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Goals. Local seminars, 1994-1995.

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FROM: "Dan Pekarsky", INTERNET:pekarsky@mail.soemadison.wisc.edu
TO: (unknown), 73321,1217
barry holtz, 73321,1221
DATE: 3/10/95 10:51 AM

Re: Goals -Reply

Sender: pekarsky@mail.soemadison.wisc.edu
Received: from wigate.nic.wisc.edu by arl-img-3.compuserve.com (8.6.10/5.941228sam)
id KAA16713; Fri, 10 Mar 1995 10:35:05 -0500
Received: from mail.soemadison.wisc.edu by wigate.nic.wisc.edu;
Fri, 10 Mar 95 09:28 CST
Message-Id: <2F606FE8.CF87.00F3.000@mail.soemadison.wisc.edu>
Date: Fri, 10 Mar 1995 09:18:00 -600
From: "Dan Pekarsky" <pekarsky@mail.soemadison.wisc.edu>
Reply-To: pekarsky@mail.soemadison.wisc.edu
Subject: Goals -Reply
To: 74671.3370%compuserve.com@mail.soemadison.wisc.edu
CC: 73321.1217@compuserve.com, 73321.1221@compuserve.com,
ALANHOF@vms.huji.ac.il
X-Gateway: iGate, (WP Office) vers 4.04b - 1032
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Content-Transfer-Encoding: 7BIT

Well, last night was the second of the projected 4 sessions in Milwaukee, and I think it went extremely well. It got off to a somewhat awkward start for two reasons: 1) Some institutional teams were not represented by the identical folks who came to session #1, and 2) I had not been forewarned that there was an entirely new team on hand. But once things got moving, I think it was a very fruitful evening.

The session began with some general points concerning why attention to issues of vision is anything but impractical. Then, prior to launching into the theme of vision, I took them through a summary of some major points from the preceding session as background to tonight's work.

Following this, I did succinct - but I think quite effective - presentations of both Brinker and Greenberg. After each one they had a chance to raise questions designed to clarify their respective views, as well as a chance to write down their reactions to the ideas presented. Then they broke into institution-based groups to trade reactions and to discuss the portrait-assignment that they had done in preparation for tonight's session. I emphasized the importance of an interplay between their own ideas, as developed in the portrait assignment, the ideas of other members of the group, and the ideas of thinkers like Brinker, Greenberg.

As best I can tell, the break-out groups were extremely fruitful, as

was the evening as a whole....but time will tell whether my perceptions are accurate.

I was impressed by the interest people have in thinking seriously about different visions of a meaningful Jewish existence which might guide the educational enterprise -- and I am coming to identify more and more strongly with your notion that this might be a very fruitful vehicle for engaging lay-leadership. We really need to discuss this further.

I look forward to talking with you soon.

Shabbat Shalom.

FROM: "Dan Pekarsky", INTERNET:pekarsky@mail.soemadison.wisc.edu
TO: (unknown), 73321,1217
barry holtz, 73321,1221
(unknown), 74671,3370
DATE: 2/10/95 4:59 PM

Re: Milwaukee Goals Seminar

Sender: pekarsky@mail.soemadison.wisc.edu
Received: from wigate.nic.wisc.edu by dub-img-3.compuserve.com (8.6.9/5.941228sam) id QAA29584; Fri, 10 Feb 1995 16:58:22 -0500
Received: from mail.soemadison.wisc.edu by wigate.nic.wisc.edu; Fri, 10 Feb 95 15:50 CST
Message-Id: <2F395BAF.CF87.0006.000@mail.soemadison.wisc.edu>
Date: Tue, 07 Feb 1995 14:42:00 -600
From: "Dan Pekarsky" <pekarsky@mail.soemadison.wisc.edu>
Reply-To: pekarsky@mail.soemadison.wisc.edu
Subject: Milwaukee Goals Seminar
To: ALANHOF@vms.huji.ac.il
CC: 73321.1217@compuserve.com, 73321.1221@compuserve.com, 74671.3370@compuserve.com, marom@vms.huji.ac.il
X-Gateway: iGate, (WP Office) vers 4.04b - 1032
MIME-Version: 1.0
Content-Type: TEXT/PLAIN; Charset=US-ASCII
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My initial sense is that the Milwaukee Goals Seminar (first of 4) got off to an excellent start. Much to my surprise, there were quite a few people, about 35 or so. Delegations of 3 or more came from 6 institutions (including one congregation, the JCC, and three Day Schools) and there was a rabbi present from another congregation (who hopes to round up a team). After a light supper from 6 to 6:20, the seminar began and lasted until 9 pm. After painting the context and the presuppositions of the Goals Project, the first part of the evening was spent painting a Vision-Driven Institution (Dewey), out of which I extracted the elements of a vision-driven institution (summarized in a concise handout). In the second part of the evening, I gave them the sheet I gave participants in Jerusalem that identifies 6 or so distinct goals-problems and leaves space to fill in examples. I exemplified each with attention to general education, and I then invited them to spend 10 minutes jotting down examples from out of their own institutions. I then broke them into institutional teams to share and compare their findings. I urged them to note but not to worry about disagreements. I'm not sure what went on at all the groups; but I was impressed that, as of 9 pm, some of them seemed to want to continue. In general, people seemed engaged and friendly.

