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Barry -  
 More reading material for the Jerusalem  
 meetings. Have a good trip.

Ginny

## Thoughts on a Research Agenda

*Adam Gamaron*

The purpose of this memo is to share my thoughts about the possibility of research and evaluation in lead communities and other areas of Jewish education in North America. I will discuss substantive issues, both general and those of special interest to me, and design issues.

### Substantive Issues

If I understand the plan in the "Report," the primary issue for research must be the evaluation of specific programs taking place in the lead communities, with the goal of disseminating knowledge about these programs to the wider Jewish education audience. As I understand it, this evaluation process will not be one in which the researchers are completely outside the reform process; rather, there will be continuous feedback between the researchers and the educators in the lead communities. Thus, the project would involve both formative and summative evaluation.

The central problem for this investigation is the identification of outcomes. Selecting and/or developing indicators would need to be a primary task in the early years of the program. Such indicators would include those at the individual level (cognitive, affective, and behavioral) and at the community level (possible indicators include rate of teacher turnover, rate of educational participation, rate of intermarriage, etc.).

At the same time, the research should probably give equal weight to studying the process of change, especially during the early years. In the lead communities, what organizational mechanisms are used to foster change? What are the barriers to change, and how might they be surmounted? To what extent can we attribute successful innovations to the charisma and drive of particular individuals, and to what extent can we identify organizational conditions that supported successful change? These questions are critical if the lead communities are to serve as models for Jewish educational improvement throughout North America.

Studying the process of change becomes more critical when we recognize that the effects of innovation may not be manifested for several years. For example, suppose Community "X" manages to quadruple its number of full-time, professionally-trained Jewish educators. How long will it take for this change to affect cognitive and affective outcomes for students? Since the results cannot be detected immediately, it would be important to obtain a qualitative sense of the extent to which the professional educators are being used effectively. Studying the process is also important in the case of unsuccessful innovation. Suppose, despite the best-laid plans, Community "X" is unable to increase its professional teaching force. Learning from this experience would require knowledge of the points at which the innovation broke down.

Aside from these issues, which are paramount from the practical side, there are other points which are of special interest to a sociologist of education. These concerns are intellectually

provocative to me because of my long-standing interest in the effects of education "treatments" on outcomes; other researchers would obviously find different issues of special interest.

### *Wide Range of Treatment*

In research on secular education in western countries, a major problem for studying the effects of schooling on achievement and other outcomes is that there is relatively little variation in the quality of schooling. In contrast, the range of educational experiences in Jewish education is enormously diverse, ranging, as Jim Coleman pointed out to me, from zero to total immersion. Yet to date, the best studies on the effects of Jewish education deal with only a restricted range of the total variation (Sunday school, afternoon school, and day school). By considering the full array of Jewish educational experiences of the youth of the lead communities (e.g., by including summer camps, Israel trips, and youth groups, as well as schools), the project could provide a better analysis of the effects of educational treatments on outcomes than has been possible in the past.

### *Emphasis on Communities*

Currently, there is a fair amount of attention to connections between schools and communities in the wider educational literature. The research agenda has at least two dimensions: studying the coordination (or its absence) between schools and other social service delivery agents; and the social networks among teachers, parents, students, and other members of the community (as in Coleman and Hoffer, 1987). Both of these issues could be fruitfully examined in the Jewish education context.

The "Report" is quite explicit in calling for community-wide emphasis on education. This may take the form of increased cooperation among the Jewish schools and other Jewish institutions in the communities. If so, the process and its results would be interesting to a broad audience for both practical and theoretical reasons. At the same time, the improvement effort may lead to stronger networks of support for education among students and their parents, and this would be equally interesting to study.

### *Design Issues*

What might the research program involve? My first thoughts are that initially, the research would require two major efforts: fieldwork studies of the process of change; and conceptual and experimental (or piloting) work on indicators of outcomes. These thoughts presuppose that educational institutions in the lead communities are automatically receptive to research efforts.

### *Fieldwork*

I would think that a half-time researcher would be needed in each lead community. The researchers would have doctoral training and fieldwork experience. Are funds available for such an effort?

More generally, would the research program need to generate its own funds, or have the funds already been committed?

The field researchers would be responsible for (1) describing the basic structure and operation of Jewish education in the community, broadly defined; (2) describing changes in those structures and processes; (3) relating these conditions to outcomes, in a qualitative sense, drawing on the subjective experiences and meanings of participants, as well as providing an external analysis of the cultural context and the quality of Jewish education in the community. Although much of their work would be done independently, these researchers would meet as a group at regular intervals (perhaps quarterly?) to exchange findings and critique one another's reports.

In addition to the field researchers, I would advocate "reflective practitioners." A few teachers and/or administrators in each community could be explicitly funded to carry out research on their own efforts, and those of their colleagues, with innovative educational programs.

As to the selection of communities, I have little to say. The only thing that occurs to me is that mid-sized Jewish communities would probably be best from the standpoint of organizing the research: Too small, and it may be difficult to find qualified field researchers; too large, and the community may be too complex for us to cope with (i.e., New York, Chicago, Los Angeles).

*Development of Indicators*

Because of diverse skills and knowledge required for this aspect of the project, a team of researchers would be required, with skills in demography, social psychology, psychometrics, survey research, and Jewish content domains (Hebrew language, history, Bible, etc.). The team would have as its goals (1) to reach decisions on what outcomes, exactly, should be measured; and (2) the development of quantitative indicators of those outcomes.

For the lead communities, it would be preferable to gather baseline data from the very first year. This may be possible for demographic and school-organizational variables, but it is not likely feasible for affective and cognitive outcomes. I have little knowledge of survey and test instruments that are already available, but even if there are some, I would not be optimistic that they could be employed immediately, as one would prefer. However, the possibility should not be dismissed out of hand, for baseline data would be extremely valuable.

Subsequently, one should think about using the surveys and tests not only in the lead communities, but elsewhere, for comparative purposes. Assessment of causality is the central design problem for this part of the project. I am not sure that causal generalizations will in fact be possible, and more thought and discussion must be given to this issue.

Mandel Institute

מכון מנדל

For the Advanced Study and Development of Jewish Education

July 4, 1991

Draft 1

## The Second Jerusalem Workshop of the CIJE

### Implementing the Recommendations of the Commission for Jewish Education in North America:

Documents for Discussion—Prepared by S. Fox and A. Hochstein

#### Introduction

During its initial setting up period the CIJE has succeeded in establishing a human, organizational, and financial infrastructure that is now ready to launch work on several of the recommendations of the Commission. A first workplan and time line were established that include the following elements (Exhibit 1):

- Establishing Lead Communities
- Undertaking a "best practices" project
- Drafting a policy paper towards the establishment of a research capability in North America
- Building community support, including the preparation of a strategic plan
- Developing a masterplan for the training of personnel
- Developing and launching a monitoring, evaluation and feedback program alongside the implementation work

This paper will deal with Lead Communities. Separate papers will be prepared on each of the other elements (forthcoming).

#### Lead Communities

In the pages that follow we will outline some of the ideas that could guide the CIJE's approach to Lead Communities.

##### 1. What is a Lead Community?

In its report *A Time to Act* the Commission on Jewish Education in North America decided on the establishment of Lead Communities as a strategy for bringing about significant change and improvement in Jewish Education (Exhibit 2). A Lead Community (LC) will be a site—an entire community or a large part of it—that will undertake a major development and improvement program of its Jewish education. The program—prepared with the assistance of the

CJIE, will involve the implementation of an action plan in the areas of building the profession of Jewish education, mobilizing community support and in programmatic areas such as day-schools or Israel experience programs. It will be carefully monitored and evaluated, and feedback will be provided on an ongoing basis.

Several Lead Communities will be established. Communities selected for the program will be presented with a menu of projects for the improvement of Jewish education. This menu, prepared by the staff of the CJIE, will include required programs (e.g., universal in-service education; recruiting and involving top lay leadership; maximum use of best practices) as well as optional programs (e.g., innovation and experimentation in programmatic areas such as day schools, supplementary schools; summer camps; community center programs; Israel experience programs). Each LC will prepare and undertake the implementation of a program most suited to meet its needs and resources, and likely to have a major impact on the scope and quality of Jewish education provided. Each community will negotiate an agreement with the CJIE, which will specify the programs and projects to be carried out by the community, their goals, anticipated outcomes, and the additional resources that will be made available. Terms for insuring the standards and scope of the plan will also be spelled out. The agreement will specify the support communities will receive from the CJIE. A key element in the LC plan is the centrality of on-going evaluation of each project and of the whole plan.

Through the LCs, the CJIE hopes to implement a large number of experiments in diverse communities. Each community will make significant choices, while they are being carefully guided and assisted. The data collection and analysis effort will be aimed at determining which programs and combination of programs are more successful, and which need modification. The more successful programs will be offered for replication in additional communities, while others may be adapted or dropped.

This conception of Lead Communities is based on the following conceptions:

- a. **Gradual Change:** A long-term project is being undertaken. Change will be gradual and take place over a period of time.
- b. **Local Initiative:** The initiative for establishing LCs will come from the local community. The plan must be locally developed and supported. The key stakeholders must be committed to the endeavor. A local planning mechanism (committee) will play the major role in generating ideas, designing programs and implementing them. With the help of the CJIE, it will be possible for local and national forces to work together in designing and field-testing solutions to the problems of Jewish education.
- c. **The CJIE's Role:** Facilitating implementation and ensuring continental input. The CJIE, through its staff and consultants will make a critical contribution to the development of Lead Communities. (See Item 2a below.)
- d. **Community and Personnel:** Meaningful change requires that those elements most critical to improvement be addressed. The Commission has called these "the building blocks of Jewish education" or "enabling options." It decided that without community support for Jewish education and dealing with the shortage of qualified personnel, no systemic change is likely to occur. All LCs will therefore, deal with these elements. The bulk of the thinking, planning, and resources will go to addressing them.

**e. Scope and Quality:** In order for a LC's plan to be valid and effective, it must fulfill two conditions:

1. It must be of sufficient *scope* to have a significant impact on the overall educational picture in the community.
2. It must ensure *high standards* of quality through the input of experts, through planning, and evaluation procedures.

**f. Evaluation & Feedback-Loop:** Through a process of data- collection, and analysis for the purposes of monitoring and evaluation the community at large will be able to study and know what programs or plans yield positive results. It will also permit the creation of a feedback-loop between planning and evaluation activities, and between central and local activities.

**g. Environment:** The LC should be characterized by an environment of innovation and experimentation. Programs should not be limited to existing ideas but rather creativity should be encouraged. As ideas are tested they will be carefully monitored and will be subject to critical analysis. The combination of openness and creativity with monitoring and accountability is not easily accomplished but is vital to the concept of LC.

## **2. Relationship Between the CIJE and Lead Communities**

**a. The CIJE will offer the following support to Lead Communities:**

1. Professional guidance by its staff and consultants
2. Bridge to continental/central resources, such as the Institutions of Higher Jewish Learning, JESNA, the JCCA, CJF, the denominations, etc.
3. Facilitation of outside funding—in particular by Foundations
4. Assistance in recruitment of Leadership
5. Ongoing trouble-shooting (for matters of content and of process)
6. Monitoring, evaluation and feedback loop
7. Communication and networking

**b. Lead Communities will commit themselves to the following elements:**

1. To engage the majority of stakeholders, institutions and programs dealing with education in the planning process—across ideological and denominational points of view.
2. To recruit outstanding leadership that will obtain the necessary resources for the implementation of the plan.
3. To plan and implement a program that includes the enabling options and that is of a scope and standard of quality that will ensure reasonable chance for significant change to occur.

## **3. The Content:**

The core of the development program undertaken by Lead Communities must include the "enabling options." These will be required element in each LC program. However, communities will choose the programmatic areas through which they wish to address these options.

*a. Required elements:*

**1. Community Support**

Every Lead Community will engage in a major effort at building community support for Jewish education. This will range from recruiting top leadership, to affecting the climate in the community as regards Jewish education. LCs will need to introduce programs that will make Jewish education a high communal priority. Some of these programs will include: new and additional approaches to local fund-raising; establishing a Jewish education "lobby," inter-communal networking, developing lay-professional dialogue, setting an agenda for change; public relations efforts.

**2. Personnel Development:**

The community must be willing to implement a plan for recruiting, training, and generally building the profession of Jewish education. The plan will affect all elements of Jewish education in the community: formal; informal; pre-service; in-service; teachers; principals; rabbis; vocational; a-vocational. It will include developing a feeder system for recruitment; using previously underutilized human resources. Salaries and benefits must be improved; new career paths developed, empowerment and networking of educators addressed. The CJE will recommend the elements of such a program and assist in the planning and implementation as requested.

