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Board of Directors subcommittee. Content and Program,  
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As of 12-31-94

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Gail Dorph, Staff

Steve Chervin

Max Fisher

Joshua Fishman

Charles Goodman

Alfred Gottschalk

Robert Hirt

Gershon Kekst

Norman Lamm

Norman Lipoff

Morton Mandel

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### Content & Program Committee

John Colman, Chair

Barry Holtz, Staff

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Mandell Berman

Chaim Botwinick

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William Schatten

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Isadore Twersky

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Arthur Rotman

Jonathan Woocher

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Bennett Yanowitz

COUNCIL FOR INITIATIVES IN JEWISH EDUCATION

Content and Program Committee

<u>Name</u>	<u>Attending 4/21 Meeting?</u>
John Colman, Chair	Yes
Daniel Bader	No
Mandell Berman	Yes
Maurice Corson	Yes
Thomas (Tim) Hausdorff	No
Barry Holtz, Staff*	Yes
Henry Koschitzky	No
Florence Melton	No
Daniel Pekarsky, Staff*	Yes
William Schatten*	No
Richard Scheuer	Yes
David Teutsch	Yes
Isadore Twersky	Uncertain
Ilene Vogelstein*	Yes
Jonathan Woocher*	Yes

[Expect 10 people, including Twersky]

\*Not a Board member



## Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education

Minutes: CIJE Board Committee on Content and Program

Date of Meeting: April 21, 1994

Date Minutes Issued: June 9, 1994

Present: John Colman (Chair), Maurice Corson, Richard Scheur, David Teutsch, Ilene Vogelstein, Jonathan Woocher

Guest: Carl Sheingold

Consultants and staff: Barry Holtz, Daniel Pekarsky,

Copy to: Daniel Bader, Mandell Berman, Thomas Hausdorff, Henry Koschitzky, Florence Melton, William Schatten, Isadore Twersky

1. After introduction of the participants, the committee reviewed the Memorandum outlining the committee's definition, purposes and possible activities. The two main areas of current concern for this committee are the Best Practices Project and the Goals Project.
2. The Best Practices Project consists of two elements: a) documentation of exemplary programs in Jewish education in a variety of venues; b) implementation of these findings--using what the project has discovered to affect practice in the field. Dr. Barry Holtz gave an update on the work of the Best Practices Project and its current status.
3. Members of the committee agreed that documentation was an important activity of the project. It was suggested that CIJE focus on the implementation side of program as well. The goal, the committee agreed, is to "help institutions become better."
4. The question of "replication" was discussed at length. It was pointed out that currently this is an issue of great concern within the foundation world. CIJE may be able to make a significant contribution to the discussion of replication of success through its efforts to introduce best practices into local communities.
5. It was suggested that an area of best practice worth exploring would be "best practice in the replication of good ideas." Dr. Holtz told the committee that he had prepared an article on first thoughts about this question and will distribute it to the committee upon publication.

6. Members of the committee pointed out that giving hope was an important aspect of the Best Practices Project. To that end it will be desirable to tell the story of best practices-- to show the process of how educational institutions moved toward success. Other areas of fruitful study mentioned were exploring the inner lives of children affected by being in best practice programs and examining lives of the the best practitioners in more detail. The latter idea has been mentioned by Dr. Holtz in the published volumes on best practices.

7. The aim of implementation of the Best Practices Project is to "push institutions to start thinking about themselves" in the light of best practice examples currently operating in the field. It was suggested, for example, that CIJE should launch a project in which three or four schools would try to implement best practices that have been workable elsewhere and then share the process of implementation and outcomes, including events of failure.

8. The other major focus of the committee is the Goals Project. The committee deferred discussion of this project awaiting consideration of the presentation by Dr. Pekarsky at the Board meeting immediately following.

9. It was decided that the next meeting of committee, would center on the "Goals Project Summer Seminar" which will take place in Israel in July, 1994.

**Enclosures:**

- a) Article on the Best Practices Project recently published in Compass Magazine.
- b) Description of the Goals Project, in particular the Summer Seminar.



# BEST PRACTICES IN JEWISH EDUCATION

by Barry W. Holtz

Those of us in the field of Jewish education are often overwhelmed by tales of failure. Jewish education is blamed for many of the woes of contemporary Jewish life, in particular the intermarriage rates as reported in the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey. Of course, we all know that Jewish education has had its failures. Sometimes these failures have been due to the lack of support, both financial and moral, that education has received from the organized Jewish community. Sometimes, truth be told, these failures have been due to our own errors or lack of vision.

And yet, we also know that "failure" is not the only story. We all have seen Jewish education that works, both for children and adults. Perhaps it is time to document the good news about Jewish education and find ways to learn from the tales of success. That underlying concept—to record the examples of success in Jewish education and to learn from those examples—is the basic thrust of the Best Practices Project of the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education (CIJE), which has been at work since 1991.

