention will need to be developed.

*a. Recruitment*

We will want to learn more about what is required to attract the appropriate candidates to enter the field of Jewish education. We will need to identify the conditions under which talented people could be attracted to the field (e.g., the belief that they will have a significant impact on the future of the Jewish people, adequate salaries and benefits, financial incentives during training, possibilities of advancement and growth, empowerment).



*b. Training*

The centers of training will have to be further developed. It is already clear that there is a serious shortage of faculty for the education of educators for both formal and informal Jewish education. Financial assistance will be needed for the expansion and improvement of existing training programs. It may be necessary to develop new and specialized training programs (e.g., for early childhood, for informal education, for special education). Judaica departments in North American universities could make their contribution to the enrichment of educators by offering in-service education programs. The Community Action Sites will require on-the-job training for the educators who will be working in the many programs included in the demonstration projects.

*c. Building the Profession*

We hope to learn more about what is required to develop the profession of Jewish education through the study that we have commissioned. (See Appendix 1.) We already know that Jewish education does not offer sufficient opportunities for advancement, nor is there a well-developed map of positions and career lines.

We may need to develop a ladder of advancement that is not only linear (from teacher, to assistant principal, to principal), but one that makes it possible for talented educators to specialize in a variety of areas such as Bible, early childhood, the Israel experience, special education, curriculum development, etc.

*d. Retention*

We will want to learn more about turnover in the various areas of Jewish education. A strategy to retain the most talented and dedicated educators must be developed. We will have to discover how to handle what is described as burn-out, particularly for experienced and creative administrators.

**3. Establishing and developing Community Action Sites.**

- a. Several Community Action Sites will need to be developed. They will be places (an entire community, a network of institutions) where Jewish education at its best will be developed, demonstrated and tested. Ideas and programs that have succeeded, as well as new ideas and programs, will be developed there for other communities to see, to learn from, to modify, and where appropriate, to replicate. Community Action Sites will make it possible for local and national forces to work together in designing and field-testing solutions to the problems of Jewish education. Personnel and the Community will be addressed there simul-

taneously and comprehensively, integrating the various components: professionalizing Jewish education, recruiting, training, retaining educators. Because personnel will be developed in the Community Action Sites for specific programs, the programmatic options can also be addressed (see below).

- b. Demonstration in the Community Action Sites of what Jewish education can be, may serve a number of purposes: promising ideas and programs that already exist — “best practices” — could be brought together in one site, adequately funded, integrated and implemented in a complementary way. Thus, their impact would be significantly greater than when their application is fragmented. New programs could be developed, tested, assessed and modified on the local level — where education takes place — for all to see, learn from and replicate.
4. Implementing strategies, on the continental level and in Israel, in areas such as the development of training opportunities or recruitment programs, to meet the shortage of qualified personnel.

In addition to efforts that will be undertaken in Community Action Sites, a continental support system for Jewish education must be developed.

- Training opportunities do not meet the need of Jewish education in North America. Though some training can be done locally, much will have to be done in major centers in North America and Israel.
- Salaries and benefits are a concern throughout North America. Improvements may be undertaken locally, but answers to the financial and organizational issues involved may require continental policies.
- Candidates for the profession will need to be recruited on a continental basis. New pools of candidates will have to be identified. A continental plan for recruitment needs to be prepared and undertaken.

These and other challenges will benefit from the involvement of institutions and organizations in North America and in Israel.

5. Outlining an agenda for programmatic options and an approach for dealing with them.

Throughout the discussions, some commissioners have emphasized the importance of dealing with specific program areas (e.g., the media, informal education, Israel experience, the day school, college age). While Community Action Sites will deal with

personnel and the community, they will, of necessity, address programmatic options. Education takes place in programs, thus any personnel recruited will be personnel recruited for a specific program (personnel for early childhood, for the supplementary school, etc.). Community Action Sites will deal with programs as they resolve their personnel problems.

The Commission report will seek to offer a vision and a broad agenda for Jewish education. The agenda will include an approach for dealing with the programmatic options. For each option, a general overview will be provided, problems and opportunities will be identified, steps to be taken and what appears feasible will be pointed out. Based on these assessments, an institution or a foundation may decide to pursue detailed consideration of the option.

6. **Building a research capability to deal, in particular, with impact and effectiveness of programs.**

As the Commission work progresses, the paucity of information, data and analysis on Jewish education becomes more and more evident. Decisions are often made without the benefit of clear evidence of need. Major resources are invested with insufficient evaluation or monitoring. We seldom know what works in Jewish education; what is better and what is less good; what the impact of programs and investment is. The market has not been explored; we do not know what people want from Jewish education. We do not have accurate information about how many teachers there are; how qualified they are; what their salaries are.

