



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES
A DIVISION OF HEBREW UNION COLLEGE – JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION

MS-831: Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Foundation Records, 1980-2011.

Series F: CIJE Accrual, 1981-2011, undated.
Subseries 2: Dan Pekarsky, 1981-2011, undated.

Box
73

Folder
1

Change Think Tank. Guiding principles. 1997-1998.

For more information on this collection, please see the finding aid on the
[American Jewish Archives](http://AmericanJewishArchives.org) website.

COUNCIL FOR INITIATIVES IN JEWISH EDUCATION

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FAX TRANSMISSION COVER SHEET

Date: May 6, 1998
To: Daniel Pekarsky
Fax: 608-262-9074
Re: Alisa R. Kurshan fax
Sender: Jonah Falcon

YOU SHOULD RECEIVE 6 PAGE(S), INCLUDING THIS COVER SHEET.

C O V E R

S H E E T

FAX

To: Karen Bantz
Fax #: 532 2646
Subject:
Date:
Pages: , including this cover sheet.

COMMENTS:

for our phone conversation today!

Alisa

From the desk of...
Dr. Alisa Rubin Kurshan
Executive Director, Jewish Continuity
Commission
U.I.A.-Federation of New York
130 East 59th Street
New York, N.Y. 10022
212- 836 1242
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How to Effect Synagogue Change?

Introduction:

Throughout Jewish history, there have been at least three models for the synagogue: Beit Tfilah - a house of worship, Beit K'nesset - a house of meetings and Beit Midrash - a house of study. Some Jews have viewed the synagogue as the source of Jewish community, others view the synagogue as the best vehicle for finding God and faith in life, for others it is a conduit to meaning and understanding. Like all other institutions in the Jewish community, synagogues have evolved throughout Jewish history, to meet new needs.

Arnold Eisen argues that Jews walk into synagogues today to find meaning and community but it is not clear that synagogues are meeting these demands. Many synagogues enable Jews to celebrate life cycle events, give their children a Jewish education, and to provide an address for the local Jewish community. However, there are indications that large numbers of Jews are not fully engaged with their synagogues. Although more 70% of all Jews look to the synagogue for entry into the Jewish community at one point in their lives, fewer than 30% of American Jews are affiliated with synagogues today. Obviously, we have developed a revolving door- where many Jews walk into the synagogue, and walk out after they feel their needs (in the best cases) have been met.

Current interest in Synagogue Change?

In recent years, numerous institutions and organizations have established synagogue change initiatives. Some are national in scope, and others are local-- but all have a basic premise that synagogues are in need of transformation. Incremental change will not suffice to meet the new challenges facing the American Jewish community today.

1. Synagogue 2000 is a transdenominational national effort which aims for complete synagogue transformation. Synagogue 2000 has identified the following four areas of content change:
 - transforming prayer so that it becomes engaging and meaningful
 - developing adult educational programs that foster learning and spiritual growth
 - a commitment to Tikkun Olam and community service
 - a center of caring and healing
2. Experiment in Congregational Education (ECE) can be characterized as envisioning education as an inherent part of every synagogue activity. This initiative had determined a need for change based on the historical model of religious education. Through the 1970's the dominant view of religious education was supplementary schooling. It was modeled after public schools with age graded classes, certified

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teachers and standardized curricula. ECE sought to broaden the understanding of education within the synagogue by defining the synagogue as a learning community.

ECE has established the following as a model for educational change:

- a commitment to life long learning for every age
- a focus on communal, spiritual and moral development rather than utilitarian or
- professional development
- in-reach to meet the physical and spiritual needs of a congregation
- empowerment for Jewish learning and literacy

ECE has worked with more than a dozen congregations throughout the United States. (one in NY area.)

3. McKinsey & Co. has been working with UJA-Federation of New York for the past 4 years to consult with synagogues to develop strategic plans. Many of the synagogues have reported that the time spent in this change effort has been helpful, but the expertise that McKinsey has offered is process alone. Synagogues need to define the content of the change and must define for themselves their mission and vision for the future.