The CIJE is the small implementation organization created by the Commission on Jewish Education in North America.

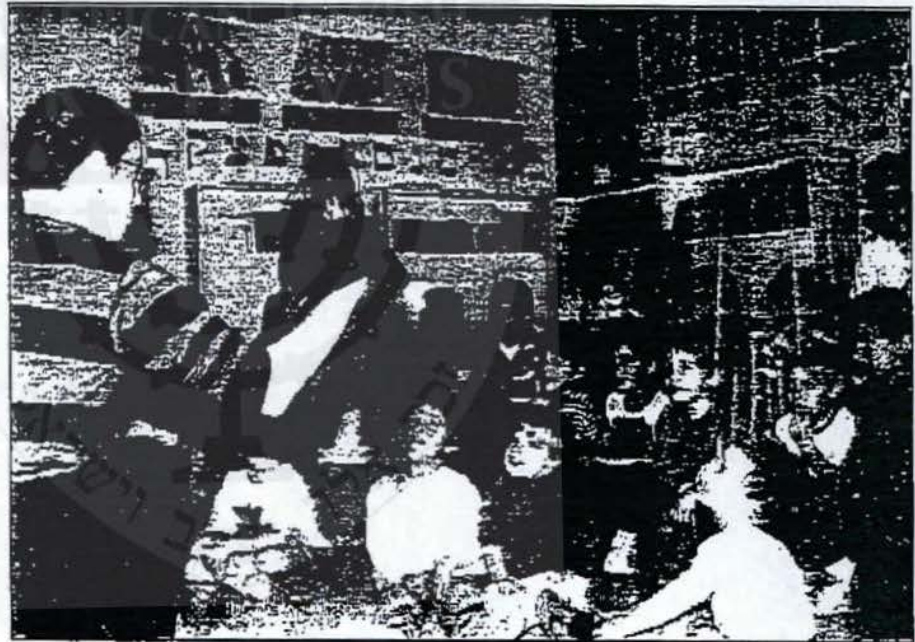
*Barry W. Holtz is the project officer and director of the Best Practices Project of the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education (CIJE). He is currently on leave from his position as associate professor of Jewish Education at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America and is codirector of the seminary's Melton Research Center.*

The Commission met from 1988 to 1990, chaired by the noted philanthropist and communal leader Morton L. Mandel of Cleveland. It included some of the leading religious and philanthropic figures in the continental Jewish community. Among the recommendations of its report *A Time to Act* was a call for the creation of "an inventory of best educational practices in North America."<sup>1</sup>

The primary purpose of this inventory is to aid the CIJE in its

What do we mean by "best practice"? One recent book about this concept in general education states that it is a phrase borrowed "from the professions of medicine and law, where 'good practice' or 'best practice' are everyday phrases used to describe solid, reputable, state-of-the-art work in a field."<sup>2</sup>

It is important, however, to be cautious about what we mean by the word "best" in the phrase "best practice." The contemporary literature in general educa-



work as a "catalyst for change" for North American Jewish education. It will do this in two ways: (1) by helping create a larger "knowledge base" for Jewish education by documenting outstanding educational work that is currently taking place and (2) by offering a guide to Jewish educational success that can be adapted for use in local communities.

tion points out that seeking perfection when we examine educational endeavors will offer us little assistance as we try to improve actual work in the field. In an enterprise as complex and multifaceted as education, these writers argue, we should be looking to discover "good" not ideal practice.

"Good" educational practice is what we seek to identify for





Jewish education, that is, models of excellence. Essentially we are looking to document the "success stories" of contemporary Jewish education.

We should be clear, however, that effective practical use of the Best Practices Project is a complex matter. Observing a "best practice" in one community does not guarantee that other communities will be able to succeed in implementing it in their localities. Successful curriculum or early childhood programming in Denver or Cleveland is dependent upon a whole collection of factors that may not be in place when we try to introduce those ideas in other places. The issue of translation from the "best practice" site to another community is one that will require considerable imagination.

Of course "best practice" does not exist in the abstract. There is only "best practice" of "X" particularity: the supplementary school, JCC, curriculum for teaching Israel, etc. The first problem that the Best Practices Project encountered was the defining of areas for the inventory's particular categories. We could have addressed the problem in a number of different ways. We could, for example, have looked at some of the sites in which Jewish education takes place, we could have focused on some of the subject areas that are taught in such sites, or we could have looked at the specific populations served. There were numerous other possibilities as well.

Our answer to the question of cutting into the problem of best practices was to focus on the venues in which we find Jewish

education conducted. Eight different areas were identified: supplementary schools, early childhood programs, JCCs and Ys, day schools, the Israel experience, college campus programming, camping/youth programs, and adult education.

Obviously there are other areas that could have been included and there were other ways that the project could have been organized. We chose, for example, to include family education within the relevant areas above—that is, family education programs connected to synagogue schools, day schools, JCCs, etc.—rather than identify it as a separate area.