*b. Program areas*

Enabling options are applied in programmatic areas. For example, when we train principals, it is for the purpose of bringing about improvement in schools. When supplementary school teachers participate in an in-service training program, the school should benefit. The link between "enabling" and programmatic options was made clear in the work of the Commission. It is therefore proposed that each lead community select, as arenas for the implementation of enabling options, those program areas most suited to local needs and conditions. These could include a variety of formal and informal settings, from day-schools, to summer camps, to adult education programs or Israel experience programs.

*c. The Role of the CJE*

The CJE will need to be prepared with suggestions as to how LC's should work in program areas. Therefore it will need to build a knowledge base from the very inception of its work. The CJE will provide LCs with information and guidance regarding "best practices" (see separate paper on "best practices"). For example, when a community chooses to undertake an in-service training program for its supplementary school or JCC staff, it will be offered several models of successful training programs. The community will be offered the rationale behind the success of those programs. They will then be able to either replicate, make use of, or develop their own programs, in accordance with the standards of quality set by those models.

#### *d. Outcomes*

The Commission on Jewish Education in North America was brought into existence because of an expressed concern with "Meaningful Jewish Continuity." The pluralistic nature of the Commission, did not permit it to deal with the goals of Jewish education. However the question of desired outcomes is a major issue, one that has not been addressed and that may yield different answers for each ideological or denominational group in the community. The role of evaluation in the process of Lead Communities will require that the question of outcomes be addressed. Otherwise, evaluation may not yield desired results. How will this be handled? Should, for example, each group or institution deal with this individually? (e.g. ask each to state what is educationally of importance to them). Should it be a collective endeavor? The CJE may have to develop initial hypotheses about the desired outcomes, base its work on these and amend them as work progresses.

#### **4. Monitoring, Evaluation and Feedback-loop**

The CJE will establish an evaluation project (unit). Its purpose will be three-fold:

1. to carry out *ongoing monitoring of progress* in Lead Communities, in order to assist community leaders, planners and educators in their daily work. A researcher will be commissioned and will spend much of his/her time locally, collecting and analyzing data and offering it to practitioners for their consideration. The purpose of this process is to improve and correct implementation in each LC and between them.
2. to *evaluate progress* in Lead Communities—assessing, as time goes on, the impact and effectiveness of each program, and its suitability for replication elsewhere. Evaluation will be conducted in a variety of methods. Data will be collected by the local researcher and also nationally if applicable. Analysis will be the responsibility of the head of the evaluation team with two purposes in mind: 1) To evaluate the effectiveness of individual programs and of the Lead Communities themselves as models for change, and, 2) To begin to create indicators and a data base that could serve as the basis for an ongoing assessment of the state of Jewish education in North America. This work will contribute to the publication of a periodic "state of Jewish education" report as suggested by the Commission.
3. *The feedback-loop*: findings of monitoring and evaluation activities will be continuously channelled to local and central planning activities in order to affect them and act as an ongoing corrective. In this manner there will be a rapid exchange of knowledge and mutual influence between practice and planning. Findings from the field will require ongoing adaptation of plans. These changed plans will in turn, affect implementation and so on.

#### **5. Recruitment and Selection of Lead Communities**

Several possible ways for the recruitment of LC's should be considered.

1. Communities, thought to be appropriate could be invited to apply, while a public call-for-proposal would also make it possible for any interested communities to become candidates.
2. Another method could be for the CJE to determine criteria for the selection of communities and encourage only those appearing most suitable to apply as candidates.

As part of the application process for participation, candidate communities will be invited to undertake an organizational process that would lead to:

- a. The recruitment of a strong community leader(s) to take charge of the process and to engage others to assist in the task.
- b. Establishing a steering committee/commission to guide the process including most or all educational institutions in the community.
- c. Conducting a self-study that will map the local state of Jewish education, identifying current needs and detailing resources.
- d. Engaging a professional planning team for the process.

Some or all of these elements may already exist in several communities.

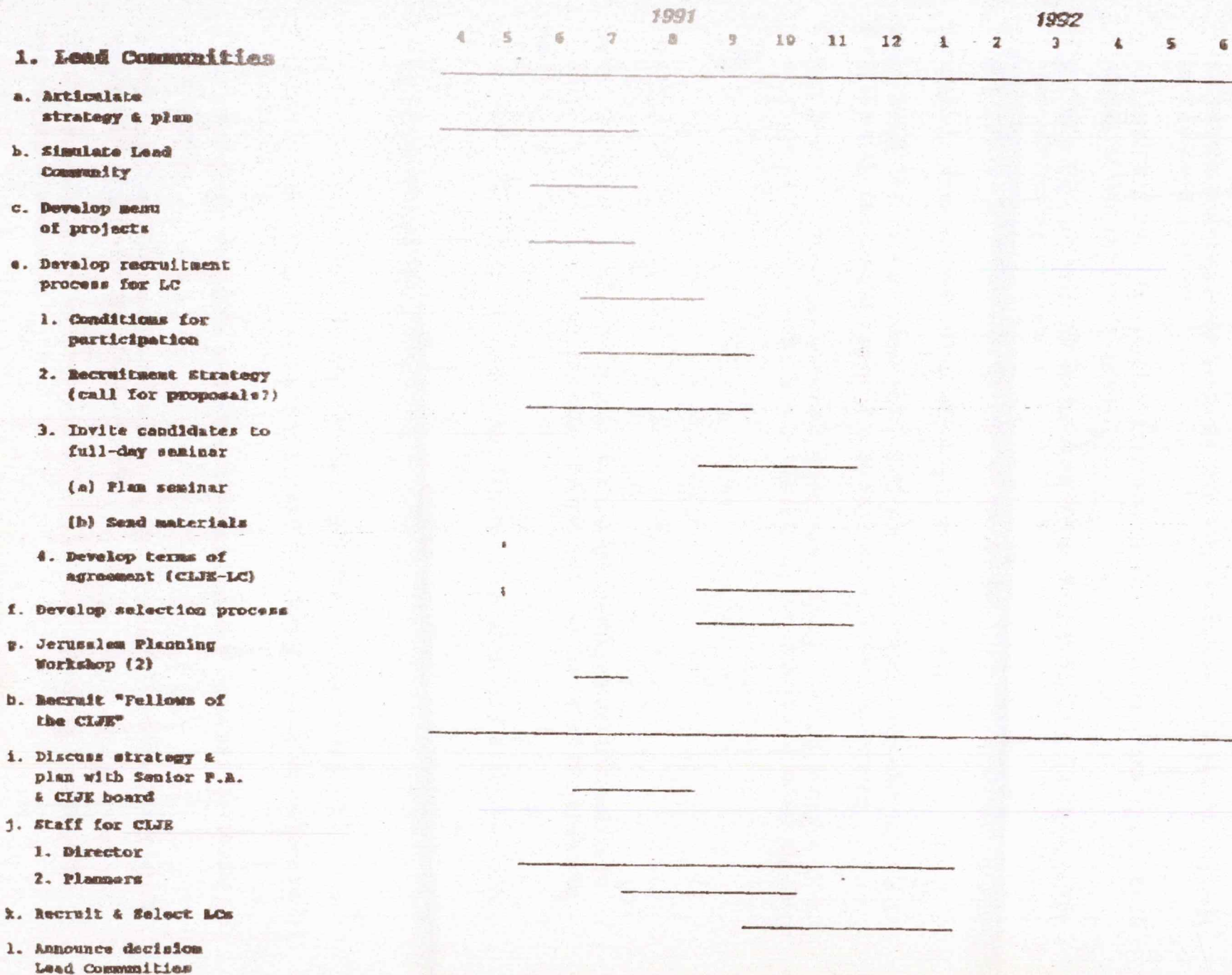
A side benefit from such a process would be community-wide publicity regarding the work of the CIJE and the beginning of a response to the expectations that have been created.

Criteria for the selection of Lead communities were discussed at the January Workshop and at the March meeting of Senior Policy Advisors (Exhibit 3). They must now be refined and finalized.

\* \* \* \* \*

We hope that this document will help us in our discussions at the seminar. It is meant to be modified, corrected and changed. In addition we will need to consider some of the following issues:

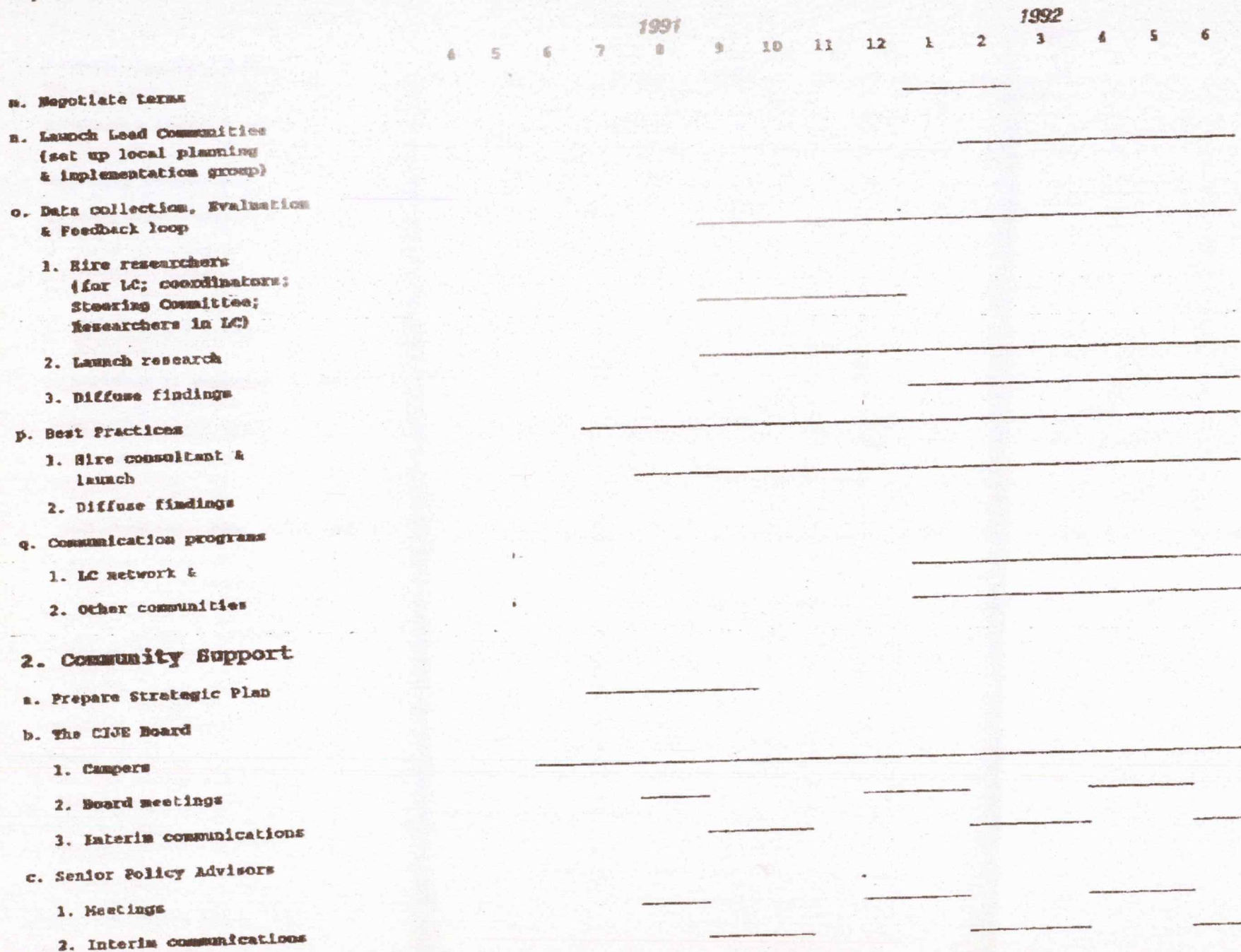
1. How will the CIJE gear itself up for work with the LC? In particular it will have to recruit staff to undertake the following:
  - a. Community relations and community development capability
  - b. Best Practices
  - c. Planning; research; monitoring, evaluation and feedback loop (a research unit?)
  - d. Overall strategies for development (e.g. plan for the training of educators; development of community support).
  - e. Development of financial resources—including work with foundations, federations and individuals.
2. How many Lead Communities can be launched simultaneously? This will require a careful consideration of resources needed and available.
3. What are the stages for establishing an LC, from selection, to planning, to undertaking first programs and activities.