These initiatives have yielded significant findings which will inform the next generation of synagogue change initiatives. These results, coupled with what UJA-Federation's Jewish Continuity Commission has learned through its evaluation of discrete synagogue change initiatives, leads us to suggest the following:

1. Synagogues are reflections of cultural norms of society at large, personal religious yearnings of its membership, and leadership strengths of the professional and volunteer leadership, and thus, transformation requires expertise in many areas— leadership, change management, organizational knowledge, vision, Jewish law and tradition.
2. The process of institutional transformation must be coupled with strong and coherent vision for change.
3. Institutions must want to change.
4. Transformation must be organic but also requires outside skilled facilitation and expertise to succeed.
5. Each institution must go through its own extended learning and planning process— inevitably costly in both time and money.
6. Successful change requires focus, alignment and intensity.
7. Committed, mission-driven leadership is critical.

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Thus, the Jewish Continuity Commission, together with the Joint Synagogue-Federation Commission, seeks to become the broker of several types of expertise and interests to develop a synagogue change program-- Synagogues for the Future-- to respiritualize the synagogue. This program would take the best from the change initiatives that are currently underway to date to develop a content-rich, process-driven approach to change.

Together we will develop a plan to work with a select number of synagogues in the New York area that are interested and able to think strategically about creating spiritual homes for Jews of the next century.

Action Plan

Planning process (estimated time required: 6-9 months):

- Development of criteria for what constitute a "change ready" synagogue and for selection of synagogues
- recruit a cadre of facilitators to work with each synagogue-- both on process and content
- Set criteria for success
- Creation of curriculum
- Delineation of monitoring and evaluation rubrics-- how would we define success?

Implementation Phase

Part I: Professional training of Rabbis and educators from each synagogue (estimated time required: 4-6 months)

(Actual curriculum in leadership to be determined)

Part II: Strategic planning process (estimated time required: 2 years)

- Ongoing consultation with small groups of lay leaders and synagogue professionals
- Retreats
- Ongoing Jewish text study curriculum to complement strategic planning
- Widening the circle of participants in planning

Programming Phase (estimated time: 2 years)

Programmatic implementation of the vision (financial resources will be made available to synagogues at this point to realize their programmatic goals.)

Many issues demand further exploration and brainstorming. However, we believe that there is great potential to realize a new future for synagogue life in NY.

CIJE Educational Philosophy

- 1) Vision at the Heart
 - What a graduate needs to know and be able to do
 - Permeates everything
- 2) Focus on interactive and experiential learning
 - Starts where the student is
 - Projects
 - Mentoring, field work, learning from life
- 3) Making Meaning
- 4) Educational institutions as learning communities
 - Studying together
 - Professional development
 - Evaluation
 - Reflective practice
- 5) Centrality of Jewish texts and ideas
 - Senior content
 - Context permeates every aspect

Series

- First teacher

- Audience

- omissions/abstentions/formulations

TO: Chava, Gail, Barry, Nessa, Karen Barth
FROM: Dan

Here is a draft of the guiding principles document that tries to be responsive to at least some of the concerns voiced at our retreat. I am sending you hard copy because I'm mistrustful of my email right now.

Chava -- Please make sure this gets to the other people this is addressed to. Thanks.

Gail: When you have a chance, please review and revise the sections relation to interactive learning. Thanks. Also, does the revised draft adequately speak to your concerns about "the text as a Thou" and about the social construction of meaning?

Barry: It was suggested by KAB that I send this to you in case we do a session around it at the Professors Seminar.

Nessa: Your mission, should you choose to accept this assignment, is to edit, re-frame in language more readily accessible to a lay audience, etc. I will look forward to working with you on this.

Since this is very much in process, if you have reactions and time, I'd welcome continuing feedback. Thanks.