As data is being gathered for the work of the Commission, a broad research agenda is emerging that must be addressed. The necessary research capacity for North America will need to be established.

7. **Designing a mechanism for implementation that will continue the work of the Commission, as well as initiate and facilitate the realization of the plan.**

The action plan, the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission, will require that some mechanism be created to continue the work. The mechanism may be a new organization or part of an existing organization. Its mission will be to facilitate implementation of the recommendations of the Commission. The proposed mechanism must be a cooperative effort of individuals and organizations concerned with Jewish education, as well as the funders who will help support the entire activity. Federations will be invited to play a central role and the denominations will have to be fully involved. JWB, JESNA, CJF will continue to be full partners in the work. The mechanism will carry out its assignments in a way that will encourage and assist local initiative and planning.

Some of the functions of the mechanism could include:

- a.* To help initiate and facilitate the establishment of several Community Action Sites. This may involve developing criteria for their selection; assisting communities as they develop their site; lending assistance in planning; helping to recruit personnel; ensuring monitoring, evaluation and feedback; and assisting in the diffusion of innovation.
- b.* To serve as a broker between expertise at the continental level and local expertise and initiative.
- c.* To encourage foundations and philanthropists to support innovation and experimentation in the Community Action Sites.
- d.* To facilitate implementation of strategies on the continental level and in Israel. This may mean encouraging institutions that will plan and carry out the development efforts. For example, if an existing training institution undertakes expansion and development of its training program, the mechanism may help secure funding and lend planning assistance as required.
- e.* To offer assistance as required for the planning and development of programmatic options.
- f.* To gather the data and undertake the analysis necessary for implementation; to help develop the research capability in North America.
- g.* To prepare annual progress reports for public discussion of the central issues on the agenda of Jewish education.

\* \* \* \* \*

Some commissioners have expressed the opinion that the **process launched by this Commission should not end** with the publication of its report in the summer of 1990. Various formats have been suggested for the continued involvement of the Commission itself with the implementation of its recommendations. A suggestion was made that the Commission should convene once a year to discuss progress and implementation. Alternately, all or some commissioners should remain involved in specific aspects of implementation. This might include a process, led by commissioners, to ensure monitoring and accountability, or active involvement of a group of commissioners in the implementation process and in the diffusion of successful programs and innovations.

## Work in Progress: Research Design

This research design is a working document aimed at developing a research program for the work of the Commission. This program will provide the background data for the Commission report. It is not comprehensive: major topics, such as the evaluation of programs, are not addressed. They belong on a wider research agenda that is beyond the scope of the Commission report. Such an agenda will be outlined in the report and may lead to a recommendation that a research capability on Jewish education be developed in North America.

### I. Introduction

In this document, we will attempt to do the following:

- A. Review key questions that will be addressed in the final report.
- B. Identify the research needed in order to help answer these questions.
- C. Assess the feasibility of undertaking such research for the report.
- D. Recommend the research papers to be commissioned at this time.

### II. Key Questions

The design will deal with key questions that need to be answered in order to make informed recommendations. The questions are presented in broad terms; they will be detailed within the framework of the actual research.

Some of these questions can be dealt with in time for the final report. Others can only be dealt with in preliminary form because of time constraints. Others yet are too broad — or the data is too scarce — to be undertaken at this time. Many of these questions will serve as a basis for the research agenda to be included in the recommendations for the final report.

We will deal with the following topics:

1. The Link Between Jewish Continuity and Jewish Education
  2. The State of the Field
  3. The Community
  4. The Relationship Between the Community and the Denominations
  5. The Shortage of Qualified Personnel
  6. Training Needs
  7. Jewish Education as a Profession
  8. Recruitment and Retention
  9. The Cost of Change
  10. Best Practice
  11. An Agenda for Programmatic Options
- III. The Questions Detailed

#### 1. THE LINK BETWEEN JEWISH CONTINUITY AND JEWISH EDUCATION

*The Question:* The Commission defines its mandate as dealing with Jewish education as a tool for meaningful Jewish continuity. This is based on an underlying assumption that Jewish education and Jewish continuity are linked. Several commissioners have raised the question of whether this assumption can be substantiated.

*Research needed:* Optimally, the following should be undertaken in order to deal with this question:

1. A philosophical/sociological essay should be drafted on the topic of the relationship between Jewish education and meaningful Jewish continuity.
2. Empirical studies that deal with the link between Jewish education and meaningful Jewish continuity should be undertaken or, if they already exist, reported on.

*Feasibility:* A philosophical approach to the issue is highly feasible. However, given the paucity of data and the time constraints, an empirical study should be held for a longer term research agenda.

*Recommendation:*

- R\***        Ask a philosopher-educator to write a preliminary essay on this topic.

