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CHANGING THE CORE: COMMUNAL POLICIES AND PRESENT REALITIES IN THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS FOR JEWISH SCHOOLS[1]

Barry W. Holtz, Adam Gamoran, Gail Zaiman Dorph, Ellen Goldring, and Bill Robinson

I. Introduction

In the past decade, the emergence of Jewish "continuity" as a key concern of the North American Jewish community has placed the improvement of Jewish education at the center of the communal agenda (Commission on Jewish Education in North America, 1991; Holtz, 1992). A variety of strategies have been proposed to help achieve such improvement, most of which have focused either on specific targets for change (educational trips to Israel, building new day schools, etc.) or on structural and organizational changes within the community (such as new funding structures, new roles for local federations, etc.) (Woocher, 1996; Ruskay, 1995/6).

But like reform in general education, such efforts in Jewish education rarely look at what Richard F. Elmore has called "the core of educational practice," namely, the experience of teaching and learning that comprises the heart of what Jewish education—at least in "formal" settings—is necessarily about. As Elmore puts it:

> Much of what passes for "change" in U.S. schooling is not really about

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> changing the core. . . . Innovations often embody vague intentions of changing the core through modifications that are weakly related, or not related at all, to the core. . . .
>
> However, the changes are often not explicitly connected to fundamental changes in the way knowledge is constructed, nor to the division of responsibility between teacher and student, the way students and teacher interact with each other around knowledge, or any of a variety of other stable conditions in the core. Hence, changes in scheduling seldom translate into changes in the fundamental conditions of teaching and learning for students and teachers (Elmore, 1996, p. 3).

In the context of Jewish education, by analogy, we could replace the phrase "changes in scheduling" in the sentence above with a phrase like "changes in the structural relationships between federations and boards of Jewish education" and come out with the same conclusion Elmore reaches: by and large the fundamental conditions of teaching and learning in Jewish schools remain unchanged!

What would it take to <u>really</u> change the core practices of contemporary Jewish education? How could we imagine the experience of teaching and learning fundamentally altered in today's classrooms? One crucial element in implementing such changes in these core practices is ongoing, effective professional development—in-service education—for teachers in Jewish schools (Dorph, 1995). Such a strategy raises many challenges, both for policy planners and implementers. In this article we will try to address some of the key questions that must be considered in order to guide new approaches for Jewish communal policy in improving the core enterprise of Jewish education: 1) What characterizes the latest thinking about professional development in the world of general education? 2) What kinds of professional development are typically offered in Jewish education today and how does professional development in Jewish

education compare to the state-of-the-art in the field, as delineated by contemporary standards in general education? To answer those questions we will report in detail on a study of teachers' professional development offered in five Jewish communities. 3) Finally, based on the discussion of the issues above, we will propose approaches to professional development that could have an important impact on how teachers teach and consequently how children experience their Jewish education.

Before looking at these issues, we need first to present the rationale behind our advocacy of professional development as the appropriate strategy for addressing the improvement of the core practices of teaching and learning in Jewish schools. Why do we argue in favor of this approach? After all, an obvious answer for improving practice is to recruit teachers with rich Jewish backgrounds into the field and to find ways to place these prospective teachers in strong teacher preparation programs (at the "pre-service" level). But both of these responses are long-term solutions to an immediate crisis. Moreover, given the part-time nature of field—particularly in supplementary schools—such a change in personnel is not likely to happen without major innovations in school and staffing structures. In addition, even if it were desirable, it is impractical to imagine replacing the entire population of those teachers who have inadequate preparation, given the vast numbers that would be involved.

On the other hand, it is obvious that teachers currently in Jewish schools *are* in need of professional development. In research previously published we showed, among other things, that teachers in Jewish day schools, supplementary schools and preschools were highly motivated and took their work seriously, but were not well prepared for their jobs, both in their formal Judaic

background and in their educational training. In the supplementary schools in particular the teachers lacked learning in Jewish subject areas and training in Jewish education. Less than 20% of the teachers were professionally prepared in both pedagogy and Judaic subject matter (Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education, 1994; Gamoran, Goldring, Robinson, Tammivaara, & Goodman, 1998).

Since the preparation and educational background of teachers are among the most important factors in influencing teacher effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, 1997, pp. 307-313), these findings indicate a crucial area in need of dramatic improvement. Thus along with imagining better plans for recruiting talented people into the field of Jewish teaching and together with efforts to improve existing teacher preparation programs and create new ones, it is clear that much work needs to be done with the population of teachers now in the field.

On the positive side, the study of educators quoted above also discovered an important additional fact: Contrary to the popular notion that Jewish education was staffed by a transient, constantly changing population of teachers, most of the teachers studied planned to stay in current positions and viewed Jewish education as their career, even though (or perhaps *because*!) for many their positions were part-time:

> Enhancement of professional growth is a powerful strategy for reform because teachers are committed, stable, and career-oriented. Even among part-time teachers, who lack formal training as Jewish educators, many view their work in Jewish education as a career and plan to stay in their positions for some time to come. These teachers are a ripe target for higher standards of professional growth.
> (Gamoran, Goldring, Robinson, Tammivaara, & Goodman, 1998, p. 22).

It makes sense, therefore, to argue that ongoing professional development for teachers must be at the heart of any effort to change the face of contemporary Jewish education. We have learned from general education that professional development is important even for teachers with excellent backgrounds and preparation (Little, 1993; Darling-Hammond, Wise and Klein, 1995). The case of Jewish education calls out even more dramatically for the continuing education and training of teachers.

II. Professional Development and the Reconceptualization of Teaching

Until recently the dominant approach to professional development for teachers, seen both in general and Jewish education, has taken the form of one-shot workshops, or at best, short-term passive activities, with limited follow-up (Goldenberg and Gallimore, 1991). The content of such in-service workshops was built upon a "one size fits all" approach—the idea that professional development strategies are applicable to all participants regardless of the educational setting in which the teacher worked, the age of the student in the teacher's class, or the subject matter to be taught and learned.

Such strategies are based on a "transmission of information" model of professional development: It is assumed that each teacher would "learn" the latest new techniques and bring them back to her/his own classroom, making whatever "adjustments" might be necessary. Teachers in this conception are treated as passive recipients of techniques and practices, rather than "intelligent, inquiring individuals with legitimate expertise and important experience," as one study has put it (D. Sparks and S. Loucks-Horsley, 1989, p.50).

It is important to emphasize that different approaches to professional development tend to emanate out of different conceptions of *teaching* itself. That is, the model of preparing teachers is closely related to the style of teaching and learning envisioned in the classrooms that the teachers will be working in. Thus the "old" paradigm of professional development grew out of a particular view of teaching that focused on teachers transmitting information and children listening and remembering (Feiman-Nemser and Remillard, 1996).

In recent years, however, reformers in general education have advocated for a different kind of teaching to replace conventional practices in classrooms. At times this approach has been called "teaching for understanding" (Cohen, 1990; Cohen and McLaughlin, 1993), though its roots go back at least as far as Dewey. It is a view of teaching that moves away from a more traditional image of "teaching as telling and learning as listening" to a vision of "learning as telling, teaching as listening" (Little, 1993). Moreover, this view sees teaching as not mainly a technical skill (though it does require skillfulness); but rather as an unpredictable and "uncertain" practice (McDonald, 1992; Ball and Wilson, 1996). Finally this notion of teaching emphasizes the fact that teachers need to have knowledge in order to teach well, but knowledge of a certain kind, knowledge that is specific to the pedagogic issues inherent in the subject matters that they are teaching. (Shulman, 1986; Grossman, Wilson, Shulman, 1989; Grossman, 1990; Stodolsky, 1988).

These three elements of teaching—a focus on teaching for understanding, a recognition of the uncertain nature of teaching, and a need for what Shulman (1986) calls "pedagogical content knowledge" in the areas that they teach—call out for new models and approaches in the

professional development of teachers.

