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D R A F T

FROM EXPERIMENTATION TO INSTITUTIONALIZED
CHANGE: AN ACTION PLAN FOR JEWISH CONTINUITY

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INTRODUCTION

The student confrontation at the 1969 Council of Jewish Federations General Assembly in Boston helped create a climate of interest, concern and experimentation in American Jewish education. In the years that followed, Federation funding for Jewish education expanded, studies were carried out in many Jewish communities; and significant changes were made in Bureaus of Jewish Education throughout the country. On a national level CAJE (the Conference on Alternatives in Jewish Education) was created; JWB helped expand the Jewish educational mission of Centers; significant curricular reform took place in the congregational movements; and major changes were made in the structure, function and leadership of the American Association for Jewish Education (now JESNA -- the Jewish Educational Service of North America).

These years of experimentation helped us learn more about the sociological underpinnings of Jewish identity -- including the important role that community and family must play in the transmission of identity, commitment and knowledge. We also learned more about the strengths and limitations of our Jewish educational tools -- especially the power of day school education, the potential of informal settings like JCCs, the key role of congregations, and some of the inherent weakness of supplementary education -- particularly past the fifth or sixth grade for many youngsters.

Most importantly, we learned that we need to develop a strategic focus for change in Jewish education through new educational environments that can strengthen Jewish identity, create Jewish family supports, and reestablish a sense of Jewish community, while also transmitting Jewish knowledge. Thus while in former times it might have been adequate to teach a child about a Jewish holiday in the classroom knowing that the holiday would be celebrated in the home or observed in the community, it became clear that we now need to create educational models that teach parents how to celebrate the holiday; demonstrate to parent and child alike that the holiday can be meaningful and joyful and then teach the child the historical-religious details.

It's now well over fifteen years since that "cultural revolution" began and American Jewry is beginning a national reappraisal of its efforts to assure Jewish continuity. This new process is developing in part as a response to an international effort sponsored by the Jewish Agency and should serve as an

excellent opportunity to build new leadership, assess our progress to date, and establish new directions.

In order for this new process to fulfill its promise, however, it's critical to move from experimentation and program development to a new implementation phase during which the ideas and programs generated over the last fifteen years are institutionalized throughout our system of Jewish education. This will require clear national and local priorities and unprecedented cooperation and joint planning between congregations and Federations, JCCs and Jewish educational institutions, formal and informal Jewish educators, and national rabbinic, congregational and communal leadership. Most important it will require the commitment of our communities' top leadership along with a number of broadly agreed upon strategies for institutional change.

This paper will therefore sketch out a strategy that includes targeting specific populations and institutions and that suggests four achievable objectives for improving the transmission of Jewish identity. These are:

1. Strengthening the tie between young families and "gateway institutions" -- primarily congregations and JCCs -- through programs designed to increase the Jewish commitment of parents and make them partners in the Jewish education of their children.
2. Intensifying supplementary Jewish education through the integration of classroom and "beyond the classroom" programs -- primarily through vastly increased strategic cooperation between congregations and JCCs.
3. Increasing the proportion of non-Orthodox youngsters receiving a day school education -- primarily by improving educational quality and marketing.
4. Recruiting and training lay and professional leadership with the skill and vision needed to implement these strategic changes -- primarily through greater national and local planning and coordination.

CHOOSING TARGET POPULATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS: "MARGINALLY AFFILIATED" JEWS AND "GATEWAY INSTITUTIONS"

For over a decade -- at least since the 1975 National Jewish Population Study -- planning in the field of Jewish education and identity has been based in part on very low estimates of American Jewish affiliation and of the proportion of youngsters receiving a Jewish education. Some interpretations of NJPS data indicated that fewer than 50 percent of American Jewish children were receiving any kind of Jewish education and that only around 40 to 50 percent of American Jewish households were affiliated with a congregation. The natural response to these data was the development of planing efforts that

focused on the creation of intensive outreach strategies aimed at the unaffiliated.

More recent studies in most major Jewish urban areas (excluding a few communities like Los Angeles and Denver) as well as studies in smaller towns have shown a "family life cycle" pattern of affiliation that produces very high affiliation over time. Steven Cohen's most recent estimates show that "the vast majority of American Jews send their children at one time or another to some form of Jewish schooling..." and that "the overwhelming majority of parents affiliate with a Jewish institution at some time in their lives." ¹ Cohen asserts that by the end of adolescence 87% of males and 70% of females have received some Jewish schooling. These new estimates don't dispute the fact that only 40 to 50 percent of all Jewish families and less than half of Jewish children ages 6-18 are currently affiliated or in school at this moment in time. They do show however that most Jews join a congregation when their child reaches school age; that nearly all Jewish children therefore receive a Jewish education at some point prior to adolescence; and that many of these families then disaffiliate after all their children have attained Bar/Bat Mitzvah or confirmation.