## 2. THE STATE OF THE FIELD

*The Question:* What is the scope of the problem? What, in the state of the field of Jewish education, requires change? What are the opportunities for improvement and change?

*Research Needed:* A general statement (with data) should be offered, substantiating or disproving the notion that the field of Jewish education shows generally poor performance as regards: trends in participation; program quality; Jewish knowledge; affiliation; etc.

At the same time, the statement should illustrate positive trends that have been identified. For example: increased participation in day schools; increased visits to Israel; the trend towards Jewish education in JCCs; the trend towards adult and leadership programs of Jewish studies, and more.

The quantitative data could include: 1) enrollment figures for various types of Jewish education; 2) the number of institutions for the various forms of education; 3) general data on personnel, including the number of educators in various settings, salaries and benefits. Qualitative data should be included where available. Optimally, empirical research about the effectiveness of various programs should be undertaken.

*Feasibility:* It is possible to offer at this time a general summary picture — mostly quantitative — about the state of the field. The preliminary data report prepared for the first Commission meeting could serve as a basis. Very little qualitative data exists. A literature review including studies such as W. Ackerman's many assessments of Jewish education in North America, the New York BJE's study of the supplementary schools in New York, and the Miami Central Agency for Jewish Education's study on the Jewish educator should be undertaken.

*Recommendations*

- R**        Draft a descriptive essay using existing data to offer an overview of the state of the field. Data from commissioned papers should be incorporated when relevant and analyzed in a way that will highlight both the problems and the opportunities.

\*R = Recommendation

### 3. THE COMMUNITY

*The Question:* What can be done to improve the climate in the community regarding Jewish education, and in turn, bring more outstanding leaders to work in Jewish education, develop adequate communal structures, and increase funding for Jewish education?

The climate in the community is often skeptical about the quality and potential of Jewish education. Many outstanding leaders do not choose to become involved with education. The organizational structures — local and national — are often fragmented and divided; some are obsolete. There are, however, clear signs of change, as expressed by the establishment of this Commission, as well as the local commissions on Jewish continuity.

There is a shortage of funding for both the personnel and programs of Jewish education. This shortage affects existing programs and deters the establishment of new programs.

*Research needed:* The following research would be helpful:

1. **Organizational/institutional analysis:** Identify the major actors in the area of Jewish education (both local and national: federations, JESNA, congregations, denominations, JCCs, BJE's, Judaica departments at universities, etc.). Who provides services, allocates resources, makes policy? Assess their relative importance, their relationships, their financial resources and patterns of resource allocation. Point out conflicts and problems as well as trends and opportunities.
2. **Resource analysis:** Commission a paper on the financing of Jewish education (communal and private resources). Point out trends and major changes.
3. **Market study:** Possibly commission a survey on attitudes and opinions of the Jewish population concerning Jewish education, including questions such as how people perceive what exists; what their own Jewish educational experience was; how they perceive the needs; what programs and developments they would want. This survey could be undertaken with one or more of three populations: communal leaders, educators, the Jewish population at large.

*Feasibility:* It is possible at this time to present a preliminary view of the attitudes of leadership toward Jewish education. Some data is available from demographic studies conducted in recent years in several communities and analysis could yield significant knowledge. The large-scale studies belong on the long-term research agenda.



*Recommendations:*

- R In addition to the papers prepared by H.L. Zucker and J. Fox for the third Commission meeting, we recommend commissioning a paper on the organizational structures of Jewish education in North America. The paper should include an historical overview pointing to major changes and evolutions along with a map of the current situation.
- R A preliminary paper on the finances of Jewish education should be considered. This might include a conceptual framework for dealing with the issue as well as an assessment of major sources of funding, communal priorities, etc.
- R Consider commissioning a survey of communal leadership's attitudes and opinions. If successfully carried out, such a survey could yield important data on the leaders of the community, their Jewish educational backgrounds, their opinions and suggestions regarding Jewish education, their view of the field, their assessment of quality and needs.
- R Use existing data from demographic studies of individual communities to assess the market for Jewish education.

#### 4. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE COMMUNITY AND THE DENOMINATIONS

*The Question:* Who in the Jewish community should be responsible for setting policy and allocating resources for Jewish education? Who could convene the many actors and forces now contributing to Jewish education so that they would complement each other?

*Research needed:* Analysis of the respective roles of denominations, congregations, and federations as regards Jewish education. The analysis would focus on opportunities for cooperative efforts, potential changes and emerging structures.

*Feasibility:* Case studies of federations, congregations and current cooperative ventures could be prepared in time for the Commission report. The larger analysis belongs in the longer-term agenda.

