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Goals Project. JCC retreat, 1995.

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To: Daniel Pekarsky
From: Daniel Pekarsky

Date:12-4-95
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From: Daniel Pekarsky at 608-233-4044
To: Daniel Pekarsky at 262-9074

12-04-95 11:52 pm
002 of 005

MEMO TO: Barry Holtz
FROM: DP
RE: JCC REPORT

Here's a first draft, written late Monday night but not yet seriously reviewed. Let me know if you think it's in the ballpark. I too will review it tomorrow.

I'd like a chance to talk through the Wexner weekend with you. Like you, I was very impressed with the quality of the folks they've attracted.

Talk to you soon.

DP

ORIGINS, CHARACTER AND IMPACT OF JCCA CAMPING RETREAT
November 1995

In November 1995 CIJE ran a retreat for the professional leadership of several JCC summer camps on the question of Jewish educational goals for these camps. This report summarizes the background to the retreat, what happened at the retreat, and possibilities for follow-up.

Background. One of the participants in the CIJE Goals Seminar in Jerusalem in July 1994 was Jay Roth, the Executive Director of Milwaukee's Jewish Community Center. Excited by what he learned and eager to enhance the Jewish dimension of JCC programming, Roth brought some of his lay leadership and professional staff to a series of Goals Seminars run by CIJE for Milwaukee-area institutions in the spring of 1995. Towards the end of that series Roth approached CIJE with the suggestion that it work intensively with Milwaukee's JCC camp on a Goals Agenda; his thought was that this could serve as one of CIJE's Pilot Projects. As a result of the conversations with Roth, some preliminary activities were scheduled for January and February 1996.

But Roth did not keep his excitement to himself. In his conversations with the JCCA leadership, which shares his strong interest in strengthening the Jewish dimension of JCC programming, Roth's positive experience with CIJE led him to encourage the JCCA to sponsor a Goals Seminar organized around the needs of select JCC overnight camps from around the country. Roth's conversations with the JCCA in turn gave rise to conversations between the JCCA and CIJE around the possibility of such a seminar. Believing that JCC camps represent an important and interesting potential player in the field of Jewish education, CIJE was extremely interested in exploring the possibilities. In the end it was decided that a two-day seminar would take place at the tail-end of the JCCA's annual meeting, to be held in Washington in early November. Planning for the retreat began with CIJE proposing some ideas that seemed promising; these ideas were then reviewed by the JCCA leadership, after which a final program was developed. *The program was*

The retreat. Scheduled for November 8 and 9, the invited participants included institutional teams associated with five JCC camps. In most cases, camp directors were accompanied by the JCC executive director and by the agency's Judaic educator. Participating institutions included the JCC's of Atlanta, Milwaukee, ~~and~~ St. Louis, and Pittsburgh, along with the leadership of New Jersey's Y Camp. Also participating were five staff members and consultants associated with the JCCA and four CIJE staff members. All in all, there were approximately 23 participants.

As an aid to planning, the following list of desirable ^{ed} outcomes was articulated early on:

developed around with attention to several desired outcomes:

1. ~~A new or~~ deeper appreciation for the educational value of having determinate and compelling goals to guide the efforts of the camps.

Greater clarity

2. ~~Each team is substantially~~ clearer concerning "the state of the art" in their own camps and those of their colleagues. They are more aware of the kinds of goals that have been associated with these camps (both in rhetoric and in practice), and they have a deeper understanding of the ways these goals have - and have not - been adequately reflected in practice.

Condense

3. ~~Participants have~~ ^A deeper understanding of what is involved in approaching the realization of a goal in a systematic, strategic way.

4. Participants leave the seminar with some new ideas concerning the kinds of goals that might animate their camps and with the realization that this matter requires more thought and study.

5. Participants leave the seminar with the desire to make progress on a goals-agenda and with some concrete, if rudimentary, ideas concerning what issues to tackle (e.g., engaging their boards in addressing the issue of goals; studying the state of goals in the life of the camp; educating the camp-staff) and how to begin approaching them.

The program itself included a short frontal presentation concerning the importance of vision and goals for Jewish education, but it was otherwise highly participatory. It also featured a structured opportunity for participants to scan their institutions with attention to their difficulties and dilemmas in the Judaic realm, as well as an opportunity to experiment with what might be involved in systematically trying to use the camp setting as a vehicle of realizing a particular goal. These activities generated some exceptionally interesting discussions concerning what are - and what are not - appropriate Jewish goals for a JCC camp serving a very diverse set of constituencies. Indeed, so very interesting were these discussions that it was decided mid-stream to let the participants continue these discussions at the price of omitting a planned session organized around the question "Are Community Goals for Jewish Education Possible?"

Towards the end of the retreat, institutional teams met by themselves around questions designed to stimulate honest reflection and deliberation concerning their own camps. These questions focused on a number of themes, including the following: the official Jewish goals of their camps; the goals implicit in their actual practices; the outcomes of the camp-experience undergone by campers; the two goals which, on reflection, seemed to them the most important.