I am still hoping, when time permits, to try my hand at a version that organizes key-ideas in categories like "Outcomes", "Conditions", and "Characteristics" of a quality-education. I'd be interested in whether you think this important to do.

PS At Avi Decter's request, and with the understanding that the document is "in-process" and not official, I've sent him a copy of this as well.

CORE THEMES IN CIJE'S APPROACH TO EDUCATION

CIJE's efforts to foster high-quality Jewish education are informed by several powerful and mutually reinforcing ideas:

Vision at the heart. The soul of an educating institution is a guiding vision that identifies in a compelling way its paramount aspirations. An adequate guiding vision points to the attitudes, knowledge-base, dispositions, and skills desired in the graduate; and it is grounded in serious encounters with powerful Jewish ideas that concern the nature of human and Jewish existence in the cosmos and history. Such a vision, if genuinely shared, energizes the participants and provides an indispensable basis for educational decision-making and evaluation. A vision is a **guiding** vision only to the extent that it permeates the entirety of an institution's life, from hiring practices, to architecture, to daily learning experiences, to budgetary decisions.

Learning -- both the means and the end of education. In an adequate educating institution the activity of learning is intrinsically rewarding, while meaningfully contributing to the student's growth as a Jewish human being as interpreted by its community's guiding vision.

We think it likely that if the student's learning-experiences regularly satisfy these demanding standards, the student will develop into a person with the capacity and disposition to engage in serious Jewish learning regularly and enthusiastically. This is important because we believe that however differently various sub-groups understand the aims of Jewish education, Jewish education should always aspire to empower and dispose the student to be a learning Jew.

In multiple ways, powerful learning is experiential. Because it is responsive to the students' experience of life and addresses their living concerns, their understandings, and their beliefs, powerful learning is engaging and personally meaningful.

Powerful learning enlarges and deepens the students' understanding and appreciation of their experience as Jews and as human beings; it also enables them to enter meaningfully into new experiential realms.

Powerful learning is often generated, enriched, and tested by experiences and activities out in the world. These include immersion-experiences in Jewishly significant cultural and geographical settings, accompanied by opportunities to learn about these settings and to reflect on one's experience in these settings; and opportunities to grow that arise out of projects that require the student to plan, implement, and learn from an

effort to address a real world problem under real-world conditions. While such experiences and activities should not be viewed as a substitute for more traditional forms of learning which put the engagement with Jewish texts at the center, they have the potential to stimulate, deepen, and complement such learning. For some students they may prove a primary mode of learning; and for many students they prove essential elements in a balanced learning-diet that also includes other forms of learning.

Education is about making and discovering meaning. Judaism speaks powerfully to the human being's need for spiritual and other kinds of meaning, and a central challenge of education is to make its voice, or voices, meaningfully accessible to the student.

Education is deeply rewarding when the learner is engaged in trying to make sense of an intriguing but perplexing text, question or situation, and when his or her deepest questions concerning God and the meaning of our existence can be voiced and heard.

Education is exhilarating when reflection and discussion culminate in insights that make sense of a troubling text, question, or situation, or enrich the meaning of the learner's lived experience, or offer the learner a glimpse of a transcendent reality.

Education is empowering when it culminates in the acquisition of skills and sensibilities that enable the learner to find or create these kinds of meaning in new kinds of situations.

Powerful learning is interactive. Powerful learning results from the dynamic interaction between the sensibilities, concerns, interpretive schemes, and skills of the learner and the features of the encountered situation, be this situation a text, a task, or a social situation. Educators are responsible for enriching this kind of interaction, rather than turning the learner into passive receptacles.

Powerful learning is also interactive in another sense. A major source of the insights it generates, and the excitement and sense of well-being that accompanies it, is unscripted give-and-take between teacher and student and between students. Such give-and-take enhances the intellectual, social, and spiritual rewards of learning.