Ruth and Jane also seemed to think it went very well...but we'll see whether time confirms this impression!

My plan for the next session, in March, is to focus on distinctively Jewish visions. I gave them the Portrait-assignment we used in Jerusalem, and I am also planning to send out the Greenberg-piece along with some questions to focus their thinking. Since we are giving it out in Atlanta, it would seem odd to me not to be able to give it out in Milwaukee; nonetheless, I'd prefer getting your okay on this. Let me know.

There are a number of matters I'd like to discuss with you. I hope we can talk soon.

Shabbat Shalom!

DP

FROM: "Dan Pekarsky", INTERNET:pekarsky@mail.soemadison.wisc.edu
TO: (unknown), 73321,1217
barry holtz, 73321,1221
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DATE: 1/17/95 7:33 PM

Re: Milwaukee update

Sender: pekarsky@mail.soemadison.wisc.edu
Received: from wigate.nic.wisc.edu by dub-img-1.compuserve.com (8.6.9/5.941228sam) id TAA17879; Tue, 17 Jan 1995 19:21:26 -0500
Received: from mail.soemadison.wisc.edu by wigate.nic.wisc.edu; Tue, 17 Jan 95 18:03 CDT
Message-Id: <2F1C5AA0.CF87.0001.000@mail.soemadison.wisc.edu>
Date: Tue, 17 Jan 1995 18:02:00 -600
From: "Dan Pekarsky" <pekarsky@mail.soemadison.wisc.edu>
Reply-To: pekarsky@mail.soemadison.wisc.edu
Subject: Milwaukee update
To: ALANHOF@vms.huji.ac.il
CC: 73321.1217@compuserve.com, 73321.1221@compuserve.com, 74671.3370@compuserve.com, Pekarsky@mail.soemadison.wisc.edu
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Attached you will find a summary of my meeting with representatives of some of the institutions interested in participating in the upcoming seminars. Some of this material I summarized in my recent conversation with Alan and Gail - including the fact that the JCC, though not in attendance at this meeting, has said it will participate. Conceivably, there may also be another Day School. Note that this document also includes some ideas about how to proceed with the seminar. By the way, I sent Ruth the Heilman and the Dewey piece, to be distributed in preparation for our first seminar on Feb. 2. I've requested a setting that allows institutional groups opportunities to meet for periods of time in private.

Today (Tuesday) I met with the Rabbis' Council in Milwaukee. There were about 8 rabbis in attendance, as well as Ruth and Louise. They listened politely, but I don't know with what effect. I certainly would not describe them as "bowled over" with excitement.

The bottom-line is that at least one institution, that of Terry Buckmann (spelling?), which is a major Reform congregation, is planning to participate, and I think it represents a very good addition. Buckmann seems interesting, and I think his educational director, who is eager to participate, could prove an asset in the

seminar. But here's the bad news: Buckmann (who is married to Karen Sobel of MAJE) has just accepted a job as a rabbi in Miami (as of July)! I'm disappointed not just because it threatens whatever progress might be made in the seminar, but also because Sobel is a real asset. By the way, since the only thing necessary to participate in the seminars is a willingness to come to all sessions, I see no reason at all to dissuade them from coming because of Terry's plans.

I still don't know how to read Lee Buchmann (spelling?), the young Conservative rabbi who chaired the meeting and is about to replace Gershon Panitch as head-rabbi of Louise Stein's congregation... I've known him for years and think he's a thoughtful person. He seems to be on the fence about this, probably leaning negatively; he keeps asking to "be persuaded" that this is worth coming to. My own sense is not to push him into coming. A few Day Schools, a JCC, and one congregation are more than plenty to work with, and I see only problems in getting Lee and his gang to come unwillingly.

A representative of another congregation said he was strongly supportive of what we're doing but did not see anyway of putting together a team who could come on the scheduled seminar days. Even he, he said, realized as he scanned his calendar that he could not attend all sessions.

