

### MS-831: Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation Records, 1980–2008. Series C: Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education (CIJE). 1988–2003. Subseries 3: Lead Communities, 1988–1997.

Box 35 Folder 8

Milwaukee, Wis. "Communal Day High School Feasibility Study", May 1995.

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

3101 Clifton Ave, Cincinnati, Ohio 45220 513.487.3000 AmericanJewishArchives.org





JEWISH EDUCATION SERVICE OF NORTH AMERICA, INC.

החברה למען החינוך היהודי בצפון אמריקה

#### 730 BROADWAY NEW YORK, NY 10003-9540 Entrance 418 Lafayette Street (212) 529-2000 FAX: (212) 529-2009

President Billie Gold

Honorary Chair Mandell L. Berman

Vice Presidents Dr. Sidney Busis Mark Lainer L. William Spear Richard Spiegel Bernard K. Yenkin Dr. Lois Zachary

> Secretary Cindy Kaplan

Assistant Secretary Andrew Groveman

> Treasurer Joseph Kanfer

Assistant Treasurers Helene Berger Lawrence Sherman

Executive Vice President Jonathan S. Woocher

> Life Members Robert Arnow Arthur Brody Neil Greenbaum Mark E. Schlussel Fred Sichel Bennett Yanowitz

### MEMORANDUM

Louise Stein,	Jane Gellman	(Lead Commun	ity Initiatives, co-
chairs)			
Dr. Ruth Cohe	n (Lead Comm	unity Initiatives,	Project Director)

Rabbi David Shluker, Ed.D., Director of Consultation and Planning

DATE: May 25, 1995

TO:

FROM:

RE:

Communal Day High School Feasibility Study

I found my two recent trips to Milwaukee to explore the creation of a communal day high school to be not only stimulating and challenging with respect to the process, but, at the same time, both disappointing and encouraging with respect to the outcome. On the negative side, the projected, communal day high school does not seem to be "in the cards" for September, 1996, and, what has been called, the "alternative" school, also has a long way to go to become a reality. On the positive side, the commitment, dedication, hard work, and endurance of the Day School Subcommittee members during the course of the past year remain a source of inspiration and hope that something may yet happen, if not now, perhaps down the road a few years hence.

My intent here, as promised, is to provide some brief *background* (by way of introduction for outside readers) about the work of the Day School Subcommittee (the "Subcommittee"). I will then turn to JESNA's *findings*, *conclusions*, and *recommendations/next steps*. (*Note to Outside Readers*: We agreed that JESNA's written follow-up would be an "executive summary" memorandum, rather than a full report. Those interested in a full orientation to the background, as well as a more detailed update on JESNA's meetings with parents and others should read the relevant communal documents and consult with Lead Community leadership. The appendices also provide some additional background, namely: (APPENDIX 1) The Day School Subcommittee's Eleven Points; (APPENDIX 2) The Alternative Model; (APPENDIX 3) Subcommittee Questionnaire and Results; (APPENDIX 4) JESNA's Consultation Design Memorandum; and (APPENDIX 5) Letter of Invitation to Parents.

### BACKGROUND

The Day School Subcommittee emerged out of the Lead Community Initiative process in response to expressions of need for a local day high school by numerous parents with children attending both Hillel and the Milwaukee Jewish Day School (MJDS). The Subcommittee convened to explore the creation of a day high school to address these needs within the context of existing circumstances in the community.

The situation is as follows: most Orthodox elementary graduates (mostly from Hillel with a few from MJDS) in Milwaukee continue their education at day high schools or yeshivot, usually in Chicago, with some going to WITS, or other local schools. The benefit of Chicago is that it is relatively close, offers a variety of Orthodox options, and provides a suitable religious and social environment. But sending students away from home at the age of thirteen is difficult for most parents, and presents many problems besides logistical ones. Having a local communal day high school suitable for Modern Orthodox families, whether from Hillel (as most are) or from MJDS (as some are), is, therefore, seen as very desirable.

Since there does not exist a critical mass of students for such a school, a pluralistic, "communal" school, meeting Orthodox, Conservative and Reform requirements, with some type of moderate traditional approach, is seen as a possible compromise model. The notion is that perhaps this type of school would be able to attract many Orthodox parents already committed to day high school elsewhere, but reluctant to send their children out-of-town, as well as non-Orthodox students from both schools, particularly MJDS, where parents already have, or might have, an interest, or might be induced or motivated to consider the prospects. This would be in line with prevailing trends in some circles, continent-wide, that encourages day high school attendance for all students, including non-Orthodox ones.

It was acknowledged that substantial work would have to be done to conceptualize, articulate, design and implement such a school. It was especially clear that a major task would be to reach agreement on the mission of the school and arrive at a consensus on how to deal with some of the delicate, overlapping religious and educational issues. Beyond that, a host of other areas would have to be addressed including the creation of a suitable, pluralistic-minded board, resource development, hiring of faculty. Above all, both assessing enrollment for the first year and beyond, and actually securing enough students for the first class, and even beyond would be a first-order requirement.

The Subcommittee spent more than a year, in consultation with several Orthodox, Conservative and Reform rabbis in Milwaukee, discussing the type of school it envisioned and how to deal with a variety of religious/educational matters. It also sent out a questionnaire to MJDS and Hillel parents to assess the general level of interest, and specifics about what parents were looking for. There were eight "yes" and 20 "maybe" responses with regard to enrollment in a co-educational communal high school

for the ninth grade in 1996. Thirty percent of respondents felt that small class size would be a negative factor. Overall, the responses were not promising, nor concrete.