*Recommendations:*

In addition to the papers on “the community” (p. 13 above) the following would be useful:

- R Case studies of federations that are increasingly involved in Jewish education — as conveners and as funders/policy-setters.
- R Case studies of congregations as context for Jewish education. The case studies would involve questions such as: How is educational policy set within congregations? Who decides? What is the potential for change, for expansion of the educational role of congregations? What is the potential of the supplementary school? What cooperative efforts could be developed between congregations (formal education), JCCs (informal education), federations (policy setting and resource allocation)?
- R Analysis of the conditions that would allow federations to take on greater responsibility while enabling the denominations and other institutions/organizations to rise to their full stature in the provision of services and resources for Jewish education. This paper should include extensive interviews with the decision-makers and the actors.

## 5. THE SHORTAGE OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL

*The Question:* What is the gap between the personnel currently available for Jewish education in North America and the needs for qualified personnel? What are the elements of the problem? What is its scope? These questions are based on the assumption that there is a significant shortage of qualified personnel in North America in all areas of education and at all levels of personnel. It expresses itself in the difficulty to recruit, train, retain, and offer satisfying jobs and work conditions.

*Research needed:*

1. A paper outlining the elements involved in dealing with personnel (recruitment, training, retention, building the profession), how they are inter-related and why they should be dealt with simultaneously.

2. An analytic paper indicating the scope of need for personnel versus the current situation in the following terms: shortage of personnel by categories; profiles of educators as a first step toward defining the qualitative gap; what educators know (Hebrew, Jewish studies, education, administration); data on recruitment, training, retention, career ladders, etc.; data on needs from the employers' perspective. Positive trends should also be cited, such as the emergence of a pool of qualified senior personnel, positive signs in enrollment in training programs, etc.

*Feasibility:* Most available data is in research form. Some surveys of teachers have been undertaken and a number of such studies are now in progress (Los Angeles, Philadelphia). Analysis of these data can provide an initial look at the personnel shortage and help define areas for further research and potential intervention.

*Recommendations:*

R Gather available data from existing studies and through some direct primary data collection (e.g., a limited telephone survey to a carefully constituted sample of school principals to gather data on teachers' salaries, shortages, etc.). Use data from the options papers and from the other commissioned papers.

R Draft an analytic essay summarizing existing and specially collected data, to offer an analysis of the shortage of qualified personnel.

## 6. TRAINING NEEDS

*The Question:* What is the gap, qualitative and quantitative, between the training currently available for personnel in Jewish education and what is needed?

*Research needed:*

1. What training is currently available? In what types of programs? How many students actually graduate? What is the training history of qualified educators that are currently in the field? What is the respective role of institutions of higher Jewish learning, general universities, yeshivot, training programs in Israel? What pre-service and in-service training is available for educators in the various formal and informal settings?

2. How much and what kinds of training are needed? What norms and standards should guide the training of educators?
3. What is the gap between existing training opportunities and the demand for teachers and other educators? Can existing programs grow to meet the need? What new programs need to be created? Is faculty available and, if not, what should be done to develop a cadre of teacher-trainers and professors of Jewish education?

*Feasibility:* Research papers on existing training opportunities and on the shortage can be prepared in time for the final report. Data concerning the training history of current good educators in the field would have to be collected. It is not clear to what extent this could be done in time for the report.

The issue of norms and standards for training Jewish educators has not yet been addressed systematically or extensively. This major question should be placed on the long-term research agenda.

*Recommendations:*

- R Prepare an inventory of current training opportunities.
- R Conduct a literature survey on current approaches to training in general education and compare with existing practice in Jewish education.
- R Gather data concerning the background and training history of good educators currently in the field.
- R Draft a summary paper on training needs.

## 7. JEWISH EDUCATION AS A PROFESSION

*The Question:* Some commissioners and professionals claim that in order to attract qualified personnel and offer the quality of education that is desired, it is necessary to raise the state of Jewish education to the level of a profession. Is this indeed the case? If so, what interventions are required?

*Research needed:*

1. A comparative analysis of general education as a profession and Jewish education as a profession should be done. Some of the elements to be considered include: salaries and benefits, empowerment, an agreed upon body of knowledge, a system of accreditation, status, professional networking.

*Feasibility:* A literature survey is a feasible assignment. However, little hard data on the profession of Jewish education is available. For example, there is no systematic data available on salaries and benefits. Limited data can probably be obtained from existing teacher surveys (Miami, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Boston, Houston) or can be gathered through a limited survey.

*Recommendation:*

- R Commission a paper to assess Jewish education as a profession as compared to general education.

## 8. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

*The Question:* Are there pools of potential candidates who could be trained to work in the field of Jewish education? If yes, under what conditions can such candidates be attracted to the field? Under what conditions can they be retained?

