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Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education

August 29, 1991

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COUNCIL ON INITIATIVES IN JEWISH EDUCATION

I. Mission

The CIJE has six basic roles to fulfil -- advocacy on behalf of Jewish education; initiating action on the specific recommendations on personnel and community development called for by the Commission on Jewish Education in North America; forging new connections among communities, institutions and foundations; establishing and acting on a new research agenda; helping to facilitate synergism within the emerging foundation community; and energizing new financial and human resources for Jewish education.

A. Advocacy

The best lay and professional leadership of the Jewish community need to be attracted to the cause of Jewish education. Visions of what should and can be achieved in the 21st century need to be repeatedly placed before our communities' leadership and the wherewithal to do so obtained. The CIJE can provide a unique blend of individual and institutional advocacy in North America.

B. Initiatives

Several specific recommendations are being promoted by the Commission on Jewish Education in North America. These include the need to radically strengthen personnel in the field and deepen local community leadership's commitment to Jewish education. Through comprehensive planning programs and experimental initiatives in designated lead communities, CIJE will bring together continental institutions and other experts to yield breakthroughs in Jewish education development at the local level.

C. Connections

Creative people, institutions, organizations and foundations are all acting on new ideas in Jewish education. The CIJE seeks to provide a meeting place that will bring together:

- Funders and those with proposals for action;
- Proven ideas developed through foundation initiatives and communities eager to know what works;

- Institutions that are developing new approaches and the personnel and resources to make breakthroughs possible.

The CIJE will be a setting where funders can share accomplishments and possibly agree to join together in supporting new undertakings of large magnitude.

D. Research

While there are many people engaged in Jewish education research, there still appears to be no coordinated, systematic analysis of what works in Jewish education. Research interests have been understandably idiosyncratic. The Commission on Jewish Education in North America found gaping holes in what we can say we know with real confidence, rather than relying on conventional wisdom. A comprehensive, multi-year research agenda needs to be outlined by the best thinkers on the continent, assigned to the most promising talent, supported, and the findings critically examined and disseminated.

E. Synergism

One of the most exciting new developments in Jewish education -- one that holds great promise for the field -- is the serious entry of strong private foundations into Jewish life in general and Jewish education in particular. This is an unprecedented development. The foundations are deploying creative staffs and developing recognizable signatures of their interests and accomplishments. Recruitment, day schools, media, training high potential professionals, identifying master teachers and programs, and Israel experiences are just a few of the interests being pursued. The richness of foundation endeavors is a real blessing. Through the synergy of coming together at the CIJE, foundations could efficiently diffuse their best innovations throughout the lead communities and should they desire it even help each other advance their agendas by consulting with each other, exchanging professional resources, avoiding recreating notions, etc.

F. Energize

Through the work of the Commission on Jewish Education in North America and the work of other entities, a new group of professionals

for Jewish education has begun to be identified. Generally these are people who are experts in general education who have an interest in Jewish affairs. Also, academicians with expertise in Judaica, the humanities, and social sciences want to contribute. CIJE will seek to identify these people and provide them with effective avenues to use their talents on behalf of the Jewish people, much the way we now benefit from many of the best lay leaders in the business community and other professions.

Further CIJE will attempt to generate new financial resources within local communities in partnership with existing resources and on a continental basis to back the ideas that are proven to work in Jewish education.

CIJE hopes to energize new professional and financial resources to add to the gifted people already at work. Ultimately local federations, school supporters, congregations, and consumers will need to commit more resources to accomplish the Jewish education agenda for the next century. This will not be an easy thing to achieve. It is hoped that CIJE will be able to facilitate foundations interested in providing a quick start to the development of new innovative efforts and then provide some longer term support.

II. Method of Operation

The CIJE will not be a big new comprehensive direct service provider. It isn't seeking to displace any existing institution or organization. Rather, CIJE expects to operate with a very small core staff -- no more than 3 or 4 professionals -- and work through the efforts of others -- JESNA, JCCA, CJF, Yeshiva University, JTS, HUC-JIR, Reconstructionist College, Torah U Mesorah, denominational departments of education, Brandeis, Stanford, Harvard, Spertus, Boston Hebrew College, educator organizations, etc. This list could go on and on! The need is not for a new service delivery mechanism but for a catalytic agent -- one that can convene meetings of peer organizations on the national scene, including denominational institutions and departments, communal agencies, foundations, and the like.

No existing organization plays this role today in Jewish education. CIJE, building upon the already successful engagement of these entities through the Commission on Jewish Education in North America, can play this role. The identity of all partners would be preserved and their missions enhanced. The rich diversity of foundation interests would be infused into the consciousness of the established community.

III. Structure

A simple structure to govern the CIJE is envisioned.

A. Board

Approximately 20 to 30 people will govern the CIJE. They will be drawn from among the leaders of the foundation community, continental lay leaders, outstanding Jewish educators, and leading Jewish academicians.

B. Senior Policy Advisors

A group of 20 or so senior policy advisors will provide ongoing professional guidance to the professional staff and board of the CIJE. They will be drawn from the ranks of the continental organizations and institutions and outstanding individual professionals.

C. CIJE Fellows

Beyond the Senior Policy Advisors group, the CIJE intends to assemble 50 or so fellows to provide intellectual, educational content to its work. These Fellows would be identified from among the people currently at work in Jewish education, and leading academicians and practitioners in general education, Judaica, humanities, and social sciences with a strong interest in Jewish life. In addition to providing ongoing advice to CIJE, the Fellows should be a rich resource for consultants for lead communities, foundation initiatives, the research agenda of CIJE, and the institutional objectives of CIJE working in concert with others.

D. Advisory Council

At least once a year CIJE will reconvene the members of the Commission on Jewish Education in North America, augmented with other key figures in Jewish education. This will provide an opportunity to check on the progress of implementing the Commission's recommendations and provide fresh insight on new developments that should be on CIJE's agenda.

E. Staff

The staff of CIJE will consist of a chief professional officer (initially Stephen Hoffman, the Executive Vice-President of the Cleveland Federation); a chief educational officer; and a planner. Appropriate support staff would be in place as well. An initial budget is attached.