Subcommittee members, ultimately, developed, and formally agreed on, a list of eleven policy points regarding the religious/educational matters they had been discussing. The policies represented a blend of Orthodox and non-Orthodox positions that they and the participating rabbis were relatively comfortable but not fully full satisfied with. (See APPENDIX 1). Relatively late in the process, two very actively involved members of the Subcommittee, who reluctantly agreed, so they report, to the eleven points, but having come to the decision that the communal school was not feasible, developed an alternative proposal for a part-time Jewish "day school" linked to a local public school district. This idea was based on conversations with one very cooperative and quite interested superintendent with a building available for renovation and leasing. (See APPENDIX 2).

At this point, JESNA was asked to examine the prospects of the project. A preliminary visit took place on April 24-25, to determine the nature of the feasibility consultation. There was agreement that the primary focus would be to establish, in a more definitive way, partially as a follow-up to the questionnaire, whether there was sufficient parental and student interest in the communal day high school. JESNA met with various stakeholders, and federation and Lead Community leadership, followed by a meeting with the Subcommittee. At that meeting, there was sharp disagreement by Subcommittee members from both sides as to whether both proposals (*i.e.*, the main one for a full-fledged school which was "approved" by the Subcommittee, as well as the alternative, minority proposal which was not formally approved) should be presented to parents and students. JESNA recommended that both be presented with an explanation of their status. (See APPENDIX 4 and 5). JESNA returned for a second visit on May 15-17, to meet with parents, students, local rabbis, the two day school principals, and leadership of the Lead Community Initiative.

What follows is JESNA's assessment of the feasibility of the main proposal and the alternative and some related areas.

### FINDINGS

- 1) There are not enough students from either school, by itself or combined, to start a <u>communal day high school</u> with a ninth grade in September, 1996.
- 2) There are not enough students from either school, by itself or combined, to start an <u>alternative school</u> with a ninth grade in September, 1996. However, a few students (at least six now and possibly many more if the program got started) might be interested in the alternative school for Hebrew language on a limited basis only. There might be a possibility to include a bit more of other Judaic areas.

- a. Of about 60 MJDS seventh grade students (ninth grade for September, 1996.) interviewed, virtually none are interested in attending a communal day high school. In virtually all cases, the students do not want to attend Jewish day school beyond eighth grade. A few students questioned whether they could get along with Hillel students in a communal school setting, and two were adamantly opposed to being together. The Hebrew language program at MJDS is looked upon with approval, and more of that is seen as desirable. Consequently, the alternative school, primarily for Hebrew, has some appeal.
- b. Of about 12 Hillel seventh grade students, three would, and two might, be interested in attending a communal day high school similar to Hillel. If it were less Orthodox than Hillel, but still traditional, the number would still be about the same, maybe one or two less. (Time did not permit a discussion of the alternative school, but two students planning to go to public school might be candidates.)
- There is not enough interest and/or commitment from <u>parents</u> of either school, by itself or combined, to start a <u>communal day high school</u> in September, 1996.

There is not enough interest and/or commitment from <u>parents</u> of either school, by itself or combined, to start an <u>alternative school</u> in September, 1996. However, a few parents are quite interested. Considering the interest of some MJDS students in the Hebrew component, there may be some possibility to do something with the alternative school, assuming all of the other research questions about the arrangements can be worked out, which is a big "if."

- a) For MJDS parents, there is a little interest in a communal day high school. There is moderate, but as yet insufficient, interest in the alternative school.
- b) For Hillel parents, there is moderate but still insufficient, interest in a communal school if the school were like Hillel; if not like Hillel, the interest is not even moderate. There is virtually no parental interest at Hillel in the alternative school.
- 3) Members of the Subcommittee, while strongly united on the need to create an intensive day high school experience, are deeply divided on the feasibility of such a school, as well as how to proceed on a practical level. Moreover, the designers of the alternative school indicate that the consensus on the eleven points was not a real agreement at all, but one that was somewhat forced upon them by the need to present a document for the feasibility consultation.

- 4) The vast majority of families in the two schools appear to live in guite "cultures," and seem committed different to verv different religious/educational values which have a marked influence on the their respective visions and designs for a communal school. Members of the Subcommittee seemed more closely in sync with one another, up to a point, than what one would find, JESNA expects, among most families in the two schools. The breakdown of negotiations among that relatively compatible group suggests the potential for major problems with the entire notion for others. The differences were even more apparent when talking with students. who were less restrained with their remarks during school-site interviews, as opposed to the parents from both schools who were grouped together. (Note: This was done by design. Since the communal school concept is independent of either of the existing day schools, parent group meetings were mixed. Students, however, were not, both for sensitivity reasons, as well as logistics.)
- 5) Aside from informal "lobbying" by members of the Subcommittee, strong advocacy/promotion/marketing for either proposal has been limited. It has been difficult to promote either of the notions since so many aspects are unresolved. The eleven points were only recently agreed upon, and the alternative only recently developed. Regardless, no real "readiness" activities have taken place to create a receptive environment for either approach. The local pulpit rabbis, with some exceptions, were left outside of the process. Most were uninformed of developments and were, when we met, while not negative, only "lukewarm" in their support. Also, the two principals, for a variety of apparently valid reasons, have not been involved.

### CONCLUSIONS

- 1) The communal day high school for September, 1996, is not feasible, at the very least due to insufficient enrollment potential, based on student and parental input. Should additional "marketing" reveal a greater enrollment potential, the importance of day school education would warrant a reexamination of the possibilities. However, the meager response to the "letter of invitation" suggests that, for now, the potential is not there.
- 2) The alternative school does not appear to be feasible, but more information is needed before a full and fair determination can be made. Should additional "marketing" reveal a greater enrollment potential, the importance of day school education, even of a part-time nature, would warrant a reexamination of the possibilities. While, the meager response to the "letter of invitation" suggests that, for now, the potential is not there, this concept is so new, different, and unusual, that a limited response should not necessarily rule it out so quickly. More promotion might generate a significant response, especially at MJDS. Moreover, it is a unique and

5

untested concept which may be worthwhile not only for Milwaukee, but for other communities with similar enrollment problems. For sure, it should not be considered in the same class as a full-fledged day school, but rather a second-best, transitional step towards a real day school, if possible, down the road.