*Research needed:*

1. Undertake a survey aimed at identifying and assessing potential pools of candidates from among likely populations, e.g., Judaica majors and graduates, day school graduates, rabbis, people considering career changes, general educators who are Jewish, etc.
2. Identify the conditions under which potential candidates could be attracted to the field and could be retained for a significant period of time on the job, e.g., financial incentives during training, salaries and benefits, job development and the possibility of advancement, better marketing and advertising of training and scholarship opportunities.
3. Examine the recruitment methods used by the training programs. How do the methods used to recruit Jewish educators differ from methods used by other programs (colleges, etc.)?

*Feasibility:* Market research would make it possible for us to identify and test potential pools of candidates. It will not be possible to do this in time for the Commission report, nor will it be possible to accurately identify the conditions for recruitment and retention. On the other hand, much could be learned from experimenting with existing hypotheses (e.g., directing systematic recruitment efforts at certain groups) and from the current experience of training programs in North America and Israel.

*Recommendation:*

- R Collect data on recruitment and retention from existing studies, literature, surveys, studies from general education, and extensive interviews with knowledgeable informants in training programs and educational institutions in North America and Israel. Summarize this knowledge for the report.

## 9. THE COST OF CHANGE

There is virtually no information on the economics of Jewish education. Such information will be of great importance as the Commission considers how to intervene to effect across-the-board change. We have not dealt with this topic at present. We will relate to it following the next round of consultations.

## 10. BEST PRACTICE

*The Questions:*

What are the good programs in the field that could be used as cases from which to learn, to draw inspiration and encouragement, and to replicate?

What vision of Jewish education will inform and inspire the report and its recommendations?

*Research needed:* In order to offer a representative selection of cases, a fairly extensive project should be undertaken that would include the following steps:

- Determine criteria for selecting outstanding programs;
- Define a method for canvassing the field and identifying possible candidate programs;
- Select a method of assessment;
- Assess and describe the program.

*Feasibility:* It may be possible to use one of many short-cut methodologies to offer a selection of best practice in the field of Jewish education. A systematic approach to this project should be on the long-term research agenda.

*Recommendation:*

- R We recommend that consultations be held with the researchers at their upcoming meeting and with consultants on methodology to define a method of offering best practice case studies to the Commission by the time of the final report. Such methods are feasible, but they do not offer the comprehensiveness or the depth of insight that a complete project would.

## 11. AN AGENDA FOR PROGRAMMATIC OPTIONS

*The Question:* How should the Commission intervene or make recommendations regarding programmatic options? Should specific and concrete recommendations be made? Should an umbrella mechanism be suggested that would assist interested commissioners in developing programs of implementation for specific programmatic areas?

*Research needed:* Expand the data gathering and analyses on the the various programmatic options.

*Recommendations:*

- R Develop a narrower list of programmatic options by combining topics that belong together. Outline a broad agenda for each, pointing to opportunities, needs, scope, and feasible targets for each.
- R Consider the strengths and weaknesses of an umbrella organization for dealing with programmatic options.

#### **IV. Papers to be Commissioned**

1. **The Relationship Between Jewish Education and Jewish Continuity (I. Scheffler, Harvard University).**
2. **The Organizational Structure of Jewish Education in North America (W. Ackerman, Ben Gurion University).**
3. **Community Organization for Jewish Education in North America; Leadership, Finance and Structure (H.L. Zucker, Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland).**
4. **Federation-Led Community Planning for Jewish Education, Identity and Continuity (J. Fox, Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland).**
5. **The Synagogue as a Context for Jewish Education (J. Reimer, Brandeis University).**
6. **Approaches to Training Personnel and Current Training Opportunities (A. Davidson, Jewish Theological Seminary of America).**
7. **Assessment of Jewish Education as a Profession (I. Aron, Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles).**
8. **Data Gathering, Analysis and Report on the Field of Jewish Education in North America (I. Aron, Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles).**



MINUTES  
COMMISSION ON JEWISH EDUCATION IN NORTH AMERICA  
JUNE 14, 1989  
AT HEBREW UNION COLLEGE  
NEW YORK CITY  
9:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Attendance

Commissioners: Morton L. Mandel, Chairman, David Arnow, Mandell Berman, Jack Bieler, Charles Bronfman, John Colman, Maurice Corson, Joshua Elkin, Eli Evans, Alfred Gottschalk, Arthur Green, Robert Hiller, David Hirschhorn, Carol Ingall, Mark Lainer, Norman Lamm, Sara Lee, Seymour Martin Lipset, Haskel Lookstein, Matthew Maryles, Florence Melton, Donald Mintz, Charles Ratner, Esther Leah Ritz, Harriet Rosenthal, Alvin Schiff, Ismar Schorsch, Daniel Shapiro, Peggy Tishman, Isadore Twersky, Bennett Yanowitz