July 1, 1991

CIJE TIME LINE -- APRIL 1991-JUNE 1992

Exhibit 1



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### III: ESTABLISHING LEAD COMMUNITIES

Many of the activities described above for the building of a profession of Jewish educators and the development of community support will take place on a continental level. However, the plan also calls for intensified local efforts.

#### *Local Laboratories for Jewish Education*

Three to five model communities will be established to demonstrate what can happen when there is an infusion of outstanding personnel into the educational system, when the importance of Jewish education is recognized by the community and its leadership, and when the necessary funds are secured to meet additional costs.

These models, called "Lead Communities," will provide a leadership function for other communities throughout North America. Their purpose is to serve as laboratories in which to discover the educational practices and policies that work best. They will function as the testing places for "best practices" — exemplary or excellent programs — in all fields of Jewish education.

Each of the Lead Communities will engage in the process of redesigning and improving the delivery of Jewish education through a wide array of intensive programs.

## A TIME TO ACT

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### *Selection of Lead Communities*

Fundamental to the success of the Lead Communities will be the commitment of the community and its key stakeholders to this endeavor. The community must be willing to set high educational standards, raise additional funding for education, involve all or most of its educational institutions in the program, and thereby become a model for the rest of the country. Because the initiative will come from the community itself, this will be a "bottom-up" rather than a "top-down" effort.

A number of cities have already expressed their interest, and these and other cities will be considered. The goal will be to choose those that provide the strongest prospects for success. An analysis will be made of the different communities that have offered to participate in the program, and criteria will be developed for the selection of the sites.

Once the Lead Communities are selected, a public announcement will be made so that the Jewish community as a whole will know the program is under way.

### *Getting Started*

Lead Communities may initiate their programs by creating a local planning committee consisting of the leaders of the organized Jewish community, rabbis, educators, and lay leaders in all the organizations involved in Jewish education. They would prepare a report on the state of Jewish education in their community. Based on their findings, a plan of action would be developed that addresses the specific educational needs of the community, including recommendations for new programs.

## A BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE

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An inventory of best educational practices in North America would be prepared as a guide to Lead Communities (and eventually made available to the Jewish community as a whole). Each local school, community center, summer camp, youth program, and Israel experience program in the Lead Communities would be encouraged to select elements from this inventory. After deciding which of the best practices they might adopt, the community would develop the appropriate training program so that these could be introduced into the relevant institutions. An important function of the local planning group would be to monitor and evaluate these innovations and to study their impact.

The Lead Communities will be a major testing ground for the new sources of personnel that will be developed. They will be a prime target for those participating in the Fellows program as well as the Jewish Education Corps. In fact, while other communities around the country will reap the benefits of these programs, the positive effects will be most apparent in the Lead Communities.

The injection of new personnel into a Lead Community will be made for several purposes: to introduce new programs; to offer new services, such as adult and family education; and to provide experts in areas such as the teaching of Hebrew, the Bible, and Jewish history.

Thus Lead Communities will serve as pilot programs for continental efforts in the areas of recruitment, the improvement of salaries and benefits, the development of ladders of advancement, and generally in the building of a profession.

## Exhibit 3

**Criteria for the Selection of Lead Communities****Senior Policy Advisors****What Criteria Should be Used in Selecting Lead Communities?**

The following criteria will be considered in selecting lead communities:

- a. City size
- b. Geographic location
- c. Lay leadership commitment
- d. The existence of a planning process
- e. Financial stability
- f. Availability of academic resources
- g. Strength of existing institutions
- h. Presence of some strong professional leadership
- i. Willingness of community to take over process and carry it forward
- j. Replicability
- k. Commitment to coalition building (synergism)
- l. Commitment to innovation
- m. Commitment to a "seamless approach," involving all ages, formal and informal education
- n. Commitment to the notion of *Clal Yisrael*—willingness to involve all segments of the community
- o. Agreement with the importance of creating fundamental reform, not just incremental change

## Criteria for the Selection of LCs

### January 1991 Workshop

Possible considerations in selection process:

1. City size
2. Geographical location
3. Lay leadership commitment
4. Planning process underway
5. Financial stability
6. Availability of academic resources
7. Strength of existing institutions
8. Presence of some strong professional leadership
9. Willingness of community to take over process and carry it forward after the initial period

In general, there was difficulty in conceptualizing a clear set of criteria for choosing lead communities—and in deciding among the goals of replicability/demonstrability/models of excellence. What emerged from this discussion was consensus on the idea of differentiated criteria: different communities might be chosen for different reasons. On the other hand, we clearly cannot afford to fail: however we choose candidates, we must be convinced that between the community's resources and our own, success is likely.



**for Jewish Education**

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Date: July 1

Total pages including this one: 6

RE:

June 27, 1991

To: Shulamith Elster  
From: Barry Holtz  
Re: Best Practice Version 2

Based on my original memo, our subsequent discussions and our meeting with Annette and Seymour, here is the way I see the Best Practice Project at this point.

## I. Introduction

As I understand it the purpose of the project is to develop an inventory of "Best Practice" Jewish education programs in North America. This inventory would aid the future work of the Council, particularly in the "Lead Communities" aspect of its work, because it would offer a kind of data base (or Rolodex) of successful programs/sites/curricula to which the Council staff could refer as it worked with the various Lead Communities. Thus a person from the Lead Community in "Toledo" (or wherever) could ask the Council "where is Hebrew taught well?" and the Council staff would be able to find such a program or school or site some place in the country through consulting the Best Practice inventory. E.g. You, Shulameth, would be able to say: "Go to Temple Ansche Schmutz in Boston and there you'll see how Hebrew can be taught well in a day school/afternoon school/JCC/whatever setting." (I assume that the inventory would not be a published document but a kind of data base that the Council would keep or make available to particular interested parties.)

Theoretically, in having such an index the Council would be able to offer both psychological and programmatic assistance to the particular Lead Community asking for advice. "Psychological"-- because for many people (both lay and professional) there is doubt about the actual existence of "Best Practice" about many aspects of Jewish education. ("Is there really such a creature as a good Hebrew School," I have been asked.) "Programmatic"-- because by viewing the Best Practice of "X" in one location, the Lead Community could see a living example of the way that "X" might be implemented in its local.

I say "theoretically" in the paragraph above because we really don't know how this will play out in real life and certain significant stumbling blocks will have to be overcome. First, do we really know that viewing the Best Practice of "X" in Boston offers psychological comfort or confidence building to the person sitting in the Lead Community of Toledo. Perhaps he or she will say: "Hey, that's fine for Boston, but in Toledo we don't have "A" and therefore can't do "B." Of course, we could reply, learning that they don't have "A" and discovering (by seeing it in action) that they want to accomplish "B" may be the first step toward defining goals and a plan of action for a particular Lead Community.

For me, however, the programmatic side of the Best Practice model is more problematic than the psychological issue. Knowing that Boston is able to implement a particular program and seeing that program in action does not guarantee that Toledo will be able to pull it off in their locality, no matter how good their intentions. The issue of translation from the Best Practice site to the Lead Community community site is one which will require considerable thought. I will come back to this later on in this memo.

## II. What do we mean by "Best Practice" and how do we go about figuring it out?

Let's say for the sake of argument (and this is a big assumption from the theoretical point of view, but probably justified in the realm of the practical) that "we" know what we mean by "Best Practice". The "we" here is the network of people we know, trust or know about in the field of Jewish education around the country. I assume that we could generate a list of such people with not too much difficulty. Let's say Best Practice is-- in the tradition of D.W. Winnicott to Sarah Lightfoot Lawrence (The Good High School) to Joe Reimer (Mandel Commission paper)-- something like "good enough". Let's say that when you and I talk about Hebrew schools and Day schools we know what we mean by good enough. And that there are people with expertise in other areas that you and I might not have (e.g. early childhood; JCCs) who could do a similar task in those areas.

Of course there is no such thing as "Best Practice" in the abstract, there is only Best Practice of "X" particularity: the best (i.e. good enough) Hebrew School, JCC, curriculum for teaching Israel, etc. The first problem we have to face is defining the areas which the inventory would want to have as these particular categories. Thus we could talk about some of the following areas:

- Hebrew schools
- Day Schools
- Early childhood programs
- JCCs
- Adult Ed. programs

Etc.-- Yes, this is beginning to get to be a long list and what's more it's only one cut into the problem. The above list is essentially "sites" in which Jewish education takes place. But you could also run another list here: subject areas.

- Bible
  - Hebrew
  - Israel
- etc.

Complicating this is another factor: As you pointed out to me, sometimes you can find a "Best Practice" program for one subject area in a site that isn't necessarily so great-- for example, a not so great JCC that runs wonderful programs for early childhood.

Hence the following question needs to be decided: What are the appropriate categories for the inventory?

Perhaps the way to answer this is to say that we will choose the categories based on the following criteria:

- a) what the Lead Communities appear to want and need. In other words, we wait for the Lead Communities before we do the job.
- b) what we think the Lead Communities will want and need based on our discussions in Israel about the Lead Community business.
- c) the quick and dirty approach: what we can get up and running quickly because we know the people (and maybe even some actual sites or programs) already (or can get that info. very fast.)

A guess on b-- Best Practice in: Hebrew schools, early childhood, Israel programs, family education curricula or programs.

### III. Suggestions for a process.

What has to be done to launch and implement the Best Practice project? I would suggest the following steps:

#### 1. Define the categories

I've tried to make a first stab at this immediately above.

#### 2. Create a document (I will call it a "definitional guide") for each category.

The definitional guide is a document which is composed for each category. It briefly states what we are looking for when we use the term Best Practice of X. The definitional guide is an in-house "screen" used by the "location finders" (see below) as a reference guide. Since this is an "in house" document, my guess is that we should not waste a lot of time writing fancy documents: You don't need to hand Vicky Kelman a definitional document to ask her to identify 3-5 best, really good, or good enough Hebrew Schools.

Okay we know we want to write some kind of definitional guide: how much expertise do you need to do this? Perhaps I should say, how many experts do you need? What I mean is this. You and I could do this job for day schools and Hebrew schools, could we do it for adult ed. programs? (I'll answer for myself: probably yes). For early childhood? (probably no) For special ed? (definitely no), etc. So how many people have to be involved

here? Here's a suggestion: I suspect that via "the network" we know how to find out who knows about each of these areas (that is, once we've figured out what the areas are). Can we commission a short statement from teams of people who could write this for each area. These are short pieces. They should also include a suggested list of "location finders" for each area. I suggest two-person teams just so there can be some bouncing back and forth of ideas.

### 3. Identify the location finders

Once we define a list of categories and definitional guides for each, we would then want to find a group of "location (or subject) finders" who would recognize or know about "Best Practice." It may also require a meeting of people to brainstorm places, sites, people as well. Maybe there should be a brainstorming group of well-traveled Jewish educators who could suggest the "location finders"? And maybe there is another group of people who are real generalists just because they've been around the country so much that we would be able to ask them about any of the categories: Bob Abramson, Joel Grishaver, Eliot Spack, Gail Dorph, Vicky Kelman, Betsy Katz, etc.

### 4. Get the lists

Once we have the "location finders" for each category and the definitional guides, we can then put together the suggested lists for each category. This could come via meetings (as mentioned above), through phone calls or simply through getting submissions of lists from the location finders for each category. Obviously, we will have to buy some time from people, but except for meetings this should not be an expensive or burdensome task for them.

### 5. Evaluate the choices

Here is something we haven't talked about before. Once we receive the proposed lists in each category, are we going to implement some independent evaluation? Who would do that and is it necessary?

### 6. Write up the reasons

This project begins to overlap with "Research" at this point. Let's say we have received these lists of Best Practice sites, programs, etc. Well, can't we ask what makes them "best" (or "good" enough). Perhaps this is the same as #5, outside evaluation; perhaps not. But I think we would have to go beyond mere lists to figure out what it is that defines the "goodness" of the good. (E.g. Reimer's Commission paper). Of course this is no small job. We could probably get some of this from the location finders. They could tell us their reasons for their choices. We

might be able to hire some of the location finders to write up the reasons in brief or in detail. Perhaps we would not need this for every example in every category but it does seem to me that we're going to need this if we want to get to #7:

#### 7. Translate to Action for the particular Lead Communities

What in each Best Practice case can be translated to the Lead Community and what cannot? This is a complicated question and requires the job described in #6 above, at least for those cases in which the Lead Community is planning to implement action. It then requires a careful monitoring of what is going on when the attempt to translate particular Best Practices actually is launched. Which of course leads us to #8:

#### 8. Research Dimensions

Here we can mean many things: action research in looking at the implementation of Best Practice from one place to another; evaluation research to see what is "best" about best and how things translate from one setting to another; comparative research as Best Practice from "Boston" is tried out both in Toledo and Los Angeles. And more too, I imagine, but I will leave this to Isa's project.

