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Board of Directors and Annual Meeting. 25 February 1993.
Annual Meeting minutes, February 1993.

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ANNUAL MEETING
COUNCIL FOR INITIATIVES IN JEWISH EDUCATION
FEBRUARY 25, 1993
12:00 NOON - 2:00 P.M.
UJA/FEDERATION OF JEWISH PHILANTHROPIES
NEW YORK CITY

Attendance

Board Members: David Arnow, Daniel Bader, Mandell Berman, Charles Bronfman, Gerald Cohen, John Colman, Susan Crown, Neil Greenbaum, Mark Lainer, Norman Lamm, Seymour Martin Lipset, Morton Mandel, Matthew Maryles, Melvin Merians, Charles Ratner, Esther Leah Ritz, Richard Scheuer, Ismar Schorsch, Isadore Twersky

Guests: Joel Beritz, Howard Charish, Rachel Cowan, Jason Cury, Wilbur Daniels, Dina Epstein, Eli Evans, Joshua Fishman, Peter Geffen, Judith Ginsberg, David Gordis, Carol Ingall, Israel Katz, Lydia Kukoff, Haskel Lookstein, Kerry Olitzky, Joseph Reimer, Carmi Schwartz, Daniel Shapiro, Miriam Shapiro, Herman Stein, Abe Tannenbaum, Don Well

Policy Advisors
Consultants
and staff: Robert Abramson, David Dubin, Shulamith Elster, Sylvia Ettenberg, Seymour Fox, Ellen Goldring, Roberta Goodman, Irving Greenberg, Robert Hirt, Annette Hochstein, Stephen Hoffman, Barry Holtz, Virginia Levi, James Meier, Arthur Naparstek, Arthur Rotman, Alvin Schiff, Barry Shrage, Eliot Spack, Jacob Ukeles, Jonathan Woocher, Shmuel Wygoda, Henry Zucker

I. Opening Remarks

Chairman Morton Mandel opened the meeting by noting his pleasure at the large number and diverse interests of those attending the meeting. He thanked those present for their attendance and encouraged their active participation in the meeting.

Mr. Mandel noted that the past year has been spent by CIJE in refining its approach to its work. A growing number of individuals and institutions have been identified who are working closely with CIJE.

Since the last annual meeting, 57 communities in North America were invited to apply to become Lead Communities; 23 submitted applications while several others noted their strong interest but lack of readiness to participate; 9 finalists were selected for a more thorough application process and, ultimately, 3 communities were selected. The three Lead Communities are Atlanta, Baltimore and Milwaukee.

II. The Launch of Lead Communities

- A. The chair introduced Stephen H. Hoffman, Executive Vice President of the Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland, to report on the work that has been undertaken in the three Lead Communities. Mr. Hoffman served as the acting director of CIJE when it was first established in early 1991 and is now lending his expertise in an advisory role to the launching process.

Mr. Hoffman noted that the Lead Communities concept is an opportunity to learn what can happen if CIJE nationally and the communities locally invest their best resources--financial and personnel, lay and professional--over a period of years. This would yield an exciting Jewish educational lab of what could be, linking together national foundations, agencies, and training institutions with local commitment.

The current challenge is to work out with each community an understanding of the CIJE agenda--personnel, lay development, advocacy, research, and the Israel experience--and apply this appropriately to local needs. This is to be a joint planning process between the Lead Communities and CIJE, bringing a national perspective to the unique circumstances of each Lead Community.

In recent months CIJE has made multiple visits to each of the three communities. Each community is at a different stage of planning. In order to proceed with planning systematically, a Planning Guide has been drafted for each Lead Community to use in its planning process.

A monitoring, evaluation and feedback project, funded by the Blaustein Foundations of Baltimore, has been put into place in each community. This reflects the CIJE commitment to fundamental research. It provides feedback to the communities on what is working and what should be corrected as the process proceeds. This project has been guided by Professor James Coleman of the University of Chicago and developed in detail by Professor Adam Gamoran of the University of Wisconsin. It is currently being directed by Dr. Ellen Goldring of Vanderbilt University.

The monitoring project is establishing baseline data and evaluating the community mobilization process. In addition, the project will help to monitor the implementation of the Best Practices project. Once a baseline of the current community vision has been established, CIJE will bring in the national training institutions and other resources to help inform the process.

At the same time, the project is monitoring changes in the area of personnel by first establishing the current level of staffing in each community. This is being accomplished through an educators survey to identify the current personnel in place, their levels of achievement,

and gaps in the availability of personnel to meet community needs. The monitoring teams are also studying the quality of life of Jewish educators through a series of interviews. The anticipated outcome will be an overall personnel plan, including how to fill the gaps by identifying new personnel or better training those currently in the community.

As these efforts move ahead in the next six months of work with the Lead Communities, CIJE will be working with the communities to develop one or more pilot projects. These quality interventions will depend on the specific needs of the communities and might include one or more of the following:

1. A seminar for principals of local supplementary schools based on work in best practices in the supplementary schools.
2. A seminar for key lay leaders on bringing about change in Jewish education.
3. A project for day school leadership in the area of management training.
4. A seminar with local rabbis on their central role in upgrading supplementary schools.

In summary, in the next six months or so, CIJE will work with the communities to help set goals, priorities, strategic plans, and a self-study.

B. Approach to Lead Communities by the Jewish Theological Seminary of America

Dr. Ismar Schorsch was called upon to present the perspective of the Jewish Theological Seminary. He felt that the CJF population survey seemed to show that the synagogue is the most important vehicle for long-term Jewish continuity. In his view, the synagogue provides the vision necessary to Jewish continuity. With the growing recognition in the federation field of the centrality of the synagogue in transmitting Jewish identity comes the challenge of bringing the cultures of the communal and synagogue worlds together.