This conception of teaching requires a different understanding about what teachers need to know and be able to do. It asks us therefore to think differently about the kind of professional development offered to teachers (Wilson, Miller and Yerkes, 1993). If teaching is "subject specific" (Kennedy, 1991), for example, generic approaches to teaching that are said to be appropriate to all ages and subjects are unlikely to succeed. *In the same way, generic, "one size fits all" professional development programs will not succeed in improving teaching in the classroom.* If teaching is an uncertain practice, it demands professional development opportunities for analysis and self-reflection instead of how-to workshops with easy answers and "tricks" for the classroom. If knowledge is at the core of teaching, it calls for a variety of new strategies to improve and deepen teachers' learning (McDiarmid & Ball, 1989). And educational settings will need to encourage teachers to experiment and help teachers through the real struggles that accompany any effort at change (Little, 1986; McLaughlin, 1993).

III. Professional Development for Teachers: The State of the Art

According to the best thinking in contemporary education, what does "good" professional development for teachers look like? A number of different elements have been identified by current research as characteristic of high quality professional development programs. We will point out four that have been shown to be critical.[2]

First, *Good professional development is connected to knowledge of the content that is being taught:* Teachers need to develop sophisticated understandings of the subjects they are

[2] Some of the most important research undergirding these recommendations can be found in: Little, 1993;

teaching. By "sophisticated" we mean having the ability to understand the key concepts and

Lord, 1994; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1996; McDiarmid, 1994.

skills of any particular subject and at the same time understanding the best ways to present them to students or help students discover these central ideas on their own. It means knowing the subject matter, but also understanding how that subject is understood (or misunderstood!) by children. What are the likely confusions that students will have? What are the best ways to overcome them? What activities in a classroom are most likely to encourage and inspire students to learn the subject matter? All of these questions indicate the kind of understanding of subject matter that teachers need to attain.

Second, *Good professional development has a clear and focused audience in mind:* Because the subject matter content of teaching is so central to professional development, good programs are not

based on "generic" teaching skills meant for a wide range of participants, but are "targeted." For example, they are aimed at a specific audience of teachers—either by the subject matter being taught or the grade of the students who are the potential learners.

Third, *Good professional development has a coherent plan, sustained over time.* Professional development requires a well thought-out plan, both for individual teachers and for the educational institution (or system) as a whole. Sessions must follow a meaningful educational pattern, building upon one another in a sequenced manner. In addition, professional development requires an ongoing cumulative effect that can best be effected over time. Even though a "one-shot workshop" may be able to transmit some elementary facts or practices, real change in teaching requires sustained, coherent learning.

Fourth, *Good professional development gives teachers opportunities to reflect, analyze*

and work on their practice: Teachers need "to develop ideas, learn about practices, and gain a more solid sense of themselves as contributing members of a profession" (Ball and Cohen, 1999, p. 17). That is, teachers need to have the chance to examine their ideas and approaches to teaching and learning and to think about the ways that these ideas are actualized in the real life of teaching. They need opportunities to take what they have discovered about their current work, put new ideas into practice and then reflect on their successes and failures as they attempt to implement new ideas.

In particular the research on professional development in general education has found that teachers have been best able to make significant changes in their teaching practices in the context of "professional learning communities." In the same way that doctors get to present cases to their colleagues and discuss the best approaches to real-life situations in their field, teachers too must have the chance to work with peers to improve their practices.

In this approach, one finds *groups of teachers studying the teaching and learning processes together*, sometimes with the assistance of "outside" experts, sometimes on their own (Lord, 1994; Pennell and Firestone, 1996). Teachers have opportunities to voice and share successes, doubts and frustrations. They learn to raise concerns and critical questions about their own teaching and about their colleagues' teaching.

D. What Does Professional Development Currently Look Like in Jewish Education?

As a starting point towards changing practice in Jewish education, it is essential to ascertain what opportunities currently exist for the professional development of teachers in Jewish schools. Five communities participated in a survey of existing opportunities: Atlanta,

Baltimore, Cleveland, Hartford, and Milwaukee. The communities were selected to represent an array of structures and programs in Jewish education. However, because participation was voluntary, and because some of these communities were engaged in exploring new approaches with Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education (CIJE), the characteristics of programs in these locations may be more favorable than those in North America as a whole.

The survey took place in 1996. It targeted two groups of providers: central agencies for Jewish education, and synagogue supplementary schools. The survey thus reveals the entire spectrum of professional development programs for supplementary teachers, and many of the programs available to day school and pre-school teachers, insofar as such programs are offered by the central agencies.

All central agencies and synagogue schools in the five communities responded to the survey, and a total of 173 separate programs were tallied across the five communities. Of these, 141 were offered by the central agencies and 32 were sponsored by synagogue schools. A "program" could entail a wide variety of settings and activities, ranging from single workshops to mini-courses, retreats, and so on.

It is important to note that two types of professional development were not included in the survey. One was the all-day or multi-day conference that educators often attend, such as the annual convention of the Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education (CAJE), or local conferences patterned after CAJE. There were 11 such local conferences, most of which lasted one day. These were highly diverse in their content and thus did not lend themselves to the survey categories, but may be kept in mind as additional opportunities for professional

development. Another type of opportunity that does not appear in our survey results consists of courses offered at local colleges or institutions of higher Jewish learning. (See Box 1 for an example of such a course:)

Box 1. A Course at an Institution of Higher Learning

"Introduction to Modern Hebrew Literature"

A local Jewish college offered this course as part of its graduate program. The course offers students the opportunity to become familiar with Modern Hebrew literature in translation. Poetry, essays, and fiction were read and discussed. It is a semester long course, meeting once a week for two and a half hours. The course is not designed to affect teaching in local Jewish classrooms, though Jewish educators enrolled in a Jewish education degree program may have attended the class. Courses such as this one are not included in our survey results.

Programs affiliated with institutions of higher learning were included only if they were designed with central agency staff for the in-service education of teachers. If they were simply available for any member of the public, we did not include them in our purview. Nonetheless they may be important vehicles for improving teachers' knowledge.

Focus on Jewish Content

To what extent did professional development programs offered in the five communities emphasize Jewish content? We found an emphasis on Jewish content in two types of programs. In one type, a particular Jewish subject matter is the focus of the program. Box 2 contains an

example of this type of program. In "The Akedah," the main emphasis was on participants' grappling with the difficult subject matter of the biblical tale of the binding of Isaac.

Box 2. An Emphasis on Jewish Content

"The Akedah"

This program, offered by the local central agency, was open to all teachers in Jewish schools. A professor of Jewish studies at the local university taught this program. He engaged teachers in an in-depth study of the text, and then used the Akedah (the Binding of Isaac, Genesis 22) to explore ways of teaching Jewish texts to younger students. The program met four times for a total of ten hours. Even though the course occurred over a period of several weeks, it did not incorporate follow-up efforts to support or reflect on teachers' efforts to improve their teaching of Jewish texts in the classroom.

Another type of program that emphasized Jewish content, such as that illustrated in Box 3, centered on teaching a specific Jewish subject matter. Although the Jewish content itself was not the main point of "Hebrew Instructional Issues," the connection to content was inherent in the program.

Box 3. An Emphasis on Instruction in a Specific Content Area

"Hebrew Instructional Issues"

This program was offered by a central agency for a specific congregation, which was reviewing and revising its Hebrew curriculum. The program began by exploring general models of language acquisition and, then, considered ways of applying these models to Hebrew learning. Following this, issues of faith development and spirituality were considered as among the ways one may choose to teach Hebrew acquisition. This program met four times for a total of ten hours. It was designed as part of a curriculum redesign project for this synagogue supplementary school. Separate but related programs were offered for all teachers in this congregational school to strengthen their Hebrew reading skills and to involve them in the redesign of the curriculum.

Many programs lacked a deep connection to Jewish subject matter. These tended to focus on specific pedagogical or leadership strategies, in which the subject matter was assumed to be generic, or in which the Jewish content of the potential subject matter was not addressed in the program. Box 4, "How to Use Stories in Your Teaching," provides an example of a program that did not focus on Jewish content.