#### **IV. Timetable**

What of the eight steps above can and should be done when? I will not address this here, but leave it as an open question for us to determine. But one thing is clear-- we do have to have a sense of schedule and probably should discuss this with the group in Israel.

#### **V. Don't underestimate the political dynamite in such an inventory.**

A bit of advice here: This is a matter that needs to be well thought out. Who sees this inventory? Is it public? If it's a secret that's also a problem. How do you keep this from becoming politicized by denominations or localities? Does making it onto the inventory mean you have a running start on getting funding? (I can hear it now: "after all our school is on the Inventory"-- it's now a capital letter) How do you deal with people who are annoyed because they are not on it?!

April 11, 1991  
To: Shulamith Elster  
From: Barry Holtz  
Re: Best Practice

Research dimension gets  
built into the orig. inventory  
D.P. = stepping stone for much bigger  
things

As I understand it, the ultimate purpose of the Best Practice project is to develop an inventory of "Best Practice" Jewish education programs around North America. This inventory would allow a person in Boston, let's say, to ask "where is Hebrew taught well" and to be able to find such a program or school or site some place in the country through consulting the inventory. I assume that the inventory would not be a published document but a kind of data base that the Council would keep and make available (under certain circumstances? conditions?) to interested parties.

What do we mean by "Best Practice" and how do we go about figuring it out?

I. To begin with, it seems to me that "Best Practice" may be one of those terms like pedagogy or mysticism-- it only makes sense as part of a larger phrase: is there "pedagogy" without "pedagogy of X subject" (e.g. teaching biology, not just teaching), Jewish or Hindu mysticism not just mysticism. So what does that mean for us? Well, I think it suggests that "Best (or even "Good" or "good enough") Practice" means that we have to define the areas which the inventory would want to have as its categories and then look at each category individually. Thus we could talk about some of the following areas:

"Best Practice" in

- Hebrew schools
- Day Schools
- Early childhood programs
- JCCs
- Adult Ed. programs

Etc.-- Yes, this is beginning to get to be a long list and what's more it's only one cut into the problem. The above list is essentially "sites" in which Jewish education takes place. But you could also run another list here: subject areas.

- Bible
- Hebrew
- Israel
- etc.

Complicating this is yet another factor: As you pointed out to me, sometimes you can find a "Best Practice" program for one subject area in a site that isn't necessarily so great overall-- for example, a not so great JCC that runs wonderful programs for early childhood.

Hence the following question needs to be decided: What are the appropriate categories for the inventory?

II. How do we find out what we mean by good practice?

Problem #1.

Let's say for the sake of argument (and this is a big assumption) that "we" know what we mean by "Best Practice" in any particular area. Let's say it is-- in the tradition of D.W. Winnicott to Sarah Lightfoot Lawrence (The Good High School) to Joe Reimer (Mandel Commission paper)-- something like "good enough". Let's say that when you and I talk about Hebrew schools and Day schools we know what we mean by good enough. Is the trick here to take our in-the-club knowledge and assumptions and shared language and turn it into something that a Charles Bronfman will understand and be interested in? Or is the document defining good practice just an in-house "screen" used by the "location finders" (see below) as a reference guide? That decision will influence the kind of writing that has to be done. If this is an "in house" piece, my guess is that we should not waste a lot of time writing fancy documents: You don't need to hand Vicky Kelman a definitional document to ask her to identify 3-5 best, really good, or good enough Hebrew Schools. She knows because she know.

Problem #2.

Let's say that the answer above is: it's the Charles Bronfman type of document. If so, how do you make this sound something better than a set of old cliches?

Problem #3.

Okay we know we want to write some kind of definitional guide: how much expertise do you need to do this? Perhaps I should say, how many experts do you need? What I mean is this. You and I could do this job for day schools and Hebrew schools, could we do it for adult ed programs? (I'll answer for myself: probably yes). For early childhood? (probably no) For special ed? (definitely no), etc. So how many people have to be involved here?

Here's a suggestion: I suspect that via "the network" we know how to find out who knows about each of these areas (that is, once we've figured out what the areas are). Can we commission a short statement from teams of people who could write this for each area. These are short (and inexpensive) pieces. They should also include a suggested list of "location finders" for each area. I suggest two-person teams just so there can be some bouncing back and forth of ideas.

## II. How do we locate the specific places, programs, people?

I think this one is not too hard. Once we've solved the issues I outline at the beginning in Roman numeral "I", we'll have our categories. With that list of categories we would then want to develop a set of people, "location (or subject) finders," who would recognize or know about "Best Practice." It may also require a meeting of people to brainstorm places, sites, people. Maybe there should be a brainstorming group of well-traveled Jewish educators who could suggest the "location finders"? And maybe there is another group of people who are real generalists just because they've been around the country so much that we would be able to ask them about any of the categories: Bob Abramson, Joel Grishaver, Eliot Spack, Gail Dorph, Vicky Kelman, Betsy Katz, etc.

## IV. Don't underestimate the political dynamite in such an inventory.

Yes, a bit of etzah here: This is a matter that needs to be well thought out. Who sees this inventory? Is it public? If it's a secret that's also a problem. How do you keep this from becoming politicized by denominations or localities? Does making it onto the inventory mean you have a running start on getting funding? (I can hear it now: "after all our school is on the Inventory") How do you deal with people who are annoyed because they are not on it?! (I'm not making this up: Do you think Edy and I won't feel annoyed if Melton is not on the "Best Practice" curriculum list?)

Note to Seymour and Annette: you guys live across the seas and will not have to deal with the flak that Shulamith will face when such an in-group/out-group list becomes public. Or remains in the secret star chamber. It may well be a case of damned if you do, damned if you don't.

Part vs Whole  
subject areas      salaries  
                         in-service  
                         ambulance  
                         lay support

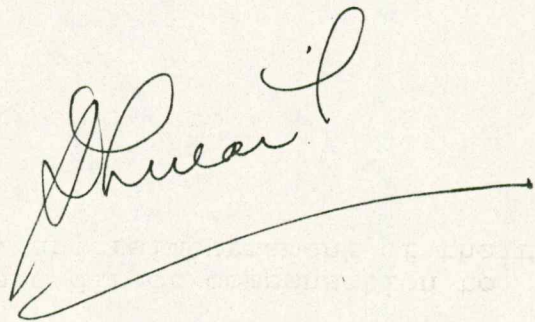
FAX: 301-984  
8160

NOTES FROM MEETING WITH BARRY HOLTZ  
March 3, 1991 RE: Best Practice

Monday

1. Basic questions:
  - What is good practice?
  - What are the intellectual/content standards for selection? How are these to be established?
  - Where do "unique" and "creative" programs fit in?
  - What of "good enough" practice?  
Reference: Introduction by Sara Lightfoot Lee to The Good High School.
  - How does "best practice" relate to research issues?
  
2. One of several possible approaches:
  - a. Barry Holtz will write a brief document identifying the issues and posing a set of questions.
  - b. Identify a group of consultants - (from general education and senior policy advisors).
  - c. Speak with them individually and as a group. (Written responses and interviews.) Possible meeting of group at CAJE.
  - d. Final document with bibliography.
  
5. Funding Options
  - a. Grant to Barry - appoint him Project Director and award a fixed budget
  - b. Grant to Barry for his work and direct compensation to consultants (\$500 per day), and reimbursement of their expenses.
  
6. Timetable

March	Continuing dialogue on "conceptual" issue
April	Agreement with Barry
May	Initial Document/Identify Consultants
June	Interviews
July	Interviews
August	Yom I'yun/Group Meeting at CAJE
September	Final Document



July 31, 1992

The Best Practices Project  
Progress Report and Plans for 1992-93  
Barry W. Holtz

Introduction

In describing its "blueprint for the future," A Time to Act, the report of the Commission on Jewish Education in North America, called for the creation of "an inventory of best educational practices in North America" (p. 69).

The primary purpose of this inventory is to aid the future work of the CIJE, particularly as it helps to develop the group of Lead Communities which will be selected this autumn. As the Lead Communities devise their educational plans and put these plans into action, the Best Practices inventory will offer a guide to Jewish educational success that can be adapted for use in particular Lead Communities.

In addition, the Best Practices Project hopes to make an important contribution to improving the quality and quantity of Jewish educational research, as also proposed by A Time to Act. The Best Practices Project will add to the knowledge base about North American Jewish education by documenting outstanding educational work that is currently taking place.

The Best Practices Project as of today

This past year has been spent in inventing a methodology for conducting a project that has never really been done in Jewish education before in such a wide-scale fashion. How do we locate examples of best practice in Jewish education? As the year has proceeded both an approach to the work and a set of issues to explore has evolved. We began by identifying the specific programmatic "areas" in Jewish education on which to focus. These were primarily the venues in which Jewish education is conducted such as supplementary schools, JCCs, day schools etc. A best practices team is being developed for each of these areas. These teams are supervised by Dr. Shulamith Elster and me.

We have come to refer to each of the different areas as a "division," in the business sense of the word. (Thus the Best Practices Project has a supplementary school division, an early childhood division, etc.) Each division's work has two phases. Phase 1 is a meeting of experts to talk about best practice in the area and to help develop the criteria for evaluating "success"; Phase 2 is the site visit and report writing done by members of the team.

This year four different divisions were launched. We began with the supplementary school primarily because we knew that a) there was a general feeling in the community, particularly in the lay community, that the supplementary school had "failed"; b) because the majority of Jewish children get their education in the supplementary school and because of that perception of failure, the Lead Communities would certainly want to address the "problem" of the supplementary school; c) as the director of the project, it was the area in which I had the most experience and best sense of whom I could turn to for assistance and counsel.

As I reported earlier this year, a group of experts was gathered together to discuss the issue of best practice in the supplementary school. Based on that meeting I then wrote a Best Practices in the Supplementary School guide (see Appendix). A team of report writers was assembled and assignments were given to the team to locate good schools and good "stand-alone" programs.

We currently have a team of seven people looking and writing. They are: Carol Ingall (Melton and BJE, Providence, RI), Vicky Kelman (Melton and Berkeley, CA), Sam Joseph (HUC-Cincinnati), Joe Reimer (Brandeis), Kathy Green (Reconstructionist Rabbinical College), Stuart Schoenfeld (York University, Toronto), Michael Zeldin (HUC-LA). By the end

of the summer we should have the reports on ten schools as written up by the group members. The first results indicate that, indeed, there are successful supplementary schools and we are finding representative places that are worth hearing about and seeing. In the spirit of Professor Lee Shulman's talk at this year's GA, we have discovered "existence proofs" that people in the Lead Communities can look at, visit and learn from.

In May Dr. Elster and I launched our second division, early childhood Jewish education. We met with a group of experts in this field and following up that meeting I wrote a Guide to Best Practice in Jewish Early Childhood Education (see Appendix). The group included: Miriam Feinberg (Washington, DC); Ruth Pinkenson Feldman (Philadelphia); Jane Perman (JCC Association); Esther Friedman (Houston); Esther Elfenbaum (Los Angeles); Ina Regosin (Milwaukee); Charlotte Muchnick (Haverford, PA); Rena Rotenberg (Baltimore); Shulamit Gittelson (North Miami Beach); Lucy Cohen (Montreal); Roanna Shorofsky (New York); Marvell Ginsburg (Chicago). Many of the members of this group have already agreed to join our team of report writers. The writing will take place in September and October.

A third division, education in the JCC world, is in the early stages of development. Dr. Elster and I met with a team of staff people at the JCCA. Lenny Rubin of the JCCA is putting together a group of JCCA staff and in-the-field practitioners to develop the Phase 1 "guidelines" for this area. We will work with them in writing up the document. After this is completed (in the fall) a team of report writers (from that group and others) will be assembled to do the actual write-ups.

Finally, a fourth area-- best practices in the Israel Experience-- has been launched thanks to the work of the CRB Foundation. The Foundation has funded a report on success in Israel Experience programming which was written by Steven M. Cohen and Susan Wall. The CIJE Best Practices Project will be able to use this excellent report as the basis of further explorations in this area, as needed by the Lead Communities.

### Next Steps: The 1992-1993 Year

#### New Areas

As mentioned above, we should have reports of the Early Childhood division completed in the early fall. The JCC division should be operationalized in the fall. During the 1992-3 we also plan to launch the following areas: day schools, adult education, camps, and college programs. Each presents its own interesting challenges. Of these four, we have already begun to plan in a preliminary way for the day schools division. Here the goal is to gather together experts from the academic world of Jewish education (like our supplementary school group) as well as actual practitioners from the field. The current plan is to have each school that is written up be analyzed for one particular area of excellence and not for its over all "goodness." Thus we would have X school written up for its ability to teach modern Hebrew speaking; another for its text teaching; another for its parent education programs; another for its in-service education, etc. A specific school can be asked to nominate the aspect of its own program that it would most like to "export" to other places, what the school imagines other schools would most want.