3) The prospects of a successful <u>communal</u> day high school, as proposed, is highly unlikely in Milwaukee, even if the enrollment potential is positive. This is due to the "cultural" differences displayed by the majority of families enrolled in the two day schools. Any attempts to create a day high school in the future, in JESNA's view, should focus on a school which is committed to a particular philosophy rather than an artificially created one to meet the needs of these two very diverse and different populations.

#### Several points on this:

- a. For the record, JESNA supports the notion of transideological, communal schools and has been extensively involved with them, as well as with interdenominational collaboration in a wide range of school and communal endeavors, but the blended approach doesn't work in all situations, and JESNA believes that the situation in this particular community is one of them.
- b. The experience of the Subcommittee in many ways an ideal group for trying to create a communal school — points to the difficulties inherent in operating a communal school with diverse membership. The Subcommittee was, for the most part, comprised of parents highly committed to: day school; a communal day high school in Milwaukee; collaboration, understanding and compromise; and hard work. But what started out in a positive way has led to a bitter and divisive struggle in which all approaches, while honorable and commendable, are clearly not doable truly "a controversy for the sake of Heaven."

To expand a bit: as a microcosm of the potential parent body for any day high school, the struggle of the Subcommittee only underscores how difficult it would be to manage such a school on a day-to-day basis. The matters dealt with during the past year or so, are typical of the matters dealt with almost weekly by school boards and committees, and school professionals. The legitimate "controversies" that have plagued this truly outstanding, well-intentioned, and capable Subcommittee would destroy any school leadership structure that had to operate this way in an ongoing way. 4) Organizational changes are complex, take time, and cannot happen unless the proper environment exists. JESNA's experiences and the literature on organizational change strongly support this principle. Aside from the work of the Subcommittee and many private conversations, the notions under consideration have not been "processed" thoroughly, or really at all. The notion of a "communal" school, for example, is a tremendously difficult step, and as indicated, is probably not possible in Milwaukee. But, a liberal day high school, as another example, is something that might be possible, primarily for MJDS graduates. For this to happen, a whole series of "readiness" and change activities would have to take place within the school, involving both professional and lay leadership, parents and the community. Similarly, the alternative school may not be accepted now, but if all the other elements are satisfactory, the notion could be developed, promoted, "marketed," and "sold" to (many MJDS and some Hillel) parents and students.

Furthermore, while the current communal day school is not feasible, and the alternative school may also not be, the situation may change. Right now, the timing be off and the environment not ready. As continuity concerns mount and advocacy for day schools increases, the climate at MJDS may change. Similarly, Hillel has been considering, and may be able to do something, at least for the first year of high school. But nothing will happen without having advocates, and a carefully orchestrated "change" process in place.

In this respect, a complete team of participants needs to be involved: students, parents, lay leaders, teachers, not to mention rabbis and principals. Regarding the last two categories: when dealing with Jewish education, there is a need to involve the local pulpit rabbis, in helping create the proper climate and environment for change. The pulpit is an excellent vehicle for day school advocacy. While not all rabbis will "buy-in" for a variety of reasons, many will, either out of conviction or when encouraged by their lay leaders. Similarly, the day school principals need to become involved. The precise role, obviously, must be designed to fit the nature of the contemplated school. But the day school principals are key resources for any planning process, and prime motivators for any enrollment campaign.

### Some Final Comments:

While a comprehensive and "universally" acceptable study on the impact of day schools has yet to be done, work by many researchers has provided ample evidence to support the generally felt consensus that day schools do an excellent job in fostering Jewish identity, but the full impact of day school education cannot be realized without the high school component.

While the Subcommittee in Milwaukee came into existence to address the unique aspects of the day high situation as it is manifested locally, similar circumstances exist in other communities. From a continental perspective: within Orthodox circles, day high school, or yeshiva high school attendance is the norm, with virtually all, or most, of those graduating from Orthodox elementary day schools continuing on to high school. (Those who don't, usually come from non-Orthodox backgrounds.) In non-Orthodox circles, the situation is quite different. While there are a number of non-Orthodox day high schools in several large metropolitan areas (of all denominations, as well as communal) the majority of those graduating from non-Orthodox, elementary day schools do not continue in day high schools — but the numbers and parental and student interest are increasing in light of day school successes coupled with continuity concerns.

For JESNA, increasing the number of day schools, overall student enrollment for all types (both levels and ideologies) of day schools, and quality (where needed) is a top priority from a continuity standpoint in general. Motivating and encouraging day school attendance among non-Orthodox youth, therefore, is seen as a priority, everywhere. (I should add that JESNA is quite pleased that many phone and on-site consultations during the past year or so have dealt with the establishment of day schools, at both elementary and high school levels.) In light of this, JESNA, highly commends the work of the Subcommittee.

Unfortunately, the enrollment numbers are inadequate — at best not even eight students for either the communal school or the alternative school. Many of the Subcommittee members themselves stipulated a minimum of twenty students for start up (and the same number per grade beyond that). JESNA would have settled for less — twelve to fifteen to get started, although not the ideal number. This minimum number was cited and reiterated several times, particularly by Hillel parents. (I believe this matter was emphasized by that group, primarily, because they are strongly committed to send their children to day high schools. And as much as many of them would like a local day high school, they are not prepared to send their children if the classes are not viable. If they support the notion of the local day high school concept without that qualification, and miraculously something did get started, but with only very limited enrollment, they would be under pressure to enroll.)