Box 4. A Program that Did Not Emphasize Jewish Content

"How to Use Stories in Your Teaching"

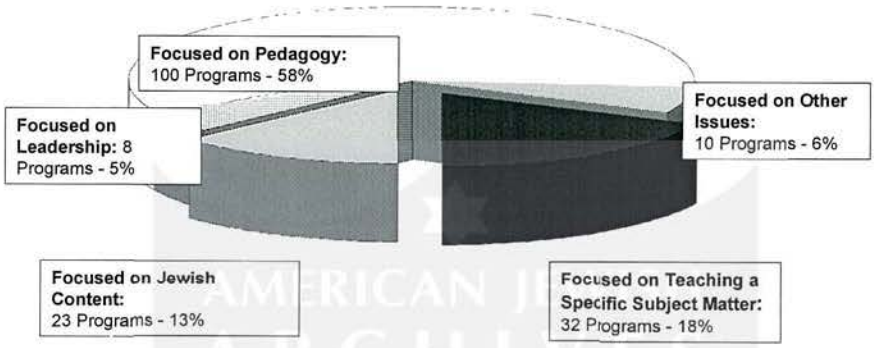
This central agency program was designed to help supplementary school teachers integrate storytelling into their classrooms by teaching them how to write a lesson plan that includes stories, exploring the role of storytelling in the curriculum, helping them to find and choose appropriate Jewish stories, and instructing them in the art of storytelling through modeling and discussion. The program met once for two hours on a Sunday afternoon.

In this type of program, Judaic subject matter is not addressed per se, but only noted as an example of how the skills under discussion might be applied. The practice of Jewish storytelling was not presented as unique or different than secular storytelling.

Overall, 23 programs, or 13%, focused on Jewish content per se, and another 32 programs (18%) focused on methods for teaching a particular Jewish content. The remaining programs (69%) centered on issues of pedagogy, leadership, or other topics without articulating a concrete connection to Jewish subject matter. Chart 1 displays these percentages:

Chart 1

Is the learning opportunity designed to contribute to the Judaic content knowledge of the educator?



Sustained and Coherent Programs

As is typical in general education, our survey suggested that opportunities for professional development in Jewish education tend to be one-shot workshops that meet for relatively few hours and are not part of a long-term, coherent plan for teachers' professional growth. "How to Use Stories in Your Teaching" (Box 4) is typical of a one-shot workshop. Chart 2 shows that 63 programs, or 37%, met for only one session, and another 49% (85 programs) met for between two and five sessions. Only 12% of programs met for six or more sessions:

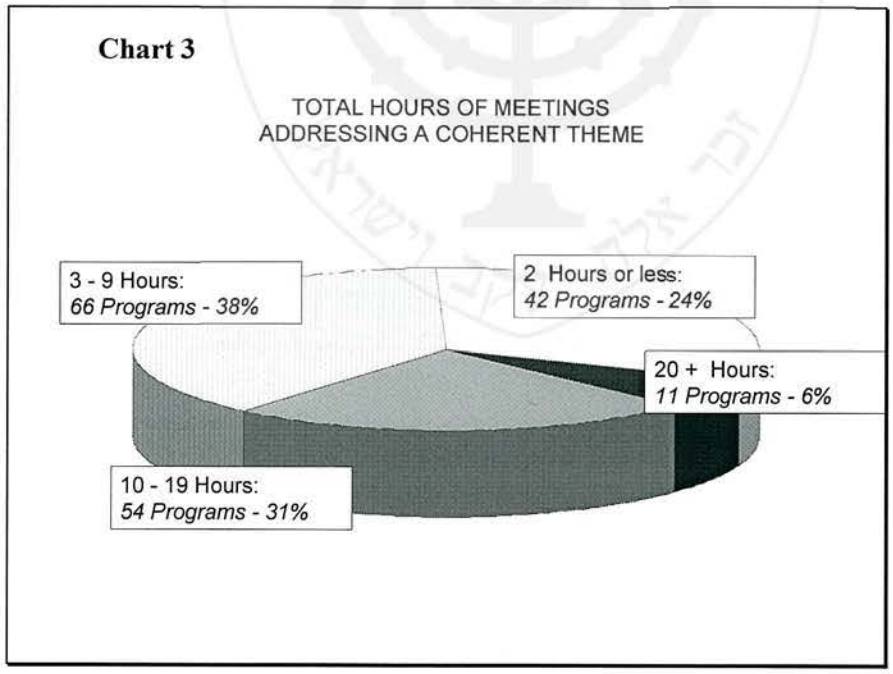
Chart 2

Is the learning opportunity a series of sessions designed to address a coherent theme rather than a "one-shot" workshop?

	# of programs	% of programs
1 session	63	37%
2 – 5 sessions	85	49%
6 – 9 sessions	12	7%
10 – 19 sessions	8	5%
20 or more sessions	4	2%
TOTAL	172	100%

Similarly, 24% of the programs spent a total of two hours or less addressing a coherent theme, and only 11 programs (6%) focused on a theme for 20 hours or more (see Chart 3):

Chart 3



Another aspect of coherence concerns whether the program is part of a more comprehensive plan. "Hebrew Instructional Issues" (Box 3) is an instance of a program that plays a role in a broad, long-term approach to renewal and growth for a synagogue supplementary school. Overall, only 27 programs (16%) were part of such a comprehensive plan, while 146 programs (84%) lacked such articulation to a wider context.

Programs Geared towards a Specific Audience

Another problem with many workshops, besides their limited duration, is that they tend to assume all participants have the same backgrounds and needs, when in fact Jewish educators vary greatly in their training, past experiences, and teaching roles. Almost half of the programs we counted (47%) were not designed for a specific audience. The others were created with a variety of particular consumers in mind, as illustrated in Chart 4.

Chart 4

Is the learning opportunity designed for the professional development of a specific audience, as delineated below, rather than "one size fits all?"

Audience Defined By:	# of programs	% of programs
Institutional Setting	66	38%
School Affiliation	5	3%
Role of Educators	10	6%
Experience of Educators	11	6%
Formal Training of Educators	0	0%
Age of Students	28	16%
Not Designed For Any Specific Audience	82	47%

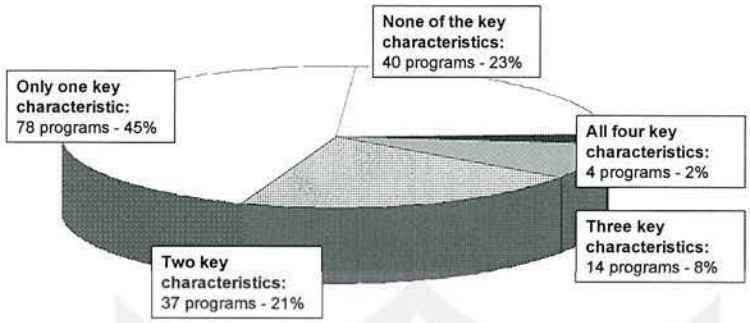
Opportunities to Reflect on Practice

None of the examples we have offered so far provided teachers with a formal opportunity to take what they have learned, develop a classroom application, and reflect upon it with other participants. Indeed, very few programs offered such an opportunity. Of course, nothing prevented teachers from trying out new ideas they may have picked up. But that is not the same as creating a formal mechanism that encourages teachers to reflect on their work. Overall, 80% of the programs lacked such mechanisms. Of those that did, 14 programs (8%) included a coaching or mentoring component, 17 programs (10%) had a formal process of classroom experimentation and reporting back to the professional development group, and 11 programs (6%) established networks of educators that offered formal opportunities for reflection. Only two of the programs were designed for teams of participants from different institutions.

Typical versus Exceptional Programs

Our survey showed that attributes of high quality professional development are lacking in many of the programs available for teachers. The picture becomes sharper when we consider how many of the programs exhibited all of the characteristics recommended by the research on teacher professional development. As Chart 5 reveals, only 4 programs (2%) across the five communities had four key characteristics, which we defined as: designed to contribute to specific content knowledge; a series of 6 or more sessions on a coherent theme; targeted for a specific audience; and designed to help educators reflect on their practice. Fourteen programs (8%) embodied three of these characteristics, 37 (21%) included two, 78 programs (45%) displayed only one of the key characteristics and 40 programs (23%) had none.

Does the learning opportunity have four key characteristics:
(1) designed to help educators reflect on their practice;
(2) designed for a specific audience;
(3) designed to contribute Judaic content knowledge; and
(4) a series of 6 or more sessions on a coherent theme?



What sort of exemplary program incorporated all four of these elements? Box 5 provides an example.

Box 5. An Exemplary Program

"Machon L'Morim: Bereshit"

This program, sponsored by a private foundation, was designed to improve teaching in Jewish early childhood education and to enhance early childhood centers as supportive contexts for teaching and learning. Twenty-six educators from five Jewish pre-schools participated in the program, which lasted for two years. In the year of our survey, the program met weekly for 24 weeks, for a total of 48 hours. Participants attended as pre-school teams, and each team included the pre-school director.

