



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

MS-831: Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation Records, 1980–2008.

Series C: Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education (CIJE). 1988–2003.

Subseries 2: Board Members, Senior Policy Advisors, and Consultants, 1990–1996.

Box
28

Folder
19

Melton, Florence, 1991-1992.

For more information on this collection, please see the finding aid on the
American Jewish Archives website.

file
melton

Memorandum

TO: Steering Committee/CIJE
FROM: Shulamith Elster
RE: Florence Melton
DATE: November 26, 1991

1. On the CIJE

"The American Jewish community needs the CIJE desperately". There has to be a group that focuses on meeting the unmet needs of the community. The work of the CIJE should focus on INITIATIVES. That is, the CIJE should not work in response to the stated needs of local communities but should be thinking about ways to solve the unmet larger needs that CIJE already knows need to be addressed, based on data and research. She used interfaith families as an example. The education and outreach to interfaith families must be addressed even if communities do not make this a priority. We know that it is an issue and needs work. (This is much like our requirements list. Do we want to consider this?)

In general, there has not been enough research and development based on demographics and data we now have. I encouraged her to come to the Annual Meeting and hear about Lipset's analysis.

She suggested that the Board does not include enough people with local community experience and is heavily weighted with people with denominational interests. I mentioned my experience with my campers (Cohen, Maryles, and others who come to the Board with community experience and local involvement).

2. On the Lead Communities

She does not like the term 'lead communities'. It suggests to her that other communities are " not good communities". It has, in her view, a negative rather than a positive connotation as it will be hurtful for those communities that are working hard and may have exemplary projects. (I don't know if this is a real issue or a matter of semantics not unlike 'good practice'/' best practice'/'good-enough practice'.)

She used the term "unit of endeavor" to describe some of her special projects and suggested that this would be an approach to describe the lead community project.

It is not prudent for us to expect that communities will come up with innovative ideas as they have limited personnel and existing leadership "doesn't know what quality Jewish education is all about". They have no allocated time or money to the enterprise. The CIJE has to come up with the ideas and the personnel and the money if this is going to work! The CIJE must take the INITIATIVE in the communities.

The CIJE has to help to create "units of endeavor" - packages: funding, training, recruitment, content, curriculum, research and follow-up for specific programs.

3. Leadership Development/Local Community Support

She described a project for leadership development that she discussed with Alan Hoffman last week that includes cruises for lay leaders with an educational component, an adaptation of the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School. This is an approach now used by industry and the professions for continuing adult education.

3. Best Practices/Programmatic Options

We spoke at length about the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School and about the Discovery Program for high school students in Columbus. I will be certain that these are included in our work on Best Practices. Both are worthy of replication.

She is interested in a new family education project- Live and Learn Family Vacations.

4. Support for CIJE Projects

We spoke about adult education in the communities. She is interested in funding a university or a department within a school to train facilitator in a specific area of education for interfaith families. She believes that couples need to come together with trained facilitators to air concerns in a retreat setting. This will lead to a recruitment effort for an objective, non-denominational educational program (The Adult Mini-School). Her several years of experience with the Mini-School suggests that this will lead to better educated families, more positive Jewish choices for affiliation and activity, synagogue membership, higher rates of enrollment of children of these families in Jewish schools and educational programs.

She is very interested in this and knows that it will take INITIATIVES AND INNOVATIVE thinking because communities do not know what to do. She likes the terms- initiatives and innovation- and the name CIJE has very positive connotations and connections with her interests and her work.

She understands that it will take an infusion of funding and very specific and complete planning (lots of training). She says that she knows what it take financially to establish something new- having done this several times before- and she is interested in doing this.

5. Board/Annual Meeting

She will do her best to come in January. It depends on Mr. Melton's health. He has good and bad days! She is interested in discussions of issues of substance. She wants the Board to focus on meeting the unmet needs in communities and is somewhat upset that discussions appear to focus on the vested interests of Board members. I encouraged her to come and participate actively in our deliberations. I also assured her that her comments to me would be shared with the Steering Committee.

5. Footnote

I will call her again in advance of the January meeting possible right after materials and the agenda are mailed to Board members.

In order to gain her support for the Lead Communities Project I think we have more work to do. This is where I think I can use some of what Lee Shulman said at the GA. I'm going to get a copy of his remarks and see if it will be useful to send to Mrs. Melton and/or others. I'd like to plan a visit with her. She had a great deal to say that was very interesting and inspiring for me. The suggestions she made about areas to consider and her descriptions of some fine programs are useful in my work with Barry on best practices.