We later chose to add a ninth area called community-wide initiatives. These were programs, usually based in a BJE or Federation, that were intended to have a large-scale communal impact on Jewish education, such as a plan to relate teacher's salaries to in-service education credits.

The first area that the Best Practices Project chose to explore was the supplementary school. The "Version 1" volume was published by the CIJE in February 1993. While the research for that volume was in progress, we launched the second area, early childhood Jewish education. The method that we followed was very similar in both cases. A group of experts gathered to discuss the issue of "best practice" in each particular area. Based on that meeting and other consultations, we developed a *Guide to Best Practices*.

The guides prepared for the volumes on supplementary schools and early childhood Jewish education represented the wisdom of experts concerning success in each arena. We did not expect to find schools or programs that scored high in every measure, but the guides were to be used as an outline or





a checklist for writing reports.

A team of report writers was assembled and was given the following assignment: Using the *Guide to Best Practices*, locate good settings or successful individual programs. The researchers were asked to write short descriptive reports for inclusion in the volumes.

We believed that working in this fashion would give us reliable results in a reasonable amount of time. We also knew from the outset that the Best Practices Project was created to fulfill a pressing need for assistance that both the practitioners of Jewish education and the leaders of North American Jewry agree must be met. We did not have the luxury of creating a research project that would have to wait many years before its results could be made available.

The model that we have employed relies on the informed opinion of expert observers. The reports written by our researchers were based on a relatively short amount of time spent in particular schools or observing individual programs. To facilitate the process, we tried to use researchers who began the process with a "running start," that is, they had some familiarity with their sites

and could use that prior knowledge to move the process along quickly.

#### BEYOND "VERSION 1": THE NEXT STEPS FOR "BEST PRACTICE" RESEARCH

It is important to remember that the CIJE has always viewed the Best Practices Project as an enterprise with important long-range implications. The first two volumes have been consciously labeled "Version 1." We believe that these reports can give serious assistance to local communities that are seeking to improve the quality of Jewish education in North America, but we also know that more work can and should be done. We view the reports included in these volumes as the first "iteration," in the language of social science researchers—the first step in a process that needs to evolve over time.

We envision developing the research in two ways. First, the research can be broadened. We have only included a handful of examples in each report. The simple fact is we have no idea how many successful supplementary schools or early childhood Jewish education programs are currently operating in North America. We have

certainly heard our share of bad news about Jewish education over the past twenty-five years, but we have heard very little about the success stories. The "first editions" of our reports have included only a tiny sample. "Version 2" of these reports should include more examples.

A second way of expanding the research would be to increase the depth of the reports. In reports this short it is impossible to get more than a basic description of a program and a feel for the flavor of an institution. What needs to be added is the detail and elucidation that a longer report would allow. I have elsewhere called this the difference between writing a "report" and writing a "portrait" or study of an institution. As further iterations of the best practices volumes develop, we would like to see more in-depth portraits of educators, schools, and programs.

We hope to develop these and other ideas and plans as the Best Practices Project evolves during its next stages. At the same time new "Version 1" volumes will be published covering the other areas of contemporary Jewish education mentioned earlier in this article. We are currently at work on studies of "best practice" in day schools, Jewish Community Centers, and college campuses. These, too, will be the first stages in an evolving process of research that will be linked with action projects in the field. Thus research can fuel new thinking for the living practice of contemporary Jewish education. ■

#### Notes

1. Commission on Jewish Education in North America, *A Time to Act* (University Press of America, 1991), p. 69.
2. Steven Zemelman, Harvey Daniels, and Arthur Hyde, *Best Practice* (Heinemann, 1993), pp. vii-viii.



## MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the CIJE Board Committee On Content and Program

FROM: John C. Colman, Committee Chair

RE: Committee Meeting of October 6, 1994

DATE: September 26, 1994

As indicated in the recent letter from Mort Mandel, the CIJE Board meeting on October 6th will concentrate on the research findings on *personnel in Jewish education* as conducted by CIJE staff consultants, Professors Adam Gamoran and Ellen Goldring.

Following their presentation, the four committees of the Board will hold separate meetings, as we did last spring. This research report has major implications for Jewish education throughout North America and, therefore, each of the CIJE Board committees will have the opportunity to discuss the significance of these findings for its particular domain.

In our meeting following this main presentation, we will wish to consider what are the implications of these reported findings on the conduct of the *Best Practices Project* and the *Goals Project*. Conversely, what can CIJE draw from these two projects that might assist in the vital work of upgrading the quality and quantity of professionals in Jewish education?

You will note from the brief *Agenda* enclosed that Professor Daniel Pekarsky will start our meeting with a discussion of the Goals Seminar that CIJE conducted this summer in Jerusalem. The Seminar provided an exciting example of the capacity of CIJE to translate high-quality academic work into major forces for change among lay and professional leaders in Jewish education.