A final session, organized around the question, "Where do we go from here?" elicited a strong interest on the part of the

participants ⁱⁿ to go further with this process. Many of them feel pressure to develop a stronger Jewish presence in their camps, and many of them genuinely want to move in this direction. But there is considerable uncertainty among them concerning what an appropriate mission is for a non-denominational JCC camp. A hope was expressed by some that future deliberations would focus on this question, and that perhaps a mission statement could be developed that would offer JCC camps guidance in this important area.

Follow-up to the retreat. In preparing for it, CIJE had viewed the retreat not as the beginning of a long-term working relationship with the JCC camps but as an opportunity to raise the consciousness of the participants concerning the need to wrestle with questions of Jewish content. However, the interest shown by many of the participants in going further with this process, combined with our own assessment that this is an important piece of the Jewish education puzzle, has led CIJE to think seriously about follow-up activities that would prove fruitful.

In addition to Pekarsky's projected work on a goals-agenda with the Milwaukee JCC camp, the following possibilities are under consideration:

1. A second retreat with the same constituencies as the first, possibly organized around the question of identifying an appropriate mission for JCC camps.
2. A seminar dealing with goals that brings lay leaders in the JCC movement into the process. Conceivably such a seminar could be organized for the JCCA's biennial meetings scheduled for this spring.
3. A seminar or retreat on the model of the seminar held in Washington, but in this case aimed at the leadership of camps not represented at the first retreat.

JCCA Retreat - Introductory

Our topic: Goals -- what are you/should you be really after?

You - not new to this question:

↳ conferences

→ Hertzberg - Dubin - Chazan - Poupko

Poupko's formulation: From 'who we are?' → should be?

↳ yes -- meet demands, but ↑ Jewish growth
Ind - Family - Community

Duway - Fun + Goals

But what should goals be?

Difficult → Fear of Anger/hurt + Marginalize.

But important ~ Jewish Continuity → ↑ Content

Debates - Secular/Religious -

↳ Ambiance - Explore options - Directive
Interventionist

Healthy - if . . . Towards Clarity/Seriousness

Not particular goal - but: clear/implement

Introduction to Part II

"Seriousness about goals"

① What goals do I really believe in?

② What's required to attain it

Steps: (a) Clarify the Goal — Cognitive
Affective
Behavior
E.g. Hebrew — Skills
Contexts
Attitudes

(b) What kinds of interventions, personnel are required

A Continuum

Strong
sense of
Vision,
Purpose
Reflected
in
Practice



Achievements
not
organized
around
Cohesive
Purposes

- Haredi Yeshiva
- Dewey School
- Ramah

Where we are?

JCCA Seminar - Day 2

Intro:

Major thesis: Effectiveness ~

How should camps be different as Jews?

Clear
Compelling
Goals

Invaluable basis for organizing
Camp life.

Not alternative to "fun".

"Fun" - very important

But "Fun" is not sufficient!!

Fun
Friendship
in Jewish
setting

Reality - Our first Exercise

No Goals - - Not embodied - Not believed
in!!



RENAISSANCE.
WASHINGTON D.C. HOTEL

My group

1) Strong Shabbat Observance
as "Option"/Alternative

→ Develop Range of options

→ Vitality of options

2) Personal/Camp Practice
w/ Candor

3) What do we do/why?
in our camps?

4) ZUSIA - Ramah - Shabbat
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Solution: "Get serious:"

- 1) Your central goals
- 2) How organize camp experience to accomplish them?

{ Rules
Contexts
Activities
→ Vehicles of aims

→ Second Exercise

Report back from groups

- 1) Struggles
- 2) Insights

Baseball diamond

Cooperation
Fairness

"Spirit of Shabbat"

"Being different" — Hank Greenberg

Music
Drama

Knowledge

Skills

Attitudes

Activities

Benefits

2020
Mensch-
lichkeit

--	--	--	--	--	--

Comments on Exercise #2:

- 1) Too many questions/categories
- 2) Too open for an "implementation-
Exercise" — Interpretation is
difficult!!
- 3) Need to study to understand the
goals. e.g. "Israel" — "ישראל"
- 4) Why not "Study"? Not
appropriate for ICC Camp??

Rosenate Session

① We are very different from
each other - '27 n/Orthodox
Conserv./Reform/Secular
Reconstructionist

= A Pluralistic Community

② Is there anything we all
share - anything towards
which we can all educate?

Shared goals for Jewish
Education

The Dubin Answer

Zusie

uniquely well-suited to teaching about pluralism!!

1) Educate towards a community in which:

a) Every Jew cares about Jewish issues/concerns

b) Every Jew is ^{unafraid} willing to develop a position on the issues.

c) Every Jew seriously listens to the others' points of view Beit Hillel

d) Shared memories

e) Shared values - tzdakech

Bonds

United by:

What do we share amidst our
diversity -- { Elements of a shared
Vision
An agenda for Jewish
Camps?

Rosenak's View

Is there a shared vision that can unite the Jewish community?

Pre-modern times:

Communities defined by shared
Values, practices, commitments

Not so today:

Voluntary Association -- want to
identify
as Jews,

but that's where commonality stops

What holds us together?