But with MJDS parents and students not yet committed, and Hillel parents and students, for the most part, wanting minimum class sizes and a more traditional program than the one worked out by the Subcommittee, the "handwriting is on the wall," at least for now with respect to the main proposal. The alternative does not offer great prospects, but before rejecting it, more research needs to be done. Because both the numbers and financial resources required to launch it would be much less substantial, the alternative bears receiving more attention. It also might serve as a model for other communities facing similar critical mass problems. To be sure, it should not be mistaken for a real day school because the primary benefit of day school education aside from the intensity of the academics — immersion in a Jewish environment — will be missing. But it is a start, for many who would not go out-of-town, and if successful may lead to the creation of a full-fledged day high school.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS/NEXT STEPS

While consultation studies or memoranda usually offer substantive recommendations, JESNA's primary role here was to provide the Lead Community Steering Committee with its assessment of the feasibility of the project — as it turned out, two projects. JESNA's *conclusions* above, provided that assessment. The few modest *recommendations* that follow constitute, therefore, in this case, more of a postscript regarding a number of procedural next steps, rather than formal recommendations.

- Thank the Subcommittee sincerely and generously for its very important work, and relieve it of its mission.
- Create a new subcommittee (with a set time-limit to do its work) to pursue the alternative school project.
- Promote day high school education in a variety of ways through the appropriate communal and institutional vehicles. In particular, encourage MJDS leadership to explore the feasibility of a full-fledged high school program.
- Involve the pulpit rabbis and day school principals more fully in any day school planning activities.

# DCHIVE

### **APPENDIX 1**

# The Day School Subcommittee's Eleven Points

### Basic Framework for a Jewish Community Day High School March 27, 1995

- 1. Compromise: The school can only exist if all parties are willing to compromise. It is understood that we will not be able to please everyone.
- 2. Dress Code: Clothing must be clean, in good condition, and modest. Boys will be required to wear kippot at all times; tzitzit are recommended. It is preferred that girls wear skirts or dresses, but this is not mandatory. No jeans or tight-fitting clothes are allowed.
- 3. Coeducation: The curriculum will be coeducational in all subjects (except gym and sex education). Gender-based separate classes can be made available when economic class size and educational skills warrant it.
- 4. Tefillot: Daily tefillot will be mandatory for all students. Accommodations will be made to meet individual needs.
- 5. Israel: The school will adhere to a strongly Zionistic philosophy.
- 6. Dietary laws: Kashrut will be observed throughout under the supervision of the Vaad HaKashrut of Milwaukee.
- 7. Hebrew: The school will give all students a solid knowledge of Hebrew in reading, writing, and speaking. Hebrew will be studied all four years.
- 8. General studies: The school will provide an excellent college-preparatory curriculum.
- 9. Length of day and division between Jewish and general studies: There will be no fewer than three periods of Jewish studies daily, in addition to Hebrew and Tefillot. The school day is estimated to run from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M.
- 10. Differing levels of background in Jewish texts and in Hebrew: These differences will be dealt with at the beginning of the 9th grade. The school will make a good faith effort to give every Jewish child the opportunity for a Jewish high school education.
- 11. Coordinator of Jewish Studies: The Judaic dean must be of a background that is committed and practicing yet worldly in his or her understanding of different interpretations of Judaism. This person must truly love Judaism and be able to transfer that love to the students.

\$

## VERICAN JEWISH

## **APPENDIX 2**

The Alternative School Model

### Alternative Proposal for a Co-educational Jewish High School

We are in agreement that a free standing co-educational Jewish high school is our long range goal. However, community resources are limited and the potential student population is small and has heterogeneous needs. As our anticipated starting date draws near we must be aware of the potentially fatal trials that will challenge our previous vision. These obstacles include:

Small class size: The most optimistic projections are a 1. class of 20 students. More realistic expectations are class sizes of 7-15. General enrollment in MJDS has plateaued and enrollment in Hillel has evidenced a slight decline. Small class sizes are a deterrent for prospective students because of limited social opportunities and course selection. Even members of our own committee have said that they would not send their children to such a school if classes were smaller than 20 students. Additionally issues and controversy related to the length of day, dress code and Judaic curriculum are likely to further decrease the school's broad spectrum. Consequently, given the current demographics of the Jewish community, it is unlikely that a de novo community Jewish high school will attain a class size that will be attractive to parents and to students.

2. Tuition. Although we have not dwelled on this aspect, we can anticipate a tuition cost of not less than the current day school tuition and realistically 1.5 - 2 times greater. The magnitude of this financial burden makes higher Jewish education available only to the financially secure. Without a benefactor with deep and generous pockets scholarship support is questionable. Consequently, class size may be further restricted by the high cost of maintaining a free standing high school.

3. High School Campus. The need to secure a high school campus replete with library, computer and science labs and gymnasium are practical issues that we have only tangentially addressed. These needs represent a tremendous up-front cost that cannot be met by tuition alone. The prospect of lining up these funds within the hoped-for time frame (9/96 starting date) will be exceedingly difficult.

4. Principal and Teachers Salary. To meet these needs in the first year the up-front cost is likely to exceed \$150,000 dollars. A class of 15 students paying a tuition of 7,500 a year would not even cover salary expenditures. Additional funds would be needed to address supplemental and extracurricular activities.