These kinds of demographic facts suggest far different strategies. Since nearly all families with children affiliate with a congregation at some point, then outreach may not be the most cost effective or highest priority strategy for strengthening Jewish commitment. More importantly, even if there were significant numbers of unaffiliated Jews and even if we could "reach" them, we would still be faced with institutions that are generally not strong enough to retain or inspire those we might (at great expense) attract. In reality, few of the institutions with which Jews affiliate are structured or staffed to take advantage of the high rate of affiliation we currently enjoy in order to significantly strengthen and upgrade the level of Jewish identification of the families that pass through. Steven Cohen highlights this opportunity when he identifies "marginally affiliated" Jews who are members of Jewish institutions but for whom the affiliation process has little meaning or impact.

This paper will therefore suggest a number of communal strategies for intensifying the affiliation process for marginally affiliated Jews. Recognizing that most families will voluntarily enter Jewish organizational life, these strategies focus on strengthening their involvement and deepening their commitment through programs carried out as early as possible in the affiliation process. Recognizing that most children attend some kind of Jewish school, these strategies focus on intensifying the educational process by increasing day school enrollment. Recognizing that even with our best efforts most families will continue to opt for supplementary Jewish education,

¹/Steven M. Cohen, "Outreach to the Marginally Affiliated: Evidence and Implications for Policymakers in Jewish Education," Journal of Jewish Communal Service, Winter 1985, Vol. 62, No. 2.

these strategies focus on intensifying the supplementary school experience by making the parent a partner in the Jewish educational process and better integrating classroom and "beyond the classroom" educational techniques. Recognizing that most Jewish families affiliate with congregations which serve as primary gateways to Jewish life for most American Jews, these strategies seek to strengthen the ability of congregations to reach their members and deepen their religious commitment by deepening the partnership between congregations and federations.

OBJECTIVE 1

STRENGTHENING THE TIE BETWEEN YOUNG FAMILIES AND "GATEWAY INSTITUTIONS" -- PRIMARILY CONGREGATIONS AND JCCS -- THROUGH PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO INCREASE THE JEWISH COMMITMENT OF PARENTS AND MAKE THEM PARTNERS IN THE JEWISH EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN

The Centrality of the Family in the Transmission of Jewish Identity

Most reports dealing with the problems of Jewish education stress that it is virtually impossible for a school to teach Jewish concepts, values, and traditions without the aid and support of the home environment. Jewish educational programs for parents and families are therefore crucial to the Jewish education of children. As Harold Himmelfarb put it in his seminal article "Jewish Education for Naught": "...without encouragement and reinforcement from the home, it is extremely unlikely that Jewish schools will have any lasting impact on their students. If the home provides the necessary encouragement and reinforcement, Jewish schooling can increase the level of Jewish commitment achieved in the home. These two institutions need each other and the efforts of one without the other are likely to produce only slight results." ²

Cleveland's recent "Survey of Jews Over Age 50 and Their Grown Children" also highlights this critical dimension of identity transmission. The study shows that while there isn't any parental recipe for raising a Jewish child in this complex society, there is a clear correlation between parental attitudes and practices -- particularly congregational affiliation -- and mixed marriage among children. For example, according to the Cleveland study: 1) Families that call themselves Orthodox are half as likely to have any of their children marry a non-Jew without conversion as families that call themselves Reform or Conservative while those who call themselves unaffiliated are twice as likely as Reform or Conservative Jews to have had a child marry out of the faith; 2) Reform and Conservative Jews who retain their congregational membership at least through age 50 are half as likely to have any of their children marry a non-Jew without conversion as a Reform or Conservative Jew who quit after

²/Harold S. Himmelfarb, "Jewish Education For Naught: Educating the Culturally Deprived Jewish Child," Analysis, No. 51, September, 1975.

their child was confirmed. Those who retain their affiliation do nearly as well as those who call themselves Orthodox; and 3) Those who say that having children and grandchildren marry Jews is very important are half as likely to have a child marry a non-Jew without conversion as one who feels it's only moderately important. Jewish identity is multidetermined and of course, none of this establishes a clear cause and effect relationship between any particular activity on the part of parents and mixed marriage among their children. This research does however provide support for a far greater emphasis on reaching parents as an integral part of our educational strategy.

Unfortunately, while we've known about the critical importance of the family for at least twenty years, parent education remains a secondary concern of Jewish education. Compared with formal classroom education, few resources have been provided and little attention has been paid to the development of comprehensive implementation strategies.