Dr. Schorsch noted that there is a core of active synagogues within the Conservative movement, but that those synagogues must rely on effective Jewish education to continue to provide a cadre of knowledgeable, committed Jews to carry forth the tradition. The two pillars supporting the Jewish community are the synagogue and effective Jewish schools. He noted that at the Jewish Theological Seminary the centrality of Jewish education is recognized and supported.

The leadership of the Conservative movement recently met to articulate a common vision for Jewish education. Representatives of the Rabbinic Assembly, United Synagogue, and the Jewish Theological Seminary considered the movement's strengths and challenges in the area of Jewish education and established a set of goals intended to meet the needs of individual communities. Included among the goals are the following:

1. Invest in personnel by doubling the number of Jewish professionals who graduate from the seminary each year, from 125 to 250.
2. Contribute curricula for use in the local communities. A comprehensive curriculum has been developed for use in the supplementary schools but remains to be prepared for the day schools.
3. Run summer institutes for teachers in Schechter day schools.
4. Send a team of educators to local communities to hold retreats aimed at the specific needs of personnel in those communities.
5. Refine and increase the consultation and facilitation functions currently offered by Seminary personnel.
6. Broaden the range of educators and educational programs to focus on programs of lifelong study.

Dr. Schorsch concluded his very encouraging remarks by noting his belief in the importance of investing in high quality, intensive educational experiences.

C. Discussion

In a discussion that followed, the following points were made:

1. We should consider the importance of experiential education gained through camping, youth groups, and Israel programs as we work on enhancing the educational process.
2. One of the challenges in the launching of the Lead Communities project has been the need to establish a clean set of shared expectations between CIJE and each community. Another challenge has been to communicate clearly the role of CIJE and other continental organizations as partners in planning for Jewish education within each Lead Community.
3. The institution of a monitoring and evaluation process at the start of the project was applauded by several speakers. It was suggested that learning what does not work will be just as critical as learning what does have the desired effect.

4. It was noted that efforts similar to those of the Jewish Theological Seminary are being undertaken by the other movements and by informal Jewish educators' groups.
5. CIJE was encouraged to continue its efforts at inclusiveness of the range of religious beliefs as well as various perspectives.

III. Covenant Foundation Initiatives

The chair referred to an emerging tradition whereby the CIJE annual meetings would include a report on important initiatives of private foundations in the area of Jewish education. At this meeting, an initiative of the Crown family of Chicago was described by Judith Ginsberg, Director of the Covenant Foundation.

The Covenant Foundation was established in 1990 by the Crown family to benefit Jewish children and their families. It is committed to impacting on Jewish education in North America through three programs. The Foundation provides annual awards to serious Jewish educators identified as pioneers in the field, it makes up to ten grants each year to support innovative programs in Jewish education, and it offers seminars to broaden the awareness of these innovative approaches. The Foundation works closely with JESNA, providing a model of linking private philanthropy to a national agency.

In her well received presentation, Ms. Ginsberg provided examples of new, innovative programs that have received grants or Covenant awards.

IV. Best Practices: The Good Supplementary School

- A. The chair noted that the work of the Covenant Foundation was an excellent lead-in to the concept of best practices, as it rewards innovations in Jewish education. He introduced Dr. Barry Holtz of the Jewish Theological Seminary who has been working with CIJE on a part-time basis and will take a two-year leave from the Seminary, effective June 1993, to participate full-time in the work of CIJE.

Dr. Holtz reminded the group that the Commission on Jewish Education in North America recommended the development of an inventory of best practices to help identify examples of excellence in Jewish education. It was the intent of the Commission to take successes from one location and see if they could be translated to another.

The Best Practices project began by identifying eight areas of Jewish education for careful study. Work is now completed on the supplementary school, and nearly finished in the area of early childhood education. The next round will focus on the day school, the Jewish community center, and college age youth. The purpose was to engage in a research project to identify examples of excellence in each area.

The first step was to develop a consensus of what constitutes success in a particular area and then to send experts out into the field to identify and report on successful approaches. The supplementary school project, the first to be undertaken, was seen as a first cut at studying successes. The list of successes can and will be expanded both for breadth and depth in the future.

The decision to look first at the supplementary school reflected a sense of particular concern about this area and the knowledge that the majority of children are educated in supplementary schools. Dr. Holtz gathered a group of 10-12 experts to develop a checklist of characteristics of a successful program. This group then identified programs with the stated characteristics and wrote short reports on the schools and why they appeared to be succeeding. Dr. Holtz has gathered these reports together, changed the identity of the schools for anonymity, and prepared concluding remarks on the practical implications for the Lead Communities. The result is a written document on best practices in supplementary schools.

Work is under way to develop comparable reports in the other areas. The purpose of the project is not just to produce reports, but to produce change. The next step is to develop a curriculum for change by engaging the local communities in dialogue, analyzing what is happening in these best practice examples, and determining what can and cannot be applied to a particular community.

Dr. Holtz concluded by reminding the group that there is also a plan to work on "new" practices. He noted that the Covenant Foundation is helping to create a list of future best practices by supporting new practices in the field of Jewish education.

B. Discussion

Dr. Holtz was asked why the programs reported on had been made anonymous. He noted that as yet most of the individual programs are not prepared for a large influx of inquiries. At the appropriate time, the Lead Communities and others will be put in direct contact with specific programs.

It was noted that CIJE may wish to look for institutional models of excellence where perhaps an entire congregation is the locus.

V. Concluding Remarks

The chair thanked people for attending the meeting and for participating so fully.