Educating institutions are learning communities. Educating institutions are to be understood not as shells in which teaching and learning go on but as **learning communities**. They are learning

communities in that all of their members -- young and old, teachers and students -- view themselves and others as both learners and sources of learning. Through their shared efforts, they create meanings that would not have arisen through isolated, individual inquiries.

Educating institutions are learning communities in that the activity of learning together is an intellectually, socially and spiritually rewarding activity which binds the participants to one another.

Educating institutions are learning communities in that the educators whose vocation is to teach within them are committed to the kind of reflective practice and careful evaluation that eventuate in professional growth and in more thoughtfully designed norms, policies, and practices.

Centrality of Jewish texts and ideas. At the heart of Judaism are powerful texts that have sustained and enriched Jewish life across the generations. Jewish human beings should have the opportunity to be deepened and to grow through meaningful encounters and struggles with the powerful questions, stories, images, perspectives and ideas that abound in their textual tradition; and they have the right to acquire the skills and dispositions that will empower and dispose them to engage in a life-long conversation with these texts. It is the responsibility of the Jewish community to offer its members educational opportunities that will secure this right and bring them to view Jewish texts as lifelong companions and sources of meaning.

We understand "texts" to include classical literature like the Torah and the Talmud, but also other forms of Jewish cultural creativity that include novels, poems, and philosophical tracts. "Texts" also include the products of Jewish creativity in other art forms like dance, film, and the plastic arts.

An alternative formulation of "Centrality of Jewish texts and ideas":

Centrality of Jewish ideas and texts. We understand Jewish tradition as a conversation about the most important things which every Jewish human being has the right to be a part of. Within this historical conversation can be found insights, questions, and ways of thinking that have the potential to challenge, deepen, and transform our understanding of our situation in the world and our challenges as Jewish human beings.

These ideas are to be found in classical Jewish texts like the Torah, the Siddur, and the Talmud, as well as in other

products of Jewish cultural creativity including novels, poems, films, music, and the plastic arts. Jewish practices can also be understood as texts that articulate powerful Jewish ideas.

A central challenge of Jewish education is to facilitate personally meaningful encounters with this textual tradition, the kind of encounters that lead to an appreciation of the ideas it embodies, as well as to a desire and capacity to become, through continuing Jewish living and learning, active participants in the conversation in which these ideas are voiced, interpreted, debated, and expressed in daily life. A hallmark of a successful Jewish education is that the learners come to view Jewish texts as lifelong companions and sources of meaning.

Living Jewishly
— ethically/spiritually

Membership in the
Jewish Community
+ primacy of that
membership

Shared Assumption Re: conditions/charact/etc

Let's Explore It! What stand for?

Value: Clarify-Develop-Effectiveness-- Who's are?

Process-to-date:

Q: Exemplary ed/ed env. - See/Principles exemplified

Brainstorm → DP writes up

Examine: Formulations - Omissions

↳ = The Present ~ your help

1) React to Q 2) React to doc/proj.

Exercise - write up - 2nd Round ...

Read doc.: Review/Qs/Concerns/suggestions

DP Summarize

CIJE'S ~~Philosophy~~ Features of a Quality Institution

CIJE'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

CIJE's philosophy of education is composed of several powerful and mutually reinforcing ideas that inform our understanding of the conditions, the character, and the aims of high-quality Jewish education.

Vision at the heart. The soul of an educating institution is a guiding vision that identifies in a compelling way its paramount aspirations. An adequate guiding vision points to the attitudes, knowledge-base, dispositions, and skills desired in the graduate; and it is grounded in serious encounters with powerful Jewish ideas that concern the nature of human and Jewish existence in the cosmos and history. Such a vision, if genuinely shared, energizes the participants and provides a basis for educational decision-making and evaluation. A vision is a **guiding** vision only to the extent that it permeates the entirety of an institution's life, from hiring practices, to architecture, to daily learning experiences, to budgetary decisions.