Developing Effective Strategies for "Universal" Family Education

Since the vast majority of Jewish parents affiliate with a congregation during their children's school years, the point in time when parents enroll their children in a Jewish school can provide our best opportunity to reach out to parents to increase their personal commitment and involve them in the Jewish educational process. By enrolling the child in a Jewish supplementary school (most commonly a congregational school) the parent has already taken an important first step in creating a connection to Jewish life.

In addition to being a critical time in the development of a relationship between the family and the school, the years of early parenthood may also be a period of maximum psychological readiness in the Jewish life cycle. In the conception of psychiatrist, Mortimer Ostow, this is a time when young parents begin to re-identify with their own parents' religious attitudes and values after earlier rejection and "sponsor" them to their children, making this the perfect target population for Jewish adult education and outreach. As Ostow put it in an article he prepared for the 1976 American Jewish Committee Colloquium on Jewish Identity, the young parent tends "to adopt for himself his parent's views of Jewishness. To the extent that he does so in response to an unconsciously motivated imperative, and to the extent that these views are modelled after childhood impressions alone, the young parent may be embarrassed by them. He tends to rationalize his compliance as something which he is doing 'for the children.' Advanced Jewish education can help him to accept observance as something in which he can feel more personally involved." ³

³/Mortimer Ostow, M.D., "The Determinants of Jewish Identity: A Maturational Approach," 1976 American Jewish Committee Colloquium on Jewish Identity, p. 61.

From this perspective, it's clear that the moment of congregational affiliation is a critical moment in Jewish life -- a moment in which congregations have a strategic opportunity to reach out to strengthen the religious character of the Jewish home, deepen the spiritual values of parents, and make them partners in the Jewish education of their children. Unfortunately this opportunity is rarely used for in-depth contact between the parent and the congregation. The message given to parents -- though unstated and unintentional -- is "drop your child off twice a week and we'll make him/her an educated Jew." While congregations clearly would like to take better advantage of this opportunity, their resources are focused on formal classroom study for children and few have funds or energy to spare for planned and targeted intake procedures and education for young families.

Congregations must be helped to take themselves more seriously as pivotal identity building structures that could -- if properly programmed -- make parents partners in the Jewish education of their children. While nearly all congregations have adult education programs they frequently lack direction or focus and generally attract a 50 and older audience rather than the young parents who are absolutely vital to our future. Congregations therefore need to consider developing careful inreach strategies for marginal Jews with most resources and efforts focused on incoming families with school-aged children. By targeting each incoming class, the task of family education becomes manageable and it also becomes possible to focus enough resources on the 50-100 families involved to really make an impact.

This strategy calls for a personal contact for each incoming family, a required in-depth intake interview, a personalized "contract," and a family education program that fits each family's own needs and lifestyle while helping parents recognize that raising a Jewish child may require changes and an increased commitment to and understanding of Jewish life, religion and culture. The intake interview might also be used to discuss the importance of day school education and/or "beyond the classroom" techniques in the school's educational program (both of which will be discussed in greater depth later in this paper). This would be followed by concrete programs aimed at giving families the home skills to feel comfortable with and enjoy Jewish traditions and rituals. The focus would be -- in Cohen's terms -- on the "language of resource" and would continue with parent-centered learning throughout the child's school career.

One target population worth mentioning for specialized outreach and family education is the mixed married (without conversion) family. While the potential for attracting large numbers of mixed married families has almost certainly been exaggerated, and while the highest priority for family education must be those marginally affiliated Jews already in the system, it's also clear that selected mixed married families are already good targets for education and involvement. A recent study of a large Reform temple in Cleveland, for example, showed that 13% of its families under 40 are currently

mixed marrieds. This happened without any special outreach at all and probably could be modestly expanded without inordinate expense through programs like those currently under way in Denver and Los Angeles where excellent communal outreach efforts support congregational education and outreach projects for mixed married couples. The kind of family approach outlined here would have a positive effect on all marginally affiliated families -- born Jewish and intermarried alike, but specialized outreach and careful programming for the mixed married population could certainly increase the impact for this growing population segment.

Of course, creating this linkage between parents (whether intermarried or born Jewish) and schools will not be easy as witness the very limited penetration of the Conservative movement's excellent Parent Education Program (PEP) which was created around ten years ago. Clearly the development of a truly widespread and integral effort demands that as much emphasis be placed on planning and funding family education as schools currently place on classroom education for children. It will also require considerable experimentation with intake and marketing efforts by congregations as well as a persistent and intensive effort on the part of Jewish educational leadership to create a variety of models ranging from simple four or five session holiday and home skill programs to more in-depth efforts like the excellent Florence Melton Program of Basic Adult Jewish Learning. In fact, the most successful and broadly-based efforts will probably need to make minimal time demands in order to maximize attendance in today's highly pressured environment, but they would at least "send a message" about the need for parents to be partners in the educational process.