Policy Advisors and Staff: David Ariel, Seymour Fox, Annette Hochstein, Stephen Hoffman, Virginia Levi, Arthur Naparstek, Joseph Reimer, Carmi Schwartz, Herman Stein, Jonathan Woocher, Henry L. Zucker

Guests: Norman Cohen, Felix Posen, Richard Scheuer, Paul Steinberg

Not Present: Mona Ackerman, Ronald Appleby, Lester Crown, David Dubin, Stuart Eizenstat, Irwin Field, Max Fisher, Irving Greenberg, Joseph Gruss, Ludwig Jesselson, Henry Koschitzky, Robert Loup, Lester Pollack, Lionel Schipper, Harold Schulweis, Isiah Zeldin

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I. Introductory Remarks

Mr. Mandel called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. He welcomed the commissioners and introduced some guests: Richard Scheuer, Chairman of the Board of Hebrew Union College, Norman Cohen, Dean of the New York School of Hebrew Union College, Paul Steinberg, Vice President and Dean of the Faculty of Hebrew Union College, and Felix Posen, a leading business executive from England who is very active in the field of Jewish education.

Mr. Mandel stressed the importance of commissioner input and indicated that the agenda for the day was designed to elicit their input. He explained that a presentation on background materials would be followed by the division of participants into three discussion groups. It was hoped that by the end of the day commissioners would have provided a sense of direction in advancing the goals of the Commission.

It was noted that the formal life of the Commission, in its present form, is scheduled to conclude by June 1990. At that point, we hope to have a report that would help to set the agenda for Jewish education in North America for the next ten years. In addition to such an agenda, it is expected that the Commission will have put some form of mechanism in place to help serve as a catalyst for action.

Mr. Mandel noted that at the December 13, 1988 meeting there was agreement that there are two preconditions for across-the-board improvement in Jewish education: (1) a systematic attack on the improvement of personnel and (2) the establishment of a community environment in which key community leaders are supportive and adequate funds are available for Jewish education. Action on these preconditions is necessary if we are to impact program. We are seeking ways to test new ideas--to seek and identify best practices. Our ultimate findings must lead to action. We want to cause change to occur in North American Jewish education.

In considering ways to impact Jewish education, we seek to strengthen the roles of continental bodies with an interest in Jewish education and to provide them with the means to accomplish their missions effectively. Most important, we must involve the foundation community and the federation movement more fully.

II. Presentation by Annette Hochstein and Seymour Fox, Consultants to the Commission

A. Overview

Ms. Hochstein elaborated on the background materials distributed prior to the meeting. She noted that two major questions had emerged from the December 13 Commission meeting:

1. Do we know what can be done to bring about significant change?  
Are there important ideas?
2. Do we have strategies to implement change?

She noted that the first meeting of the Commission (August 1, 1988) resulted in a series of suggestions--ideas of programs which, if improved, could impact favorably on the future of Jewish education. At its second meeting, the Commission focused on personnel and community as preconditions for change with the understanding that a continued interest in the identified programmatic options is important. The purpose of today's third Commission meeting is to establish strategies for impacting on the identified preconditions.

It was noted that there is a range of possible strategies for action. The Commission might proceed in any of the following ways:

1. Establish a comprehensive development plan.
2. Focus on selected elements of the preconditions.
3. Establish demonstration projects.
4. Some combination of the above.

Ms. Hochstein identified some of the characteristics necessary for any strategy:

1. Comprehensiveness

- a. Personnel has four components: recruitment, training, profession building, and retention. The criterion of comprehensiveness assumes that the four should be dealt with simultaneously. It is assumed that improvements in personnel would favorably impact on programs.
- b. Personnel and community are interrelated and must be addressed simultaneously. Community comprises leadership, structure, finance, and climate. The conditions for creating and maintaining good personnel must be created by the community and serious leaders will be attracted to Jewish education if strong personnel is available.

2. Across-the-Board Impact

The impact on personnel and community must take place across-the-board. This requires creating a means for the diffusion of innovation and change and a sustained effort carried out over a significant period of time.

3. Concreteness - Learning by Doing

Because most education occurs at the local level, it is suggested that any effort must have a significant local component. At the same time, certain aspects including training and funding require a continental or international approach. Therefore, our efforts must be a balance of the two.

We seek concrete results. It is proposed to try out real programs, learn by experience, make revisions and try again.

B. Recommendations for Action

It is suggested that the Commission adopt an approach to allow for ideas to be developed, tried and demonstrated. Community Action Sites are proposed--where ideas and programs that have succeeded (best practices) as well as new approaches could be undertaken in such a way as to be visible and to allow for the translation of visions into best practice.

Professor Fox described what might happen in a Community Action Site. In order to set implementation in motion, he proposes to work with local communities. Among the possibilities that could be considered is that an entire community might decide to become a Community Action Site--where personnel and community could be approached simultaneously.