Machon L'Morim: Bereshit constituted a learning community. Participants studied Jewish texts and rituals, and focused on integrating this content with their knowledge of child development to design new approaches to bringing Jewish content to their pre-school children. In addition to the teaching faculty, the program brought in "coaches" who met weekly with each school's team to discuss what participants had learned as well as attempts to bring new insights to their classrooms. The program provided many opportunities to try out new practices and discuss their outcomes in small groups.

"Machon L'Morim: Bereshit" was a long-term, focused, and reflective program that engaged deeply with Jewish content. An evaluation provided evidence to support participants' reports of gains in their Jewish knowledge, increases in the richness of their Jewish teaching, and changes in the cultures of their schools, encouraging a more open, change-oriented approach to teaching.

V. What Policies Should Be Introduced Into Jewish Education and How?

The Four Principles

In our view there is no reason why the principles of good professional development

evidenced in best of contemporary general education cannot be introduced into Jewish education today. In some of the programs studied in the research described above we are able to see elements of this approach already being put into action. But, unfortunately, far too many examples of professional development in Jewish education have not caught up with the latest thinking in general education. The four dimensions of good professional development must be at the heart of an effort to improve teaching in Jewish education:

1. Subject matter content
2. Focused, targeted professional development sessions
3. Coherent plans sustained over time
4. Direct relationship to teaching practice

Activities for Teachers

Within such programs there are many activities that teachers can engage in that will help improve their teaching practice. These include: the creation of informal study groups about Jewish content and reading groups about educational theory and practice both within and outside of school (Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 1996); focused investigations of existing curriculum materials with an eye toward analyzing the way the materials might be used in the classroom (Ben-Peretz, 1990; Zumwalt, 1989; Ball and Cohen, 1996); the preparation and discussion of "cases" of teaching practice (Richert, 1991; Shulman and Nelson, 1989); mentoring of less experienced teachers by more experienced teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 1992); pairing of teachers with similar experience to observe and discuss one another's teaching; video-taping lessons for analysis and discussion (Lampert and Ball, 1998); and many other approaches that are documented in the educational literature of general and Jewish education.

Context Matters

The four principles outlined above refer to the activities and sessions themselves, but research in general education also highlights a crucial additional dimension for successful professional development—the **conditions** needed in educational institutions that will allow professional development to flourish and be effective. *Good professional development requires a supportive institutional context* (Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 1996; Little, 1993; Lord, 1994):

> Concentration on formal programs of professional development tends to obscure issues of obligation, incentive, and opportunity in the salaried workday and work year. Investigation of teachers' instructional assignments, ratio of in-class to out-of-class time, and school-level affiliations. . . provides us both with a perspective on *motivation or pressure to learn* and with a description of those *opportunities to learn* that are embedded in the social organization of schools (Little, 1993, p. 147).

The context of the individual school, in other words, has a great deal to say about the attitudes and realities of professional development in its environment. Is professional development deeply woven into institutional life or is it a "luxury" that gets eliminated by the constraints of time and budget? Are there rewards, both monetary and psychic, for teachers who engage in advancing their own learning? And do schools create the *conditions* that allow teacher growth to happen? Some of the key conditions include the following:

A. "Critical Colleagueship": Brian Lord (1994) has argued that teachers need opportunities to sit with colleagues and "ask increasingly more powerful and revealing questions about the practice of teaching" (p. 184). But in order to do so, teachers must work in settings that

allow and encourage such encounters to happen in a safe and professional atmosphere:

> This kind of collegiality cannot be fostered in environments of professional isolation. Teachers need to hear other points of view, need to air their own ideas among colleagues whom they trust and respect. Yet the willingness of teachers to serve as commentators and critics of their own or other teachers' practices is dependent, in part, on perceived reciprocity—on the likelihood that other members of a department, a faculty, or the profession more generally will participate fully (p. 185).

Although professional community begins in one's own school, we also need ways to create community for teachers beyond their own schools so that teachers of the same subject matters and teachers of the same age children can work and learn together (Pennell and Firestone, 1996; Little, 1993).

B. Time: Improving practice in teaching is not a short-term activity. Teachers need time to work on their craft, learn new ideas about subject matter and deepen their understanding of how children learn. In order to do so, professional development must be redefined as a central part of teaching. It can no longer be an "extra," tacked on at the end of a long day. Rather, it must be woven into teachers' daily lives. For example, in supplementary schools this might mean adding an hour paid time per week for teachers to meet together, study Jewish content, investigate curriculum materials and plan lessons and approaches to the school's subject matters.

C. Leadership: Without the support of the school leader, professional development will not succeed. The influential Rand Change Agent Study sums up the concept very clearly: Without the support of the school leader, professional development will not succeed.

> The support of the principal was directly related to the likelihood that teachers would continue the project in part or in its entirety after special funding was withdrawn. The principal gives sometimes subtle but nonetheless strong messages about the legitimacy of the project operations

> in the school—a message that teachers cannot help but receive and interpret in terms of their professional self-interest. (McLaughlin, 1991, p. 66).

What will Jewish educating institutions have to do to help professional development become central?

Policy planners within communal institutions and leaders—both lay and professional—within schools themselves need to begin to rethink (or think for the first time!) about the importance of professional development for teachers. For the foreseeable future the teaching core in Jewish schools, in both day and supplementary settings, is not going to be radically transformed by an influx of new, knowledgeable, and well-prepared faculty. By and large, the teaching force currently in place is the reality that needs to be worked with. That being the case, professional development *of a serious and intensive sort* must be a key element in changing the core practices of Jewish schools.

To begin with schools will need to devote much more time to professional development activities. This has budgetary implications to be sure, but it also entails thinking hard about structural changes that will free up teachers for professional development. The budgetary side of this picture includes financial incentives for teachers who participate in professional development, either as direct payment, linked to raises, or connected to benefits. Freeing up teachers' time may also mean hiring substitutes to cover classes during professional development sessions or allowing teachers to view one another's classes, adding extra meetings during a month and paying teachers for their time attending these meetings, or using vacation times for professional development. If schools want to develop teaching as a practice of intellect and

investigation (Lampert and Ball, 1998), if schools want to become "centers of inquiry" (Schaefer, 1967), they will need to spend money on video taping classes, so that teachers can study their own practice with colleagues.

Second, not all professional development should or will go on within the confines of a teacher's own school. Jewish schools or the Jewish community will need to set aside money for scholarships, for study opportunities in Israel, etc.

Third, Jewish schools need to use the available resources of their communities in ways that advance the agenda of professional development for teachers. This includes many options for learning Jewish subject matter content available at local universities. It means taking advantage of the offerings of local Boards of Jewish Education, Hebrew Colleges (in the communities in which they reside), and national denominational movements and training institutions. Increasingly options for study are available from distance learning and the Internet. But it's important to remember the four principles of good professional development outlined above. Schools may need to press other institutions to do run coherent, targeted programs and give up the much more prevalent one-shot workshops, except when those workshops a specifically appropriate to the kind of learning (certain skills, etc.) envisioned in the session.

Fourth, principals need the preparation to become articulate advocates for professional development within their schools. Teachers need the support and advice of an educational leader who understands issues of teaching and learning, particularly of Jewish subject matters. Such a principal would know what it takes to change teachers' roles and practice in their classrooms and in the school.

At the most basic level, all principals need to value the enterprise of professional development. In addition they should be able to: plan, develop and evaluate initiatives in their own institutions; work with their teachers to develop appropriate individual professional development plans; and work to advocate for particular programs that might best be offered across institutions or outside of the school. Some principals may even be interested and skilled enough to take on actual responsibilities for implementing the professional development activities themselves.[3]

Beyond all that principals should be engaged in professional development themselves, becoming better versed in the challenges of teaching and learning Jewish content while modeling for the teachers in their schools the importance of ongoing professional preparation and Jewish learning.