The Need for A Partnership Between Congregations and Federations

Since most congregations clearly don't have the resources or manpower for this kind of additional sustained effort, the development of a communal strategy in this area demands close cooperation between Federations, Bureaus of Jewish Education and congregations. Federations simply cannot deal with the challenge of Jewish continuity without taking advantage of the opportunity for intensifying the affiliation process for Jews passing through this most critical "gateway to Jewish life." Congregations must therefore move from the periphery of federation concern to a far more central position. Only through the development of closer ties and funding relationships between congregations and federations can we hope to maximize the potential of the congregation as a "gateway to Jewish life" and assure Jewish continuity.

The Role of the Jewish Preschool and the JCC

Of course there are other critical opportunities for reaching our highest priority target -- young families -- through other communal institutions -- primarily through Jewish preschools which currently attract a large portion -- in Cleveland over 50% -- of all Jewish preschool age youngsters. Apart from

providing a tremendous strategic advantage in reaching the children themselves, Jewish preschools provide an outstanding opportunity to reach out to young families and touch them Jewishly at an even earlier stage than would be possible through the congregational school connection. JCCs are particularly strong in the pre-school area and through projects such as the Cleveland JCC's Family Place, provide opportunities for reaching youngsters and their families from birth right up through the preschool years.

Plainly there is a market for all sorts of educational activities for moms, dads, and children at these age levels. All of these could be used as opportunities for Jewish contact and even for some preliminary contracting around future Jewish goals and educational opportunities for their children. The adult education/parent education opportunity, however while used in varying degrees in many JCC preschools, is generally not an extensive or integral part of most schools' programs and therefore remains a high priority for communal investment.

JCCs also have a critical role to play in reaching young families that don't choose to affiliate with a congregation and may have a particularly important impact on mixed married families. The nondenominational Jewish environment can provide a safe space to test feelings of Jewishness for Jews who are unsure of their Jewish commitment or non-Jews who want to learn more about Jewish life. The JCC can serve as a place to learn and can also serve as a bridge to religious affiliation if properly programmed as a "gateway institution."

OBJECTIVE 2

INTENSIFY SUPPLEMENTARY JEWISH EDUCATION THROUGH THE INTEGRATION OF CLASSROOM AND BEYOND THE CLASSROOM JEWISH PROGRAMS -- PRIMARILY THROUGH VASTLY INCREASED STRATEGIC COOPERATION BETWEEN CONGREGATIONS AND JCCS

Inherent Limitations of Supplementary Classroom Education

While it's clear that most Jewish youngsters receive some form of Jewish education at some point before they reach adolescence and while this educational experience clearly helps in some ways to strengthen Jewish identity, it's also clear that the supplementary school educational process leaves a great deal to be desired. As many researchers have pointed out, supplementary classrooms past fifth or sixth grade become increasingly difficult or impossible educational environments. The onset of adolescence in an environment where parents apply little pressure for discipline frequently leads to chaotic classroom conditions as other activities compete for the child's after school and Sunday attention and as the gap between the culture of the classroom and the culture of the street and home grows.

The limitations of supplementary Jewish education have been amply demonstrated in many studies -- most recently Samuel Heilman's "Inside the Jewish School: A Study of the Cultural Setting for Jewish Education." Heilman stresses the tremendous differences between the Jewish child's lifestyle and the values he learns in Hebrew school; the absence of parental support; the difficulty children have in understanding ideas and customs they have never experienced in their own lives; the competition with other more valued activities; and the resultant disruptive classroom behavior.

In fact, the supplementary classroom itself may simply be the wrong environment for effective Jewish education for most youngsters past fifth or sixth grade. Can Kiddush, Havdalah and the joys of Shabbat rest and learning really be taught in a classroom to children who have never experienced it? While passing the spicebox, baking challah, or sipping wine on Shabbat can be an outstanding learning experience in the classroom for preschoolers or even for third or fourth graders, they simply don't work much past that point. While some very special and "magical" teachers can overcome these problems, even many very good teachers have great difficulty in an hour and a half to two hours of supplementary education after the children have already finished an intensive and highly pressured day of "real" school. Since much of what we want children to learn must be experienced before it can be taught, it seems by far the wiser course to carefully determine the best environments for Jewish experience and learning and then invest resources in those environments that work best.