On yet another note, I left Michael Rosenzweig a voice-mail message last night, indicating that he was welcome to send out the Greenberg essay.

I look forward to our being in touch.

--BoUnD_8KcZuX86QvYVtGo2f1c4cc6

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NOTES ON MILWAUKEE CONSULTATION (January 11, 1995)

In anticipation of the upcoming Goals Seminars in Milwaukee, I was asked by Ruth Cohen to meet with representatives of some of the participating institutions to give them a chance to voice their concerns, hopes, and expectations. Three of the four institutions that have to date expressed an interest in participating took part in this consultation, with each allotted about an hour. The three institutions were the Milwaukee Jewish Day School (a community school which describes itself as "religious"), the Hillel Academy (modern Orthodox), and a very small Right Wing Orthodox high school for girls (that is committed to a strong secular education along with Judaica). The JCC, while committed to the seminars, did not come for this event. (There is, by the way, a chance that one or more other institutions will also end up participating. Ruth indicated an interest on the part of one other Day School, and on Tuesday I'll

be meeting with the local rabbis' group.)

While I don't think Ruth adequately conveyed to them what they should bring to the meeting (in the way of questions, concerns, etc.), the evening did prove effective in giving them a sense of the seminars and of me and in giving me a sense of them. Below I try to summarize the evening, especially some impressions I formed of them.

PREPARATION FOR THE CONSULTATION

Anticipating (correctly) that the groups coming wouldn't have a clear idea of what we would be doing at this session, I sketched out some elements of an agenda that included an opportunity for them to hear about me and about the seminar; a chance for them to speak some about their institutions; a chance to hear about concerns, expectations, hopes, etc. in relation to the seminar. I mention this because in the course of preparing my sense for the direction of the seminar became clearer (although it got clearer still through meeting with the teams who showed up). Here's what I came up with:

Seminar purposes. It needs to be emphasized the seminar is not to be understood as a preface to efforts at educational improvement but as a critical stage in this effort. This said, the seminar's aims are the following:

1. Heightened awareness of place of vision and goals in education -- both ideally and in reality.
2. Acquisition of analytic tools - concepts and questions - that will facilitate a thoughtful scan or study of one's institution along significant goals-related dimensions; along with this, a preliminary self-study effort.
3. Some thoughtful reflection about the institution's vision, with attention to significant visions (e.g. as found in the Educated Jew Project and in denominational statements).
4. Acquaintanceship with an array of strategies that might prove useful in process of self-improvement.
5. Against the background of the foregoing, to identify issues in need of work, and to begin developing plans for addressing them.
6. Identification of one or more institutions that seem ripe for a partnership with CIJE beyond the seminars as they pursue a serious goals-agenda.

Projected sessions. The actual content and organization are likely to evolve in response to concerns of the participants and to the way in which they are or are not successfully working together. Roughly speaking, though, this is what a plausible set of seminars might look like.

1. Egypt and the Promised Land: Images of Failure and Images of Success. This session focuses on the ways in which goals/vision are inadequately represented in typical educating institutions -- juxtaposed with images of vision-driven institutions (Dewey and Heilman) which will be analyzed with attention to their critical features.

2. Examining visions: This session will be organized around visions - personal visions, extant institutional visions, and one or more visions of the kind associated with the Educated Jew Project. The intent is not just to better understand what enters into a vision but to encourage substantive thinking concerning one's own and one's institution's vision.

3. Roads to Greater Vision Drivenness: different strategies that have been/are being used will be identified and discussed. Issues concerning translation of vision into practice, as well as issues concerning the development of the kind of momentum and direction that might lead to greater vision-drivenness will be addressed.

4. Results of each institution's self-study, identification of issues, and developing action-plans will be explored.

(It is worth noting that based on this evening's consultations, I think that this last session may profitably take shape as a series of consultations with individual institutions. The evening also suggested that each session may need to include time for institutional teams to work on their own.)

Assignments. The seminar will include a number of assignments to be completed between sessions. In addition to reading assignments, here are some possibilities:

1. A portrait assignment (a la the summer Goals Seminar)
2. Using a schema that identifies criteria for an adequate guiding vision, invite them to assess the

adequacy of their own institutional visions (and their embodiment).

3. An effort to identify "exhibitions" (a la Sizer) that get at the kinds of traits each institution values and would like to nurture.

4. Identification of issues in need of being addressed, and the articulation of a plan for approaching them.

I now go on to note impressions from the evening.

