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"Proposed Initiative on Jewish Continuity/Jewish Education",  
January 1988.

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PROPOSED INITIATIVE ON  
JEWISH CONTINUITY/JEWISH EDUCATION

Report to Philanthropic Full Committee

by Morton L. Mandel

January 14, 1988

One of the major interests of the Mandel Philanthropic Program is fostering the survival of the Jewish people and Jewish values by increasing the effectiveness of formal and informal Jewish education, and by helping to preserve and transmit the cultural heritage of the Jewish people. We wish to encourage the meaningful continuity of commitment to Jewish identity in an open society where identification with Jewish values is a matter of choice, not necessity.

This concern served as the basis for a meeting in March, 1987, at which Jack and Joe Mandel, John Colman, Henry Zucker and I were present as were Steve Hoffman, Chuck Ratner, Jonathan Woocher and Ann Klein. At that meeting we had an opportunity to hear from Seymour Fox, Professor of Jewish Education at Hebrew University, about the importance of improvements in Jewish education in ensuring meaningful Jewish continuity. We also discussed the possibility of establishing a Commission to study Jewish education in North America.

Following that meeting a design document was drafted and steps were taken to establish a national Commission to undertake a comprehensive study of contemporary Jewish education and to recommend ways of making Jewish education more responsive to the current Jewish community. The

design document defines Jewish continuity as "the creative vitality of the Jewish people, its religion, culture, values and traditions." Active participants in this process have been Professor Fox and his consultant, Annette Hochstein, Herman Stein, Henry Zucker and, more recently, Art Naparstek and Ginny Levi; David Ariel, President of the Cleveland College of Jewish Studies; Art Rotman, Director of JWB; Jonathan Woocher, Director and Bennett Yanowitz, President of JESNA; and Carmi Schwartz, Director of the Council of Jewish Federations.

The design document defines the Commission's central challenge as "increasing the numbers of Jews who choose an active commitment to Jewish identity." In our society, the connections to and expressions of Jewish identity are highly individual, ranging from active involvement with traditional Jewish practice to identification with Israeli culture to participation in communal organizations. It is our goal to strengthen as many of these links in as many American Jews as possible.

The planning group has determined that, "as the Jewish community's primary vehicle for responding to the questions of 'why' and 'how' to be Jewish, education is our best means of helping Jews to develop and sustain a commitment to active Jewish self-expression." Jewish education is defined broadly to include all settings in which learning takes place-- within the family circle, at camps and community centers, through the



media, and in encounters with Israel. Jewish education has the capacity to reach into every aspect and stage of Jewish life--from children to senior citizens, from individuals to families, in schools, JCC's, synagogues, camps, nursing homes and child care centers.

Jewish education today suffers from a shortage of qualified, trained teachers with opportunities for professional growth. Many institutions of Jewish education have been unable to assimilate advances in education, technology, social sciences and Jewish scholarship or to tap the educational promise of the State of Israel. In order to respond to the realities of contemporary Jewish life in America, more time and resources of key community organizations and leaders must be devoted to Jewish education.

It is proposed that the Mandel Associated Foundations sponsor and fund the establishment of the Commission to study these problems in cooperation with JWB and JESNA. I will serve as Chairman of the Commission; the boards of JWB and JESNA will provide institutional support for the Commission's activities and the directors of the two organizations will participate in its deliberations.

The process of identifying and engaging a Commission Director is currently under way. We have narrowed the field to three impressive individuals and will soon have selected one to serve this important role.

The 30-member Commission of outstanding educators, community leaders, and professionals will be constituted by spring. Its role will be to identify important issues in Jewish education, point to practical opportunities for improvement, and engage key people and institutions in positive action. To accomplish its goals over a period of 18 months, the Commission will meet four to six times. It will look at the fundamental question: Who holds the keys to change? It will consider what communities and Jewish educational institutions must do to professionalize Jewish education and to attract, inspire and encourage professionals to meet the demands of a dynamic society.