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MINUTES
COUNCIL FOR INITIATIVES IN JEWISH EDUCATION
APRIL 9, 1991
12 NOON - 4:00 P.M.
COUNCIL OF JEWISH FEDERATIONS
NEW YORK CITY

Attendance

Board Members:	Charles Bronfman, Gerald Cohen, John Colman, Alfred Gottschalk, Arthur Green, Thomas Hausdorff, David Hirschhorn, Norman Lamm, S. Martin Lipset, Morton Mandel, Matthew Maryles, Lester Pollack, Esther Leah Ritz, Isadore Twersky, Bennett Yanowitz
Policy Advisors and Staff:	Shulamith Elster, Seymour Fox, Annette Hochstein, Stephen Hoffman, Martin Kraar, Virginia Levi, Arthur Rotman, Jonathan Woocher, Henry Zucker

I. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Mandel called the meeting to order at 12:40 p.m. He welcomed participants to the first meeting of the newly established CIJE board and asked those present to introduce themselves. He extended the regrets of Max Fisher, honorary chair. He reminded board members that the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education is an outgrowth of the Commission on Jewish Education in North America. Its purpose is to implement the recommendations of the Commission and to bring about greater support for Jewish education in North America with the ultimate goal of upgrading its quality.

II. CIJE Structure

The chair called board members' attention to the mission statement which had been distributed in advance. He reminded the board that its purpose is to set policy, authorize action, and galvanize resources for Jewish education. He noted that, in addition to board meetings which will occur approximately three times each year, there will be an annual meeting of an Advisory Council, composed of board members, Commission members, and other interested parties. The purpose of this meeting will be to provide a progress report on efforts to enhance Jewish education in North America.

Several board members raised questions about the actual role of the board in the work of the CIJE. Should the board initiate new ideas, evaluate funding proposals, and generally work with the staff to accomplish the Commission's recommendations? Or should the board react to proposals of the staff and policy advisors? It was suggested

that the board should set policy and strategy, and should shape the direction of the CIJE. It should create an agenda, serve as a catalyst, and generally work to make the Commission recommendations happen.

It also was suggested that an important step toward bringing about change is to establish a timetable for accomplishing concrete goals. Where do we want to be in two, five, or ten years?

III. Action Plan

A. Training

Dr. Shulamith Elster, newly appointed chief education officer of CIJE, spoke about the training of Jewish educators. She noted that the Commission concluded that the number of well-trained Jewish educators in North America must increase. In order to accomplish this goal, we must recruit, train, and place highly qualified educators.

As an initial step toward this goal, CIJE is establishing close working relationships with the major institutions of Jewish learning, encouraging them to be the best they can be. Each is working to meet the changing needs of society. CIJE is working with them to encourage the development of plans to develop and enhance their strengths. In addition, CIJE is working with the JCC Association to support the training of top leadership in the field of informal Jewish education.

As it encourages an enhanced training capability, CIJE will focus its attention on 1) clarification of current and future needs in the field, 2) facilitating planning to meet the needs of the field, 3) the teaching of subject matter, 4) identification of areas for joint projects, 5) means of attracting quality faculty, 6) the current status of in-service training and how to meet those special needs. It was noted that we must know more about the state of pre-service and in-service education in order to work effectively on recruitment, retention, and professionalization of the field.

In the discussion that followed, it was noted that the training programs being proposed will differ from those currently in effect by building on the current strengths of each of the training institutions. We are working to develop programs which will train more people for the field and to do so in innovative ways.

In response to a question about the role of CIJE in this effort, it was noted that CIJE is working with each institution to develop a strategy for meeting a particular set of needs.

B. Research

Jonathan Woocher, executive vice president of JESNA and a CIJE senior policy advisor, noted that the Commission had concluded that research is a key element for change in Jewish education. The Commission became aware of the paucity of research and the limited character of the research capability for Jewish education. It recommended, therefore, that one goal of CIJE be to strengthen the research capability for Jewish education in North America.

Senior policy advisors have recommended that research become an integral component of CIJE activities and that action be based on research. They also recommended that there is a need to address the lack of reliable data on specific elements of Jewish education, e.g., enrollments, personnel, program, etc.

It was suggested that a Jewish education data bank is needed, based on current thinking and technology, to provide the data necessary for effective planning and implementation of programs. In order to take the first steps toward developing such a data bank, JESNA and the JCC Association propose to assess the data needs of potential decisionmakers, determine how best to collect the essential data, determine where and how to organize and maintain the data, and study ways to disseminate the data once it is in place.

Finally, the senior policy advisors recommend that CIJE develop an agenda for future research efforts and expand the current research capability in the field of Jewish education. It was suggested that the first steps toward this goal include a study of the research currently available and the development of a blueprint for what is needed.

Woocher summarized the recommendations of the senior policy advisors:

1. That the CIJE consider research an integral component of its activities.
2. That a plan be developed for the creation of a data base.
3. That the CIJE undertake a study of specific approaches to building a broadbased research capability.

In the discussion that followed it was noted that there is currently a North American Jewish data bank, that this does not focus on Jewish education, and that it would be consulted on the technology necessary to develop and maintain a data bank.

If the proposal to establish a data bank is approved, the CIJE staff will work to identify funders for the project. JCCA and JESNA would then take the necessary steps to develop a design for the creation of the data bank.

It was suggested that parameters be set so that a data bank would focus on research related to the mission of CIJE. It was also suggested that any project supported by CIJE should build a component of evaluation into the program.

It was suggested that a subcommittee be formed to consider research needs and make a recommendation to the full board.

C. Lead Communities

Stephen H. Hoffman, interim director of CIJE, reminded the board that the Commission recommended the creation of lead communities to serve as a laboratory to build Jewish education programs worth replicating. Many communities have nominated themselves for this role. We wish now to determine how to identify lead communities, whether by inviting all communities to apply or by identifying a small number of candidate communities and inviting them to apply. We anticipate establishing three to five lead communities.

A list of criteria which might be used in selecting lead communities was discussed. It was suggested that the availability of new money to support innovative efforts in Jewish education be among the criteria.

Several board members spoke in favor of issuing a general invitation to apply, noting that this ensures a degree of commitment that will be important to success. Others prefer inviting communities to apply, to avoid raising the hopes of communities that will then not be selected. It was suggested that we identify a single lead community, establishing the best possible program, and assessing its impact. Other board members suggested that geographic and size diversity are significant for replicability and that we should select at least three communities. Finally, it was suggested that CIJE publish the criteria for selection and invite all communities to apply, while at the same time extending particular invitations to those we would especially like to consider.