→ indispensable.

Learning -- both the means and the end of education. In an adequate educating institution the activity of learning is intrinsically rewarding, while meaningfully contributing to the student's growth as a Jewish human being as interpreted by its community's guiding vision.

We think it likely that if the student's learning-experiences regularly satisfy these demanding standards, the student will develop into a person with the capacity and disposition to engage in serious Jewish learning regularly and enthusiastically. This is important because we believe that however differently various sub-groups in Judaism understand the aims of Jewish education, Jewish education should always aspire to empower and dispose the student to be a learning Jew.

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Multi-purposes for the ph.d

- 1) share of outside world
- 2) ~~Design~~ A tool for training

3

GIVE ~~it~~ to Sharon, Deborah, Professor

Is ~~it~~ unique??

Evaluation
Embedded

Evolution of
vision
--

conditions. While such experiences and activities should not be viewed as a substitute for more traditional forms of learning which put the engagement with Jewish texts at the center, they have the potential to stimulate, deepen, and complement such learning. For some students they may prove a primary mode of learning; and for many students they prove essential elements in a balanced learning-diet that ~~include~~ ^{also} includes other forms of learning, ~~as well.~~

Education is about making and discovering meaning. Judaism speaks powerfully to the human being's need for spiritual and other kinds of meaning, and a central challenge of education is to make ~~this~~ ¹⁵ voice meaningfully accessible to the student.

Education is deeply rewarding when the learner is engaged in trying to make sense of an intriguing but perplexing text, question or situation, and when his or her deepest questions concerning God and the meaning of our existence can be voiced and heard; education is exhilarating when reflection and discussion concerning such matters culminate in insights that make sense of a troubling text or situation, enrich the meaning of the learner's lived experience, or offers the learner a glimpse of a transcendent reality; and education is empowering when it culminates in the acquisition of skills and sensibilities that enable the learner to find or create these kinds of meaning in new kinds of situations.

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→ meaning is socially constructed

Pal
shaking
Enrich
this
KAB

Experiences from learning Jewish texts

15 voices

→ of

"Experiential learning" is separated from

Next steps

- ① More "popular" language / for lay leaders
- ② Other examples of schools of thought
- ③ Run it by diff. cashiers

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A central challenge of Jewish education is to facilitate personally meaningful encounters with this textual tradition, the kind of encounters that lead to an appreciation of the ideas it embodies, as well as to a desire and capacity to become, through continuing Jewish living and learning, active participants in the conversation in which these ideas are voiced, interpreted, debated, and expressed in daily life.

↳ "Take texts seriously," says HERS, as the

Is "TBI-like" learning ~~not~~
represented here?

-- (Mentoring
Reflected practice
going home w/ the student!!)

Is prof. devel. represented
here?

Is the doc. closer to
~~BT~~ Granger than to Brinta?

-- It is individual
rather than social!!

No reference to mission of Jewish
People, God.

"Text" as "live" -- a throw -- rather than
↳ "It".

Leadership/Change/

← Missy

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TO: Reena
FROM: Dan

Please distribute this to core-CIJE staff (especially Barry, Gail, Nessa, Cippi, Karen Barth, Ellen Goldring, and Eli Holzer). Send me a copy as well.

THANKS.

TO: CIJE STAFF
FROM: DP
RE: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Background. As most of you know, our evolving "Guiding Principles" document was presented for discussion to the professors during the June Professors Seminar. Present for this discussion were Bill, Anna, David Purpel, David Kaplan, and Susan. In introducing the document for discussion, I suggested that the effort to generate Guiding Principles is informed by a number of hopes:

1. that the process would help us to clarify and deepen our fundamental convictions;
2. that we would emerge with articulated standards to which we could hold ourselves accountable in a more systematic way than would be possible in the absence of articulated standards;
3. that the emerging Guiding Principles might help to announce to various audiences what we represent as an organization interested in quality Jewish education.