We will probably turn to the college area next and then to camping and adult education.

#### Documentation

Another task that needs to be considered is finding more examples of best practices within those areas that we have already looked at, or to look at the examples we currently have in even greater depth. This applies particularly to supplementary schools because we will have only explored ten schools and programs and there is such a wide range of supplementary schools across America that we ought to have some more breadth in this area. A similar case could be made for early childhood programs.

At the time of our first exploration of supplementary schools, we sent a letter to all the members of the Senior Policy Advisers asking for their suggestions. In addition, we worked with Eliot Spack to send a similar letter to "friends within CAJE." Because of these initiatives we now have a list of 20 to 30 Hebrew schools that we might want to investigate.

Jon Woocher has asked the following question: "for the purposes of the project, how many examples of best practice do you really need in any one given area?" Do we need to have ten reports of supplementary schools or twenty or sixty? Another question might be raised about the "depth" of the current reports. Many of the report writers have said that they would like the chance to look at their best practice examples in more detail than the short reports have allowed. I have called this the difference between writing a "report" and writing a "portrait" or study of an institution.

The research component of the Best Practices Project would certainly welcome either greater breadth or greater depth, but at the present moment we believe that the first priority is to answer another question: **What do the Lead Communities need?** After meeting with the Lead Community representatives we will have a better sense of the next stages of the Lead Community Project-- what the planning and implementation needs will be. At that point we will be able to decide the best direction the documentation should move in.

#### Lead Communities: Implementation-- and How to do it

Aside from launching the other divisions mentioned above the other main initiative of the Best Practices Project for the coming year will be thinking through the issue of best practices and Lead Communities. Seymour Fox has often spoken about the Best Practices Project as creating the "curriculum" for change in the Lead Communities. The challenge this year is to develop the method by which the Lead Community planners and educators can learn from the best practices that we have documented and begin to introduce adaptations of those ideas into their own communities. This can occur through a wide range of activities including: site visits by Lead Community planners to observe best practices in action; visits by best practices practitioners to the Lead Communities; workshops with educators in the Lead Communities, etc. The Best Practices Project will be involved in developing this process of implementation in consultation with the Lead Communities and with other members of the CIJE staff.

#### From Best Practice to New Practice

On other occasions we have spoken about the need to go beyond best practices in order to develop **new ideas** in Jewish education. At times we have referred to this as the "department of dreams." We believe that two different but related matters are involved here: first, all the new ideas in Jewish education that the energy of the CIJE and the Lead Community Project might be able to generate and second, the interesting ideas in Jewish education that people have talked about, perhaps even written about, but never have had the chance to try out. It is likely that developing these new ideas will come under the rubric of the Best Practices Project and it is our belief that the excitement inherent in the Lead Community Project will give us the opportunity to move forward with imagining innovative new plans and projects for Jewish educational change.

August 4, 1992

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the existence" of successful supplementary schools. These are sites that people in the Lead Communities can look at, visit and learn from.

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Dr. Jonathan Woocher, Executive Director of JESNA, has asked the following question: "for the purposes of the project, how many examples of best practice do you really need in any one given area?" Do we need to have ten reports of supplementary schools or twenty or sixty? Another question might be raised about the "depth" of the current reports. Many of the report writers have said that they would like the chance to look at their best practice examples in more detail than the short reports have allowed. I have called this the difference between writing a "report" and writing a "portrait" or study of an institution.

The research component of the Best Practices Project would certainly welcome either greater breadth or greater depth, but at the present moment we believe that the first priority is to answer another question: **What do the Lead Communities need?** After meeting with the representatives of the Lead Communities that are chosen, we will have a better sense of the next stages of the Lead Community Project-- what the planning and implementation needs will be. At that point we will be able to decide the best direction the documentation should move in.

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## APPENDIX

### Team Members: Best Practice in the Supplementary School

#### Report Writers:

Ms. Kathy Green (Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, Philadelphia)  
Ms. Carol Ingall (Melton Research Center and BJE, Providence, RI)  
Dr. Samuel Joseph (HUC-Cincinnati)  
Ms. Vicky Kelman (Melton Research Center and Berkeley, CA)  
Dr. Joseph Reimer (Brandeis University)  
Dr. Stuart Schoenfeld (York University, Toronto)  
Dr. Michael Zeldin (HUC-LA)

#### Additional Consultants:

Dr. Isa Aron (HUC-Los Angeles)  
Ms. Gail Dorph (University Of Judaism, Los Angeles)  
Dr. Samuel Heilman (Queens College, NY)

### Team Members: Early Childhood Jewish Education

#### Report Writers

Ms. Miriam Feinberg (Washington, DC);  
Dr. Ruth Pinkenson Feldman (Philadelphia);  
Ms. Jane Perman (JCC Association);  
Ms. Esther Friedman (Houston);  
Ms. Esther Elfenbaum (Los Angeles);  
Ms. Ina Regosin (Milwaukee);  
Ms. Charlotte Muchnick (Haverford, PA);  
Ms. Rena Rotenberg (Baltimore);  
Ms. Shulamit Gittelsohn (North Miami Beach);  
Ms. Lucy Cohen (Montreal);  
Ms. Roanna Shorofsky (New York);  
Ms. Marvell Ginsburg (Chicago).

*journal*

PRACTICE.1

April 11, 1991

To: Shulamith Elster

From: Barry Holtz

Re: Best Practice

As I understand the ultimate purpose of the Best Practice project, the Council would like to develop an inventory of "Best Practice" Jewish education programs around North America. This inventory would allow a person in Boston, let's say, to ask "where is Hebrew taught well" and to be able to find such a program or school or site some place in the country through consulting the inventory. I assume that the inventory would not be a published document but a kind of data base that the Council would keep and make available (under certain circumstances? conditions?) to interested parties.

What do we mean by "Best Practice" and how do we go about figuring it out?

I. To begin with, it seems to me that "Best Practice" may be one of those terms like pedagogy or mysticism-- it only makes sense as part of a larger phrase: is there "pedagogy" without "pedagogy of X subject" (e.g. teaching biology, not just teaching), Jewish or Hindu mysticism not just mysticism. So what does that mean for us? Well, I think it suggests that "Best (or even "Good" or "good enough") Practice" means that we have to define the areas which the inventory would want to have as its categories and then look at each category individually. Thus we could talk about some of the following areas:

--Hebrew schools

--Day Schools

--Early childhood programs

--JCCs

--Adult Ed. programs

Etc.-- Yes, this is beginning to get to be a long list and what's more it's only one cut into the problem. The above list is essentially "sites" in which Jewish education takes place. But you could also run another list here: subject areas.

-- Bible

-- Hebrew

-- Israel

etc.

Complicating this is another factor: As you pointed out to me, sometimes you can find a "Best Practice" program for one subject area in a site that isn't necessarily so great-- for example, a not so great JCC that runs wonderful programs for early childhood.

Hence the following questions needs to be decided: What are the appropriate categories for the inventory?

II. How do we find out what we mean by good practice?

### Problem #1.

Let's say for the sake of argument (and this is a big assumption) that "we" know what we mean by "Best Practice". Let's say it is-- in the tradition of D.W. Winnicott to Sarah Lightfoot Lawrence (The Good High School) to Joe Reimer (Mandel Commission paper)-- something like "good enough". Let's say that when you and I talk about Hebrew schools and Day schools we know what we mean by good enough. Is the trick here is to take our in-the-club knowledge and assumptions and shared language and turn it into something that a Charles Bronfman will understand and be interested in? Or is the document defining good practice just an in-house "screen" used by the "location finders" (see below) as a reference guide? That decision will influence the kind of writing that has to be done. If this is an "in house" document, my guess is that we should not waste a lot of time writing fancy documents: You don't need to hand Vicky Kelman a definitional document to ask her to identify 3-5 best, really good, or good enough Hebrew Schools.

### Problem #2.

Let's say that the answer above is: it's the Charles Bronfman type of document. If so, how do you make this sound something better than a set of old cliches?

### Problem #3.

Okay we know we want to write some kind of definitional guide: how much expertise do you need to do this? Perhaps I should say, how many experts do you need? What I mean is this. You and I could do this job for day schools and Hebrew schools, could we do it for adult ed programs? (I'll answer for myself: probably yes). For early childhood? (probably no) For special ed? (definitely no), etc. So how many people have to be involved here? Here's a suggestion: I suspect that via "the network" we know how to find out who knows about each of these areas (that is, once we've figured out what the areas are). Can we commission a short statement from teams of people who could write this for each area. These are short (and inexpensive) pieces. They should also include a suggested list of "location finders" for each area. I suggest two-person teams just so there can be some bouncing back and forth of ideas.

## II. How do we locate the specific places, programs, people?

I think this one is not too hard. Once we've solved the issues I outline at the beginning in Roman numeral "I", we'll have our categories. With that list of categories we would then want to develop a set of "location (or subject) finders" who would recognize or know about "Best Pracout. It may also require a meeting of people to brainstorm places, sites, people as well. Maybe there should be a brainstorming group of well-traveled Jewish educators who could suggest the "location finders"? And maybe there is another group of people who are real generalists just because they've been around the country so much that we would be able to ask them about any of the categories: Bob Abramson, Joel Grishaver, Eliot Spack, Gail Dorph, Vicky Kelman, Betsy Katz, etc.

## IV. Don't underestimate the political dynamite in such an inventory.

Yes, a bit of etzah here: This is a matter that needs to be well thought out. Who sees this inventory? Is it public? If it's a secret that's also a problem. How do you keep this from bec-

oming politicized by denominations or localities? Does making it onto the inventory mean you have a running start on getting funding? (I can hear it now: "after all our school is on the Inventory"-- it's now a capital letter) How do you deal with people who are annoyed because they are not on it?! (I'm not making this up: Do you think Edy and I won't feel annoyed if Melton is not on the "Best Practice" curriculum list?)

Note to Seymour and Annette: you guys live across the seas and will not have to deal with the flak that Shulamith will face when such an in-group/out-group list becomes public. Or remains in the secret star chamber. You're damned if you do, damned if you don't.

**MELTON  
RESEARCH  
CENTER**  
for Jewish Education

Jewish Theological Seminary  
3080 Broadway  
New York, NY 10027  
(212) 678-8031  
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To: Seymour Fox and Annette Hochstein

At FAX Number: Mandel Institute

From: BARRY HOLTZ

Date: May 13 1992

Total pages including this one: 3

RE:

CONFIDENTIAL

\*If you experience difficulty transmitting to this FAX number, please use the JTS main FAX number as an alternate: (212) 678-8947. Kindly indicate that this message should be forwarded to the Melton Research Center. Thank you.

May 12, 1992

Seymour Fox and Annette Hochstein  
Mandel Institute

Dear Seymour and Annette,

I've been giving some thought to my conversation with Annette last week, following upon my memo about the Lead Community Project and where it is going. Part of this is trying to figure out the way that the Best Practices Project fits in to all this and where it might go.

At my meeting with you, Annette, you said "make us a proposal" about future directions for Best Practices. This memo is a first stab at that. But before I get into that matter, I want to react to your questions about other possible connections for me vis a vis the Lead Community enterprise. My current inclination is to continue along the lines that I have been working with the CIJE up to now-- that is, as an outside consultant, working with Shulamith on the Best Practices Project. I will see if there are ways that I can give the CIJE a little more time. But, given my necessary obligations to Melton and JTS, I don't see how it can be too much more than what I'm currently offering. How all this will fit with the needs of the Lead Community Project is something we can determine as that moves forward.

There are, however, other possibilities and they may be tied to a serious expansion of the Best Practices Project. That's what I meant by a "proposal." Here's what I am thinking:

The Best Practices Project is one that has enormous potential. I am finding it to be extremely interesting and, I believe, it is a project whose underlying purpose is quite intelligible to the lay community as well. Where could the Best Practices Project go? It seems to me that we should think about creating an institution that might be called the Center for the Study of Jewish Education. There are two main focus points that such a Center could explore:

1) Research

This component would be the main business of the Center. It would include:

a) Best Practices of today: The documentation, study and analysis of current best practices in Jewish education. Essentially, this means moving forward with the work of the Best Practices Project as we've done it so far. However, it means expanding that work as well by seeing the project as an ongoing research project in which the success stories of Jewish education are studied in depth and successive "iterations" of research are performed on each setting.