In our discussion we will want to consider a number of issues that are related to the presentation on personnel. These questions might include:

In what ways does the initiative on Goals require appropriate personnel for implementation?

How can such leaders be found or developed?

How can a model for training "coaches" for Goals initiatives be created?

How can the Best Practices Project serve as a resource for personnel development?

In what ways is any "best practice" institution dependant on personnel and how can we deal with that issue?

In the materials enclosed with this mailing, please note in particular for the meeting of our committee a report from Professor Pekarsky on the Goals Project and two articles by Professor Barry Holtz related to the Best Practices Project. We invite you to come armed with questions for each of them on the progress of these important segments of CIJE's work.

We believe that this will be a stimulating day and I look forward to seeing you at the meeting. Warmest wishes for a Happy New Year.

# **COUNCIL FOR INITIATIVES IN JEWISH EDUCATION**

## **Board Committee On Content and Program**

**October 6, 1994**

### **AGENDA**

#### **I. Introduction**

**John Colman**

#### **II. The Goals Project:**

**Daniel Pekarsky**

A. The Goals Seminar in Israel

B. Implications for Personnel

#### **III. The Best Practices Project:**

**Barry Holtz**

A. Status Report

B. Implications for Personnel

#### **IV. Next Meeting**

**John Colman**

A. Date: Next CIJE Board is scheduled for April 27, 1994

B. Scope





# COUNCIL FOR INITIATIVES IN JEWISH EDUCATION

## Content and Program Committee

<u>Name</u>	<u>Attending 10/6 Meeting?</u>
John Colman, Chair	Yes
Daniel Bader	Yes
Mandell Berman	Yes
X Chaim Botwinick*	Yes
Maurice Corson	Yes
X Alan Finkelstein*	Yes
Thomas (Tim) Hausdorff	Yes (and Jim Joseph)
Barry Holtz, Staff*	Yes
Henry Koschitzky	No
Florence Melton	Yes
Daniel Pekarsky, Staff*	Yes
X David Sarnat*	Yes
X William Schatten*	Yes
Richard Scheuer	No
David Teutsch	Yes
<del>Isadore Twersky</del>	Yes
X Ilene Vogelstein*	?
<del>Jonathan Woocher*</del>	Yes
[Expect 16-18 people]	

\*Not a Board member



Content  
Program  
Weiler

**TO: Committee on Content and Program**  
**FROM: John C. Colman**  
**DATE: October 17, 1994**

Enclosed are the minutes of our committee's recent meeting. I believe that our discussion was both stimulating and helpful for CIJE's work and I look forward to meeting with you again at the next Board meeting on April 27, 1995. As I mentioned at the committee meeting, in the coming months, the staff will be sending you materials updating the work of CIJE in the areas that our committee has on its agenda. I encourage you to keep in touch, with me or with the staff, if you have any comments or suggestions that can further our work.

Warmest wishes.





*Jimmy Levi*

## Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education

Minutes: CIJE Board Committee on Content and Program

Date of Meeting: October 6, 1994

Date Minutes Issued: October 17, 1994

Present: John Colman (Chair), Daniel Bader, Mandell Berman, Chaim Botwinick, Maurice Corson, David Sarnat, William Schatten, Thomas Hausdorff, Jonathan Woocher

Consultants and staff: Barry Holtz, Daniel Pekarsky

Copy to: Allan Finkelstein, Henry Koschitzky, Richard Scheuer, David Teutsch, Isadore Twersky, Ilene Vogelstein

1. After introduction of the participants, the committee heard a report from Dr. Daniel Pekarsky about the CIJE Goals Project. Dr. Pekarsky dealt with three topics: a) a brief overview of the purposes and need for a Goals Project; b) a description of the 5-day Goals seminar held in Israel this past summer; c) a description of the CIJE's plans for the next stages of the Project.
2. Dr. Pekarsky pointed out that goals play an invaluable role in the process of education, facilitating evaluation, decisions about curriculum, hiring decisions, and many other areas. The Goals Seminar in Israel was aimed at introducing participants to the importance of goals for education in general and the necessity of thinking seriously about goals for Jewish education in particular. The Seminar explored why a sense of being "driven by a vision" characterized outstanding educational institutions and looked at the way that successful educational institutions were able to translate the goals written on paper into actual educational practice. The Israel Seminar tried to demonstrate a way of thinking about goals that emanated out of a reflection on serious Jewish content, not only thinking about consensus building in a group.
3. Dr. Pekarsky described some of the discussion at the Seminar, noting for example that the participants were interested in discussing whether communal goals, rather than individual institutional goals, was something that could be attained. Dr. Pekarsky reported on the session at the Seminar led by Professor Michael Rosenak of the Hebrew University in which many of these issues were addressed. It was agreed that CIJE would attempt to make a transcript of Professor Rosenak's talk available to the committee members.