After this introduction but before looking at the CIJE draft-document, those present were invited to articulate "guiding principles" that would be high on their list, were they asked to characterize quality-Jewish education. After sharing their respective ideas, the group, which also included Barry, Gail, Cippi, and myself, studied the CIJE document Chevruta-style and then reported back reactions and questions to the group. Sub-groups were asked to react to the document with attention to adequacy of formulation, credibility of the principles, omissions, etc.

Outcome of session. Though the session was late in the day and folks seemed tired at the outset, soon -- especially when we moved into Chevruta -- the energy-level picked up, and the overall session was animated and very rich. **Particularly useful was giving the participants the opportunity to study the document in Chevruta, and I would actually recommend doing the same exercise with our board.**

I had a chance to touch base with all but Susan individually and to listen, along with other CIJE staff, to comments in the group. Overall, I think the professors seemed very high on this

document, with favorable comments made both about substance and formulation. Equally important, a number of comments were made that may be helpful to us as we refine the document. Some of these comments are summarized below:

a. Missing from the document, for more than one person, were references to action (ma'aseh!); this point was also raised by E. Holzer several weeks earlier. That is, the activity of teaching and learning, as found within the Guiding Principles document, seems very self-contained -- with quality education leading to continuing desire for and engagement in quality-education. It was felt that more needs to be said about how this education deepens and enriches one's life as a Jew (beyond the teaching-learning situation). **Of particular importance to one or two people was the document's silence on the question of social responsibility; the suggestion was made that we should go on record with the view that an essential outcome of quality-Jewish education is that the learner grows more dedicated to the pursuit of social justice and the reduction of human suffering.** It was suggested that this concern could be incorporated in at least two places: first, in the principle concerning "vision at the heart", a reference could be made to Tikkun Olam; second, the experiential learning section might speak about, or use examples that point to, Tikkun Olam activities.

b. Related to a., some felt that in the effort to establish the centrality of Jewish texts, we may have over-emphasized them and not left enough room for other elements of Jewish education, for example, social action activities which could prove powerful learning experiences. And while nobody challenged the idea of Torah li'Shmah, some felt that text study as more than just an end-in-itself (i.e. as leading to transformed Jewish living) needs to be stressed.

c. To some, the document may have had too much of a "What can Judaism do for the individual?" quality, with insufficient emphasis on what, through Jewish education, the learner can contribute to the Jewish community and to humankind.

d. One person noted that the document does not speak to the relationship between Jewish education and our identities as Americans and citizens of a world facing serious global issues.

e. A couple of individuals were troubled by some of the language in the document: i) "student" and "graduate" sounded too pediatric to one person, and the reference to "educating institutions" as the site of education seemed too narrow.

f. The reference to "powerful Jewish ideas" in the document led to an effort to articulate some of these ideas. Here is the

initial response that came back from members of the group:

i. Human beings are created in the image of God.

ii. "...because we were strangers in the land of Egypt."

iii. Monotheism

iv. Tshuvah.

v. Shabbat.

vi. God is a God of History, concerned with our well-being.

g. The reference to vision in the first guiding principle gave rise to the question: Whose vision is it -- that of the leaders or the participants?

h. It was observed that neither Hebrew literacy nor God figure in this document.

i. It was suggested that the document could be improved through the inclusion of an introductory and concluding paragraph that pulls the document's major themes together into an organic whole. It was suggested that the introductory session should contextualize the guiding principles in relation to CIJE's overall mission and to the situation of American Jewry at this moment in time. It was felt that some of the concerns summarized above might adequately be handled through well-framed introductory and concluding passages.

DP's response to the professors' reactions. I thought that the idea of adding a prefatory and concluding comment was excellent, and I was especially struck by the group's observation that education as understood in this document is not sufficiently connected to our life and responsibilities outside the educational arena.