Fifth, although the literature from general education emphasizes the acquisition of skills and knowledge, Jewish education also has to deal with the spiritual and religious side of professional development. To be representatives of the Jewish tradition—as most teachers are expected to be—teachers need to have clarity and confidence in their own beliefs and attitudes about issues such as prayer, God, tradition and Torah. Although the "inner landscape of a teacher's life" has been explored by some thinkers in general education (e.g. Palmer, 1998; Greene, 1978), the need to deal with the personal aspects of teaching is particularly relevant and

[3] Elsewhere we have argued that "there is also room for the creation of a new position in schools: the professional development resource person (PDR), a position parallel to the curriculum resource person employed by schools" (Holtz, Dorph, and Goldring, 1997, p. 162). The PDR slot may be filled the principal him or herself, depending upon the skills and inclinations of individuals in particular situations.

acute in Jewish education.[4]

Finally, this effort will require people who can design and implement professional development sessions for teachers. The Teacher Educator Institute (TEI), a program[5] for preparing such leaders, has attempted to create a model of professional development based on the best of contemporary educational thought and practice (Holtz, Dorph and Goldring, 1997). In the future we envision local communities developing their own versions of TEI or sending representatives from their schools and central agencies to a national center for Jewish teacher education in which the leaders of professional development can be prepared and nurtured.

The contemporary Jewish community in North America has made admirable strides in placing Jewish education centrally on its agenda for the future. In some communities funding for Jewish education has increased dramatically. Private foundations have also backed up their promises with financial support for a variety of new initiatives. We stand at a moment of great promise. Yet without serious investment in the core enterprise of formal Jewish education—the teaching and learning that goes on in real classrooms—many good intentions will go for naught. What makes this moment particularly exciting is the fact that we have a great deal of knowledge about what it would take to help teachers improve their practice. Now is the time to put that knowledge into action.

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[4] One notable exception was Melton teacher retreat program of the mid-1980s. This is a model that may merit further investigation (Holtz and Rauch, 1988).

[5] TEI was created by the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education [CIJE] with support from the Mandel Foundation and the Nathan Cummings Foundation.

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CONTENTS

CHANGING THE CORE
Communal Policies and Present Realities in the Professional Development of Teachers for Jewish Schools*

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Changing the core practices of teaching and learning must be at the heart of any effort to improve the quality of American Jewish education. The authors report on a study of the quality and quantity of professional development opportunities—in-service education—for teachers in Jewish schools in five North American communities. Comparing professional development in these communities to the state-of-the-art as presented in the research and policy literature from general education, the authors find that professional development in Jewish education falls short of the best practices being advocated in the general educational literature today. The article concludes with recommendations for improving professional development in contemporary Jewish education.

In the past decade, the emergence of Jewish continuity as a key concern of the North American Jewish community has placed the improvement of Jewish education at the center of the communal agenda (Commission on Jewish Education in North America, 1991; Holtz, 1992). A variety of strategies have been proposed to help achieve such improvement, most of which have focused either on specific targets for change (educational trips to Israel, building new day schools, etc.) or on structural and organizational changes within the community, such as new funding structures or new roles for local federations (Ruskay, 1995/6; Woocher, 1996).

But like reform in general education, such efforts in Jewish education rarely look at what Richard F. Elmore has called "the core of educational practice," namely, the experience of teaching and learning that comprises the heart of what Jewish education—at least in formal settings—is necessarily about. As Elmore puts it:

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> Much of what passes for "change" in U.S. schooling is not really about changing the core....Innovations often embody vague intentions of changing the core through modifications that are weakly related, or not related at all, to the core...
>
> However, the changes are often not explicitly connected to fundamental changes in the way knowledge is constructed, nor to the division of responsibility between teacher and student, the way students and teacher interact with each other around knowledge, or any of a variety of other stable conditions in the core. Hence, changes in scheduling seldom translate into changes in the fundamental conditions of teaching and learning for students and teachers (Elmore, 1996, p. 3).

In the context of Jewish education, by analogy, we could replace the phrase "changes in scheduling" in the sentence above with a phrase like "changes in the structural relationships between federations and boards of Jewish education" and come out with the same conclusion Elmore reaches: By and large the fundamental conditions of teaching and learning in Jewish schools remain unchanged!

What would it take to really change the core practices of contemporary Jewish education? How could we imagine the experience of teaching and learning fundamentally altered in today's classrooms? One crucial element in implementing such changes is ongoing, effective professional development—in-service education—for teachers in Jewish schools (Dorph, 1995). Such a strategy raises many challenges, both for policy planners and implementers. In this article we address two key questions that must be considered in order to guide new approaches for Jewish communal policy in improving the core enterprise of Jewish education:

1. What characterizes the latest thinking about professional development in the world of general education?
2. What kinds of professional development are typically offered in Jewish education today, and how does professional development in Jewish education compare to the state-of-the-art in the field, as delineated by contemporary standards in general education?

To answer those questions we report in detail on a study of teachers' professional development offered in five Jewish communities. Finally, based on the discussion of the issues above, we propose approaches to professional development that could have an important impact on how teachers teach and consequently how children experience their Jewish education.

Before looking at these issues, we need first to present the rationale behind our advocacy of professional development as the appropriate strategy for addressing the improvement of the core practices of teaching and learning in Jewish schools. Why do we argue in favor of this approach? After all, an obvious answer for improving practice is to recruit teachers with rich Jewish backgrounds into the field and to find ways to place these prospective teachers in strong teacher preparation programs (at the "pre-service" level). But both of these responses are long-term solutions to an immediate crisis. Moreover, given the part-time nature of the field—particularly in supplementary schools–such a change in personnel is not likely to happen without major innovations in school and staffing structures. In addition, even if it were desirable, it is impractical to imagine replacing the entire population of those teachers who have inadequate preparation, given the vast numbers that would be involved.

On the other hand, it is obvious that teachers currently in Jewish schools *are* in need of professional development. In research previously published we showed, among other things, that teachers in Jewish day schools, supplementary schools, and preschools were highly motivated and took their work seriously, but were not well prepared for their jobs, both in their formal Judaic background and in their educational training. In the supplementary schools in particular the teachers lacked learning in Jewish subject areas and training in Jewish education. Less than

20 percent of the teachers were professionally prepared in both pedagogy and Judaic subject matter (Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education, 1994; Gamoran et al., 1998).

Since the preparation and educational background of teachers are among the most important factors in influencing teacher effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, 1997), these findings indicate a crucial area in need of dramatic improvement. Thus along with imagining better plans for recruiting talented people into the field of Jewish teaching and together with efforts to improve existing teacher preparation programs and create new ones, it is clear that much work needs to be done with the population of teachers now in the field.

On the positive side, the study of educators quoted above also discovered an important additional fact: Contrary to the popular notion that Jewish education was staffed by a transient, constantly changing population of teachers, most of the teachers studied planned to stay in current positions and viewed Jewish education as their career, even though (or perhaps because!) many of their positions were part-time:

> Enhancement of professional growth is a powerful strategy for reform because teachers are committed, stable, and career-oriented. Even among part-time teachers, who lack formal training as Jewish educators, many view their work in Jewish education as a career and plan to stay in their positions for some time to come. These teachers are a ripe target for higher standards of professional growth (Gamoran, et al., 1998, p. 22).

It makes sense, therefore, to argue that ongoing professional development for teachers must be at the heart of any effort to change the face of contemporary Jewish education. We have learned from general education that professional development is important even for teachers with excellent backgrounds and preparation (Darling-Hammond et al., 1996; Little, 1993). Jewish education calls out even more dramatically for the continuing education and training of teachers.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE RECONCEPTUALIZATION OF TEACHING

Until recently the dominant approach to professional development for teachers, seen both in general and Jewish education, has taken the form of one-shot workshops or, at best, short-term passive activities, with limited follow-up (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991). The content of such in-service workshops was built upon a "one size fits all" approach–the idea that professional development strategies are applicable to all participants regardless of the educational setting in which the teacher worked, the age of the student in the teacher's class, or the subject matter to be taught and learned.

Such strategies are based on a "transmission of information" model of professional development: It is assumed that each teacher would "learn" the latest new techniques and bring them back to her or his own classroom, making whatever "adjustments" might be necessary. Teachers in this conception are treated as passive recipients of techniques and practices, rather than "intelligent, inquiring individuals with legitimate expertise and important experience," as one study has put it (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989, p. 50).