Shifting Resources to "Beyond the Classroom" Learning Environments

Despite the problems we face with classroom-centered supplementary education there are a number of environments that have proven far more effective than classrooms for experiencing Jewish life and for cognitive Jewish learning. Retreat programs, intensive Jewish summer camping, youth group activities and trips to Israel are all effective environments that provide the extended time, the role models, the social reinforcement and in Eric Ericson's terms the "locomotion," the sense of movement and activity, that pre-teens and teens need to learn and grow in a positive and joyful way. Of course, classroom learning certainly works for Jewish teens in secular education without having to worry much about "positive and joyful" environments because it carries all the authority and compulsion of parents and the larger society. Jewish education, however, which seeks to instill identity, love of learning and knowledge must win the loyalty of the child and his peer group or lose the battle altogether, a fact that every confirmation teacher learns by the end of his first hour on the job.

Given these realities, it's ironic that classroom-centered school learning is standard, normative, and part of the curriculum of almost every Jewish school-aged child while more effective "beyond the classroom" programs like retreats, intensive Jewish summer camping, Israel experiences and youth groups

are relatively unsubsidized, extracurricular and random events in the lives of most of our children. A key objective of communal policy might therefore be to provide resources for congregations to make these potentially more effective environments a far more standard part of their educational repertoire.

The Dichotomy Between "Formal" and "Informal" Jewish Education -- Clarifying the Semantic Confusion

Before sketching a strategy for carrying out these objectives however, it's important to address the concern that this direction encourages "soft" informal learning at the expense of "serious" formal education. This concern grows out of a common tendency to equate informal education (camps, Israel experiences, retreats and the like) with affective learning and formal education (most commonly associated with the classroom) with cognitive learning. This semantic confusion becomes a serious strategic problem because some Jewish educators assign "informal" environments (camps, Israel experiences, retreats) to a secondary role since they view them as affective rather than cognitive and therefore incapable of conveying "real" knowledge.

This confusion is particularly unfortunate because cognitive education can take place in a camp environment as easily as in a classroom, while affective education can also take place in a classroom. In fact, a summer at Camp Ramah can produce more cognitive learning for many children than several years of two-afternoon-a-week supplementary Jewish education, while at the same time producing a far more positive affective response. In this case the "informal" environment may actually allow more intensive contact hours for cognitive learning than the so-called "formal" environment. Moreover, Jewish learning is not easily separated from Jewish doing and feeling. It is far easier to learn the laws of Shabbat while experiencing the joys of Shabbat in a total immersion environment.

On the whole, we could have a more intelligent discussion of Jewish educational strategies if we distinguished between types of learning environment rather than types of education in comparing traditional supplementary school settings with camping or Israel travel. Sidney Vincent was very wise when, in Cleveland's 1976 Jewish Education Report, he first distinguished between "classroom" and "beyond the classroom" environments rather than using the "formal"/"informal" dichotomy.

The discussion of "formal" vs "informal" Jewish education would also be sharper if we were more accurate about exactly what is learned in most "formal" supplementary school environments. Even some friends of "beyond the classroom" environments have suggested that Camp Ramah is all well and good but that it is unlikely to produce youngsters who understand Torah, Mishnah or Gemara and that our communal funds might better be spent on "real" classroom education. It is in fact unlikely that youngsters learn much Gemara at Camp

Ramah or Cleveland's Camp Wise. On the other hand, it is also true that at most supplementary schools, fifteen year olds know very little Torah and it would be difficult to find a dozen youngsters in most schools who graduate even knowing what Mishnah or Gemara is. More to the point, there are serious questions as to whether most supplementary school students can read three lines of prayer or still remember the characters in the Purim story five years after graduation. Increased allocations for classroom environments will not have much of an impact on this result unless accompanied by significant new investment in the development of "beyond the classroom" environments that help develop the motivation for learning and create contexts in which learning is supported.

A Strategy for Integrating Classroom and Beyond the Classroom Environments Through a Collaborative Communal Strategy

Integrating "beyond the classroom" environments more fully into the educational process will require the close coordination of communal resources involving the expertise and commitment of Jewish Community Centers, Bureaus of Jewish Education, and congregations alike. A few examples follow:

Camping

Jewish ritual, values, beliefs, and customs are difficult to understand in the abstract and too often classroom learning bears little relationship to anything the child experiences at home. Ideally, Jewish education should be tied to Jewish living experiences that bring classroom concepts to life in an atmosphere of community and joy. The potential of Jewish camping to provide this kind of experience is well established for parents and educators alike who have had the opportunity to observe children returning from these kinds of total Jewish living environments. The well-run Jewish camping experience serves not only to introduce a youngster to Jewish living, but also incorporates formal Jewish curricula (history, customs, Hebrew, etc.) in a way that can be joyful for those children participating. Although formal research is limited in this area, Reform, Conservative, Orthodox and JCC camps as well as programs such as the Brandeis-Bardin Institute in California all report frequent and repeated instances of youngsters making major changes in lifestyle through the Jewish camping experience. Jewish camping alone may not guarantee that a youngster will grow into an identified adult, but the cumulative effect of the camping experience with other coordinated beyond the classroom experiences can affect the future Jewish identification of a significant number of Jewish children.