4. Dr. Pekarsky described CIJE's plans to offer local seminars about the issue of goals as the next step in the Project. These seminars would be offered in the three Lead Communities and elsewhere over the next 6-8 months. The purpose of the seminars is to introduce issues of goals to local educators and lay leaders and to encourage institutions (and perhaps communities) to engage in a serious goals initiative. CIJE is prepared to offer the seminars, to help places think through the next stages of a process for goals exploration, and to help prepare leaders or "coaches" for this process.

5. The committee discussed Dr. Pekarsky's report and dealt with a number of issues: How does the CIJE work in this area resemble and differ from the experiences of federations and communities in engaging in "visioning" exercises and strategic planning processes. It was noted that the CIJE enterprise tries to introduce issues of content rather than focussing only on matters of process and consensus. It was suggested that placing the goals seminar in Israel may have been problematic because the situation in Israel is so different from that of North America that even experienced and knowledgeable Israeli scholars may be limited in what they can contribute to the discussion of Diaspora needs and conditions.

6. The committee asked if it was more important for CIJE to deal with issues of **community** vision rather than only individual institutional vision. It was pointed out that the current climate in North America -- given the changes in Israel's security needs and positive signs about the situation of Jews in oppressed lands-- may well be helped by finding ways of unifying communities around shared goals. The committee urged strongly that CIJE pursue the communal goals arena along with its concern for individual institutions.

7. Dr. Barry Holtz described briefly the next stages of the Best Practices Project. Dr. Holtz reminded the committee that the project deals with two areas-- research and implementation. On the research side the project will next explore the area of Jewish education in the JCC world, in a joint effort with the JCCA. Dr. Holtz will work jointly on this area with Dr. Steven M. Cohen. In addition the Day School area will look at specific issues within day school education, beginning with the issue of teaching Hebrew in the day school. Dr. Holtz will also explore the question of portraits of "the good day school" as well.

8. On the implementation side the Best Practices Project plans to introduce best practice learning seminars in the Lead Communities, launching this project with the CIJE Leadership Institute at Harvard University in early November.



9. The next formal meeting of the committee will coincide with the CIJE Board Meeting on April 27 , 1995. In addition, the chair encouraged members of the committee to be in touch with Drs. Holtz and Pekarsky. In turn the staff will be in touch with the committee members to update them on activities of both the Goals Project and the Best Practices Project during the period before the next Board meeting.



## MEMORANDUM

CIJE Board Committee

TO: Committee on Content and Program  
FROM: John C. Colman  
DATE: April 6, 1995  
RE: Committee Meeting, New York, Thursday, April 27, 1995

In the meeting of our committee on the day of the CIJE Board meeting, we wish to concentrate on two issues that were raised the last time we met:

*Are Communal Goals for Jewish Education Possible? and How can CIJE's Best Practices Project best be of use to institutions and communities?*

As you may recall the issue of community goals for Jewish education is a serious and knotty one. In each of our meetings the question of both the possibility and desirability of such goals has been raised. We have asked Professor Pekarsky to introduce the issues and possible directions which appear pertinent from his work to date. After his presentation, we will consider what might be appropriate activities for CIJE in this realm.

Professor Holtz will then summarize the state of CIJE's experience in describing and helping others to replicate Best Practices. Again we will consider what are feasible undertakings for CIJE in this area.

In the materials enclosed with this mailing, please note in particular for the meeting of our committee the report from Professors Holtz and Pekarsky on the Best Practices Project and the Goals Project. We invite you to come armed with questions for each of them on the progress of these important segments of CIJE's work. By all means send us these questions in advance so that we may be prepared to address issues you think important.

We believe that this will be a stimulating day and I look forward to seeing you at the meeting.



# **CIJE**

## **Content and Program**

### **UPDATE**

**From October, 1994 through April, 1995**

#### **Goals Project Update**

##### Background

The Goals Project is designed to help Jewish educating institutions become more effective through careful attention to their guiding goals. The project's assumptions are straight-forward. First, educational effectiveness depends substantially on the extent to which the work of educating institutions is organized around goals that are clear and compelling to the key stake holders. Such goals enhance the motivation of educators; they make possible evaluation and accountability; and they play a critical role in guiding basic decisions concerning such varied matters as personnel, in-service education, and curriculum design.

Second, many Jewish educating institutions suffer from a failure to be meaningfully organized around clear and compelling goals. Third, efforts to improve Jewish education usually deal inadequately with goals. Often, institutions by-pass serious issues relating to goals altogether; and when the stake holders in an educating institution do address the question of goals, the process is usually not one that asks them to examine Jewish sources that might illuminate their deliberations. Nor are systematic efforts typically made to organize and evaluate educational practice in the light of the goals arrived at; too often, and for reasons that need to be seriously addressed, mission-statements just gather dust!