It was noted that the CIJE will bring the following elements to each lead community:

1. Expertise of CIJE staff and planning teams.
2. Help with the cost of outside experts.
3. The ability to link projects with potential funders.

We wish to encourage a focus on planning in each community. We also propose to identify, codify, and disseminate information on good practices which can be replicated elsewhere.

It was suggested that a timetable be set for the establishment of lead communities. Short- and intermediate-term goals should be set to encourage concrete action.

IV. Finance, Administration and Staffing

It was reported that we anticipate a professional staff of three for CIJE: a chief professional officer to provide overall direction, a chief education officer to provide expertise on issues of education, and a planner familiar with community organization and social planning. Dr. Shulamith Elster has accepted the position of chief education officer and will assume that position on July 1. There is a need to identify the chief professional officer as soon as possible.

An anticipated three-year operating budget for CIJE was presented and discussed.

It was proposed that a search committee be established to select the chief professional officer. Committee members will include Charles Bronfman, Max Fisher, Charles Goodman, Neil Greenbaum, Morton Mandel, Matthew Maryles, and Lester Pollack. The search committee will consider engaging a search consultant. It will see that a position description is written and that it is shared with the board. The search committee will canvas the board, senior policy advisors and others for possible candidates. A progress report will be presented at the next meeting of the board.

V. Foundation Community Contacts

It was noted that a number of foundations are already actively involved with support of or considering new initiatives for programs in Jewish education. The CRB Foundation has an interest in Israel experience programs, the Cummings Foundation in development of best practices, the Jim Joseph Foundation is working with day schools, the Mandel Associated Foundations on senior personnel, the Revson Foundation is working on media and technology, the Wexner Foundation with recruitment, and the Zanvyl Krieger Foundation on compensation and pension programs.

VI. CIJE Mission

Following the presentations and discussion on an action plan, the board returned to a discussion of its method of operation. It was anticipated that three meetings per year would be held in New York. Subcommittees may be established which will meet between meetings or on mornings prior to board meetings. Materials for board discussion will

be sent out in advance and individual consultations will be held with board members between meetings. There will be periodic communications with the board to provide updates on progress which occurs between meetings. All of this will evolve as we go about our work.

It was suggested that CIJE's role as an advocate for Jewish education be considered further at a future meeting. The concept of lead programs or institutions was raised for further discussion at a future meeting. There was also a reminder of the importance of the replicability of programs within lead communities.

VII. Concluding Comments

The meeting concluded with a thoughtful D'var Torah by Rabbi Norman Lamm, president of Yeshiva University.



**TOWARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE
COMMISSION ON JEWISH EDUCATION IN NORTH AMERICA:
THE COUNCIL FOR INITIATIVES IN JEWISH EDUCATION**

LEAD COMMUNITY PROJECT

The Lead Community: A Concept, A Process, A Place

An Overview and Basic Conceptions

A Lead Community is a concept, a process and a place - a community engaged in planning for a comprehensive, far-reaching and systematic improvement of Jewish education.

The CIJE and the Lead Community

Several lead communities will be established and each will enter a partnership with the CIJE committing itself to develop and implement a specific plan of programs and projects in the community.

Content

The community plan must include elements designed to address the 'enabling options' - professional development programs for all educators, recruitment and involvement of key lay leadership and enhanced use of Israel experiences as an educational resource.

Programs

The communities should undertake programmatic initiatives most suited to meet local needs and resources and likely to have a major impact on the scope and quality of Jewish education in the community.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Feed-back

Community plans and projects should be carefully monitored and evaluated and feedback provided on an ongoing basis.

Appendix: Recruitment and Selection of Lead Communities

An Overview

A Time to Act, reflects the North American Commission on Jewish Education's recommendation to establish local laboratories for Jewish education as a strategy for bringing about significant change and improvement.

Three to five model communities will be established to demonstrate what can happen when there is an infusion of outstanding personnel into the educational system, when the importance of Jewish education is recognized by the community and its leadership, and when the necessary funds are secured to meet additional costs.

These models, called "Lead Communities", will provide a leadership function for other communities throughout North America. Their purpose is to serve as laboratories in which to discover the educational practices and policies that work best. They will function as the testing places for "best practices" - exemplary or excellent programs - in all fields of Jewish education.

Each of the Lead Communities will engage in the process of redesigning and improving the delivery of Jewish education through a wide array of intensive programs.

(A Time to Act, p. 67)

Basic Conceptions

1. The process of change is gradual. A long term project is being undertaken by the CIJE. The Lead Community Project is a means of bringing about meaningful change in Jewish education in North America by addressing those elements thought to be most critical to improvement.
2. Without community support for Jewish education and an approach to deal with the shortage of qualified personnel no systemic change is likely. These are the "building blocks or enabling options" identified by the Commission.
3. The initiative for bringing about community change should come from the local community itself.
4. Each local community will be encouraged to strengthen existing programs and to develop innovative and experimental programs to expand thinking beyond existing ideas and approaches.
5. A local planning mechanism will be responsible for generating plans and ideas and designing programs that have the support of a coalition of the stakeholders-- key institutions and individuals.
4. In order for a community plan for change to be valid and effective it should fulfill two conditions:
 - It must be comprehensive and of sufficient scope to have significant impact on the overall profile of Jewish education.
 - It must ensure high standards of quality. This can be accomplished with the assistance of experts in the field, careful and thorough planning, and appropriate evaluation procedures.
5. The CIJE will assist in designing and field-testing solutions to local problems through the professional and technical support of its staff and consultants and the assistance of the many resources of its co-sponsors-- the Council of Jewish Federations (CJF), the Jewish Community Center Association (JCCA) and the Jewish Educational Services of North America (JESNA)-- the national training institutions, the denominations and the local, regional, and national organizations.

The CIJE and the Lead Community

A coalition of the majority of the local educational institutions should be required to undertake a planning process and to make a commitment to recruit outstanding lay leadership so as to establish a supportive community climate to ensure the success of the plan.

Based on the specific needs of the community and the resources available for implementation each community should propose a specific program that it believes will make a significant impact on the scope and quality of Jewish education.