While the congregations that educate most of our children also sponsor camp programs through their national movements these are almost never coordinated with the child's educational experience and are designed to reach only a tiny portion of the total school-aged population. They have

neither the room nor the mandate to do more, yet community camp sites, most frequently part of our Jewish community center movement, are available with physical facilities and with the group work and recreational skills of those who administer them. It would certainly be possible for congregations to sponsor their own "mini-Ramah" two or three week encampments on-site at JCC campgrounds, enabling far more youngsters to participate in intensive Jewish camping as an integral part of their congregational schooling experience.

Retreats

Retreat programs used in a planful and regular way can be another vital tool for bringing Jewish education to life by creating real Jewish living situations for children. In recent years, JCCs have increasingly developed retreat centers also staffed with individuals who have Judaic, recreational, and group work expertise. These retreat centers can be and frequently are used to help make retreat programs an integral part of the congregational school experience.

Youth Group Activity

It is not possible to ignore the critical connection between peer group activity and identity formation during the adolescent years. As Harold Himmelfarb put it in "Jewish Education for Naught," "Jewish youth group participation does have an impact that is independent of Jewish schooling ..." ⁴ This point of view was reinforced by the American Jewish Committee's Colloquium on Jewish Education and Jewish Identity, which stated that "the youth group may provide more positive reinforcement of Jewish identity in adolescence than various kinds of Jewish schools." ⁵ It is obviously important to assure that every Jewish teenager has an opportunity and is encouraged to belong to a Jewish youth group and to participate in its activities.

Recently the Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland formed a Joint Congregational Plenum/Federation Youth Commission to explore programs that could encourage more youngsters to become involved in youth group activity and enhance the Jewish content of these programs. As a result, the community will now be developing a Youth Resource Office to strengthen all of the youth groups in town and to work toward making a youth group experience an integral part of the Jewish education of every youngster. This youth activities office will be housed at the JCC and jointly sponsored by the Jewish Community Center and the Plenum of

4/Harold S. Himmelfarb, *ibid.*

5/"Summary Report and Recommendations," 1976 American Jewish Committee Colloquium on Jewish Identity, p. 25.

Congregations. Here again, we are seeking to use the JCC expertise as a resource to strengthen the congregations' ability to use both classroom and beyond the classroom learning environments.

Israel Experiences

The impact of the Israel experiences on Jewish identity is well established, particularly in programs with real ideological, religious, and educational content, and the notion that an Israel program should be an integral part of every youngster's Jewish education has long been an accepted part of Cleveland's educational strategy. Five years ago, Cleveland's Bureau of Jewish Education developed the Israel Incentive Savings Plan which creates economic incentives for parents and congregational schools to join with the community in contributing toward a high school Israel experience for every youngster. Since this program operates through congregational schools, congregations can use the Israel experience as an integral part of their educational curriculum and to date over 500 youngsters are enrolled. This program provides an excellent example of how Federation policy can foster closer cooperation with congregations while helping to make beyond the classroom experiences an integral part of the educational experience of children. It has now been adopted by a number of other communities including Chicago and Philadelphia.

The need for this kind of cooperation as a way of improving both program recruitment and quality is reinforced by the recent Jewish Education Committee of the Jewish Agency for Israel, "Report on Educational Programs in Israel." The report notes that: "The use of organizational channels and word-of-mouth as the most effective recruitment methods suggests that marketing of Israel programs is primarily geared to those active and involved in Jewish community life...of our 'interested' target population, however, only 13 percent had ever received information about Israel programs through organizations." ⁶ While this may imply a need for some additional channels of communication with the unaffiliated, it also suggests that many more affiliated families and youth could be recruited if organizations could be persuaded to raise the priority of Israel travel in their overall program.

In addition, the report identified a number of characteristics of high quality programs including: "a clear concept of educational goals; planning consonant with those goals; and a knowledgeable staff,

⁶/"Report on Educational Programs in Israel," Summary Report of the Jewish Education Committee of the Jewish Agency for Israel, 1986, p. 24

understanding of the Diaspora and the needs of Diaspora participants." ⁷

Clearly, programs that are integrated into the educational objectives of congregational schools are more likely to achieve these kinds of goals than many other kinds of approaches.