It is expected that the Commission will develop a list of meaningful initiatives which, when implemented, will upgrade Jewish education and improve the environment for Jewish continuity. I anticipate that the Mandel Associated Foundations will wish to fund one or more of the resultant proposals and that we will encourage other individuals and foundations to support other proposals.

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March 28, 1988

MEMORANDUM

TO: Henry L. Zucker

FROM: Henry L. Zucker

Can we establish at the Federation a "Fund for Jewish Education"? This Fund would be dedicated to raising the level of support for Jewish education in greater Cleveland. It would be part of the annual Jewish Welfare Fund Drive. Donors could earmark part of their Jewish Welfare Fund gift for this special purpose.

The Fund would serve two important purposes: 1) it would show the Cleveland community that the Federation means business about ~~making a~~ ~~random jump in its~~ support for Jewish education; 2) it would serve as a means for persons with this special interest to make generous gifts for Jewish education and have these gifts included as part of their Jewish Welfare Fund gift.

significantly increased

An alternative to serve some of the same purpose, but not all of it, would be to permit part of the Jewish Welfare gift to be earmarked for the operation of the Federation office. Gifts for this purpose would help to relieve the local agency. An inducement might be an Endowment Fund gift for this same purpose, which would serve as a challenge for individual earmarked funds to match.

HZ/pmp

Are Mandels prepared to make \$1 M gift each to Welf. Fund to endow Fed. ofc. budget or cost of JW Fund campaign

$3M \times 6\% = \$180,000$

Would others consider the same now as then post-morsem gifts? Net result = relieve annual budget of \$100,000/yr. for local allocations

earmark gifts only for Fed. ofc. budget. Object: to relieve cost of operations

Have End. Fund match gifts & double the gifts



March 1, 1988

PD. Redraft  
4/18/88



INTRODUCTION

*body stresses before*  
*face greater challenges*

[The ties that help connect Jews to a meaningful Jewish life and similarly help ensure Jewish identity and continuity for their children ~~are weaker now than ever before.~~] Our society is dynamic and open. It offers countless ways to define and express personal identity. Identification with a community, a tradition, a set of values is now a matter of choice, not necessity. Amid the competing demands and opportunities, what binds an individual to Jewish life? How much of our Jewish heritage will be transmitted to future generations?

These questions challenge the North American Jewish community. It is time to respond with enthusiasm and energy [using the best tool at our disposal - Jewish Education.] The Mandel Associated Foundations, in cooperation with the Jewish Welfare Board (JWB) and the Jewish Education Service of North America (JESNA), propose an initiative to explore and recommend significant new support for Jewish Education. ] (important factor affecting Jewish continuity in America--Jewish education.)

[The Mandel Associated Foundations are prepared both to commit their own resources to this cause and to encourage others to support the implementation of projects designed to bring a new

vibrancy to Jewish Education and Jewish Educators.]

[It should be clear at the outset that] Jewish education includes not only classroom instruction but all the settings in which learning takes place--within the family circle, at camps and community centers, through print and electronic media, and in encounters with Israel. Many of these settings do not have the personnel, the programs, the content and the strategies needed to meet the challenge of educating Jews who are fully accepted in an open society.

The Mandel Associated Foundations are prepared to form a national Commission to involve the North American Jewish community in a policy-oriented study of Jewish education in a variety of settings. This study will recommend practical steps and interventions for the improvement of Jewish education.

The Mandel Associated Foundations are supporting foundations of the Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland. They were established in 1982 by Jack N. and Lilyan Mandel, Joseph C. and Florence Mandel, and Morton L. and Barbara Mandel as a primary means of handling their philanthropic interests.

JWB, the Association of Jewish Community Centers and YM-YWHA's, is the leadership body for the North American network of JCCs and Y's. JWB serves the needs of individual Jewish Community Centers.

and it helps to build, strengthen and sustain the collective Center movement through a broad range of direct and indirect services, institutes, consultations and Jewish experiences, and by identifying and projecting movement-wide directions, issues and priorities.

JESNA is the organized Jewish community's planning, service and coordinating agency for Jewish education. It works directly with local federations and the agencies and institutions they create and support to deliver educational services.