THE MILWAUKEE JEWISH DAY SCHOOL

The Jewish Hebrew Day School brought significant representation to this consultation [Sylvia - Chair of Educational Policies Committee, Steve Baruch of the Hebrew/Judaica Committee who also works with the public schools, Doris - the principal, Mike Morgan who is Dean of Jewish Studies, Jane Gellman, Jay Beder who is co-chair of Hebrew/Judaica Committee, and Rick who is president. Not present was Judy Block who chairs the Comprehensive Planning Committee and works at University School]. My initial impression is very positive: they seem thoughtful and serious, eager to use this opportunity effectively.

It is because they are serious, I think, that they are somewhat nervous about the make-up of the seminar. Their concern is that sitting around the table with representatives of rivalrous institutions with a history of complicated relationships may inhibit candor and fruitful discussions. While the other groups with whom I spoke did not share this concern, I think it is an important one that needs to be seriously taken into account. My initial thought on this is a) to give each institutional group some time in small work-groups at each of the sessions, where they can explore issues on their own, and b) to use the last session for individual consultations with each of the institutions. In any event, this is an important issue which we will have to monitor.

Other issues they raised included the following:

1) the problem of pluralism - can they as an institution subscribe to a compelling vision and yet be strongly pluralistic and welcoming to Jews of very different kinds? What is their pluralistic range, and what are the limits? What should the school do when its members engage (sometimes outside the school's time/space) in activities that go beyond the recognized

limits, e.g. the Shabbat birthday party? How much Judaica -- and what kind - is appropriate in this kind of a setting? The desire -- but the impossibility - of trying to satisfy everyone! Who, if anyone, can reasonably be excluded? Group seems eager but somewhat frightened of addressing such issues, around which there is sometimes a "loud silence".

2) A desire to more adequately integrate Jewish and general education components of the school. They felt that although their rhetoric emphasized integration, in reality there was little integration. There was some interesting but brief conversation about what "integration" might mean, and there were references to Jewish concerns and categories suffusing (or, like oxygen - Jewish oxygen! - perfusing) the life of the institution, both in and out of the formal curriculum.

TORAH ACADEMY OF MILWAUKEE

T.A.M. is the small girl's high school (single gender, Right Wing Orthodox, but also strong on secular subjects and not parochial in outlook). There are now only about 6 kids there, two seniors and four. For many of their secular subjects they hire outsiders and have even contracted with a local Catholic school for some subjects. Their kids are bright, get a lot of attention, and do very well in both their Jewish and secular subjects (as judged by their parents). Representatives of this school seem comfortable with what they're doing and very confident about their approach and its outcomes.

In view of this I wondered what they hoped to get out of the seminar. When I asked them about their issues and concerns, their initial responses focused on their lack of money and what they described as their "image-problem" in the community. They feel that their academic excellence is not recognized and that they are perceived as a bunch of right-wing fanatics. In fact, they describe themselves as Orthodox religious but parve politically. I indicated that I didn't think this seminar would help them with these matters, since it was focused on educational issues. They then said that perhaps having the chance to work on a mission-statement in the context of the seminar might be of value to them.

They gave me a bit of a history lesson: some time back, the Hillel Academy was the main school in town. But breakaways to the Left and the Right gave rise to the Milwaukee Jewish Day School and to the Y.E.S. (Orthodox). T.A.M. is the high school extension of Y.E.S. What this analysis suggested: possibility of tension and a measure of competition among these institutions.

HILLEL ACADEMY

Hillel Academy is a modern Orthodox Day School which, according to those present, draws students from outside as well as inside the Orthodox community. It too feels that it suffers from an image-problem -- the community doesn't recognize the ways in which it has evolved. Present at the meeting was the principal, an Israeli (Yigal) who seems to play a pivotal role with the Hebrew/Judaica curriculum, and a lay leader (brother-in-law of Levi Lauer) who has worked as a teacher and a counsellor in public school settings (with at-risk kids).

They are concerned about the low level of parental involvement in the life of the school, and I encouraged them to speculate concerning the possible reasons -- and perhaps to try to gather pertinent data.

Another troubling issue is the level of pedagogical expertise. They asked me if the seminar might contribute to their in-service work with teachers. I suggested that goals-issues might provide a wonderful avenue for thinking through the kinds of skills and attitudes they want students to emerge with, and what kinds of skills and understandings teachers would need to have in order to nurture these desirable characteristics. This may be a promising topic to pursue.

Towards the end of the conversation, the issue of assessment came up -- the importance of having clear goals as a way of assessing how we're doing, but also the difficulty of developing ways of measuring success with qualitative goals. Also an issue that may be worth taking up.

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