The Goals Project launched its work with communities through a seminar in the summer of 1994 intended for lay and professional educational leaders from a number of communities in the United States. This seminar was designed to educate the participants concerning the important place of goals and vision in Jewish education and to encourage them to engage their local educating institutions back home in a process of becoming more thoughtful concerning their goals and the relationship between these goals and educational practice.

CIJE promised to support such local efforts by means of a series of seminars in the local communities aimed at key stake holders in their educating institutions. It was assumed that the clientele for these seminars would be generated by these communities. It was also assumed that among institutions participating in these seminars, some would decide that the goals-agenda did not meet their needs; that others would use the opportunities provided by these seminars to improve their educational efforts; and that from among the latter group of institutions a few would emerge as candidates for intensive work with CIJE beyond the period of these local seminars. These institutions might become the nucleus of a kind of coalition of institutions



seriously striving to be vision-driven.

#### Recent and current activities

The Jerusalem Seminar has stimulated a variety of goals-related efforts over the last several months. For example, in Cleveland, a seminar organized around the theme of goals and led by Professor Walter Ackerman has become a vehicle for bringing together key lay and professional leaders in the Jewish education from across the community for regular meetings. In addition, Rabbi Robert Toren of the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland has been hard at work with his Drisha Project, which is designed to engage local educating communities (schools and congregations) in a serious self-improvement process in which issues pertaining to goals play a very prominent role. CIJE has been consulting to Rabbi Toren in this process, and he has suggested CIJE-involvement in working with the institutions that participate in this local project.

Also in Cleveland, CIJE has been in conversation with the Agnon School concerning collaborative work around a goals-agenda. In Milwaukee, a four-session seminar on goals began in February for a constituency that includes over 35 people representing 4 Day Schools, the JCC, and two congregations.

Alongside these efforts, CIJE collaborated with lay and professional leaders in Atlanta around the development of an all-day seminar on goals in February for some sixty key stake holders in a new Community High School. There have also been conversations concerning Goals Project involvement with a number of JCC camps and possibly with one or more congregations that seem particularly interesting.

#### Projected activities.

Next fall, the Goals Project is scheduled to begin working with a limited number of select institutions interested in undertaking a systematic effort to develop and organize practice around a set of clear and compelling goals.

One significant new project will be a meeting co-sponsored by CIJE and the JCCA to explore the goals of residential camping programs in the realm of JCCs. 4-6 JCCs will be invited to join in a two-day seminar on the goals of JCC camping. Each JCC will send a team of three people--the JCC director, the camp director and the JCC Jewish educator. Following upon that meeting CIJE and the JCCA hope to begin to develop a major intervention project in selected JCC camps.

We believe that such collaborations will benefit these institutions and will contribute significantly to our own knowledge-base. But our success in such partnerships will depend heavily on our ability to build capacity in two major areas.

First, the success of our work with individual institutions on a goals-agenda will depend on our ability to expand our base of knowledge and know-how. Of special importance is finding ways



to engage the stake holders in these institutions in wrestling with issues of Jewish content in the face of their tendency to rush impatiently towards a consensus based on the beliefs they bring to the table.

Second, since CIJE's core-staff will not itself be able to work with individual institutions around the country in any sustained way, we need to recruit and cultivate a cadre of resource-people or coaches to work with these institutions. Since the pool of people with the requisite background and talent is small, and they are the kind of people whose energies are typically already fully engaged, this is a difficult challenge.

Alongside the various seminars scheduled for the next few months, our work this spring and summer is organized around this "building capacity" agenda. During the coming summer CIJE will be running a 4-day workshop designed to bring on-board potential resource-people for our project and to further our own learning concerning ways of working with institutions on a serious goals-agenda.

In addition to those pointed to above, the issue of community-vision also needs to be addressed. The Program and Content Committee expressed great interest in this topic, as did many participants in the Jerusalem Summer Seminar. How to address it meaningfully without giving short shrift to other facets of our work remains an important challenge. The talk Professor Michael Rosenak's delivered at last summer's seminar, when transcribed and edited, may provide a useful avenue for approaching this matter. CIJE's recent statement concerning community-vision may also provide a useful springboard to discussion.

## **Best Practices Project**

### Background

The Best Practices Project is an effort to document exemplary models of Jewish educational work and to use these examples for improving the quality of Jewish education in the field. The Project has delineated a number of different domains in which to document examples of successful practice. Up to this point two volumes have been published: Best Practice in the Supplementary School and Best Practice in Early Childhood Jewish Education.

### Recent and current activities

At the General Assembly Dr. Gail Dorph and Dr. Barry Holtz presented a workshop session on the findings of the Best Practices Project about supplementary schools. About thirty lay leaders and educators attended the session and had the opportunity to use the best practices volume and its findings as a way of analyzing supplementary schools with which they were familiar. This session was very well received by the participants and offered a kind of model for using the



project as a practical aid toward improving Jewish education in the field for both professionals and lay leaders.