It is important to emphasize that different approaches to professional development tend to emanate out of different conceptions of *teaching* itself. That is, the model of preparing teachers is closely related to the style of teaching and learning envisioned in the classrooms in which the teachers will be working. **Thus the "old" paradigm of professional development grew out of a particular view of teaching that focused on teachers transmitting information and children listening and remembering (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1996).**

In recent years, however, reformers in general education have advocated for a different kind of teaching to replace conventional practices in classrooms. At times this approach has been called "teaching for understanding" (Cohen, 1990; Cohen et al., 1993), though its roots go back at least as far as

Dewey. It is a view of teaching that moves away from a more traditional image of "teaching as telling and learning as listening" to a vision of "learning as telling, teaching as listening" (Little, 1993). Moreover, this view sees teaching as not mainly a technical skill (though it does require skillfulness), but rather as an unpredictable and uncertain practice (Ball & Wilson, 1996; McDonald, 1992). Finally this notion of teaching emphasizes the fact that teachers need to have knowledge in order to teach well, but knowledge of a certain kind, knowledge that is specific to the pedagogic issues inherent in the subject matters that they are teaching (Grossman, 1990; Grossman et al., 1989; Shulman, 1986; Stodolsky, 1988).

These three elements of teaching–a focus on teaching for understanding, a recognition of the uncertain nature of teaching, and a need for what Shulman (1986) calls "pedagogical content knowledge" in the areas that they teach–call out for new models and approaches in the professional development of teachers.

This conception of teaching requires a different understanding about what teachers need to know and be able to do. It asks us therefore to think differently about the kind of professional development offered to teachers (Wilson et al., 1993). If teaching is "subject specific" (Kennedy, 1991), for example, generic approaches to teaching that are said to be appropriate to all ages and subjects are unlikely to succeed. *In the same way, generic, "one size fits all" professional development programs will not succeed in improving teaching in the classroom.* If teaching is an uncertain practice, it demands professional development opportunities for analysis and self-reflection instead of how-to workshops with easy answers and "tricks" for the classroom. If knowledge is at the core of teaching, it calls for a variety of new strategies to improve and deepen teachers' learning (McDiarmid & Ball, 1989). And educational settings will need to encourage teachers to experiment and help teachers through the real struggles that accompany any effort at change (Little, 1986; McLaughlin, 1993).

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS: THE STATE OF THE ART

According to the best thinking in contemporary education, what does good professional development for teachers look like? A number of different elements have been identified by current research as characteristic of high-quality professional development programs. Here we point out four that have been shown to be critical. Some of the most important research undergirding these recommendations can be found in Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1996; Little, 1993; Lord, 1994; McDiarmid, 1994; McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993.

1. *Good professional development is connected to knowledge of the content that is being taught:* Teachers need to develop sophisticated understandings of the subjects they are teaching. By sophisticated, we mean having the ability to understand the key concepts and skills of any particular subject and at the same time understanding the best ways to present them to students or help students discover these central ideas on their own. It means knowing the subject matter, but also understanding how that subject is understood (or misunderstood!) by children. What are the likely confusions that students will have? What are the best ways to overcome them? What activities in a classroom are most likely to encourage and inspire students to learn the subject matter? All of these questions indicate the kind of understanding of subject matter that teachers need to attain.
2. *Good professional development has a clear and focused audience in mind:* Because the subject matter content of teaching is so central to professional development, good programs are not based on generic teaching skills meant for a wide range of participants, but are targeted. For example, they are aimed at a specific audience of teachers—either by the subject matter being taught or the grade of the students who are the potential learners.

3. *Good professional development has a coherent plan, sustained over time.* Professional development requires a well thought-out plan, both for individual teachers and for the educational institution (or system) as a whole. Sessions must follow a meaningful educational pattern, building upon one another in a sequenced manner. In addition, professional development requires an ongoing cumulative effect that can best be effected over time. Even though a "one-shot workshop" may be able to transmit some elementary facts or practices, real change in teaching requires sustained, coherent learning.
4. *Good professional development gives teachers opportunities to reflect, analyze, and work on their practice.* Teachers need "to develop ideas, learn about practices, and gain a more solid sense of themselves as contributing members of a profession" (Ball & Cohen, 1999, p. 17). That is, teachers need to have the chance to examine their ideas and approaches to teaching and learning and to think about the ways that these ideas are actualized in the real life of teaching. They need opportunities to take what they have discovered about their current work, put new ideas into practice, and then reflect on their successes and failures as they attempt to implement new ideas.

In particular the research on professional development in general education has found that teachers have been best able to make significant changes in their teaching practices in the context of "professional learning communities." In the same way that physicians get to present cases to their colleagues and discuss the best approaches to real-life situations in their field, teachers too must have the chance to work with peers to improve their practices.

In this approach, one finds groups of teachers studying the teaching and learning processes together, sometimes with the assistance of "outside" experts, sometimes on their own (Lord, 1994; Pennell & Firestone, 1996). Teachers have opportunities to voice and share successes, doubts, and frustrations. They learn to raise concerns and critical questions about their own teaching and about their colleagues' teaching.

WHAT DOES PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CURRENTLY LOOK LIKE IN JEWISH EDUCATION?

As a starting point toward changing practice in Jewish education, it is essential to ascertain what opportunities currently exist for the professional development of teachers in Jewish schools. Five communities participated in a survey of existing opportunities: Atlanta, Baltimore, Cleveland, Hartford, and Milwaukee. The communities were selected to represent an array of structures and programs in Jewish education. However, because participation was voluntary, and because some of these communities were engaged in exploring new approaches with Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education (CIJE), the characteristics of programs in these locations may be more favorable than those in North America as a whole.

The survey took place in 1996. It targeted two groups of providers: central agencies for Jewish education and synagogue supplementary schools. The survey thus reveals the entire spectrum of professional development programs for supplementary teachers, as well as many of the programs available to day school and preschool teachers, insofar as such programs are offered by the central agencies.

All central agencies and synagogue schools in the five communities responded to the survey, and a total of 173 separate programs were tallied across the five communities. Of these, 141 were offered by the central agencies, and 32 were sponsored by synagogue schools. A program could entail a wide variety of settings and activities, ranging from single workshops to min-courses, retreats, and so on.

It is important to note that two types of professional development were not included

in the survey. One was the all-day or multi-day conference that educators often attend, such as the annual convention of the Coalition for the Advancement of Jewish Education (CAJE), or local conferences patterned after CAJE. There were 11 such local conferences, most of which lasted one day. These were highly diverse in their content and thus did not lend themselves to the survey categories, but may be kept in mind as additional opportunities for professional development. Another type of opportunity that does not appear in our survey results consists of courses offered at local colleges or institutions of higher Jewish learning. Programs affiliated with institutions of higher learning were included only if they were designed with central agency staff for the in-service education of teachers. If they were simply available for any member of the public, we did not include them in our purview. Nonetheless they may be important vehicles for improving teachers' knowledge.

Focus on Jewish Content

Two types of programs emphasized Jewish content. In one type, a particular Jewish subject matter is the focus of the program (see Box 1). In "The Akedah," the main emphasis was on participants' grappling with the difficult subject matter of the biblical tale of the binding of Isaac.

Another type of program that emphasized Jewish content, such as that illustrated in Box 2, centered on teaching a specific Jewish subject matter. Although the Jewish content itself was not the main point of "Hebrew Instructional Issues," the connection to content was inherent in the program.

Many programs lacked a deep connection to Jewish subject matter. They tended to focus on specific pedagogical or leadership strategies, in which the subject matter was assumed to be generic, or in which the Jewish content of the potential subject matter was not addressed in the program. Box 3, "How to Use Stories in Your Teaching," provides an example of a program that did not focus on Jewish content.

Overall, 23 programs, or 13 percent, focused on Jewish content per se, and another 32 programs (18%) focused on methods for teaching a particular Jewish content. The remaining programs (69%) centered on issues of pedagogy, leadership, or other topics without articulating a concrete connection to Jewish subject matter. Figure 1 displays these percentages.

Sustained and Coherent Programs

As is typical in general education, our survey suggested that opportunities for professional development in Jewish education tend to be one-shot workshops that meet for relatively few hours and are not part of a long-term, coherent plan for teachers' professional growth. Sixty-three programs (37%) met for only one session, and another 49 percent (85 programs) met for between two and five sessions. Only 12 percent of programs met for six or more sessions.