#### THE CHALLENGE: JEWISH CONTINUITY

Jewish continuity--the creative vitality of the Jewish people, its religion, culture, values and traditions--is an issue of cardinal [primary] importance to the American Jewish community. The central challenge is improving the means by which the Jewish community promotes an active commitment to Jewish identity.

In our society, connections to and expressions of Jewish identity are highly individual. Some Jews are linked by traditional religious practice, some through participation in communal organizations. Others express their involvement through Israel, Soviet Jewry or memories of the Holocaust. For many, association with other Jews is an important mode of participation.



Our efforts on behalf of Jewish continuity must strengthen as many of these links in as many American Jews as possible. It is a substantial challenge. Because Jewish identification is a matter of choice today, we must provide a persuasive rationale for why commitment and involvement are important.

We are convinced that, as a people, we have the vision and the resourcefulness to accomplish this aim. Jews have shown their capacity to succeed in community work. Now we have an opportunity to apply the same energy and creativity to the challenge of encouraging Jews to choose a strong Jewish identity.

THE KEY: EDUCATION

The Trustees of the Mandel Associated Foundations, in cooperation with JWB and JESNA, have chosen to focus on Jewish education as a potent resource for transmitting the living values of our culture.

As the Jewish community's primary vehicle for responding to the questions of "why" and "how" to be Jewish, education is our best (means of) [tool for] helping Jews to develop and sustain a commitment to active Jewish self-expression, both individually and communally. Jewish education also has the capacity to reach into every aspect and stage of Jewish life--from children to senior citizens, from individuals to families, in schools,

community centers, synagogues, camps, nursing homes and child care centers.

#### Jewish Education Today

More than 30,000 people are employed in Jewish education today. These include teachers, school directors, teacher trainers, specialists, educational planners, and professors of education as well as personnel in community centers, camps and retreat centers. Jewish education is conducted throughout North America in a variety of settings in and outside the classroom. Most Jewish children receive some Jewish education at some point in their lives. Hundreds of millions of dollars are spent annually on Jewish education. The field of Jewish education is a large enterprise throughout the North American Jewish community.

Still, Jewish education throughout North America suffers from a shortage of qualified, well-trained educators. The few institutions which train Jewish educators have fewer faculty and students than at any time in the recent past. Professional standards, meaningful positions, adequate salaries and compensation packages, career advancement possibilities and professional status are not adequately associated with the field of Jewish education. It is difficult to recruit and retain young men and women to the field.

The Jewish community has created notable successes in the last

sixty years in such areas as philanthropy, social services, defense and support for Israel. It is time to make the enterprise of Jewish education one of the success stories of modern Jewish life. Now is the time to turn the concern of the Jewish community toward creating a Jewish educational system which can in all its variety insure the survival of the Jewish people.

#### The Potential for Tomorrow

We believe that it is possible to establish an educational environment that will be responsive to the current realities of Jewish life in America. To make it a reality, the organized Jewish community must be prepared to invest substantial new resources of thought, energy and money.

There are positive elements in place and there is great potential for improvement. Today, Jewish education appears on the agendas of major Jewish forums. Key community organizations and leaders are already increasing time and resources devoted to Jewish education. Jewish community federations, individual philanthropists and Jewish-sponsored foundations appear ready to increase financial support for initiatives that can have a positive impact on the range and quality of Jewish education.

The critical question is: What initiatives will be meaningful? The Mandel Associated Foundations, in cooperation with JWB and JESNA, propose an approach that will help guide them and other



supporters toward a practical application of resources to the needs of Jewish education.

#### A STRATEGY: COOPERATIVE EFFORT

We propose the establishment of a national Commission to review Jewish education in North America and recommend ways to make it a more powerful force for enhancing the continuity of Jewish life in our society.

#### The Purpose

Emerging consensus on the importance of Jewish education makes this an auspicious time for a catalyst to identify the issues, point to practical opportunities for improvement, and engage key people and institutions in positive action. The catalyst: a [40??] (30)-member national Commission of community leaders, outstanding educators, and other professionals. They will be men and women chosen ad personam, whose competence, influence and institutional connections are clear and impressive.