5. General Studies Curriculum. Diversity and intensity of general courses will initially be severely subjected to severe financial constraints. This limitation might further dissuade potential students and parents from such a school. If the parents on this committee are hesitant to send their children to the school we have envisioned, then how can we expect other parents to enroll their children in this school?

In response to these problems we would like to propose an alternative plan for discussion. This design is intended to establish a low-cost, low-risk, quality Jewish high school that would meaningfully increase the *daily* quality and content of Judica in our childrens' lives. It is intended the proposed measures will eventually serve as a bridge to the future establishment of a solvent, robust and free-standing Jewish High School.

Proposal - Establishing a Jewish High School in a Small or Medium-Size Urban Community:

1. A Jewish high school is established in or near one of the North Shore public schools. The day would begin with Jewish studies. There would be at least 2 - 3 Jewish courses depending on the schedule of general studies classes. Creative use of flexible periods such as study hall, elective time, lunch and physical education might provide enough time to cover 3 Judaic periods. An additional period might be gleaned from before or after school adjustments of the schedule.

2. Hebrew would be credited as a language.

3. General studies would be provided by the public high school. This arrangement would offer a wider range of courses, extracurricular activities, enrichment and attention to special needs and enrichment programs that would not be available in a small free-standing Jewish high school.

4. Arrangements would be made to excuse the Jewish high school students from classes and test on all Jewish holidays. Appropriate arrangements for make up test would be made for early Fridays and Saturday evening activities where appropriate.

5. A separate environment will be established for the Jewish HS. The physical space may be leased from the school district.

6. The Jewish HS would issue its own diplomas and students would graduate from the Jewish HS and not from the public school.

7. The Jewish HS would provide an environment where Jewish adolescents can be taught by Jewish educator to effectively deal with the exigencies of living a Jewish life in a secular world. To test feasibility of this hypothesis we discussed this idea with the Superintendent of Shorewood Public Schools, Dr. John Linehan. The following issues were discussed and found to be mutually agreeable.

- 1. Wisconsin's school voucher/choice program will make it likely that there will be no additional cost for students coming from either Milwaukee or other North Shore school districts. Consequently, tuition will be significantly lower compare to a free-standing Jewish high school.
- 2. Special consideration for time off for all Jewish holidays, test schedules adjusted accordingly. Parenthetically, Shorewood HS does not have a hat/cap restriction. Thus, Jewish HS students can have their head covered without calling attention to themselves.
- Separate building that can be leased by the Jewish HS (i.e. Shorewood's industrial arts building or other nearby structures).
- 4. Willingness to make available all of Shorewood's facilities to the Jewish HS.

Action Plan to Test the Feasibility of this Proposal

- Contact all North Shore High Schools to inquire if they could meet the needs enumerated above.
- 2. Distribute questionnaire to evaluate whether parents would be willing to send their children to such a hybrid school.
- 3. Contact area Rabbis and educators to discuss the relative merits of this proposal as well as to solicit their support.

Why is this approach better than a supplemental HS?

- 1. Students will learn Torah daily.
- Judaic studies will be given academic weight equal to general studies (GPA, graduation requirements). Consequently, the level and quality of these studies would be greater than that observed at a supplemental HS.
- 3. The time spent per week in Judaic studies will exceed that spent in a supplemental HS by a least a factor of 4:1.
- 4. Ability to issue diplomas allows the flexibility to have students spend part or all of a year studying in Israel.
- 5. This school will have a greater influence on the students regarding the issues of Jewish values, dating, drugs etc.
- 6. This plan allows the community to slowly grow into the idea of a free standing co-educational Jewish HS and avoids a high risk of a costly failure that befell the previous HS.
- 7. Jewish studies are not relegated to the status of an after school elective.

3

#### Potential Positives of This Approach

- 1. School can get off the ground by 9/96
- Minimal capital outlay (i.e. physical plant, general studies teachers, labs etc.)
- 3. Tuition 1/3-1/4 of that of a free standing school
- 4. Wider range of curriculum and extracurricular options
- 5. Financial burden on Jewish community less
- 6. Idea embodies the "Visionary" aspect of the Lead Community directive. This strategy represents a new approach to increasing Jewish education in small and medium sized communities that do not have a critical mass of Jews committed to establishing a free-standing coeducational Jewish HS.
- Students can discuses with Judaic faculty, in a "real-time environment", the means of resolving conflicts between between secular and religious issues.
- 8. This design obviates the need for these students to find alternative, after school supplemental Jewish education.
- This plan allows the community to slowly grow into the idea of a free-standing co-educational Jewish HS with lower cost and lower risk for the community and the parents.
- 10. Torah will be studied every day.

Potential Negatives of This Approach

- Increased exposure to "negative" influences at a public high school(i.e. drugs, alcohol, gangs etc).
- 2. Possibility of inter-denominational dating.
- 3. Possible conflict with extra-curricular activities and Jewish observances.
- Less flexibility in controlling the school day, scheduling dependent on general studies.
- 5. This paradigm may be unattractive to those who are likely to send their children out of town for a Jewish education.
- 6. Uncertaintiy whether parents from one suburban district would be willing to send their child to another North Shore school district to get a Jewish education during the day.
- 7. Loss of autonomy in controlling school environment.
- Delay in establishing a free standing co-educational Jewish HS.

AJF/JHB March 13, 1995

# AMERICAN JEWISH

# **APPENDIX 3**

Subcommittee Questionnaire and Results

June 9, 1994

Dear Parent:

The Milwaukee Lead Community Initiative for Jewish Education is exploring the possibility of establishing a community Jewish high school in Milwaukee. As part of this exploration, we need to gather information from Milwaukee Jewish parents. Please complete and return this questionnaire in the enclosed self addressed stamped envelope by June 24th, 1994. Thank you for your help.