A city might emerge as a Community Action Site in the following way: A local federation would convene the community players who would determine what must be done to help existing programs rise to their potential. If exciting ideas are offered, an effort would be made centrally to find funding. A major challenge would be to recruit and retain the personnel required to implement the plan. It was noted that the establishment of a Community Action Site should improve the chances of recruiting quality personnel because of the visibility of the project. Staff would be empowered to set policy and to innovate--a fact which might attract people from other fields. The pool of personnel might be supplemented by paraprofessionals--people with other career goals who might be willing to work within the field of Jewish education for a limited period of time. It is anticipated that national and regional training institutions would train personnel for Community Action Sites while, at the same time, developing a training program for personnel. Through the Community Action Sites we hope to answer the question of what works in Jewish education.

III. Discussion Groups

At the conclusion of the presentation of the progress report, commissioners met in discussion groups. At the conclusion of the discussion period, each group reported on the main points of discussion and agreement or divergence.

A. Group A - Charles R. Bronfman, Chair; Bennett Yanowitz, Co-Chair

Mr. Yanowitz reported that this group supports the concept of the Community Action Site. The group noted that the development of personnel and the means to building a profession are dependent upon the availability of quality training and of career ladders for professionals.

The group noted that there are models for Community Action Sites. Many communities have had successes, but these have been isolated and seldom reported in a way that these successes might be replicated. It was suggested that successful efforts be studied and publicized--it is not necessary to start from scratch.

It was suggested that we should define community carefully--is it a city, a group of organizations, or some other subset of the continent? In order to successfully build community, lay leaders must be included and should be involved as early as possible in the process. Further, existing institutions within the denominational communities play a vital role in Jewish education and should be tapped. In addition, there should be a mechanism for reporting outcomes to other communities.

Members of the group felt that we need a data base to support action. It is important to know what is currently working in Jewish education. The climate in the Jewish community is right for change in Jewish education; there is an openness to trying new approaches. Data will be important to support these efforts. While supportive of research, some members of the group felt that we cannot afford the time to conduct research before beginning to act. We must move to implementation as quickly as possible. Both the gathering of data and a process of evaluation based on high standards will be important components of the Community Action Site concept.

In discussing how to move from Commission to implementation, this group noted that the Commission itself is special and should be built upon. The Commission should oversee the ultimate outcome of

its recommendations in some manner. The outcome should be more than a program of Community Action Sites to guide the field of Jewish education toward innovative programs. We should consider how national and local agencies can work together to accomplish these goals. Use of existing resources is important.

The group endorsed the four elements identified as critical to personnel (recruitment, training, profession building and retention) and suggested adding curriculum as a fifth element. Building the profession by raising the esteem of professionals and their programs was emphasized.

The group suggested that there are two tasks to be accomplished before the next meeting of the Commission: 1) to begin to prepare an outline of the Commission's report, and 2) to develop detailed statements defining the Community Action Site concept and the means of implementation.

B. Group B - Esther Leah Ritz, Chair; Donald R. Mintz, Co-Chair

Ms. Ritz reported that this group agreed to the concept of the Community Action Site as a starting point to test programs that could be replicated elsewhere. The group proposed a means of inviting communities to become Community Action Sites. Criteria would include a willingness to look at new ideas, a comprehensive view of community, the involvement of coalition building within the community, a willingness to accept monitoring and evaluation, a willingness to provide some funds, and the support of local lay leadership. Community Action Sites should be established in a variety of communities of varying sizes and levels of sophistication. A means of training lay leadership at all levels for formal education should be a component of the Community Action Site.

The group suggested that the Commission design a continuing body to create a network among participating communities and between them and all other interested communities. This entity would be responsible for the collection and dissemination of information and for creating a linkage between local efforts and national agencies, including JWB, JESNA, CJF, training institutions, congregational and rabbinic bodies, voluntary organizations, and others.

It was noted that there is a need for substantial financing to support Community Action Sites. The Commission should make clear its goals for Community Action Sites and should take responsibility

for selecting the sites without encouraging communities to present unrealistic proposals. The major rabbinic seminaries should be offered matching grants to train teachers who would commit themselves to Jewish education for a period of service in exchange for that training.

The group reported two areas of disagreement: 1) whether the emphasis of the Community Action Site should be on innovative development of new programs or on programs in place and in need of support and, 2) whether the focus should be on denominational approaches, on non-denominational approaches, or on those which are cross-denominational or inter-denominational.

C. Group C - David Hirschhorn, Chair; Mandell L. Berman, Co-Chair

Mr. Hirschhorn reported agreement on the necessity for research on community needs. The group warned against spreading funding too thin. It suggested an emphasis on the importance of family education. There was general agreement with the concept of the Community Action Site, but the group questioned how it might most effectively be accomplished. It suggested the need for a new community alignment to bring about change. The group raised questions about the role of the denominations in this effort as well as the issue of community accountability versus community autonomy.