Mrs. Melton will be in Boca Raton until February-March when the Meltons return to Columbus. Her address in Florida is: 1180 South Ocean Boulevard Apartment 9B Boca Raton, Florida 33432. Phone number: 407-391-3190.

hdC:melton

Memorandum

TO: Steering Committee/CIJE
FROM: Shulamith Elster
RE: Florence Melton
DATE: January 22, 1992

When I was in Florida (1/13), I went to Boca Raton to visit with Mrs. Melton in Boca Raton.

During our visit we spoke of a great many things and I hope the following summary will be helpful as we look for a way to involve Mrs. Melton in our work both as a funder of the CIJE and as a foundation principal whose projects we may want to incorporate into the lead communities.

Mrs. Melton indicated that she was not planning to attend the board meeting because she felt that attending the meeting was not the best use of her time. She says that she has many ideas and that she was pleased to share them with staff and others suggesting that it may not be as easy to get the attention of board members.

1. She was emphatic that we need careful planning for all that we do. I responded by reiterating our COMMITMENT to planning for our own work and to the planning process in the communities.
2. Nothing will happen without leadership development! Her specific recommendation is that the Melton Mini-School staff prepare an "innovative adaptation" of their curriculum which would then be incorporated into a two week cruise for the leadership of the lead communities.

Her suggestion is that the CIJE plan this together with national UJAF Leadership and Campaign Training Departments and Allan Hoffmann (Hebrew University staff). This proposal for leadership development effort could combine the need for specific training for local leadership (campaign etc.), the need for leaders to become more informed Jews and the desire to get the CIJE lead community projects off and running.

In addition to the important Jewish "learning curve", time would be allocated for discussion of lead community and community organization issues - including time for local task forces to work on their respective community plans.

Advantages: CIJE would have the undivided attention of leadership. Every segment would be content-based! This would satisfy the requirement that leadership development is a critical first step. Time could be spent in discussion of the implications of the CJF study and other issues. With the diminishing pool of lay leadership the interaction between people from various communities would be an advantage.

3. Regarding best practice, quoting herself that "system chokes innovation" she cautioned me not to get bogged down but to continue to look for methodological innovations. She indicated that we ought to be setting up a Fund for Creativity. Just think, she commented, what some talented people could do in the field for little money.

More on best practice and the communities: she suggests that CIJE set up a "fair" type program at a camp, perhaps at Ramah. Our experts within the programmatic areas would be the residence staff and people from the communities would come to seminars, classes and individual consultation on the programmatic areas. CIJE could also invite some of the other communities- the communities, not chosen, and other deprived communities.

This might then be worked into a regional center concept sponsored by Lead Communities for their regions of the country. This is the setting where they could work on regional issues that impact the larger philosophical and cultural issues.

4. Regarding the importance of data collection and dissemination: Let JESNA become the information clearing house for information about programs. They can set up a data base and take on responsibility for the dissemination of information. She feels that this is a perfect role for JESNA.

5. CAJE: Mrs. Melton is a CAJE fan and avid-supporter. She would like CAJE to provide the talent bank to complement the information bank (JESNA).

6. Working with communities: Mrs. Melton described the process by which the Mini-School was introduced to the Chicago community and suggested that the CIJE could learn from this experience how to overcome local roadblocks in introducing innovation into communities.

In Chicago the coordinator met with Rabbis and local lay leaders to introduce the program and to present materials for one of the units. The Board of the JCC (40 people) was given a sample lesson to help lay the foundation for the adoption of the program.

Her interest in promoting the mini-school is based on her view that the lay people will have to assume responsibility on behalf of the Jewish people and the majority of current lay leadership- not to mention the future- do not have the Jewish knowledge base on which to build a serious commitment.

7. Programmatic areas:

Mrs. Melton likes to call these "units of endeavor".

She suggests that we pay close attention to :
outreach to interfaith marriages
programming for high school students
recruitment of paraprofessionals
e.g., graduates of the mini schools
in-service training of teachers

She is gearing up to work with the Hebrew University on the last two related to training and in-service.

8. Finally, we spoke about Jewish education in the Palm Beach County communities and of the growth of the day schools, in particular.

P.S. I planned to write to Mrs. Melton to thank her for her time and suggestions. As I was writing up these notes, I decided to call her instead.

I spoke with her this afternoon (1/22) and we continued the conversation. She remains especially enthusiastic about the prospects for the cruise- the benefits of joint ventures and the prospects that this has for funding by foundations (here she quoted Seymour) that are looking for exciting and innovative thinking!

I also reported on the board meeting. She asked if I made any of her suggestions at the meeting. I told her that the board was focused on the recruitment and selection process and that we would be meeting in Cleveland to begin planning for the content and next steps with the communities.