### Milwaukee Community Jewish High School Questionnaire

- 1. Do you think that Milwaukee should have a co-educational Community Jewish high school? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No
- 2. If Milwaukee had a co-educational Community Jewish high school would you consider sending your child to it? Yes \_\_\_\_No \_\_\_\_Maybe
- 3. What are the most important reasons that would make you hesitant to send your child to a co-educational Community Jewish high school? (Rank most important choices 1-4 and check all others that apply.)
  - Class size too small, social opportunities may be more limited.
  - Extracurricular opportunities may be more limited.
  - Tuition cost.
  - Quality of secular education (College prep).
  - Less ethnic and cultural diversity, "not the real world."
  - No track record, i.e. "I don't want my child to be the first."
  - Aware of previous Milwaukee Jewish high school's struggle.

Other

- 4. What are the most important reasons that make you consider sending your child to a co-educational Community Jewish high school? (Rank your most important choices 1-4 and check all others that may apply.)
  - My child's formal Jewish education is not complete.
  - \_\_\_\_ Small class size provides a better educational experience (more individual attention).
    - Reduced conflict between Jewish practices and secular school activities. (i.e. tests on Jewish holidays, activities on Shabbat.)
      Decline of public school system (i.e. drugs, crime and violence). Enhanced Jewish social contact, (i.e. few Jewish children in my
  - school district).
    - Small schools foster greater input and participation by parents.
      The day school environment promotes an extended "family feeling."
      - Other

- 5. What do you see as the most important aspects necessary to maintain a viable and academically competitive Community Jewish high school? (Rank in order of importance.)
  - Quality of Judaic/Hebrew education. Quality of secular education, college prep. Social opportunities Extracurricular activities Tuition Course selection Other What grade is your day school child going into? 6th 7th What day school does s/he attend? MJDS Hillel Other What high school do you currently anticipate your child will attend? What are your current plans for continuing your child's education beyond 8th grade? Out of town Jewish high school Supplemental after school synagogue program WITS Independent study with a Rabbi No special plans
    - Other

Additional Comments (please use space below):

If you are interested in helping establish or supporting a co-educational Milwaukee community Jewish high school or wish more information, please include your name and telephone number.

NAME

6.

7.

8.

9.

PHONE

### RESULTS OF THE MILWAUKEE JEWISH HIGH SCHOOL SURVEY - JUNE 1994 -

Number of surveys sent: 113 Respondents = 66Precent response = 58%

Breakdown of respondents by school and grade as of fall 1994:

School	6 Grade	7 Grade
Hillel	14	15
MJDS	29	53

- Do you think that Milwaukee should have a co-educational Jewish high school? yes = 55 (83%) no = 11
- 2. Would you send your child to a co-educational Jewish high school? yes = 16 (24%), no = 20 (30%), maybe = 30 (46%)

(Responses to Question 2 by school and grade)

Yes

School	6 Grade	7 Grade
Hillel	4	4
MJDS	4	4

Maybe

School	6 Grade	7 Grade
Hillel	5	3
MJDS	7	15

Potential 9th grade class size:

1996 = 261997 = 20 (survey con't)

[N = 66]

3. What are the most important reasons that would make you hesitant to send your child to a co-educational Community Jewish High School (CJHS)? (the numbers in the parentheses correspond to the percent of the respondent who listed this choice as either their 1st or 2nd concern).

Percent (%)

- a. (30%) Class size too small, social opportunities may be more limited
- b. (21%) Extracurricular opportunities may be more limited
- c. (29%) Tuition cost
- d. (29%) Quality of secular education (College prep)
- e. (20%) Less ethnic and cultural diversity, "not the real world"
- f. (17%) No track record, i.e. "I don't want my child to be the first"
- g. (5%) Aware of previous Milwaukee Jewish high school's struggle

Same data for question 3 analyzed only for those who would or might send their children to a Community Jewish High School, (N = 45)

#### Percent (%)

a.	(24%)	Class size too small, social opportunities may be more limited	
b.	(16%)	Extracurricular opportunities may be more limited	
c.	(33%)	Tuition cost	
d.	(36%)	Quality of secular education (College prep)	
e.	(14%)	Less ethnic and cultural diversity, "not the real world"	
f.	(24%)	No track record, i.e. "I don't want my child to be the first"	
g.	(18%)	Aware of previous Milwaukee Jewish high school's struggle	÷

4. What are the most important reasons that make you consider sending your child to a coeducational Community Jewish High School? (the numbers in the parentheses correspond to the percent of the respondent who listed this choice as either their 1st or 2nd concern).

- a. (30%) My child's formal Jewish education is not complete
- b. (30%) Small class size provides a better educational experience (more individual attention)
- c. (20%) Reduced conflict between Jewish practices and secular school activities (i.e. tests on Jewish holidays, activities on Shabbat)

 d. (38%) Decline of the public school system (i.e. drugs, crime and violence) .. 2/25 where from MPS, 11/21 from Nicolet

### (survery con't)

- e. (6%) Enhanced Jewish social contact, (i.e. few Jewish children in my school district)
- f. (3%) Small schools foster greater input and participation by parents
- g. (14%) The day school environment promotes an extended "family feeling".