The CIJE should offer each lead community:

- professional guidance by staff and consultants
- on-going consultation on content and process issues
- liaison to continental and international resources
- facilitation of funding for special projects through the CIJE's relationship with foundations
- assistance in the recruitment of community leadership
- Best Practice Project
- Monitoring, Evaluation and Feed-back

Each community should make specific programmatic choices selected by mutual agreement from a menu prepared by the CIJE. The CIJE menu will include required and optional elements.

The required elements will include:

- activities to "build the profession" including in-service education for all personnel
- recruitment and involvement of outstanding lay leaders for "community support" of Jewish education
- maximum use of Best Practices so as to strengthen existing programs
- additional and enhanced Israel experience programs

Personnel Development:

Communities should develop and implement a plan for the recruitment and training of personnel and for activities to "build the profession". The plan should consider the community's varied settings for formal and informal Jewish education and plan for pre-service and in-service activities for teachers, principals, rabbis and all personnel working in the field, either as professionals or as avocational educators. It should include a plan to recruit and train previously under-utilized community human resources.

Specific examples of personnel development activities include the development of policies and programs to improve salaries and benefits, to develop new career paths and to empower educators by creating new roles for educators in decision-making in schools and in the community.

The CIJE will recommend elements of an effective personnel development program and assist communities in the planning and implementation stages.

Community Support:

Each lead community should launch a major effort at building community support. What is required is leadership at the congregational/school, agency board level and Federation levels. This requirement includes the recruitment of top leadership for financial support for Jewish education so as to create a supportive community climate to influence funding decisions and provide effective leadership for lead community activities.

Some possible approaches to developing stronger leadership have been identified. They include:

- improving the status of leadership in Jewish education
- providing mentors for younger leadership from among the well-established and influential community leadership
- training of school and agency boards through a community based training program
- recruiting leadership from active adult learners
- community leadership development programs designed specifically for Jewish educational leadership

Among the specific activities that should be considered is the adoption of a formal agenda for COMMUNITY SUPPORT that includes:

- new financial commitments with specific appropriate approaches to local fund-raising
- establishment of a formal education "lobby"
- development of regional or inter-communal networks
- formalization of lay-professional dialogues
- public relations efforts

Optional elements may include the enrichment and/or modification of existing programs and the development of innovative and experimental programs for a variety of settings.

The CIJE should formalize its relationship with each lead community specifying the programs/projects to be implemented - the goals, anticipated outcomes, and the additional human and financial resources that the community will make available. The agreement should likewise specify the support that can be expected from the CIJE.

The CIJE should provide each lead community with timely feed-back through the study of programs and projects. At a later stage, the successful programs may be offered to additional communities for replication or modification in other settings. Others may be dropped altogether.

Content

A wide variety of possible options reflecting the commitments, concerns and interests of the commissioners were considered - any one of which could have served as the basis for the Commission's agenda. It was recognized that the options could be usefully divided into two large categories: enabling options and programmatic options.

The Commission decided to focus its work initially on two enabling options as major approaches to change without which other program options were unlikely to achieve their goals. The enabling options are to "build the profession" so as to deal with the shortage of qualified personnel and "the community - its leadership, structures and funding" so as to provide the support essential for community change. Each community will be required first to plan for the "enabling options", the required elements of the community plan.

The Commission identified programmatic areas for intervention as a means to improving existing programs, strengthening institutions and developing innovative and experimental projects. The programmatic areas include the target populations (early childhood through senior citizens), settings and frameworks (informal and formal - e.g., schools, centers and camps) and specific content and methods.

Each community should choose the programmatic areas through which they plan to address these options.

"Enabling options" should be reflected in the programmatic areas selected by the community, those most suited to local needs and conditions.

Two examples help clarify the critical relationship between "enabling options" and specific programs.

- Training programs for principals improve schools.
- Individual schools benefit when supplementary school teachers participate in required in-service training programs.

"As the Lead Communities begin to develop their plans of action the Best Practices inventory would offer a guide to successful programs/sites/curricula which could be adopted in the Lead Communities." (The Best Practices Project by Dr. Barry W. Holtz). Thus a community choosing to undertake a specific program/project will be offered models of successful programs/projects by the CIJE so as to incorporate experience in the field in planning and decision making. The community can then either replicate, modify or develop unique programs, keeping in mind the standards set by these models.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Feedback

Ongoing monitoring of progress -- collection and analysis of data -- should assist community leaders, planners and educators to improve and adjust implementation activities in the communities.

The CIJE should establish an Evaluation Project to provide:

- ongoing monitoring of activities and elements of the community plan
- evaluation of progress in appropriate form/s
- a feedback loop(s) to "connect practical results with a process of rethinking, replanning and implementation"

Data will be collected locally and nationally to:

- evaluate the impact and effectiveness of individual programs
- evaluate the effectiveness of the Lead Community Concept as a model for change
- create indicators and a data base to serve as the basis for an ongoing assessment of Jewish education in North America.

It is anticipated that this work may contribute to a periodic "State of Jewish Education Report" as recommended by the Commission.

Research findings provided through the feedback loop(s) will make information available on a continuous basis for decision-making purposes. The feedback loop(s) provide for the rapid exchange of knowledge and the ability to use information in both planning and practice. It is anticipated that this approach will result in ongoing adjustments and adaptations of plans.

UPDATE: NEXT STEPS

During its initial months the CIJE has succeeded in establishing a organization and infrastructure that is now ready to launch work on the recommendations of the Commission. The Senior Policy Advisors and the Board of Directors of the CIJE have held their initial meetings and reviewed preliminary papers and conceptions. The Education Officer has begun work on a full-time basis and a search is underway for the Executive Director and Senior Planner.

Two deliberations were held at the Mandel Institute in Jerusalem - January and July 1991- with CIJE staff, advisors and consultants. A working group of educators and planners has been formed to assist the CIJE in its work.

A first workplan for the CIJE and time line have been established that includes the following elements:

- Establishing Lead Communities - as outlined in this paper

- Undertaking a Best Practices Projects as outlined in the enclosed CIJE paper by Dr. Barry W. Holtz

- A paper now being prepared towards the establishment of a research capability in North America

- A project to building community support including the preparation of a strategic plan

- Development of an approach to a continental strategy for preparing Jewish educators

- Developing and launching a monitoring, evaluation and feedback program for the CIJE

Separate papers will be forthcoming on each of the above elements of the CIJE's program.