Based on the professors' responses, I have made some changes to the document; most prominently, I've tried to make more of a reference to "ma'asseh"-- to the ethical Deed. What I haven't done yet is to add a preface or concluding comment. I will try to get to this soon -- but in the meantime, I thought this updated version of the document (complemented by the summary of the professors' reactions) might be worth passing by you for reactions.

CORE THEMES IN CIJE'S APPROACH TO EDUCATION

CIJE's efforts to foster high-quality Jewish education are informed by several powerful and mutually reinforcing ideas.

Vision at the heart. The soul of an educating practice or institution is a guiding vision that identifies in a compelling way its paramount aspirations. An adequate guiding vision points to the attitudes, knowledge-base, dispositions, and skills to be encouraged in the learner. An adequate vision is grounded in serious encounters with powerful Jewish ideas that concern the nature and moral challenges of Jewish and human existence in the cosmos, in history, and in contemporary America. Such a vision, if genuinely shared, energizes the participants and provides an indispensable basis for educational decision-making and evaluation. A vision is a **guiding** vision only to the extent that it permeates the entirety of an institution's life, from hiring practices, to architecture, to daily learning experiences, to budgetary decisions.

Learning -- both the means and the end of education. In an adequate educating institution the activity of learning is intrinsically rewarding, while meaningfully contributing to the student's growth and daily experience as a Jewish human being as interpreted by its community's guiding vision.

We think it likely that if the student's learning-experiences regularly satisfy these demanding standards, the student will develop into a person with the capacity and disposition to engage in serious Jewish learning regularly and enthusiastically. This is important because we believe that however differently various sub-groups understand the aims of Jewish education, Jewish education should always aspire to empower and dispose the student to be a learning Jew, whose activities as a learner guide and enrich his or her approach to life.

In multiple ways, powerful learning is experiential. Because, in both in form and content, it is responsive to the learners' experiences of life and addresses their living concerns, understandings, and beliefs, powerful learning is engaging and personally meaningful.

Powerful Jewish learning enlarges and deepens the learners' understanding and appreciation of their experience as Jews, American citizens, and members of the human community in settings that range from the family, Jewish communal settings, the work-place, and nature. Jewish learning should interpret,

strengthen, and deepen our understanding of ourselves as morally challenged to respond to the human needs and the suffering found within Jewish and the broader human community.

Powerful learning is often generated, enriched, and tested by experiences and activities out in the world. These include opportunities to take on significant ethical challenges and to learn to interpret them in Jewish terms; other kinds of projects that require one to plan, implement, and learn from an effort to address a real world problem under real-world conditions; and immersion-experiences in settings and activities that are culturally, religiously, or historically significant. Accompanied by opportunities for reflection, experiences of this kind have the potential to stimulate, deepen, and complement more traditional, text-based learning. For some learners such experiences may prove a primary mode of learning at some stages of their development; and for many students they prove essential elements in a balanced learning-diet that also includes other forms of learning.

Education is about making and discovering meaning. Judaism speaks powerfully to the human being's need for spiritual and other kinds of meaning, and a central challenge of education is to make its voice, or voices, meaningfully accessible to the student.

Education is deeply rewarding when the learner is engaged in trying to make sense of an intriguing but perplexing text, question or situation, and when his or her deepest questions concerning God and the meaning of our existence can be voiced and heard.

Education is exhilarating when reflection and discussion culminate in insights that make sense of a troubling text, question, or situation, or enrich the meaning of the learner's lived experience, or offer the learner a glimpse of a transcendent reality.

Education is empowering when it culminates in the acquisition of skills and sensibilities that enable the learner to find or create these kinds of meaning in new kinds of situations.

Powerful learning is interactive. Powerful learning results from the dynamic interaction between the sensibilities, concerns, interpretive schemes, and skills of the learner and the features of the encountered situation, be this situation a text, a task, or a social situation. A central challenge of educator is to structure the form, content, and social context of learning in a way that renders this interaction a source of growth for the

learner; meeting this challenge requires careful planning based on an in-depth understanding both of the subject-matter and of the learner in his or her many dimensions.