Data for question 4 analyzed only for those who would or might send their children to a Community Day High School, (N = 45)

- a. (38%) My child's formal Jewish education is not complete
- b. (36%) Small class size provides a better educational experience (more individual attention)
- c. (24%) Reduced conflict between Jewish practices and secular school activities (i.e. tests on Jewish holidays, activities on Shabbat)
- d. (47%) Decline of the public school system (i.e. drugs, crime and violence)
- e. (9%) Enhanced Jewish social contact, (i.e. few Jewish children in my school district)
- f. (2%) Small schools foster greater input and participation by parents
- g. (16%) The day school environment promotes an extended "family feeling".
- 5. What do you see as the most important aspects necessary to maintain a viable and academically competitive Community Jewish high school?
  - (44%) Quality of Judaic/Hebrew education
  - (76%) Quality of secular education, College prep
  - (5%) Social opportunities
  - (12%) Extracurricular activities
  - (20%) Tuition
  - (11%) Course selection
- 6. What grade is your day school child going into?

6th = 27

- 7th = 40
- 7. What day school does s/he attend?

School	6 Grade	7 Grade
Hillel	11	10
MJDS	14	30

### (survery con't)

8. What high school do you currently anticipate your child will attend?

Homestead = 1 MPS = 2 Nicolet = 25, (38%) Out of Town (mostly Chicago) = 12 Shorewood = 4 Whitefish Bay = 6 WITS = 3 Undecided = 7 Other = 6 (Univ. School, Wauwatosa,

9. What are your current plans for continuing your child's education beyond 8th grade?

a.	(15)	Out of town Jewish High School or WITS
b.	(17)	Independent study with a Rabbi
d.	(7)	Supplemental after school Synagogue program

e. (26) no special plans, (40%)

At the present time 12 children from Hillel plan to go out of town (6 from each grade) and 2 plan to go to WITS.

### Selected (unedited) Comments

- 7. Religious practice; will school be truly pluralistic? How will it deal with Jewish diversity.
- 9. (sic. the school) Does not have a philosophy that reflects our beliefs. Strong philosophya school which as a definitive philosophy.
- 12. Judaic program may not be intensive enough.
- 14. We are orthodox and do not send our children to mixed classes after bar/bat mitzvah age.
- 17. I need a very reform environment, allowing for like MJDS. I don't want to get involved in Jewish faith infighting.
- 22. Willing to send child to parochial school rather than MPS.
- 23. I believe the Jewish community can't afford to support an excellent Jewish High School. It has to be academically superior to the public system to even be considered.
- I would be interested in non co-ed programming for my daughter. I would need an orthodox track in the schools Judaic program for it to have appeal to me and my daughters.
- 33. The community must be prepared to finance a high school. If money is available there should be no excuse for failure. A quality product should succeed.
- 37. The traditional community will send their children to Jewish schools by hook or by crook. Any new high school has to satisfy our expectations, if not our children will go to other existing Jewish high schools.
- 47. I would not send my child to such a school under any circumstances!! The community can not afford such a school and should not consider it.
- 52. How do we put money away for college when paying for high school. We will not consider sending our child to a Jewish community H.S. if \_\_\_\_\_\_ has anything to do with it. You should draw on experience of T.A.M. They use Mt. Mary for secular studies and do many worthwhile and interesting community activities and trips.
- 55. Tuition appears to be my biggest concern.
- 57. Balancing the religious "slant" of the school to make it acceptable to orthodox, conservative and reform.
- That the religious environment will not comfortably accommodate the liberal end of the spectrum.

While I feel that a high school is a great idea I have serious concerns about the community's ability to support another school when the financial pie continues to shrink.

# AMERICAN JEWISH

# **APPENDIX 4**

JESNA's Consultation Design

### Excerpt from JESNA's Consultation Design Memorandum (May 1, 1995)

... As the process moves now moves into the most critical crossroad, the immediate hurdle just ahead looms large and ominous, as all involved recognize that the moment has come to "test the waters" and see if the enrollment numbers are there.

I would like to: 1) clarify JESNA's role; and 2) reiterate the "game plan" for my next visit, as we discussed right before I left.

My goal is to explore the enrollment potential, and if possible, touch on parental financial capacity, although, depending on how things go, the latter may not be touched on, at all or sufficiently. My intent is to meet with students and parents from grades four through seven in both MJDS and Hillel to assess the enrollment potential for a communal day high school beginning in September 1996 with grade nine. I prefer that the interviews be scheduled using the following guidelines, but will accept any similar arrangement you feel is appropriate based on your assessment of logistics and time factors:

- 1) meetings with parents (from both schools together at a neutral site);
- meetings with students (in each school separately);
- 3) meetings with other key informants (as identified on the next page).

I will discuss with each, in an appropriate way for the particular interview, the main proposal for a new, independent "full-service" communal day high school which blends components of the two existing day schools in Milwaukee, based on the work of the subcommittee, as well as the alternative "partial-service" model linked to a local public school system which represents a minority position. I will explain, again as appropriate for the particular interview, the pros and cons of each proposal as compared to other options, as I understand them from my own experience as a student, teacher, principal, parent and consultant. I will also try to provide a sense of what each scenario would be like in real life. I may touch on the notion of the fledgling school possibly emerging, at least initially, out of MJDS or Hillel, or being managed administratively by one of them, although this notion may be problematic.

I will try to assess: 1) overall interest; 2) level of commitment; and 3) readiness to enroll, for either of the two scenarios, or any other emerging options. The assessment generally will be a qualitative/subjective one with respect to the first two areas, and quantitative, if possible, with respect to enrollment readiness. Should things go well with the enrollment response, I will, as mentioned earlier, try to get some reading on financial capacity, but follow-up with interested parents, at your end, will probably be needed to assess these matters more precisely.

I would like to suggest the following set of group and individual interviews, but, again, please feel free to modify the schedule as you see fit, if necessary:

Monday afternoon: Ruth Cohen (one hour) public school superintendent (one hour)

Monday evening: MJDS parents (one hour per twenty parents) Hillel parents (one hour per twenty parents)

> Send out letters with an immediate RSVP requirement by phone or fax, and schedule times as appropriate, followed up with confirmation letters or phone calls. Run hour-long meetings from 5:00-10:00, if necessary, which would give us five time slots, if needed. If fewer parents respond, schedule meetings for 90 minutes.