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Appendix: The Recruitment and Selection of Lead Communities

The following approach has been proposed for the recruitment and selection of lead communities through a two round screening process.

Application and Selection

Round One: Request for Proposals (RFP)

Following a public announcement and communication to the local federation, which will include information about criteria and the selection process, communities will have six weeks to prepare a letter of intent which will be processed by CIJE staff, reviewed by Senior Policy Advisors and a committee of the Board of Directors.

Selection Criteria:

- A. City Size: minimum Jewish population of 15,000 to maximum Jewish population of 500,000
- B. Commitment
In the Letter of Intent the local federation will be asked to provide evidence of:
 - 1. the community's capability of a joint effort by all elements of the community
 - * 2. commitment to involve all stakeholders
 - 3. an existing planning process
 - 4. initiatives and progress in Jewish education in recent years (5 years)
 - * 5. a serious commitment of lay leadership
 - 6. potential to recruit strong community leaders
 - 7. potential for funding for lead community activities
 - 8. understanding of the importance of creating an environment conducive to innovation and experimentation
 - 9. commitment to developing personnel.
- * Letters of support should be included from a sampling of the stakeholders - educational and communal leaders.

Communities will be selected to participate in the second round.

Following discussion and approval by the Senior Policy Advisors and the Board of Directors, the CIJE staff will begin the recruitment process as outlined above.

Round Two: Formal Application

Communities selected for Round Two will be invited to send representatives to an informational seminar in preparation for Round Two and a more detailed application process that will include a site visit by CIJE staff upon receipt of the completed form.

Following screening by the CIJE staff, comments will be elicited from the Senior Policy Advisors and all applications, materials and comments will be reviewed by a committee of the Board of Directors and recommendations made for approval by the Board.

Timetable for Recruitment and Selection:

1. Requests for Proposals (RFP): early September 1991
2. Round One applications due: October 15, 1991
3. Decision by CIJE Board: mid November 1991
4. Seminar for Round Two Communities: early December 1991
5. Round Two applications due: late January 1992
6. Decision by CIJE Board: by March 1992



July 30, 1991

The Best Practices Project
Barry W. Holtz

I. Introduction

In describing its "blueprint for the future," A Time to Act, the report of the Commission on Jewish Education in North America, called for the creation of "an inventory of best educational practices in North America" (p. 69). The primary purpose of this inventory would be to aid the future work of the Council, particularly as it helps to develop a group of model Lead Communities, "local laboratories for Jewish education." As the Lead Communities begin to devise their plans of action, the Best Practices inventory would offer a guide to successful programs/sites/curricula which could be adopted for use in particular Communities. The Best Practices inventory would become a data base of Jewish educational excellence to which the Council staff could refer as it worked with the various Lead Communities.

Thus the planners from a Lead Community could ask the Council "where in North America is the in-service education of teachers done well?" and the Council staff would be able to find such a program or school or site some place in the country through consulting the Best Practice inventory. It is likely that the inventory would not be a published document but a resource that the Council would keep or make available to particular interested parties.

What do we mean by "best practice"? The contemporary literature in general education points out that seeking perfection when we examine educational endeavors will offer us little assistance as we try to improve educational practice. In an enterprise as complex and multifaceted as education, these writers argue, we should be looking to discover "good" not ideal practice. As Joseph Reimer describes this in his paper for Commission, these are educational projects which have weaknesses and do not succeed in all their goals, but which have the strength to recognize the weaknesses and the will to keep working at getting better. "Good" educational practice, then, is what we seek to identify for Jewish education.

A project to create such an inventory begins with the assumption that we know how to locate such Best Practice. The "we" here is the network of people we know, trust or know about in the field of Jewish education around the country. I assume that we could generate a list of such people with not too much difficulty. Through using that network, as described below, we can begin to create the Best Practice inventory.

Theoretically, in having such an index the Council would be able to offer both encouragement and programmatic assistance to the particular Lead Community asking for

advice. The encouragement would come through the knowledge that good practice does exist out in the field in many aspects of Jewish education. By viewing the Best Practice of "X" in one location, the Lead Community could receive actual programmatic assistance by seeing a living example of the way that "X" might be implemented in its local setting.

I say "theoretically" in the paragraph above because we will have to carefully examine the way that the inventory of good educational practice can best be used in living educational situations. Certainly significant stumbling blocks will have to be overcome. In what way, for example, will viewing the Best Practice of "X" in Boston, Atlanta or Montreal offer confidence building and programmatic assistance to the person sitting in the Lead Community? Perhaps he or she will say: "That may be fine for Boston or Atlanta or Montreal, but in our community we don't have 'A' and therefore can't do 'B'."

Knowing that a best practice exists in one place and even seeing that program in action does not guarantee that the Lead Communities will be able to succeed in implementing it in their localities, no matter how good their intentions. The issue of translation from the Best Practice site to the Lead Community site is one which will require considerable thought as this project develops. What makes one curriculum work in Denver or Cleveland is connected to a whole collection of factors that may not be in place when we try to introduce that curriculum in Atlanta or Minneapolis. Part of this project will involve figuring out the many different components of any successful practice.

As we seek to translate and implement the best practice into the Lead Communities, it will be important also to choose those practitioners who are able to communicate a deeper understanding of their own work and can assist the Lead Communities in adapting the Best Practices ideas into new settings.

The Best Practices initiative for Jewish education is a project with at least three interrelated dimensions. First, we will need to create a list of experts in various aspects of Jewish educational practice to whom the CIJE could turn as it worked with Lead Communities. These are the consultants that could be brought into a Lead Community to offer guidance about specific new ideas and programs. For shorthand purposes we can call this "the Rolodex." The Rolodex also includes experts in general and Jewish education who could address questions of a broader or more theoretical sort for the benefit of the CIJE staff and fellows-- people who would not necessarily be brought into the Lead Community itself, but would help the CIJE think about the work that it is doing in the communities.

The first phase of the Best Practices project-- stocking the Rolodex-- has already begun as the CIJE staff has begun working. It will continue throughout the project as new people become known during the process.