It was suggested that training, recruitment, and benefits might best be handled at the national level. It is important that the people training educators themselves be well qualified. It was suggested that JCC leaders be better trained in Judaic content.

The group also noted the need for an effective process of evaluation in assessing how money is being spent in support of Jewish education initiatives.

Some members of the group warned against building "another bureaucracy." It was also noted that the group discussed the advantages and disadvantages of ambitious undertakings with great potential for success or failure, versus more modest approaches to implementation.

D. General Discussion

1. Recruitment

It was suggested that a national recruitment program be developed for high school and college students. Through such

a program, students would be recruited and funded to spend three months studying advanced Jewish education in Israel with a resulting degree as "junior teacher." This work would be for college credit and participants would be required to teach for one year following their return.

## 2. Final Report

It was suggested that the final report of the Commission should reflect the quality of the Commission itself. It should provide a high level of information, ideas and aspirations that can have an impact on Jewish education for many years to come. It should seek to find national solutions to local problems. The report should include a vision of what Jewish education might be in the future. One commissioner suggested disseminating the report, in part, through the media. Another noted that the use of the media is complex and requires experts and cautioned moderation in the use of the media.

It was suggested that the Commission has an opportunity to (a) serve as a catalyst for positive movement in definitive areas, (b) suggest ways to implement, identify resources, and help to develop those resources, (c) develop a mechanism which can ultimately impact upon the diverse elements within local communities to affect the status, stature, and funding of Jewish education and, (d) create coalitions within the community, and between the community and enhanced national bodies, involving all aspects of the Jewish community in steps forward.

It was suggested that the contents of the final report will depend on the audience for which it is prepared. If for a broad audience, it will be necessary to provide substantially more background information than if it is aimed at an audience already familiar with Jewish education. In any case, it should include a section on the state of the field of Jewish education today, a vision of the field for the future, and a strategy for accomplishing that vision.

## 3. Financing

It was suggested that funders and federations be followed up to address matters of funding. It was also suggested that an effort be made to list efforts currently being funded in the area of Jewish education. The Commission might conduct a survey of what foundations are currently doing to fund Jewish education programs. A general overview of the current and future funding patterns might be useful.



4. Denominations

A commissioner suggested that the matter of involvement of denominations is not an issue because personnel and community are not ideological matters. Improvements in these enabling areas will prove helpful across-the-board.

5. The Catalyst

It was suggested that federations serve an important role as the local catalyst for change in Jewish education. Among their roles would be to train new leaders in Jewish education on a regular basis.

It was suggested that we capitalize through national visibility on the existence of the Commission to serve as a catalyst on the local level. It is important to maintain both a national initiative and local implementation.

6. Research

It was noted that the gathering of data on the current state of Jewish education and on approaches which are showing success in the field is important to any future implementation approach.

Finally, we are advised to "think tachlitically."

IV. Concluding Comments

The chairman thanked commissioners for their involvement in the day's proceedings and noted that Commission staff will take the recommendations submitted at this meeting and begin to develop a plan for the Commission's report and for its next steps.

V. D'Var Torah

The meeting concluded with an inspirational D'Var Torah delivered by Dr. Alfred Gottschalk, President of Hebrew Union College.

Mr. Mandel adjourned the meeting at 4:00 p.m.

COMMISSION ON JEWISH EDUCATION IN NORTH AMERICA

AGENDA

MONDAY, OCTOBER 23, 1989

9:30 A.M. TO 4:00 P.M.

UJA/Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York  
130 East 59th Street  
New York, New York

- |      |   |               |
|------|---|---------------|
| I.   | Registration; Refreshments  | 9:30 - 10:00  |
| II.  | Plenary Session #1  |               |
|      | A. Introduction   | 10:00 - 10:30 |
|      | B. Discussion   | 10:30 - 12:15 |
| III. | Separate Discussion Groups<br>Including Lunch   | 12:15 - 2:15  |
|      | Group A - Conference Room A<br>Chair : Charles Bronfman<br>Co-Chair: Bennett Yanowitz |               |
|      | Group B - Conference Room B<br>Chair : Lester Crown<br>Co-Chair: Lester Pollack       |               |
|      | Group C - Weiler Room<br>Chair : Esther Leah Ritz<br>Co-Chair: John Colman            |               |
| IV.  | Plenary Session #2  | 2:15 - 3:50   |
|      | A. Summary Reports  |               |
|      | B. Discussion   |               |
| V.   | Concluding Comments - Rabbi Arthur Green  | 3:50 - 4:00   |