Overall, the strategy for "beyond the classroom" education developed through these four examples aims at strengthening the Jewish educational enterprise by making: a trip to Israel as normal a part of the youngster's Jewish education as learning the aleph-bet; an intensive Jewish summer camping experience as normal as studying the story of the creation; parent education as normal as signing the youngster up for school; regular intensive youth group involvement as standard as a Bar Mitzvah; and retreat programs as regular as the more usual classroom activity. It must be clearly noted that the aim of this strategy is not simply to encourage youngsters to participate in these activities, as they currently do -- as individual, isolated experiences, frequently disconnected from their ongoing classroom work. The aim, to the contrary, is to connect these experiences to the classroom and to provide them under the auspices of the youngsters' own congregational school.

OBJECTIVE 3

INCREASING THE PROPORTION OF NON-ORTHODOX YOUNGSTERS RECEIVING A DAY SCHOOL EDUCATION -- PRIMARILY THROUGH IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND MARKETING

Day schools have long been viewed as an alternative to supplementary education that can intensify the educational experience and integrate it into the life of the child. Community funding for day school education has therefore grown and the number of youngsters receiving a day school education has increased as a proportion of all Jewish youngsters receiving any kind of Jewish education. Clearly, increasing the proportion of youngsters receiving a day school education would be an important communal goal.

Here again however, progress will require a rethinking of the strategic targets of communal policy. Currently in Cleveland, as in most communities, over 90 percent of Orthodox youngsters are already enrolled in a Jewish day school as compared with fewer than 10 percent of non-Orthodox youngsters. Clearly this indicates a need to provide adequate funding for all forms of day school education and then to focus planning attention and resources on marketing day school education to the non-Orthodox segment.

Unfortunately, communal attention most frequently focuses on the quality of Judaic education in the Jewish day school. While this is a natural outcome of

⁷/"Report on Educational Programs In Israel," Summary Report of the Jewish Education Committee of the Jewish Agency for Israel, 1986, p. 31

our primary interest in day schools as an effective Jewish educational medium, it fails to understand the key motivating factors for non-Orthodox parents. Many non-Orthodox parents are certainly concerned with the quality of the Jewish education that their children receive but are far more concerned with the quality of secular education in any school they choose for their children. For non-Orthodox day schools to be widely accepted, they must be as good or better than the best private schools available in the community, including high academic standards and rich extracurricular opportunities. Only by focusing communal attention on these issues can we hope to significantly increase the proportion of youngsters receiving a day school education in our communities.

While day school education is a vital alternative that deserves considerable marketing attention, it's clear that day schools are unlikely to attract much more than 30% of the Jewish education market -- leaving congregational supplementary schools to carry the greatest burden of the Jewish education enterprise. This makes it important to deal both with upgrading supplementary education and with increasing day school enrollment. Under these circumstances, focusing all resources on one or the other would seem destructive to the ultimate goal of Jewish continuity.

OBJECTIVE 4

RECRUITING AND TRAINING LAY AND PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP WITH THE SKILL AND VISION NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT THESE STRATEGIC CHANGES: AN OVERARCHING PRIORITY FOR AMERICAN JEWISH EDUCATION

Lay Leadership

Clearly, the kind of change outlined in this paper will require new kinds of lay and professional leadership in Jewish education -- leadership with an interdisciplinary problem-solving approach and an ability to work across agency and institutional lines. The process of attracting the best and brightest lay leaders to Jewish education has already begun in many local communities. Internationally, the Jewish Agency's Jewish Education Committee has had a number of programs that have involved top leadership from throughout Israel and the Diaspora. These efforts will need to be expanded through Federation-sponsored local programs that bring together the leadership of all the agencies involved in the identity-building process including congregations and that also attract the best Federation leadership to increase the human and material resources available for significant change in the Jewish educational system.

Professional Leadership

It's also clear that no change can take place in Jewish education without adequate professional personnel and that even the current system is in danger

of collapse due to a lack of experienced teachers and administrators. A shift to parent education, "beyond the classroom" education, and an increased emphasis on day school education would make new demands on our whole system of personnel recruitment and training and might, in fact, require a new kind of professional educational leadership. While a detailed examination of personnel issues is beyond the scope of this paper, it's clear that personnel recruitment and training strategies must be consistent with strategies for change in the Jewish educational system if either are to be effective. Thus, the approach to change in Jewish education outlined in this paper requires personnel who are skilled in community organization, family dynamics, "beyond the classroom" education, and program development as well as in traditional classroom approaches. This in turn would suggest the need for a comprehensive system of recruitment and training aimed at producing the kinds of educators needed to carry out this new agenda.

In reality, the implementation of new approaches to personnel recruitment and training need to come "on-line" at the same time as institutionalized change in our system of Jewish education. The training institutions need a clear idea of what kinds of environments they're training teachers for, while the new educational environments will be unable to function without fully trained staff. This will require far more thoughtful planning and coordination between those who train Jewish educators, Rabbis, and Jewish communal professionals and those who implement educational policy nationally and locally.