We plan to do similar workshops in other settings during the course of the year-- in the three lead communities where opportunities for this work are being planned and at national meetings. CIJE, for example, in March CIJE conducted a major session of this kind at the Jewish Educators Assembly, the organization of Conservative educators, at their annual convention in March. The CIJE Leadership Institute, conducted last fall at the Harvard Principals Center, helped prepare the way for best practices sessions in local communities by engaging school principals in a process of self-improvement for themselves and their schools. Parallel sessions for lay leaders in these communities would also seem to be appropriate.

The Best Practices Project is currently involved with three initiatives documenting examples of successful educational practice. In the area of **Jewish education in the JCC arena**, CIJE is working in a joint effort with the JCCA. Dr. Barry Holtz is conducting the project in coordination with Dr. Steven M. Cohen who has been engaged by the JCCA for the purposes of the project. The project is using the model that has been successfully employed in the other best practice volumes: a group of experts gathered together with Drs. Holtz and Cohen to delineate criteria for best practice in this domain and to choose six outstanding JCCs and six "stand alone" programs within other JCCs for further research. For this volume it was decided that the individual JCCs will not be written up as separate studies, but rather will serve as examples which will be incorporated into a long analytic essay written by Holtz and Cohen about Jewish education in the JCC. The stand alone programs will be written up by local practitioners describing their own programs.

Holtz and Cohen have now visited five JCCs (one jointly and the rest separately). Another researcher has written up the other site as a research report. The research reports of the entire team will be supplemented by an investigation of published materials (reports, board meeting notes, catalogues, etc.) from each of the selected JCCs along with interviews with knowledgeable informants from the world of JCC education. After Holtz and Cohen write the draft of their report, the original advisory committee will reconvene in May, joined by representatives from the best practice sites for a review of their findings. It is expected that this volume will be published in the late summer, 1995.

Secondly, the work throughout CIJE on the area of in-service education of teachers needs to be served by the Best Practices Project as well. With the publication of the CIJE Policy Brief on the background and training of educators last fall, upgrading the quality of educators in the field has become prime focus of activities in a number of different domains of CIJE. Dr. Holtz and Dr. Gail Dorph will be preparing a volume on best practice in the area of in-service education-- both



in general and Jewish education-- to guide local schools and communities as plan for improving the skills and knowledge of their educators. This volume will look at examples of successful in-service education and seek to learn from those examples specific practical advice for implementing "programs that work."

The third best practice "documenting" initiative is in the area of **day schools**. Following upon meetings with outstanding practitioners in day school education organized by Rabbi Robert Hirt at Yeshiva University and Rabbi Robert Abramson at the United Synagogue, along with consultations with other experts in day school education from the field and from academia, it was decided that the complexity of day school education would require more than one volume on best practices. CIJE will look at selected topics of great interest to day schools and then move on in the future to a volume on "the good day school." The first topic to addressed will be Hebrew language instruction in the day school. Since this is one of the primary motivations for day school education and since it is an issue that cuts across denominational lines, the topic is particularly appropriate as a first approach into the day school arena.

Dr. Holtz has been conducting interviews and discussions with a number of experts in the field of Hebrew language instruction and has drafted a "guide" for researchers in the area of best practice in Hebrew language teaching in the day school. He has now turned to a number of expert informants to help choose the sites that will be written up in the final report. These sites are expected to represent a range of successful schools-- as geographically, educationally and religiously as diverse as is appropriate. It is expected that this volume will be ready in the spring of, 1996.

The fundamental issue facing the Best Practices Project is the way that institutions can learn from places that succeed. The successful model employed at our session during the General Assembly leads us to believe that there is a considerable amount that people can learn from these kinds of "hands-on" sessions. For CIJE, of course, this raises the question of how to allocate time and resources. Given the size of the CIJE staff and wide range of need in the field (in so many different arenas), CIJE could not possibly spend all of its time doing hands-on sessions to help schools and other educational institutions all around the country. The approach that is most on the CIJE agenda at this time is to think about "building capacity" for best practices facilitators/trainers. This approach coordinates well with other domains of "building capacity" on the CIJE plan for this year-- in Goals and in Building the Profession.

There are other approaches that also should be employed: Using publications, we may want to begin to think about short reports along with the longer best practice volumes. These reports will be along the lines of the CIJE "Policy Brief" on Jewish educators that emerged out of the



longer research project directed by Adam Gamoran and Ellen Goldring. A policy brief, for example, on "how to improve your supplementary school" could be developed based on the best practice volume already published by CIJE.

A second kind of publication that clearly seems to be necessary is something that describes the process by which an institution becomes successful. In other words, the current best practices volumes represent a kind of snapshot of a "finished product." But how did the good school become such a good school? What were the steps that the leaders took? Who initiated the process? We have found that practitioners in the field find these questions to be of the most interest.