Similarly, 24 percent of the programs spent a total of two hours or less addressing a coherent theme, and only 11 programs (6%)

BOX 1. AN EMPHASIS ON JEWISH CONTENT: "THE AKEDAH"

This program, offered by the local central agency, was open to all teachers in Jewish schools. A professor of Jewish studies at the local university taught this program. He engaged teachers in an in-depth study of the text and then used the Akedah (the Binding of Isaac, Genesis 22) to explore ways of teaching Jewish texts to younger students. The program met four times for a total of ten hours. Even though the course occurred over a period of several weeks, it did not incorporate follow-up efforts to support or reflect on teachers' efforts to improve their teaching of Jewish texts in the classroom

BOX 2. AN EMPHASIS ON INSTRUCTION IN A SPECIFIC CONTENT AREA: "HEBREW INSTRUCTIONAL ISSUES"

This program was offered by a central agency for a specific congregation, which was reviewing and revising its Hebrew curriculum. The program began by exploring general models of language acquisition and then considered ways of applying these models to Hebrew learning. Following this, issues of faith development and spirituality were considered as among the ways one may choose to teach Hebrew acquisition. This program met four times for a total of ten hours. It was designed as part of a curriculum redesign project for this synagogue supplementary school. Separate but related programs were offered for all teachers in this congregational school to strengthen their Hebrew reading skills and to involve them in the redesign of the curriculum.

focused on a theme for 20 hours or more.

Another aspect of coherence concerns whether the program is part of a more comprehensive plan. "Hebrew Instructional Issues" (Box 2) is an instance of a program that play a role in a broad, long-term approach to renewal and growth for a synagogue supplementary school. Overall, only 27 programs (16%) were part of such a comprehensive plan, whereas 146 programs (84%) lacked such articulation to a wider context.

Programs Geared toward a Specific Audience

Another problem with many workshops, besides their limited duration, is that they tend to assume all participants have the same backgrounds and needs, when in fact Jewish educators vary greatly in their training, past experiences, and teaching roles. Almost half of the programs we counted (47%) were not designed for a specific audience. The others were created with a variety of particular consumers in mind, as illustrated in Table 1.

Opportunities to Reflect on Practice

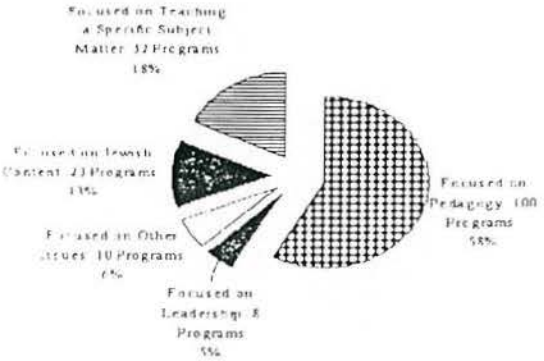
None of the examples we have offered so far provided teachers with a formal opportunity to take what they had learned, develop a classroom application, and reflect upon it with other participants. Indeed, very few programs offered such an opportunity. Of course, nothing prevented teachers from trying out new ideas they may have picked up. But that is not the same as creating a formal mechanism that encourages teachers to reflect on their work. Overall, 80 percent of the programs lacked such mechanisms. Of those

BOX 3. A PROGRAM THAT DID NOT EMPHASIZE JEWISH CONTENT: "HOW TO USE STORIES IN YOUR TEACHING"

This central agency program was designed to help supplementary school teachers integrate storytelling into their classrooms by teaching them how to write a lesson plan that includes stories, exploring the role of storytelling in the curriculum, helping them find and choose appropriate Jewish stories, and instructing them in the art of storytelling through modeling and discussion. The program met once for two hours on a Sunday afternoon.

In this type of program, Judaic subject matter is not addressed per se, but only noted as an example of how the skills under discussion might be applied. The practice of Jewish storytelling was not presented as unique or different than secular storytelling.

Figure 1. Is the learning opportunity designed to contribute to the Judaic content knowledge of the educator?



that did, 14 programs (8%) included a coaching or mentoring component, 17 programs (10%) had a formal process of classroom experimentation and reporting back to the professional development group, and 11 programs (6%) established networks of educators that offered formal opportunities for reflection. Only two of the programs were designed for teams of participants from different institutions.

Typical versus Exceptional Programs

Our survey showed that attributes of high-quality professional development are lacking in many of the programs available for teachers. The picture becomes sharper when we consider how few of the programs exhibited all of the characteristics recommended by the research on teacher professional development. As Figure 2 reveals, only four programs (2%) across the five communities had the four key characteristics, which we defined as (1) designed to contribute to specific content knowledge; (2) a series of six or more sessions on a coherent theme; (3) targeted for a specific audience; and (4) designed to help educators reflect on their practice. Fourteen programs (8%) embodied three of these characteristics, 37 (21%) included two, 78 programs (45%) displayed only one of the key characteristics, and 40 programs (23%) had none.

What sort of exemplary program incorporated all four of these elements? Box 4 provides an example.

Machon L'Morim: Bereshit was a long-term, focused, and reflective program that engaged deeply with Jewish content. An evaluation provided evidence to support participants' reports of gains in their Jewish knowledge, increases in the richness of their Jewish teaching, and changes in the cultures of their schools, encouraging a more open, change-oriented approach to teaching.

WHAT POLICIES SHOULD BE INTRODUCED INTO JEWISH EDUCATION AND HOW?

There is no reason why the principles of good professional development evidenced in the best of contemporary general education cannot be introduced into Jewish education today. In some of the programs studied in the research described above we are able to see elements of this approach already being put into action. But, unfortunately, far too many examples of professional development in Jewish education have not caught up with the latest thinking in general education. Four dimensions of good professional development must be at the heart of an effort to improve teaching in Jewish education: (1) subject matter content, (2) focused, targeted professional development sessions, (3) coherent plans sustained over time, and (4) direct relationship to teaching practice.

Activities for Teachers

Within such programs there are many

BOX 4. AN EXEMPLARY PROGRAM: *"MACHON L'MORIM: BERESHIT"*

This program, sponsored by a private foundation, was designed to improve teaching in Jewish early childhood education and to enhance early childhood centers as supportive contexts for teaching and learning. Twenty-six educators from five Jewish preschools participated in the program, which lasted for two years. In the year of our survey, the program met weekly for 24 weeks, for a total of 48 hours. Participants attended as preschool teams, and each team included the preschool director.

Machon L'Morim: Bereshit constituted a learning community. Participants studied Jewish texts and rituals and focused on integrating this content with their knowledge of child development to design new approaches to bringing Jewish content to their preschool children. In addition to the teaching faculty, the program brought in "coaches" who met weekly with each school's team to discuss what participants had learned as well as attempts to bring new insights to their classrooms. The program provided many opportunities to try out new practices and discuss their outcomes in small groups.

activities that teachers can engage in that will help improve their teaching practice. These include the creation of informal study groups about Jewish content and reading groups about educational theory and practice both within and outside of school (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1996); focused investigations of existing curriculum materials with an eye toward analyzing the way the materials might be used in the classroom (Ball & Cohen, 1996; Ben-Peretz, 1990; Zumwalt, 1989); the preparation and discussion of "cases" of teaching practice (Richert, 1991; Shulman & Nelson, 1989); mentoring of less experienced teachers by more experienced teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 1992); pairing of teachers with similar experience to observe and discuss one another's teaching; videotaping lessons for analysis and discussion (Lampert & Ball, 1998); and many other approaches that are documented in the literature of general and Jewish education.