Clearly the institutionalization of interdisciplinary and interagency models for change in Jewish education call for similar recruitment and training strategies that bring together the skills and strengths of local Colleges of Jewish Studies, schools of Jewish communal service, religious seminaries, and the Jewish studies departments of major universities. These institutions clearly need to rethink the kind of training they provide to meet the changing needs of the educational system. At the same time, those seeking to institutionalize change in Jewish education need to recognize that change cannot take place without significantly increased support for the local and national training and recruitment efforts needed to produce the personnel who can implement the new strategies.

Top Educational Leadership: A Priority for Change

Clearly the kinds of change described in this paper suggest new attention to planning, community organization, and program development and none of this can take place without new ways of thinking at the top of the Jewish educational enterprise. School directors and rabbis, as well as Bureau, Federation, and JCC directors will all need to look at their roles, their institutions and their communities in new ways if multi-disciplinary and interagency approaches are to succeed. In addition, these top personnel might need different kinds of training to be able to administer programs that cross traditional agency

lines while emphasizing family education and "beyond the classroom" techniques to a much larger degree than ever before.

Rabbis and congregational school directors for example might need new kinds of preparation to really turn their institutions into "Gateways to Jewish Life" with the kind of intake and involvement discussed here. Religious leaders as diverse as Rabbi Steven Riskind and Rabbi Harold Schulweis, for example, have shown that targeted, community organization approaches can succeed in widely different environments. If their approaches to congregational life are to become the rule rather than the exception, the schools that train the top level of congregational professional leadership may need to reshape the type of training they provide.

The Need For a Revitalized "Feeder System" for Jewish Educational Personnel

While improvement in top educational leadership is vital, the current shortage of line personnel for classroom and "beyond the classroom" settings is also reaching a critical stage. Though changes in remuneration for teachers and educational administrators can help in the recruitment effort, most of the very best in our current system were attracted by positive day school, youth group, camping, and college experiences rather than by money. It's vital to recognize that allowing these feeder systems to deteriorate -- as youth groups and Jewish camps have over the last decade -- will have disastrous consequences on the availability of educational personnel. The new focus on youth activities of all kinds described in this paper as well as an increase in non-Orthodox day school enrollment could therefore be an important part of creating a pool of talented and interested Jews from which to draw future Jewish educators.

In addition, however, a greater emphasis on college program and involvement will be essential for future recruitment efforts. Many Hillel programs fail to attract the "best and brightest" students and there are few organized attempts to reach out and involve the thousands of students who participate in Jewish studies programs on campuses throughout the country.

One way of quickly adding to our reserves of current classroom and "beyond the classroom" personnel while at the same time involving some of the "best and brightest" in Jewish activity and ultimately perhaps in Jewish educational careers would be through outreach and recruitment activities aimed at these students. Communities might, for instance, consider developing scholarship programs that stipend carefully selected students for work in supplementary classrooms as well as JCCs, camps, Israel experiences, youth groups, and retreat programs. These programs could target students interested in careers in Jewish education (or with substantial course work in Jewish studies). Beyond creating work and scholarship opportunities, such programs could also include social activities, enrichment courses, special retreats, and Israel missions for these students with a view to building a sense of group cohesion

and increasing their commitment to work in the Jewish field. In this way we could immediately increase our pool of talented, enthusiastic, high status line staff while building toward a much improved pool from which to draw future educational leadership.

CONCLUSION

This paper calls for a complete review of what we've learned about Jewish education and Jewish identity over the last fifteen to twenty years and the development of community strategies aimed at institutionalizing our most successful experiments and program initiatives. This will require a broad consensus on what really works in Jewish education and a commitment to shift resources to those kinds of programs and methods that work best including an emphasis on the marginally affiliated rather than the unaffiliated; on "gateways to Jewish life" rather than untargeted outreach; and on high impact methods and environments like day schools, parent education and "beyond the classroom" techniques rather than on less promising methodologies and learning environments.

This is a critical moment in the history of the American Jewish community -- a time of great opportunity and great danger. It's a time of widespread affiliation -- providing an opportunity to educate and motivate more Jews than ever before. But it's also a time when knowledge and commitment is so minimal for so many Jews that there's no way of really knowing whether the next generation -- a generation raised after the Holocaust and the founding of the State of Israel -- will continue to affiliate at the same rate as their parents. In truth this may be our last opportunity to make use of our current high level of affiliation to help assure the Jewish future. Time is short but the American Jewish community certainly has the resources to succeed if these are applied with the thoughtful intelligence and sustained commitment that this kind of vitally important enterprise deserves.

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