It may also mean convening conferences and consultations with those doing this research to try to discern patterns and implications of the analysis.

b) The Department of Dreams: This is the area that we've often talked about-- all the ideas in Jewish education that people have written about and never had the means to try. In addition this "department" would commission "dreams"-- encourage people to invent solutions to problems and imagine new directions for Jewish education.

c) Best Practices of the past: Looking at those success stories of the past (e.g. Shragge Arian's famous school) to see if we can reconstruct what was done and why it was important.

## 2) Practical Implications

The second thrust of the Center would be to test out the practical implications of its work. In particular this would mean working closely with the Lead Communities as they try out the ideas discovered by the analysis of best practices, past and present and of dreams for the future.

How would such a Center for the Study of Jewish Education be organized? There are many possible routes. It seems to be that one could view such a Center as a joint project of the Mandel Institute (for the research side) and the CIJE (for the Lead Community side). Perhaps the Center would be physically located at an institution currently in place-- JTS or Brandeis. Perhaps at JESNA, though I would prefer not to see it there. Perhaps the Mandel Institute's connection with Harvard could be formalized via the Center for the Study of Jewish Education. All this would need to be explored.

My questions to you two are: is this something that is worth exploring further? If so, how? Is there a possibility for funding? Or is this an idea which is premature at this point?

I am interested in being involved with such an enterprise. If you think it's worth pursuing, I think we ought to talk about ways that it can be fleshed out.

Best wishes,



Barry W. Holtz

September 26, 1991

To: Steve, Shulamith, Seymour, Annette:  
From: Barry Holtz  
Re: Best Practices Plan

Dear Friends,

I. This memo summarizes my understanding of ideas that Seymour, Shulamith and I discussed in a two-hour meeting on September 5, 1991. At that time Seymour reacted to a set of questions that I had raised about the best way to implement the Best Practices Project. The three of us discussed Seymour's suggestions and came to an agreement about some of the steps required to launch the project. Because of the holidays that soon came upon us (and because in the midst of all that I managed to come down with the flu which dragged on for a while), there was more lag time between the meeting and this memo than I would have liked, but I believe that I have accurately represented our discussion below.

II. One of the issues raised about my original paper in Israel (and to some extent about the revised-- July 30th-- version as well) was that the plan of action that I proposed was perhaps too planned, too overly determined and dependent on implementing a set of defined logical steps. The problem with such a plan was that it didn't take into account the issue of time exigencies, it was not sufficiently "messy" to deal with real-life situations, and it spun out a web of actions that might not be needed at all. The first issue that Seymour addressed at our meeting, then, was: is there a way to do a quicker, messier run at the problem and still get results that might be as useful as the other more "planful" method?

Second, I was concerned about the whole enabling option vs. programmatic option conflict. By aiming at the enabling options only would we be giving the Lead Communities the help they wanted and needed?

Finally, would we run into political problems by having to "evaluate" (even indirectly) the national training institutions when we looked at the preservice enabling (i.e. personnel training) option?

Other questions were also raised (such as how do we define the categories of Best Practice that we're going to look at). All these questions seemed to be solved or at least put on hold by the plan of action that we discussed in the September 5 meeting.

III. The plan is a kind of advanced simulation for attacking the Best Practices Project. It tries to work "quick and dirty," evaluating itself as it goes along and using the familiar as a way to learn about how to understand the unknown. We would work like this:

A. We would try to find four categories that Best Practices should focus on. The suggestions would come from polling senior policy advisors and other "friends" of the CIJE and they would come by looking at the local Commission reports to see what those communities suggested were their needs on the assumption that the Lead Communities would in all likelihood resemble the five (yes?) local communities who have had commissions on Jewish education.

B. We would then try out the following exercise: Assume that we had only one month to help a Lead Community. We would take one of the four categories of "A" above and play it out. We would take the category that we felt that we already had some good contacts and ideas about. Most likely candidate: the supplementary school. We would gather (ideally in person; if not via telephone or by individual interviews) five good people with knowledge of that area. These five are people we know or know of through our current contacts and we wouldn't worry at this point about all the good people whom we haven't included. Eventually we will gather others.

The group of five would look at our category and ask the question what do we mean by Best Practice in the realm of X (e.g. supplementary school)? In answering this question matters of both a programmatic and enabling type would surely emerge. Once we generated this list of ideas or components, we would then ask: 1) What examples in real life do we know of the Best Practice of these components? 2) And knowing these examples, now what would all this mean for the Lead Communities? How useful is it?

We would then "give ourselves a grade." We would also ask a few outside critics for their grade. It's possible at this point that we would say that this process is a "good enough" cut at dealing with our issue. If so, we've learned a lot about how to get into this quickly and usefully. A more refined version could then be invented for later iterations. If we have serious questions about what we've done, we should then be able to rethink the process figure out how to fix it. Most importantly it would give us a model for determining Best Practice in areas that we have less knowledge of familiarity with-- the other categories from "A" above.

C. If this quick and dirty method is good enough to be of use to the Lead Communities, it might mean that we could go immediately into the research component. Here we would be doing serious examination of the Best Practices that we've listed, trying to analyze and describe in a reflective way the nature of the work going on in these places. It may be, in other words, that for immediate aid to the

2-3 day meeting

5 weeks to home 2 days paid "scrubbing" + reporting

Do we need more to help a LC

But how much do we need to know to help a LC

Lead Communities, the serious research is not necessary-- it can kick in later down the road, as we move the work into a higher stage of analysis.

D. This plan deals with the enabling option in the following way: One of the questions that the group of five must always ask is what kind of personnel-building is going on in the site we are talking about? Is it preservice or in-service? A second question would be what kind of training would we need to implement in a Lead Community to duplicate the quality of programmatic excellence that we found in the Best Practice setting? In other words, the enabling option of personnel is dealt with by examining a) what is happening in personnel in the Best Practice setting and b) by imagining how we could recreate the Best Practice of X site in the Lead Community-- in this arena the "programmatic" and the "enabling" overlap without question. In a way it's an answer to the issue of translation raised in my original paper: translation means finding the way we can move a Best Practice into the Lead Community by "building the profession." In that fashion we have an elegant solution to the problem of enabling vs. programmatic: namely, there is no dichotomy-- the enabling is the way we bring the programmatic into the Lead Community.

E. Some of the above is my own language and rephrasing of Seymour's plan and I may have missed something (or a good deal). Seymour, Annette and Shulamith should feel free to offer additions, clarifications or corrections. Let me know what you think.

Barry

cc. Isa Aron

What kind of training would "T-ledo" / LC [Tchrs] need to understand what is going on in BP -> "St Louis" and to transfer it  
We need to invent the curric. for translating St Louis to T-ledo

 **MELTON  
RESEARCH  
CENTER**  
for Jewish Education

July 31, 1991

To: Shulamith Elster, Steve Hoffman,  
Seymour Fox, Annette Hochstein  
From: Barry Holtz

Friends,

Here is the new version of the Best Practices Project paper, revised for use with the Senior Policy Advisers and the Board. Please let me know if you want other changes.

After speaking with Shulamith and Seymour, I have answered my question from the previous version: Best Practices will focus on the enabling option of personnel, not on particular programmatic options per se. Programmatic options will have a role here, but personnel ("building the profession") will be the microscope under which certain programmatic options will be viewed.

**BUT:** after thinking about this, something here makes me nervous and I would very much like to hear your collective response: I began to think about how going this route is bound to run into heavier political troubles than what we'd get doing a straight collection or analysis of various examples of best practice among the programmatic options. Why? Because doing some of the programmatic options would tend to be a much more local thing, while the personnel issue is going to put us in the situation of evaluating national institutions. That is, if I am looking at examples of best practice within JCCs or looking for good supplementary schools or places where Hebrew is taught well (i.e. the programmatic options approach), I am going to find one in Denver, another in San Diego, another two in Boston, etc. But if I am looking at who does training of personnel for supplementary schools (i.e. going the enabling option route of personnel)-- aren't I stuck having to deal with a small number of national institutions (JTS, HUC, Brandeis) and in the politically touchy waters of evaluating them?

I think this could present major problems for the project and I'd like some response from you four in this matter. Is there any way to avoid this? Am I missing something here?

While I have your attention, let me now raise a second problem (which was in the other draft of the paper as well). I just got off the phone with Isa and she asks the following: by not doing the programmatic options are we going to shortchange the

Holtz--2

Lead Communities who are looking for some very practical short-range advice about issues such as teaching Hebrew in the day school, running good (best practice) trips to Israel, hearing about curricula for early childhood education? Isn't the personnel issue too broad and too "non-programmatic" for good, quick help to the Lead Communities? Any responses?

News flash: I finished this letter and then got a call from Adam who had a very similar reaction to Isa's. He thinks that an "inventory" makes sense when it is a collection of programs, but the personnel issue doesn't seem to have that "practice" dimension which will be of immediate use to the Lead Communities. So what do you all think?

Best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Barry". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name "Barry".

October 8, 1991

To: Steve, Shulamith, Seymour, Annette:  
From: Barry Holtz  
Re: Best Practices Plan

Dear Friends,

I. This memo summarizes my understanding of ideas that Seymour, Shulamith and I discussed in a two-hour meeting on September 5, 1991. At that time Seymour reacted to a set of questions that I had raised about the best way to implement the Best Practices Project. The three of us discussed Seymour's suggestions and came to an agreement about some of the steps required to launch the project. Because of the holidays that soon came upon us (and because in the midst of all that I managed to come down with the flu which dragged on for a while), there was more lag time between the meeting and this memo than I would have liked, but I believe that I have accurately represented our discussion below.

II. One of the issues raised about my original paper in Israel (and to some extent about the revised-- July 30th-- version as well) was that the plan of action that I proposed was perhaps too planned, too overly determined and dependent on implementing a set of defined logical steps. The problem with such a plan was that it didn't take into account the issue of time exigencies, it was not sufficiently "messy" to deal with real-life situations, and it spun out a web of actions that might not be needed at all. The first issue that Seymour addressed at our meeting, then, was: is there a way to do a quicker, messier run at the problem and still get results that might be as useful as the other more "planful" method?

Second, I was concerned about the whole enabling option vs. programmatic option conflict. By aiming at the enabling options only would we be giving the Lead Communities the help they wanted and needed?

Finally, would we run into political problems by having to "evaluate" (even indirectly) the national training institutions when we looked at the preservice enabling (i.e. personnel training) option?

Other questions were also raised (such as how do we define the categories of Best Practice that we're going to look at). All these questions seemed to be solved or at least put on hold by the plan of action that we discussed in the September 5 meeting.

III. The plan is a kind of advanced simulation for attacking the Best Practices Project. It tries to work "quick and dirty," evaluating itself as it goes along and using the familiar as a way to learn about how to understand the unknown. We would work like this:

A. We would try to find four categories that Best Practices should focus on. The suggestions would come from polling senior policy advisors and other "friends" of the CIJE and they would come by looking at the local Commission reports to see what those communities suggested were their needs on the assumption that the Lead Communities would in all likelihood resemble the five (yes?) local communities who have had commissions on Jewish education.

B. We would then try out the following exercise: Assume that we had only one month to help a Lead Community. We would take one of the four categories of "A" above and play it out. We would take the category that we felt that we already had some good contacts and ideas about. Most likely candidate: the supplementary school. We would gather (ideally for 2 days) five good people with knowledge of that area. These five are people we know or know of through our current contacts and we wouldn't worry at this point about all the good people whom we haven't included. Eventually we will gather others.

The group of five would look at our category and ask the question what do we mean by Best Practice in the realm of X (e.g. supplementary school)? In answering this question matters of both a programmatic and enabling type would surely emerge. Once we generated this list of ideas or components, we would then ask: 1) What examples in real life do we know of the Best Practice of these components? 2) And knowing these examples, now what would all this mean for the Lead Communities? How useful is it?

We would then "give ourselves a grade." We would also ask a few outside critics for their grade. It's possible at this point that we would say that this process is a "good enough" cut at dealing with our issue. If so, we've learned a lot about how to get into this quickly and usefully. A more refined version could then be invented for later iterations. If we have serious questions about what we've done, we should then be able to rethink the process figure out how to fix it. Most importantly it would give us a model for determining Best Practice in areas that we have less knowledge of familiarity with-- the other categories from "A" above.

C. If this quick and dirty method is good enough to be of use to the Lead Communities, it might mean that we could go immediately into the research component. Here we would be doing serious examination

of the Best Practices that we've listed, trying to analyze and describe in a reflective way the nature of the work going on in these places. It may be, in other words, that for immediate aid to the Lead Communities, the serious research is not necessary-- it can kick in later down the road, as we move the work into a higher stage of analysis.