Second, the project will have as its primary mission the use of Best Practices for assisting the Lead Communities. For shorthand purposes we can call this "the data base." This will be described in detail in the next section of this memo below. Third, the project has implications for a much larger ongoing research project. For shorthand purposes we can call this "the long-range plan." The long-range plan is a major study of Best Practices in Jewish education-- locating, studying and documenting in detail the best work, the "success stories," of contemporary Jewish education. (I say "contemporary" here, but a research project of this sort might well include a historical dimension too. What can we learn about the almost legendary supplementary school run by Shrage Arian in Albany in the 1960s should have important implications for educational practice today.) Such a project should probably be located in an academic setting outside the CIJE. We could imagine a Center for the Study of Excellence in Jewish Education established at a institution of higher learning with a strong interest in Jewish education, in a School of Education at a university or created as a "free-standing" research center. Obviously, this project intersects with the research plan that the CIJE is also developing.

"Best Practices for assisting the Lead Communities" and "the long-range plan" are not mutually exclusive. The latter flows from the former. As we begin to develop a data base for the Lead Communities, we will also begin to study Best Practices in detail. The difference between the two projects is that the Lead Communities will need immediate assistance. They cannot wait for before acting. But what we learn from the actual experience of the Lead Communities (such as through the assessment project which will be implemented for the Lead Communities) will then become part of the rich documentation central to the long-range plan.

II. Best Practice and the Lead Communities

Of course there is no such thing as "Best Practice" in the abstract, there is only Best Practice of "X" particularity: the (good enough) Hebrew School, JCC, curriculum for teaching Israel, etc. The first problem we have to face is defining the areas which the inventory would want to have as its particular categories. Thus we could cut into the problem in a number of different ways. We could, for example, look at some of the "sites" in which Jewish education takes place such as:

- Hebrew schools
- Day Schools
- Trips to Israel
- Early childhood programs
- JCCs
- Adult Education programs

Or we could look at some of the subject areas which are taught in such sites:

- Bible
- Hebrew
- Israel

Other modes are also possible. Hence the following question needs to be decided: What are the appropriate categories for the inventory?

We propose to choose the categories based on a combination of the following criteria:

a) what we predict the Lead Communities will want and need, based on a survey of knowledgeable people (see step 1 below) and b) what we can get up and running quickly because we know the people and perhaps even some actual sites or programs already, or can get that information quickly.

III. Suggestions for a process

What has to be done to launch and implement the Best Practice project for Lead Communities? I would suggest the following steps:

1. Define the categories

To do this we should quickly poll a select number of advisers who have been involved in thinking about the work of the CIJE or the Commission to see what categories we can agree would be most useful for the Lead Communities.

Our main focus should be the Commission's "enabling option" of developing personnel for Jewish education ("building the profession"). (A second enabling option-- mobilizing community support for Jewish education-- will be dealt with as the Lead Communities are selected and as they develop. Although in principle the "Best Practices" approach might also apply in this area--e.g. we could try to indicate those places around the country in which community support has been successfully mobilized for Jewish education-- the Best Practices project will be limited to the enabling option of "building the profession." A different subgroup can be organized to investigate the Best Practices for community support option. The option of the Israel Experience, viewed as an enabling option, could also be studied by a different subgroup.)

The enabling option of "building the profession" comes to life only when we see it in relationship to the ongoing work of Jewish education in all its many aspects. A number of these dimensions of Jewish education were discussed during the meetings of the Commission and twenty-three such arenas for action were identified. These were called the "programmatic options" and the list included items such as early childhood education, the day school, family education, etc. Although the Commission decided to focus its work

on the enabling options (rather than any specific programmatic options) because of their broad applicability to all areas of Jewish education, it is appropriate for the Best Practices project to turn now to explore the specific programmatic options which can be of most benefit to the Lead Communities. Indeed, it is this list, coupled with the enabling option of building the profession, that can help us begin the process of deciding what specific areas of best practice we ought to analyze.

The method of work will be to use the enabling option of "building the profession" as a lens through each of the chosen programmatic options (from the original list of twenty-three) are viewed. Each chosen programmatic option would be viewed specifically in the light of best practice in building the profession within its domain. For example, what is the best practice of building the profession within the domain of the programmatic option called "adult education" or "early childhood education."

2. Commission a document (a "definitional guide") for each option.

The definitional guide is a document which is prepared for each category. Its purpose is to offer guidance as we seek to determine best (i.e. "good enough") practice within the category.

One advantage of focusing on the enabling option of personnel is that in the Commission report we already have a headstart in defining the how we should go about studying the programs we will examine. A Time To Act (pp. 55-63) analyzes "building the profession" in the light of six subcategories: 1) recruitment, 2) developing new sources of personnel, 3) training, 4) salaries and benefits, 5) career track development, 6) empowerment of educators.

These six subcategories can be the filter we use in looking at the programmatic options under consideration. Thus, if one chosen programmatic option is supplementary school education we could ask: where are the good programs for recruiting personnel to the supplementary school? who does a good job of developing new sources of personnel for the supplementary school? where is the training of personnel for the supplementary school done well? who has done an interesting job in improving salaries and benefits? Has any place implemented outstanding programs of career track development? Are there examples that can be found of the empowerment of educators? The same six points of building the profession can be applied to any of programmatic options.

The definitional guide will take these six subcategories and flesh them out and refine them as an aid which can be used by the "location finders" (see below) who will help us locate specific examples of current best practice in the field. The guide should also include a suggested list of "location finders" for each area. The CIJE staff would react to these papers but we anticipate that this should be a fairly fast process.

3. Identify the location finders

Once we define a list of categories and definitional guides for each, we would then want to find a group of "location finders" who would recognize or know about "Best Practice." It may also require a meeting of people to brainstorm places, sites, people as well. There probably also should be a group of well-traveled Jewish educators who could suggest the "location finders" to the CIJE.

4. Get the lists

Once we have the "location finders" for each category and the definitional guides, we can then put together the suggested lists of best practice for each category. This could come via meetings (as mentioned above), through phone calls or simply through getting submissions of lists from the location finders for each category.