Powerful learning is also interactive in another sense. A major source of the insights it generates, and of the excitement and sense of well-being that accompany it, is unscripted give-and-take between teacher and student and between students. Such give-and-take enhances the intellectual, social, and spiritual rewards of learning.

Educating institutions are learning communities. Educating institutions are to be understood not as shells in which teaching and learning go on but as **learning communities**. They are learning communities in that all of their members -- young and old, teachers and students -- view themselves and others as both learners and sources of learning. Through their shared efforts, they create meanings that would not have arisen through isolated, individual inquiries.

Educating institutions are learning communities in that the activity of learning together is an intellectually, socially and spiritually rewarding activity which binds the participants to one another.

Educating institutions are learning communities in that the educators whose vocation is to teach within them are committed to the kind of reflective practice and careful evaluation that eventuate in professional growth and in more thoughtfully designed norms, policies, and practices.

Centrality of Jewish texts and ideas. At the heart of Judaism are powerful texts that have sustained and enriched Jewish life across the generations. Jewish human beings should have the opportunity to be deepened and to grow through meaningful encounters and struggles with the powerful questions, stories, images, perspectives and ideas that abound in their textual tradition; and they have the right to acquire the skills and dispositions that will empower and dispose them to engage in a life-long conversation with these texts. It is the responsibility of the Jewish community to offer its members educational opportunities that will secure this right and bring them to view Jewish texts as lifelong companions and as sources of meaning and guidance.

We understand "texts" to include classical literature like the Torah and the Talmud, but also other forms of Jewish cultural creativity that include novels, poems, and philosophical tracts. "Texts" also include the products of Jewish creativity in other art forms like dance, film, and the plastic arts.

An alternative formulation of "Centrality of Jewish texts and ideas":

Centrality of Jewish ideas and texts. We understand Jewish tradition as a conversation about the most important things which every Jewish human being has the right to be a part of. Within this historical conversation can be found insights, questions, and ways of thinking that have the potential to challenge, deepen, and transform our understanding of our situation in the world and our challenges as Jewish human beings.

These ideas are to be found in classical Jewish texts like the Torah, the Siddur, and the Talmud, as well as in other products of Jewish cultural creativity including novels, poems, films, music, and the plastic arts. Jewish practices can also be understood as texts that articulate powerful Jewish ideas.

A central challenge of Jewish education is to facilitate personally meaningful encounters with this textual tradition, the kind of encounters that lead to an appreciation of the ideas it embodies, as well as to a desire and capacity to become, through continuing Jewish living and learning, active participants in the conversation in which these ideas are voiced, interpreted, debated, and expressed in daily life. A hallmark of a successful Jewish education is that the learners come to view Jewish texts as lifelong companions and as sources of meaning and guidance

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Powerful learning is often generated, enriched, and tested by experiences and activities out in the world. These include immersion-experiences in Jewishly significant cultural and geographical settings, accompanied by opportunities to learn about these settings and to reflect on one's experience in these settings; and opportunities to grow that arise out of projects that require the student to plan, implement, and learn from an

effort to address a real world problem under real-world conditions. While such experiences and activities should not be viewed as a substitute for more traditional forms of learning which put the engagement with Jewish texts at the center, they have the potential to stimulate, deepen, and complement such learning. For some students they may prove a primary mode of learning; and for many students they prove essential elements in a balanced learning-diet that also includes other forms of learning.

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Powerful learning is interactive. Powerful learning results from the dynamic interaction between the sensibilities, concerns, interpretive schemes, and skills of the learner and the features of the encountered situation, be this situation a text, a task, or a social situation. Educators are responsible for enriching this kind of interaction, rather than turning the learner into passive receptacles.

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