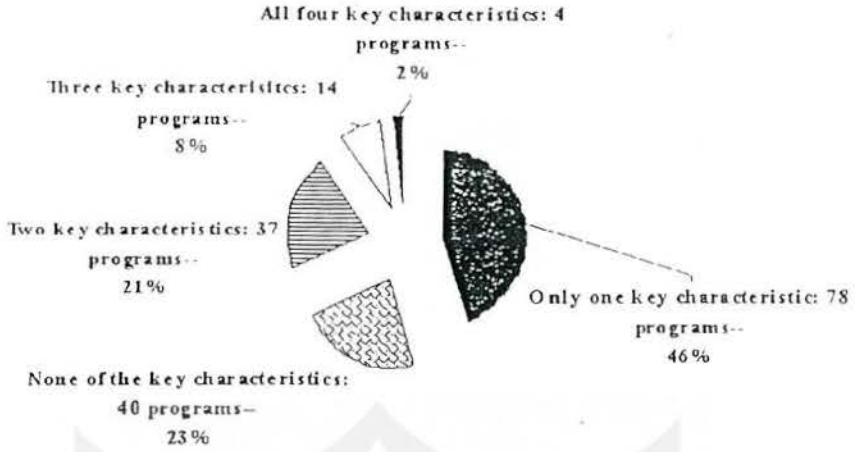
Context Matters

The four principles outlined above refer to the activities and sessions themselves, but research in general education also highlights a crucial additional dimension for successful professional development—the *conditions* needed in educational institutions that will allow professional development to flourish and be effective. Good professional development requires a supportive institutional context (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin,

Table 1. Are programs geared toward a specific audience?

Audience Defined By:	# of Programs	% of Programs
Institutional Setting	66	38%
School Affiliation	5	3%
Role of Educators	10	6%
Experience of Educators	11	6%
Formal Training of Educators	0	0%
Age of Students	28	16%
Not Designed for Any Specific Audience	82	47%

Figure 2. Does the learning opportunity have four key characteristics: 1) designed to help educators reflect on their practice; 2) designed for a specific audience; 3) designed to contribute Judaic knowledge; and 4) a series of 6 or more sessions on a coherent theme?



1996; Little, 1993; Lord, 1994).

The context of the individual school, in other words, has a great deal to say about the attitudes and realities of professional development in its environment. Is professional development deeply woven into institutional life, or is it a "luxury" that gets eliminated by the constraints of time and budget? Are there rewards, both monetary and psychic, for teachers who engage in advancing their own learning? And do schools create the conditions that allow teacher growth to happen? Some of the key conditions include the following:

"Critical Colleagueship"

Brian Lord (1994) has argued that teachers need opportunities to sit with colleagues and "ask increasingly more powerful and revealing questions about the practice of teaching" (p. 184). But in order to do so, teachers must work in settings that allow and encourage such encounters to happen in a safe and professional atmosphere:

> This kind of collegiality cannot be fostered in environments of professional isolation. Teachers need to hear other points of view, need to air their own ideas among colleagues whom they trust and respect. Yet, the willingness of teachers to serve as commentators and critics of their own or other teachers' practices is dependent, in part, on perceived reciprocity—on the likelihood that other members of a department, a faculty, or the profession more generally will participate fully (p. 185).

Although professional community begins in one's own school, we also need ways to create community for teachers beyond their own schools so that teachers of the same subject matters and teachers of the same age children can work and learn together (Little, 1993; Pennell & Firestone, 1996).

Time

Improving practice in teaching is not a short-term activity. Teachers need time to work on their craft, learn new ideas about subject matter, and deepen their understanding of how children learn. Therefore, professional development must be redefined as a central part of teaching. It can no longer be an extra, tacked on at the end of a long day, but must be woven into teachers' daily lives. For example, in supplementary schools this might mean adding an hour paid time per week for teachers to meet together, study Jewish content, investigate curriculum materials, and plan lessons and approaches to the school's subject matters.

Leadership

Without the support of the school leader, professional development will not succeed. The influential Rand Change Agent Study sums up the concept very clearly.

> The support of the principal was directly related to the likelihood that teachers would continue the project in part or in its entirety after special funding was withdrawn. The principal gives sometimes subtle but nonetheless strong messages about the legitimacy of the project operations in the school—a message that teachers cannot help but receive and interpret in terms of their professional self-interest (McLaughlin, 1991, p. 66).

How Jewish Educational Institutions Can Help Professional Development Become Central

Policy planners within communal institutions and leaders—both lay and professional—within schools themselves need to begin to rethink (or think for the first time!) about the importance of professional development for teachers. For the foreseeable future the teaching core in Jewish schools, in both day and supplementary settings, is not going to be radically transformed by an influx of new, knowledgeable, and well-prepared faculty. By and large, the teaching force currently in place is the reality that needs to be worked with. That being the case, professional development *of a serious and intensive sort* must be a key element in changing the core practices of Jewish schools.

To begin with, schools will need to devote much more time to professional development activities. This has budgetary implications to be sure, but it also entails thinking hard about structural changes that will free up teachers for professional development. The budgetary side of this picture includes financial incentives for teachers who participate in professional development, either as direct payment, linked to raises, or connected to benefits. Freeing up teachers' time may also mean hiring substitutes to cover classes during professional development sessions or allowing teachers to view one another's classes, adding extra meetings during a month and paying teachers for their time attending these meetings, or using vacation times for professional development. If schools want to develop teaching as a practice of intellect and investigation (Lampert & Ball, 1998), if schools want to become "centers of inquiry" (Schaefer, 1967), they will need to spend money on videotaping classes, so that teachers can study their own practice with colleagues.

Second, not all professional development should or will go on within the confines of a teacher's own school. Jewish schools or the Jewish community will need to set aside money for scholarships, for study opportunities in Israel, and the like.

Third, Jewish schools need to use the available resources of their communities in ways that advance the agenda of professional development for teachers. It means taking advantage of the offerings of local Boards of Jewish Education, Hebrew Colleges (in the communities in which they reside), local universities, and national denominational movements and training institutions. Increasingly distance learning and Internet options for study are available. However, it is important to remember the four principles of good professional development outlined above. Schools may need to press other institutions to run coherent, targeted programs and give up the much more prevalent one-shot workshops, except when those workshops are specifically appropriate to the kind of *learning* (certain skills, etc.) envisioned in the session.

Fourth, principals need the preparation to become articulate advocates for professional development within their schools. Teachers need the support and advice of an educational leader who understands issues of teaching and learning, particularly of Jewish subject matters. Such a principal would know what it takes to change teachers' roles and practice in their classrooms and in the school.

At the most basic level, all principals need to value the enterprise of professional devel-

opment. In addition they should be able to plan, develop, and evaluate initiatives in their own institutions; work with their teachers to develop appropriate individual professional development plans; and advocate for particular programs that might best be offered across institutions or outside the school. Some principals may even be interested and skilled enough to take on actual responsibilities for implementing the professional development activities themselves.[1]

Beyond all that, principals should be engaged in professional development themselves, becoming better versed in the challenges of teaching and learning Jewish content while modeling for the teachers in their schools the importance of ongoing professional preparation and Jewish learning.

Fifth, although the literature from general education emphasizes the acquisition of skills and knowledge, Jewish education also has to deal with the spiritual and religious side of professional development. To be representatives of the Jewish tradition—as most teachers are expected to be—teachers need to have clarity and confidence in their own beliefs and attitudes about such issues as prayer, God, tradition, and Torah. Although the "inner landscape of a teacher's life" has been explored by some thinkers in general education (e.g., Greene, 1978; Palmer, 1998), the need to deal with the personal aspects of teaching is particularly relevant and acute in Jewish education.

Finally, this effort will require people who can design and implement professional development sessions for teachers. The Teacher Educator Institute (TEI), a program of the Mandel Foundation (partially supported by a grant from the Nathan Cummings Foundation) for preparing such leaders, has attempted to create a model of professional development based on the best of contemporary educational thought and practice (Holtz et al., 1997). In the future we envision local communities developing their own versions of TEI or sending representatives from their schools and central agencies to a national center for Jewish teacher education in which the leaders of professional development can be prepared and nurtured.

The contemporary Jewish community in North America has made admirable strides in placing Jewish education centrally on its agenda for the future. In some communities funding for Jewish education has increased dramatically. Private foundations have also backed up their promises with financial support for a variety of new initiatives. We stand at a moment of great promise. Yet without serious investment in the core enterprise of formal Jewish education—the teaching and learning that goes on in real classrooms—many good intentions will go for naught. What makes this moment particularly exciting is the fact that we have a great deal of knowledge about what it would take to help teachers improve their practice. Now is the time to put that knowledge into action.

[1]Elsewhere we have argued that "there is also room for the creation of a new position in schools: the professional development resource person (PDR), a position parallel to the curriculum resource person employed by schools" (Holtz et al., 1997, p. 162). The PDR slot may be filled by the principal depending upon his or her skills and inclinations.

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