Yet another approach that also can be implemented is a "bottom up" attack on this issue. The CIJE can put out a call to the field for suggestions of best practice to be included in the inventory. One model we ought to investigate is the National Diffusion Network, an organization in general education which seeks to disseminate examples of best practice around the country through this bottom up approach. We would need to explore how the Network deals with questions of quality control to see if it is applicable to our needs.

5. Evaluate the choices

Once we receive the proposed lists in each category, we are going to need to implement some independent evaluation of the candidates for inclusion. As stated above quality control is an important element of the Best Practices project. It will be important, therefore, to have outside experts at our service who could go out into the field to look at those sites that have been proposed as examples of Best Practices. Before we can pass on these exemplars for use by the Lead Communities, we must be able to stand by what we call "best."

6. Write up the reasons

Here this project begins to overlap with other research concerns mentioned in the report of the Commission. The evaluation that has begun in the step above now must move on to another stage. We have to go beyond mere lists for the inventory so that we can try to determine what it is that defines the "goodness" of the good that has been identified. Otherwise the general applicability of the inventory will never be realized. We will certainly get some of this from the location finders. They will need to tell us the reasons for their choices. The outside evaluators will also need to write up the projects that they visit. In this way we can begin to develop a rich source of information about the success stories of Jewish education and how they might (or might not) be translated into other situations.

7. Translate to Action for the particular Lead Communities

What in each Best Practice case can be translated to the Lead Community and what cannot? This is a complicated question and requires the job described in #6 above, at least for those cases in which the Lead Community is planning to implement action.

It then requires a careful monitoring of what is going on when the attempt to translate particular Best Practices actually is launched. This monitoring is the intersection of the Best Practices project with the research and assessment that will be conducted in each Lead Community. How the two matters are divided-- Best Practices Research and Lead Communities Assessment-- is a matter that needs further clarification as the work proceeds.

But another issue that forms the background to all of this work is an important additional research project that probably should be undertaken by the Best Practices project (in consultation with the researchers working on the Lead Communities). That is an investigation of the current knowledge and state of the art opinion from general education on the question of implementing change and innovation into settings. A second and related issue is the question of research on implementing change into sites which are larger than school settings since this seems to be applicable to the ambitious goals of the Lead Communities project.

IV. Timetable

What of these seven steps can and should be done when? Probably the best way to attack this problem is through successive "iterations," beginning with a first cut at finding examples of best practice through using the network of Jewish educators whom we know, then putting out a call for submissions to the inventory, and getting preliminary reports from the "location finders." A second stage would evaluate these first choices and begin the writing up of reasons that can lead to action in the Lead Communities. During the process we would, no doubt, receive other suggestions for inclusion on the list and the final inventory of Best Practices would get more and more refined as the exploration continued. On successive investigations we can refine the information, gather new examples of practice and send out researchers to evaluate the correctness of the choices. The important point is that the Best Practices project can be launched without waiting for closure on all the issues. Thus we will be able to offer advice and guidance to the Lead Communities in a shorter amount of time.

V. Lead Communities: Beyond Best Practices

In the view of A Time to Act the "Lead Communities would be encouraged to select elements from the inventory" (p. 69) of Best Practices as they developed their educational plan. It is with this goal in mind, that we wish to initiate the Best Practices project. But it is important to add a caveat as well: Innovation in Jewish education cannot be limited only to implementing those programs that currently work into a new setting called the Lead Community. If Jewish education is to grow it must also be free to imagine new possibilities, to reconceptualize as well as to replicate. One practical approach to this matter would be an investigation of innovative ideas that have been written about, but have never been tried out in Jewish education. A search of literature for such ideas should also be undertaken either under the rubric of the Best Practices Project or through any research project put into operation by the CIJE.

"Best Practices" should be only one dimension of Lead Communities. The crisis in Jewish education calls for new thinking: Bold, creative, even daring "new practices" must also play a role in our thinking as the Lead Communities search for ways to affect Jewish continuity through Jewish education. Under the banner of the Best Practices Project we should create the Department of Innovative Thinking for Jewish education. This would be the arena in which new ideas or adaptations of ideas from other contexts could be formulated and eventually funded for Jewish education. This could be done through conferences, commissioned think pieces or through the investigation mentioned above of ideas that have written about, but never tried out. The Best Practices project gives us a chance, in other words, to dream about possibilities as yet untried and to test out these dreams in the living laboratories established by the Lead Communities.

A Time To Act

עת לעשות

AMERICAN JEWISH
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The Report of the
Commission on Jewish Education
in North America

November 1990

Heshvan 5751

Convened by the Mandel Associated
Foundations, JCC Association, and JESNA
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Jewish community of North America is facing a crisis of major proportions. Large numbers of Jews have lost interest in Jewish values, ideals, and behavior, and there are many who no longer believe that Judaism has a role to play in their search for personal fulfillment and communality. This has grave implications, not only for the richness of Jewish life, but for the very continuity of a large segment of the Jewish people. Over the last several decades, intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews has risen dramatically, and a major proportion of children of such marriages no longer identify themselves as Jews.

It is clear that there is a core of deeply committed Jews whose very way of life ensures meaningful Jewish continuity from generation to generation. However, there is a much larger segment of the Jewish population which is finding it increasingly difficult to define its future in terms of Jewish values and behavior. The responsibility for developing Jewish identity and instilling a commitment to Judaism for this population now rests primarily with education.

The Jews of North America have built an extensive and diverse system of education that takes place in many formal and informal settings. Outstanding educators who are excellent teachers and role models for young people and adults can be found throughout North America in classrooms and community centers, on educational trips to Israel, and in summer camps. However, the system of Jewish education is plagued by many problems, and because of its inadequacies it is failing to engage the

minds of a critical segment of the Jewish population who have no other way of experiencing the beauty and richness of Jewish life.

Careful study of the current state of Jewish education reveals that much of the system, in its various forms and settings, is beset by these problems — sporadic participation; deficiencies in educational content; an underdeveloped profession of Jewish education; inadequate community support; the absence of a research function to monitor results, allocate resources, and plan improvements.

Recent developments throughout the continent indicate that a climate exists today for bringing about major improvements. However, a massive program will have to be undertaken in order to revitalize Jewish education so that it is capable of performing a pivotal role in the meaningful continuity of the Jewish people. It was to achieve this goal that the Commission on Jewish Education in North America was established.