D. This plan deals with the enabling option in the following way: One of the questions that the group of five must always ask is what kind of personnel-building is going on in the site we are talking about? Is it preservice or in-service? A second question would be what kind of training would we need to implement in a Lead Community to duplicate the quality of programmatic excellence that we found in the Best Practice setting? In other words, the enabling option of personnel is dealt with by examining a) what is happening in personnel in the Best Practice setting and b) by imagining how we could recreate the Best Practice of X site in the Lead Community-- in this arena the "programmatic" and the "enabling" overlap without question. In a way it's an answer to the issue of translation raised in my original paper: translation means finding the way we can move a Best Practice into the Lead Community by "building the profession." In that fashion we have an elegant solution to the problem of enabling vs. programmatic: namely, there is no dichotomy-- the enabling is the way we bring the programmatic into the Lead Community.

E. Some of the above is my own language and rephrasing of Seymour's plan and I may have missed something (or a good deal). Seymour, Annette and Shulamith should feel free to offer additions, clarifications or corrections. Let me know what you think.

Barry

cc. Isa Aron

October 18, 1991

To: Steve, Shulamith, Seymour, Annette:  
From: Barry Holtz  
Re: The Best Practices Plan (Revised)

Dear Friends,

This memo will propose the "final" plan for the Best Practices Project, based on my meeting on September 5, 1991 with Seymour and Shulamith and on subsequent discussions with both of them.

The plan as it currently stands is an attempt to find an efficient and realistic way to implement the Best Practices Project. It tries to work, "quick and dirty," evaluating itself as it goes along and using what is well-known to us as a way to learn about how to understand the unknown. We would work like this:

#### YEAR ONE

A. We would decide on the four main areas or categories (such as "the supplementary school" or "early childhood programs") that the Best Practices Project should focus on. The suggestions would come from polling senior policy advisers and other "friends" of the CIJE and they would come by looking at the local Commission reports to see what those communities suggested were their needs-- on the assumption that the Lead Communities would in all likelihood resemble the local communities who have had commissions on Jewish education.

B. We would then work in the following manner

#### **Round One**

We would try out the following exercise: Assume that we had only one month to help a Lead Community. We would take one of the four categories of "A" above and play it out. We would take the category that we felt that we already had some good contacts and ideas about. Most likely candidate: the supplementary school. We would gather (ideally for 2 days) five good people with knowledge of that area. These five are people we know or know of through our current contacts and we wouldn't worry at this point about all the good people whom we haven't included. Eventually we will gather others.

Phase One

The group of five would look at our category and ask the question what do we mean by Best Practice in the realm of X (e.g. supplementary school)? In answering this question matters-- to use the language of A Time to Act and the Commission-- of both a programmatic and enabling type would surely emerge. In other words, we would hear about good programs (e.g. "how to teach Hebrew in the supplementary school") and we would hear about successful attempts at "building the profession" (e.g. "how one school implements a good staff training program").

Once we generated this list of ideas or components, we would then ask: 1) What examples in real life do we know of the Best Practice of these components? 2) And knowing these examples, now what would all this mean for the Lead Communities? How useful is it? After that discussion, the group of five would go home and do some "scouting". They would look into programs that they personally know about; they would call people they know for some advice and suggestions. Let's assume that this would take two days of work. After scouting around, they would be in touch with us (Shulamith and Barry) with their report.

#### Phase Two: Site visits

At this point it may be necessary to initiate a certain number of "site visits" to look at some of the examples of Best Practice that have been suggested. In most cases such visits will probably not be needed since the group of five will have recent and direct contact with the Best Practice sites that they are recommending. However, it is also likely that in researching for other examples, individuals will hear of sites that ought to be looked at. We anticipate up to five such site visits.

#### Next Steps: Evaluating what we have done

C. Once the sites visits are completed, we would then be in the position to "give ourselves a grade." We would ask: "Do we need more in order to help a Lead Community?" We would also ask a few outside critics for their grade. It's possible at this point that we would say that this process is a "good enough" cut at dealing with our issue. If so, we've learned a lot about how to get into this quickly and usefully. A more refined version could then be invented for later iterations. If we have serious questions about what we've done, we should then be able to rethink the process to figure out how to fix it. Most importantly it would give us a model for determining Best Practice in areas that we have less knowledge of familiarity with-- the other categories from "A" above.

If this method is good enough to be of use to the Lead Communities, it might mean that we could go immediately into the research component. Here we would be doing serious examination of the Best Practices that we've listed, trying to analyze and describe in a

reflective way the nature of the work going on in these places. It may be, in other words, that for immediate aid to the Lead Communities, the serious research is not necessary-- it can kick in later down the road, as we move the work into a higher stage of analysis. What we do have to think about is how much do we need to know in order to be able to help a Lead Community.

This would lead us to

### Phase Three

Here there are three options depending on how we answer the question immediately above. To help the Lead Communities: A) We have enough just simply by having a Rolodex card with the name of the site and relevant on-site people, the nature of the work done there and the seal of approval from our group of 5. B) We would need 1 to 3 page write-ups of the programs we've seen. C) We would need serious portraits/profiles of the schools in the manner of Sara Lawrence Lightfoot's The Good High School.

### Round Two

Round Two, also to be done in the first year, would deal with a second area/category from the A. list above. We would take the knowledge we had gained from Round One, adapt and change the method based on that experience, and deal with our new category. We should note, however, that it is likely that each subsequent "round" will take more time to implement, even though we will be refining the process as we go along. Why? Because we are going to begin with the area/category we know best, where we have good and reliable experts and contacts (e.g. to make up our group of 5). But in the later rounds we will be moving into areas that are less familiar to us and we will need more time to figure out who the right experts are and to gather the information.

### YEAR TWO

Year Two would consist of developing additional "rounds" (to deal with other areas/categories--see A. above) and implementing what we have learned from Best Practices into the Lead Communities themselves.

This latter process-- what we have called "the issue of translation" in other memos-- should involve a serious discussion and exploration by the staff of the CIJE before we undertake the work. It would be important to try to determine among other things: a) the particular nature of Best Practices that we have seen and the potential difficulties in moving any individual best practice from its "home" to the Lead Community; b) an evaluation of the economic implications of Best Practices-- what does it cost to implement and run the programs we have seen and what might it cost to take a program from

one place and introduce it into a Lead Community. Startup costs may have to be taken into consideration, for example, or hidden costs that may not be apparent until we try to move a practice into a Lead Community; c) Seymour has pointed out that we will need to invent a "curriculum" for translating any particular Best Practice into a Lead Community. In other words, one issue that we will have to deal with is finding a way for the educators and involved laypeople in our Lead Community simply to understand the Best Practice we want to introduce. Then we must figure out the steps that can move the practice into the Community. In that regard we ought to look at: d) the literature from general education about the introduction of change into educational settings and particularly the question of what happens when change is mandated "from above." This might be very useful in our thinking about the Lead Communities.

Barry

cc. Isa Aron

August 4, 1992

The Best Practices Project  
Progress Report and Plans for 1992-93  
Barry W. Holtz

Introduction

In describing its "blueprint for the future," A Time to Act, the report of the Commission on Jewish Education in North America, called for the creation of "an inventory of best educational practices in North America" (p. 69).

The primary purpose of this inventory is to aid the future work of the CIJE, particularly as it helps to develop the group of Lead Communities which will be selected this summer. As the Lead Communities devise their educational plans and put these plans into action, the Best Practices inventory will offer a guide to Jewish educational success that can be adapted for use in particular Lead Communities.

In addition, the Best Practices Project hopes to make an important contribution to the knowledge base about North American Jewish education by documenting outstanding educational work that is currently taking place.

The Best Practices Project as of today

This past year has been spent in designing a methodology for conducting a project that has never really been done in Jewish education before in such a wide-scale fashion. How do we locate examples of best practice in Jewish education? As the year has proceeded both an approach to the work and a set of issues to explore has evolved. We began by identifying the specific programmatic "areas" in Jewish education on which to focus. These were primarily the venues in which Jewish education is conducted such as supplementary schools, JCCs, day schools etc. A best practices team is being developed for each of these areas. These teams are supervised by Dr. Shulamith Elster and me.

We have come to refer to each of the different areas as a "division," in the business sense of the word. (Thus the Best Practices Project has a supplementary school division, an early childhood division, etc.) Each division's work has two phases. Phase 1 is a meeting of experts to talk about best practice in the area and to help develop the criteria for assessing "success"; Phase 2 is the site visit and report writing done by members of the team.

This year four different divisions were launched. We began with the supplementary school primarily because we knew that a) there was a general feeling in the community, particularly in the lay community, that the supplementary school had not succeeded; b) because the majority of Jewish children get their education in the supplementary school and because of that perception of failure, the Lead Communities would certainly want to address the "problem" of the supplementary school; c) as the director of the project, it was the area in which I had the most experience and best sense of whom I could turn to for assistance and counsel.

As I reported earlier this year, a group of experts was gathered together to discuss the issue of best practice in the supplementary school. Based on that meeting I then wrote a Best Practices in the Supplementary School guide (see Appendix). A team of report writers was assembled and assignments were given to the team to locate both good schools and good elements or programs within schools (such as parent education programs).

We currently have a team of seven people looking and writing reports (see Appendix). By the end of the summer we should have the reports on ten schools as written up by the group members. The first results indicate that, indeed, there are successful supplementary schools and we are finding representative places that are worth hearing about and seeing. In the spirit of Professor Lee Shulman's talk at this year's GA, we have discovered real examples that "prove the existence" of successful supplementary schools. These are sites that people in the Lead Communities can look at, visit and learn from.

In May Dr. Elster and I launched our second division, early childhood Jewish education. We met with a group of experts (see Appendix) in this field and following up that meeting I wrote a Guide to Best Practice in Jewish Early Childhood Education. Many of the members of the group have already agreed to join our team of report writers. The writing will take place in September and October.

A third division, education in the JCC world, is in the early stages of development. Dr. Elster and I met with a team of staff people at the JCCA. Mr. Lenny Rubin of the JCCA is putting together a group of JCCA staff and in-the-field practitioners to develop the Phase 1 "guidelines" for this area. We will work with them in writing up the document. After this is completed (in the fall) a team of report writers (from that group and others) will be assembled to do the actual write-ups.

Finally, a fourth area-- best practices in the Israel Experience-- has been launched thanks to the work of the CRB

Foundation. The Foundation has funded a report on success in Israel Experience programming which was written by Dr. Steven M. Cohen and Ms. Susan Wall. The CIJE Best Practices Project will be able to use this excellent report as the basis of further explorations in this area, as needed by the Lead Communities.

## Next Steps: The 1992-1993 Year

### New Areas

As mentioned above, we should have reports of the Early Childhood division completed in the early fall. The JCC division should be operationalized in the fall. During the 1992-3 year we also plan to launch the following areas: day schools, adult education, camping and the college campus. Each presents its own interesting challenges. Of these we have already begun to plan in a preliminary way for the day schools division. Here the goal is to gather together experts from the academic world of Jewish education (like our supplementary school group) as well as actual practitioners from the field. The current plan is to have each school that is written up be analyzed for one particular area of excellence and not for its over all "goodness." Thus we would have X school written up for its ability to teach modern Hebrew speaking; another for its text teaching; another for its parent education programs; another for its in-service education, etc.

### Documentation

Another task that needs to be considered is finding more examples of best practices within those areas that we have already looked at, or to look at the examples we currently have in even greater depth. This applies particularly to supplementary schools because we will have only explored ten schools and programs and there is such a wide range of supplementary schools across America that we ought to have some more breadth in this area. A similar case could be made for early childhood programs.

At the time of our first exploration of supplementary schools, we sent a letter to all the members of the Senior Policy Advisers asking for their suggestions. In addition, we worked with Dr. Eliot Spack, Executive Director of CAJE, to send a similar letter to "friends within CAJE." Because of these initiatives we now have a list of 20 to 30 Hebrew schools that we might want to investigate.

Dr. Jonathan Woocher, Executive Director of JESNA, has asked the following question: "for the purposes of the project, how many examples of best practice do you really need in any one given area?" Do we need to have ten reports of supplementary schools or twenty or sixty? Another question might be raised about the "depth" of the current reports. Many of the report writers have said that they would like the chance to look at their best practice examples in more detail than the short reports have allowed. I have called this the difference between writing a "report" and writing a "portrait" or study of an institution.

The research component of the Best Practices Project would certainly welcome either greater breadth or greater depth, but at the present moment we believe that the first priority is to answer another question: **What do the Lead Communities need?** After meeting with the representatives of the Lead Communities that are chosen, we will have a better sense of the next stages of the Lead Community Project-- what the planning and implementation needs will be. At that point we will be able to decide the best direction the documentation should move in.