Such a Commission will have a fourfold mission:

- to review the field of Jewish education in the context of contemporary Jewish life
- to recommend practical policies that will set clear directions for Jewish education

to develop plans and programs for the implementation of these policies

to stimulate [significant financial commitments and] advocacy, and engage committed individuals and institutions in collaborative, communal action.

While the Commission will initiate the study, it will also make it a participatory venture. We believe that Jewish continuity is a communal challenge. It can only be met with a communal effort expressing the interests and practical needs of involved institutions and individuals.

Thus, an important part of the Commission's initiative will be gathering opinion makers, community leaders, scholars and educators to play active roles in all stages of its work, including the implementation of its recommendations.

That is the ultimate purpose of the Commission: to offer concrete recommendations for strengthening Jewish education in all its forms and settings. [Undoubtedly, the Commission's recommendations will require the investment of significant financial support, and as noted at the outset,] the Mandel Associated Foundations are prepared to commit their own

resources. They are also ready to encourage others to support the implementation of projects and programs proposed by the Commission.

#### THE STUDY: CREATING CONDITIONS FOR CHANGE

Preparing Jewish education to respond to the realities of contemporary Jewish life will require interventions on many fronts, at many levels. We propose that the Commission begin with a study to examine Jewish education and recommend realistic ways to improve it. The Commission will guide the study, develop programs and plans in cooperation with the Jewish community, and encourage implementation of its recommendations.

#### The Work

The Commission will probably meet four to six times over a period of 18 to 24 months. It will direct the activities of a [Commission] (study) director and appropriate supporting staff, whose responsibilities will include preparing background papers and reports, gathering and organizing data, consulting with contributing scholars, educators and policy makers, and coordinating the ongoing participation of important Jewish publics. The final report will be the responsibility of the Commission.



### The Focus: People and Institutions

A study undertaken for the purpose of positive change begins with a fundamental question: Who holds the keys to change? It is a premise of this enterprise that change can best be achieved through a partnership of educators and communal leadership committed to invigorating existing institutions and creating new ones.

One objective of the Commission study must be an examination of what Jewish communities and educational institutions must do to professionalize Jewish education and to attract, inspire, encourage and train professionals.

The Commission study may address four issues:

1. Professional opportunities in Jewish education. A profession is characterized by formalized standards of knowledge and training, a code of ethics, institutionalized forms of collegiality, and paths for advancement. We need to look at how these aspects of Jewish education can be developed to professionalize our educational services.

2. The recruitment and retention of qualified educators. Such factors as low status, low salary and limited potential for advancement have a twofold effect on a profession. They deter

entry and encourage attrition. We need to examine these factors in light of the small pool of interested talent Jewish education now attracts. We also need to explore the potential for making more effective use of our feeder system--youth movements, camps, community organizations.

3. The education of educators. Today North American institutions graduate fewer than 100 Jewish educators annually. We need to look at how to fill the demand for qualified people in both existing and emerging positions, and to provide continuing professional education.

4. Historical perspective and current structures of Jewish educational institutions. We need to begin with an understanding of the existing structures. A look at the past can help us to assess current institutions and their needs and guide us in establishing any new structures that might be needed to respond to today's needs.

#### TOWARD TOMORROW

Our community services experience has shown that North American Jews can cooperate to make positive things happen. Today we know that something must happen if we are to transmit the riches of Jewish experience to future generations.

We have established organizations--service, educational and

philanthropic--with energetic leaders who are intensely interested in the question of Jewish continuity. We have, in Jewish education, a tradition of involvement with the why and how of Jewish life.

We propose to establish a leadership Commission to assess the challenges facing Jewish education and suggest methods for dealing with them. Such a Commission can coalesce the interests and needs of those who are committed to Jewish continuity. Its study of Jewish education can clarify issues to encourage outcomes: practical responses with strategies for implementation.

This paper invites a communal venture: the deliberate shaping of new connections between individuals and the community of Jewish experience. Thinking and acting together, we can make Jewish education a sustaining force for Jewish life, as rich and dynamic as the society in which it exists.