Finally, we might want to think about other modes of documentation. Video documentation of best practices might be an important route to create a knowledge base for Jewish education and a resource for teacher education and improvement. By looking at "best practitioners" and documenting their work (both in writing and on film), a new kind of training model for all the areas of Jewish education could be developed. What sites might best lend themselves to this approach would have to be explored as the project develops.

The Best Practices Project has another important role as well-- informing community lay leaders about successful educational practice to help them in decision-making for communal policy. Local lay leaders should have the information about Jewish education that can help them influence Federation planning for Jewish education in effective and useful ways. By educating our lay constituents we can begin to fulfill the mandate of CIJE for building community support for Jewish education. Our recent meeting in Atlanta which centered on the issue of creating a local day high school is an excellent example of the kind of work that could be done to inform and work with local lay leadership through best practice and goals workshops.

Barry W. Holtz and Daniel Pekarsky



Minutes: CIJE Board Committee on Content and Program

Date of Meeting: April 27, 1995

Date Minutes Issued: May 15, 1995

Present: John Colman (Chair), Maurice Corson, Michael Rosenzweig (Guest),  
Richard Scheuer, David Teutsch

Staff: Barry Holtz, Daniel Pekarsky

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1. After introduction of the participants, the committee heard a report from Dr. Daniel Pekarsky about the CIJE Goals Project. Dr. Pekarsky dealt with current activities of the project, in particular Goals seminars currently being held in Milwaukee and Cleveland, the CIJE goals retreat for the Atlanta community around the creation of a new day high school, and the plans to develop a cadre of "goals coaches" to work with institutions on goals-related issues.
2. The question was raised: is such an approach to creating "vision driven institutions" being done elsewhere? Dr. Pekarsky responded that in Jewish education this particular approach, with its focus on Jewish content and ideas, was not being done-- although there are organizations working with specific institutions in an effort of change and improvement. One project in general education which has received a considerable amount of both fame and funding and has some similarities to the CIJE Goals Project is the Coalition of Essential Schools created by Ted Sizer at Brown University. We hope to be able to learn from efforts such as these.
3. A number of issues were raised in the discussion. It was pointed out that the purpose of the Goals Project was not to have institutions confirm and actualize their current goals (in cases where such goals exist), nor was it to provide them with goals. Rather the Project aims at challenging institutions to consider their goals in the light of Jewish content and ideas and to reflect upon the ways that their goals may or may not be embodied in the actual life of the institution.
4. In the discussion, Dr. Pekarsky noted that CIJE's plan was for teams from each institution to participate and then act as catalysts for the institution to engage in an intensive goals enterprise. These teams should include the chief educator, lay leaders and rabbis from the home institution. Members of the committee pointed out that even where such teams participated, it did not guarantee that the institution could be inspired to engage in the goals project. How much the team "represented" the institution itself (and not just themselves as individuals) is an open question.
5. Clearly, at the stage of actual institutional goals work, a "coach" or resource person would be necessary. CIJE does not have the capacity to work with many institutions, but CIJE is interested in helping develop a group of such coaches who could work with their own or other institutions. In response it was pointed out that CIJE should not underestimate the need for ongoing support of such coaches. Based on experiences elsewhere (such as work with the Philadelphia central agency), we should be aware of the needs of coaches once they are at work in the field.



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6. The group then discussed the benefits and difficulties of doing such work. Indeed, it was suggested, the goals process may require a "readiness" quotient within an institution, and it may be important for CIJE to determine what factors need to be in place before a goals process is initiated. Nonetheless, it was also noted that there are many ways to cut into the goals process-- such as through direct work with teachers and curriculum. Perhaps by beginning in that way, the entire institution can develop a "goals readiness."
7. In the time remaining the committee heard a brief presentation from Dr. Pekarsky on the question of "community-wide goals". In other words, is it possible for a community as diverse as most Jewish communities are to share in goals that are more than slogans or platitudes? This issue had been raised at the CIJE Goals Seminar in Israel last summer and was again raised at the last meeting of our committee. In response Dr. Pekarsky raised four different approaches to this issue. Members of the committee suggested the view that the issue is greater than that of Jewish education alone-- it is about the nature of Jewish life in North America and its meaning. Dr. Pekarsky agreed with this view: the question, he said, was about the nature of "a meaningful Jewish existence." Questions of Jewish education must flow out of that. The committee raised concerns about such discussions of communal goals as devolving into the "least common denominator," an issue all agreed that would be detrimental to the process.
8. The question of communal goals was viewed as extremely significant. It was decided that at the next meeting, Dr. Pekarsky would prepare a short written document on this subject, and of CIJE's possible role in this endeavor, to serve as a focal point for discussion. In addition, the committee will wish to have time to hear from Dr. Barry Holtz about the work of the Best Practices Project in our next meeting.