#### Lead Communities: Implementation-- and How to do it

Aside from launching the other divisions mentioned above the other main initiative of the Best Practices Project for the coming year will be thinking through the issue of best practices and Lead Communities. Professor Seymour Fox has often spoken about the Best Practices Project as creating the "curriculum" for change in the Lead Communities. The challenge this year is to develop the method by which the Lead Community planners and educators can learn from the best practices that we have documented and begin to introduce adaptations of those ideas into their own communities. This can occur through a wide range of activities including: site visits by Lead Community planners to observe best practices in action; visits by best practices practitioners to the Lead Communities; workshops with educators in the Lead Communities, etc. The Best Practices Project will be involved in developing this process of implementation in consultation with the Lead Communities and with other members of the CIJE staff.

#### From Best Practice to New Practice

On other occasions we have spoken about the need to go beyond best practices in order to develop **new ideas** in Jewish education. At times we have referred to this as the "department of dreams." We believe that two different but related matters are involved here: first, all the new ideas in Jewish education that the energy of the CIJE and the Lead Community Project might be able to generate and second, the interesting ideas in Jewish education that people have talked about, perhaps even written about, but never have had the chance to try out. It is likely that developing these new ideas will come under the rubric of the Best Practices Project and it is our belief that the excitement inherent in the Lead Community Project will give us the opportunity to move forward with imagining innovative new plans and projects for Jewish educational change.

## APPENDIX

### Team Members: Best Practice in the Supplementary School

#### Report Writers:

Ms. Kathy Green (Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, Philadelphia)  
Ms. Carol Ingall (Melton Research Center and BJE, Providence, RI)  
Dr. Samuel Joseph (HUC-Cincinnati)  
Ms. Vicky Kelman (Melton Research Center and Berkeley, CA)  
Dr. Joseph Reimer (Brandeis University)  
Dr. Stuart Schoenfeld (York University, Toronto)  
Dr. Michael Zeldin (HUC-LA)

#### Additional Consultants:

Dr. Isa Aron (HUC-Los Angeles)  
Ms. Gail Dorph (University Of Judaism, Los Angeles)  
Dr. Samuel Heilman (Queens College, NY)

### Team Members: Early Childhood Jewish Education

#### Report Writers

Ms. Miriam Feinberg (Washington, DC);  
Dr. Ruth Pinkenson Feldman (Philadelphia);  
Ms. Jane Perman (JCC Association);  
Ms. Esther Friedman (Houston);  
Ms. Esther Elfenbaum (Los Angeles);  
Ms. Ina Regosin (Milwaukee);  
Ms. Charlotte Muchnick (Haverford, PA);  
Ms. Rena Rotenberg (Baltimore);  
Ms. Shulamit Gittelsohn (North Miami Beach);  
Ms. Lucy Cohen (Montreal);  
Ms. Roanna Shorofsky (New York);  
Ms. Marvell Ginsburg (Chicago).

## Memo

February 18, 1993

To: CIJE Board

From: Barry W. Holtz

Re: Update-- The Best Practices Project

### Introduction

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The primary purpose of this inventory is to help the CIJE in its work with the three Lead Communities (Atlanta, Baltimore, Milwaukee) which were selected last summer. As the Lead Communities devise their educational plans and put these plans into action, the Best Practices inventory will offer a guide to Jewish educational success that can be adapted for use in particular Lead Communities.

In addition, the Best Practices Project hopes to make an important contribution to the knowledge base about North American Jewish education by documenting outstanding educational work that is currently taking place.

### The Best Practices Project as of today

This past year has been spent in designing a methodology for conducting a project that has never really been done in Jewish education before in such a wide-scale fashion. How do we locate examples of best practice in Jewish education? As the year has proceeded both an approach to the work and a set of issues to explore has evolved. We began by identifying the specific programmatic "areas" in Jewish education on which to focus. These were primarily the venues in which Jewish education is conducted such as supplementary schools, JCCs, day schools etc. A best practices team is being developed for each of these areas. These teams are supervised by Dr. Shulamith Elster and me.

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Phase 1 is a meeting of experts to talk about best practice in the area and to help develop the criteria for assessing "success"; Phase 2 is the site visit and report writing done by members of the team.

Last year four different divisions were launched. We began with the supplementary school primarily because we knew that a) there was a general feeling in the community, particularly in the lay community, that the supplementary school had not succeeded; b) because the majority of Jewish children get their education in the supplementary school and because of that perception of failure, the Lead Communities would certainly want to address the "problem" of the supplementary school; c) as the director of the project, it was the area in which I had the most experience and best sense of whom I could turn to for assistance and counsel.

A group of experts was gathered together to discuss the issue of best practice in the supplementary school. Based on that meeting I then wrote a Best Practices in the Supplementary School guide. A team of report writers was assembled and assignments were given to the team to locate both good schools and good elements or programs within schools (such as parent education programs).

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In May, 1992 Dr. Elster and I launched our second division, early childhood Jewish education. We met with a group of experts in this field and following up that meeting I wrote a Guide to Best Practice in Jewish Early Childhood Education. Many of the members of the group have already agreed to join our team of report writers. We now have the first drafts of reports on ten programs and sites.

A third division, education in the JCC world, is in the early stages of development. Dr. Elster and I met with a team of staff people at the JCCA. Mr. Lenny Rubin of the JCCA is putting together a group of JCCA staff and in-the-field practitioners to develop the Phase 1 "guidelines" for this area. We will work with them in writing up the document. After this is completed a team of report writers (from that group and others) will be assembled to do the actual write-ups.

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### The 1992-1993 Year

#### Next Steps

We are now beginning to put together a Preliminary Guide to Best Practice for each of the "areas" of Jewish education. These Guides will serve the three Lead Communities in their planning process by offering examples of success and suggestions for specific improvements that could be implemented. The first Guide has recently been published in draft form and is devoted to the Supplementary School area. This Guide contains: an introduction which includes an explanation of the concept of Best Practice and an overview of the specific area of the Supplementary School-- what characterizes a successful Supplementary School with suggestions for practical applications, the "Guide to Best Practice in the Supplementary School" that was used by the report writers, the full reports (using pseudonyms) of the report writers, each preceded by a brief "overview" of the contents of the report, and an appendix listing the researchers who have been involved in the project.

Of course such a Guide will continue to grow and deepen as the research effort into Best Practice continues and subsequent "editions" of the Guides in each of the areas will expand the knowledge base for action.

Following upon that publication we hope to create a second Guide in the area of Early Childhood programs which will appear about two months after the Supplementary School Guide.

During the 1992-3 year we have begun to launch the following areas: a) day schools; b) the college campus and will then move on to adult education, camping, and community-wide initiatives (those programs in training, recruitment, board development, etc. that have been done at the community level such as Federation or BJE).

Each area presents its own interesting challenges. Our discussions in the day school area have begun by consulting experts in the field for their suggestions of how to look into

the field and what best practices sites they would recommend that we explore. The current plan is to have each school that is written up be analyzed for one particular area of excellence and not for its overall "goodness." Thus we would have X school written up for its ability to teach modern Hebrew speaking; another for its text teaching; another for its parent education programs; another for its in-service education, etc.

#### Lead Communities: Implementation-- and How to do it

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#### From Best Practice to New Practice

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## Memo

July 29, 1993

To: CIJE Board

From: Dr. Barry W. Holtz

Re: Update-- The Best Practices Project

The Best Practices Project is an operation that has many long-range implications. Documenting "the success stories of Jewish education" is something that has never been done in a systematic way and it is a project that cannot be completed within a short range of time. This memo outlines the way that the Best Practices Project should unfold over the next 1 to 2 years.

### Documentation and Work in the Field

The easiest way to think about the Best Practices Project-- and probably the most useful-- is to see it as one large project which seeks to examine eight or nine areas (what we have called "divisions"). The project involves two phases of work. First, is the documentation stage. Here examples of best practice are located and reports are written. The second phase consists of "work in the field," the attempt to use these examples of best practice as models of change in the three Lead Communities.

The two phases of the Best Practices Project are only partially sequential. Although it is necessary to have the work of documentation available in order to move toward implementation in the communities, we have also pointed out previously that our long-range goal has always been to see continuing expansion of the documentation in successive "iterations." Thus, the fact that we have published our first best practice publication (on Supplementary Schools) does not mean that we are done with work in that area. We hope in the future to expand upon and enrich that work with more analysis and greater detail.

In the short run, however, we are looking at the plan below as means of putting out a best practices publication, similar to what we've done for the Supplementary School division, in each of the other areas. What we have learned so far in the project is the process involved in getting to that point. Thus it appears to be necessary to go through the following stages in each of the divisions:

### The Steps in Documentation: First Iteration

Preliminary explorations: to determine with whom I should be meeting

Stage one: Meeting (or multiple meetings) with experts

Stage two: Refining of that meeting, leading to a guide for writing up the reports.

Stage three: Visiting the possible best practices sites by expert report writers

Stage four: Writing up reports by expert report writers

Stage five: Editing those reports

Stage six: Printing the edited version

Stage seven: "Advertising" and Distributing the edited version

## Next Steps

For this memo, I've taken each "division" and each stage and tried to analyze where we currently are headed:

1) Supplementary schools: Mostly done in "iteration #1". There may be two more reports coming in which were originally promised.

2) Early childhood programs

Here we are at stage five. The volume should come out at the end of the summer.

3) JCCs

Here we are at stage three. This will require visits, report writing, etc. The JCCA is our partner in implementing the documentation.

4) Day schools

Here we are at stage one, two or three, depending on the denomination. Because this involves all the denominations, plus the unaffiliated schools, this will be the most complicated of the projects for the year.

5) College campus programming

Here we are at stage three, with the national Hillel organization as a partner. One question to deal with is non-Hillel campus activities and how to move forward with that. As to Hillel programs, we need to choose report writers, visit sites, etc.

6) Camping/youth programs

Here we are at the preliminary stage. We should be able to have a stage one meeting this year. It's probably fairly easy to identify the right participants via the denominations and the JCCA.

7) Adult education.

Here we are at the preliminary stage. We should be able to have a stage one meeting this year. Here gathering the right participants is probably more complex.

8) The Israel experience

We hope to move this project forward with consultation from the staff of the CRB Foundation. As they are moving forward with their own initiative, we hope to be able to work on the "best practice issues" involved with the successful trip to Israel.

9) Community-Wide initiatives

Finally, I have recommended that we add a ninth area-- Community-Wide initiatives using JESNA's help. This refers to Jewish education improvement projects at the Federation or BJE level,

particularly in the personnel or lay development area. Examples: the Providence BJE program for teacher accreditation; the Cleveland Fellows; projects with lay boards of synagogue schools run by a BJE; salary/benefits enhancement projects. This project would use JESNA's assistance could probably be launched rather quickly.

#### Lead Communities: Implementation-- and How to do it

In previous reports I have quoted Seymour Fox's statement that the Best Practices Project is creating the "curriculum" for change in the Lead Communities. This applies in particular to the "enabling options" of building community support for Jewish education and improving the quantity and quality of professional educators. It is obvious from the best practice reports that these two elements will appear and reappear in each of the divisions under study.

The challenge is to develop the method by which the Lead Community planners and educators can learn from the best practices that we have documented and begin to introduce adaptations of those ideas into their own communities. This can occur through a wide range of activities including: presentations to the local Lead Communities commissions about the results of the Best Practices Project, site visits by Lead Community lay leaders and planners to observe best practices in action; visits by best practices practitioners to the Lead Communities; workshops with educators in the Lead Communities, etc.

The Best Practices Project will be involved in developing this process of implementation in consultation with the Lead Communities and with other members of the CIJE staff. We have already discussed possible modes of dissemination of information in our conversations with the three communities.

The supplementary school area was the first that the Best Practices Project was able to launch in the research phase. Thanks to the support of the Nathan Cummings Foundation we were able to complete the first phase of research quickly and, with the continuing support of the Cummings Foundation grant, we are now in a position to be able to move toward improving the quality of supplementary school education in the three Lead Communities through use of the Best Practices Project. During the coming year this process will be an important focus of the project's work.

How can we spread the word?

The first report on supplementary schools has engendered a good deal of interest in the larger Jewish educational community. One issue that the CIJE needs to address is the best way to make the results of the Best Practices Project available. How should the dissemination of materials take place? How should the findings of this project have an impact on communities outside of the Lead Communities? Certainly we should find ways to advertise and distribute the materials as they are produced. Perhaps we should also begin to consider a series of meetings or conferences open to other communities or interested parties, as the project moves forward.