Tuesday morning and afternoon:

Hillel students MJDS students two principals pulpit rabbis (group)

Tuesday evening: day school subcommittee

Wednesday: Ruth Cohen, Louise Stein, Jane Gellman (group)

The letters of invitation to all participants should contain the basic elements of both options (the main proposal and the alternative, identified as such), with the most space and emphasis on the main one. It should summarize the basic philosophy of the school, emerging out of the principles developed by the subcommittee, but not go into all eleven points in detail. Here is a brief outline of the components that I would include (This is for parents. Rabbis and others would get a slightly different version.):

### Dear Day School Parent,

- 1) As you know...day school education (something about its importance)...
- 2) For about a year, under the auspices of... a number of parents have been meeting to...
- 3) With the input of local rabbis, educators etc... they have envisioned...and begun to formulate the framework for a new communal day high school which would open in September 1996.
- 4) To move things forward, and help them and the community decide how best to proceed they have invited JESNA... Rabbi David Shluker visited Milwaukee on... to meet with the committee, communal leadership and rabbis to...
- 5) He will be returning on May... to meet with you and your children... (Please share this letter or its contents with your children.)
- 6) Meetings will be scheduled for your children during the school day...
- 7) Parents meetings will be scheduled as follows...
- 8) In order for you to think about this exciting opportunity, we are providing you with a sketch of how the new school is conceived of by the subcommittee.

The Milwaukee Jewish Communal Day High School will be a co-educational four year college preparatory school with a dual program of general and Jèwish studies. The program will emphasize excellence in general studies, as well as substantive Hebraic

and Judaic content, including the study of texts, along with a uniquely tailored set of Jewish experiences and observances adapted to the needs of students coming from both MJDS and Hillel. There will be some type of daily prayer arrangement, observance of dietary laws, intensive Hebrew language study designed to meet individual needs, and the study of Modern Israel.

- 9) Also under consideration is an alternative plan to create a set of Jewish study and experiences through a hybrid model linking the Judaic/Hebraic program to a local public high school. (An abbreviated version of the alternative proposal should be provided here. It should exclude all negative references to the main proposal.)
- 10) Meetings will be scheduled as follows... Please indicate your time preference as follows... Someone will confirm ...
- 11) Should you have any questions before the meeting, please contact...

Sincerely,

Jay Beder Subcommittee Chair Ruth Cohen Director of...

Following the on-site visit (within four-five weeks), I will prepare a memorandum/report briefly summarizing the *background* and work of the subcommittee (based on the materials I received), my own *findings*, *conclusions*, and *recommendations* with respect to the two alternatives — all three in light of day school needs in the community and informed by practices elsewhere — and *next steps*...

# AMERICAN JEWISH

## APPENDIX 5

Letter of Invitation to Parents.



Lead Community Initiatives for Jewish Education

Commission Co-Chairs Jane Gellman Louise Stein

Project Director Dr. Ruth Cohen

May 3, 1995

#### Dear Day School Parent:

As a parent of a day school student, you recognize the importance of day school education in fostering Jewish identity. During the past year, the Lead Community Initiatives for Jewish Education Project, a planning process of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation, has convened a task force to explore the feasibility of establishing a day high school in Milwaukee. Members of this task force, with input from local Rabbis, began to formulate the framework for a new communal day high school which may open in September, 1996.

In an effort to move things forward and determine the feasibility of establishing such a school, Rabbi David Shluker, Director of Community Consultation and Planning at JESNA, was invited to conduct the feasibility study. He visited Milwaukee on April 24-25 to meet with the task force, communal leaders and Rabbis to collect preliminary data for the study. Rabbi Shluker will be returning to Milwaukee on May 15-17 to meet with you and your children.

Meetings will be scheduled for your children during the school day. Parent meetings will be scheduled on May 15th as follows:

5:00 - 6:00 P.M. 7:00 - 8:00 P.M. 8:00 - 9:00 P.M. 9:00 - 10:00 P.M.

Please complete the enclosed card indicating your time preference, return it as soon as possible to the Milwaukee Jewish Federation, or call Mary Ann at 271-8338.

You will receive a telephone call with your assigned meeting time and location of the meeting a few days prior to the meeting.

Should you have any questions before the meeting, please call Dr. Ruth Cohen at 271-8338.

#### (Continued)

A planning process of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation, in partnership with the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education, leading to systemic change in Jewish education. In order for you to think about this exciting opportunity, we are providing you with a sketch of how the new school is conceived by members of the task force:

The Milwaukee Jewish Communal Day High School will be a coeducational four-year college preparatory school with a dual program of general and Jewish studies. The program will emphasize excellence in general studies, as well as substantive Hebraic and Judaic content, including the study of texts, along with a uniquely tailored set of Jewish experiences and observances adapted to the needs of students coming from both MJDS and Hillel. There will be some type of daily prayer arrangement, observance of dietary laws, intensive Hebrew language study designed to meet individual needs, and the study of Modern Israel.

The following is an alternative plan developed by a few members of the task force; the plan was not voted or approved by the task force. It proposes to create a set of Jewish study and experiences through a hybrid model linking the Judaic/Hebraic program to a local public high school. The plan envisions utilizing the public school general studies course offerings, resources, and extracurricular activities while maintaining a Jewish environment, and offering a quality Jewish Studies Program within a separate space in or near the high school.

Sincerely,

Ruth Cohn

Dr. Ruth Cohen, Director Lead Community Initiatives

RC/map

Enclosures