After analyzing the problems, the Commission decided to focus its effort on the two building blocks upon which the entire system rests — developing the profession of Jewish education and mobilizing community support to meet the needs and goals of Jewish education. In order to secure these essential building blocks, a blueprint for the future consisting of a series of concrete steps was worked out by the Commission. The plan includes both short- and long-range elements, and implementation can begin immediately with initial funding already provided.

The core of the Commission's plan is to infuse Jewish education with a new vitality by recruiting large numbers of

talented and dedicated educators. These educators need to work in a congenial environment, sustained by a Jewish community that recognizes Jewish education as the most effective means for perpetuating Jewish identity and creating a commitment to Jewish values and behavior.

The plan developed by the Commission includes the following elements:

1. *Building a profession of Jewish education* – By creating a North American infrastructure for recruiting and training increasing numbers of qualified personnel; expanding the faculties and facilities of training institutions; intensifying on-the-job training programs; raising salaries and benefits of educational personnel; developing new career track opportunities; and increasing the empowerment of educators.
2. *Mobilizing community support* – By recruiting top community leaders to the cause of Jewish education; raising Jewish education to the top of the communal agenda; creating a positive environment for effective Jewish education; and providing substantially increased funding from federations, private foundations, and other sources.
3. *Establishing three to five Lead Communities* – To function as local laboratories for Jewish education; to determine the educational practices and policies that work best; to redesign and improve Jewish education through a wide array of intensive programs; to demonstrate what can happen when there is an infusion of outstanding personnel into the educational system, with a high level of community support and with the necessary funding.

4. *Developing a research capability* – By drawing up a comprehensive research agenda for Jewish education; creating the theoretical and practical knowledge base needed to monitor results and make informed decisions; conducting ongoing studies on the state of Jewish education in general, and on the progress of each component of the Commission's plan.

5. *Creating the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education* – A new entity that will operate as a catalytic agent, working mainly through the efforts of others to ensure the implementation of the Commission's plan; helping to secure necessary funding; overseeing the establishment of Lead Communities; coordinating research activities; providing a setting in which creative people, institutions, organizations, and foundations can work together to develop new undertakings in Jewish education; and helping to replicate the successful experiences in Lead Communities throughout North America.

The Commission is confident that its blueprint is realistic and feasible, and will indeed provide the foundation for a new era in Jewish education. An enormous investment of resources and energies will be required to bring this about, but the Commission is convinced that the will is there and the time to act is now.

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Prior to her appointment in 1984 as Associate Professor of Education, she was the Coordinator of the HUC Skirball Museum Education Program.

Dr. Aron has been the recipient of research grants for policy studies related to the teacher shortage in supplementary schools. She was invited by the Commission on Jewish Education in North American to write one of the Commission's papers "Towards the Professionalization of Jewish Teaching." Dr. Aron's work related to Jewish teachers has been presented at research conferences. It has been published in prominent education journals - Educational Theory, School Review, Religious Education, Philosophy of Education; in Jewish publications - Journal of Jewish Communal Service, Journal of Reform Judaism, The Melton Journal, Pedagogic Reporter, Response and Sh'ma and in To Build A Profession: Careers in Jewish Education and in Studies in Jewish Education.

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DR. BARRY W. HOLTZ

Dr. Barry W. Holtz is Co-director of the Melton Research Center for Jewish Education at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York and Associate Professor in the Department of Jewish Education.

At the Melton Center Dr. Holtz has been the educational editor of the Melton Graded Curriculum Series, supervising the writing, testing, implementation and revision of the curriculum for supplementary schools. He is an editor of The Melton Journal, widely-considered one of the outstanding publications in the field of Jewish education.

Dr. Holtz, a native of Boston and graduate of Tufts University received his PhD from Brandeis University in 1973. He has been a visiting professor at the Hebrew University and, for close to a decade, a regular lecturer at the 92nd Street Y in New York. He regularly presents at national educational conferences and is featured regularly nationwide at adult education programs in synagogues and communal settings.

He is the co-author with Arthur Green of Your Word is Fire: The Hasidic Masters on Contemplative Prayer (Shoken Books) and the editor of Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts (Summit Books/Simon and Schuster), a guide to reading, understanding and appreciating the great Jewish books. This book, a Book-of-the-Month Club selection, is used as a textbook for university and adult education courses.

Dr. Holtz's most recent work, Finding Our Way: Jewish Texts and the Lives We Lead Today (Shoken Books) was published in 1990. In addition, he is the editor of The Shoken Guide to Jewish Books, a reader's guide to Jewish history, literature, culture and religion scheduled for publication in the Spring of 1992.

Dr. James Coleman, Distinguished Service Professor of Sociology and Education at the University of Chicago, is the leading world authority on research methodology in sociology and education. A world-renowned consultant on education in the United States and Israel, Dr. Coleman served as the director of the largest research study ever undertaken on desegregation in education. He is the President-elect of the American Sociological Association.

Dr. Michael Inbar, Past Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem is Professor of Sociology at the University. The distinguished social scientist served as a consultant to the Commission on Jewish Education in North America and is now a consultant to the Mandel Institute in Jerusalem.

Dr. Jacob Ukeles, President of Ukeles Association Inc., a planning and management consulting firm, has been involved in ten projects in Jewish education including several strategic planning projects for institutions of Jewish higher education. Dr. Ukeles was the Executive Director for Community Services of the New York Federation of Jewish Philanthropies from 1981 to 1985.

Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education

Board of Directors

August 29, 1991
10:00 AM - 3:30 PM

AGENDA

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|--|---------------------|
| I. Welcome and Progress Report | Morton L. Mandel |
| II. Lead Communities Project | Shulamith R. Elster |
| A. The Israel Experience | Charles R. Bronfman |
| B. The Best Practices Project | Barry W. Holtz |
| C. Monitoring, Evaluation & Feedback | Annette Hochstein |
| III. Building the Profession | |
| A. The Mandel Associated Foundations
Program to Expand Training Capability | Henry L. Zucker |
| B. The Wexner Foundation Professional
Professional Recruitment and Training | Maurice Corson |
| IV. Research Capability Update | Annette Hochstein |
| V. Council Update | |
| A. Director Search | Morton L. Mandel |
| B. Financial Report | Stephen H. Hoffman |
| VI. Concluding Comments | Bennett Y. Yanowitz |