(made our
own
choices)

Two Views of what holds us together

A) Covenant of fate

Need keeps us together:

1) as Jews we face common problems

2) It's in our interest to band together to meet our needs and to ignore the many differences that separate us.

→ 3) Jewish Ed: 1) Go your own way
2) Tolerance, grounded in need!

View 2

As different as we are, we are connected by more than common needs. There are certain very basic elements we do or can share which make up a shared/common Universe

What are these positive traits?

① We share a sacred literature

הנהיג

הנהיג

Maimonides

Disagree re: 1) Authority 2) which ones

But

↳ "ours" -- Commitment to study it. \ albeit in different ways

Liebman: "Cease studying → ↓ Survive"
↓ Predictable

Educate towards

2) A Common Vocabulary, rich
w/ Associations -- A window
into a distinctively Jewish
World.

a) Saturday -- Shabbus/Shabbat

Holy
Genesis
Chicken Soup
Shul
Rest

b) Shabbus comes in/goes out...

c) Motze'ay Shabbat

d) Tikkun Olam

e) תענית - Joke

{ Temple
Kashrut
Jewish sufferings
Fasting

Educate towards / Create

#3) Shared Community practices

a) Tzedakah

b) Kosher food / Birakat Ha-mazon
at Community Functions

c) Community institutions
close on Yom Kippur.

4: A willingness to regard the problems of any Jew as

"my" Problem:

vs Rosa
Luxemburg

a) Ethiopians / French / Russia
Argentina explosion

b) Take seriously the problems of
Jews who we disagree with;
take their situation seriously
vs dismissively

E.g. Television on Friday night

Orthodox Rabbi: not compromise,
but caring!

→ Connectedness / mutual concern.

#5- A commitment to Israel as special place in life of Jewish People:

Israel = Covenant of fate

Israel as ^{Growing} Shared Universe

- language
- Customs
- Shared Experiences

Questions

1) Can these elements provide an agenda for the JCC Camps?

2) Other elements

CIJE/JCC ASSOCIATION

November 8 - 9, 1995
Renaissance Hotel
Washington D.C.

Participants

Atlanta JCC

Joel Gross, Assistant Director
Jim Mittenthal, Director - Camp Barney Medintz
Deborah Goldstein, Director of Jewish Education

Milwaukee JCC

Jay Roth, Executive Director
Jeff Metz, Assistant Executive Director
Jon Levin, Director - Camp Interlacken
Rabbi Ed Rettig, Director of Jewish Education

New Jersey Y Camp

Leonard Robinson, Executive Director
Ann Tursky, Director - Camp Nah-Jee Wah
Kim Moskowitz, Jewish Educator

St. Louis JCC

Jed Margolis, Assistant Executive Director
Steve Engel, Director - Camp Sabra
Phil Miller, Director, - Department of Jewish Life

Pittsburgh

Steven Wendell, Director - Emma Kaufmann Camp

Co-Sponsors

CIJE

Jonathan Ariel
Barry Holtz
Josie Mowlem
Daniel Pekarsky

JCC Association

Mark Charendoff
Barry Chazan
Allan Finkelstein
Leonard Rubin
Leonard Silberman

**JEWISH CAMPS IN JCCS: A CIJE-JCCA RETREAT
PROGRAM**

Renaissance Hotel, Washington, DC
November 8-9, 1995

Wednesday afternoon, November 8

Introduction to the Day

*Barry Holtz
Allan Finkelstein*

The Importance of Vision and Goals

Daniel Pekarsky

A Scan of Practice Using a Goals-lens: an Exercise

Participants

Implementation Exercise (In Small Groups):
What Would it Mean to Approach a Goal Strategically?

Participants

Thursday, November 9

Are Community Goals for Jewish Education Possible?
Presentation and Discussion of Michael Rosenak's Concept

Daniel Pekarsky

Break

Small Group Discussions (based on institutional teams)

Participants

Large Group Discussion (based on small group exercise)

Participants

Wrap-up: Where Do We Go from Here?

Barry Holtz

— Marketing — Goals — Advantages

— Unaffiliated { Yes } { }
 { No } { }

Unaffiliated /

what does "affiliated" mean?

Introduction to Part II

"Seriousness about goals"

- ① What goals do I really believe in?
- ② What would need to happen if it's to be attained?

Steps

A) Clarify the goal E.g. Hebrew'

a) Why important? How will it fit in?

b) What ~~would~~ is "success"?

c) Cognitive/Affective/Behavior

B) Serious strategic thinking

vs: Personnel - Interventions - Organization

Policies - Constituencies - Context

The Exercise

4 groups - 4 goals - 2 challenges

The Goals

Love of Israel -- Ident. f w Israel

Jewish Study - camp setting

Shabbat -- Issue of Observance
Religion

Membership in a family that
is both united and divided
→ A pluralistic community

Guide-Sheets:

Interpreting Goals — General-Specific

Implementation — Contexts/Policies/Practices

CIJE/JCCA SEMINAR ON GOALS OF JCC CAMPS
November 1995

GUIDE QUESTIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION EXERCISE

A. INTERPRETING THE GOAL

Try to get as clear as you can concerning the nature of the goal that you are charged with advancing. Here are some general questions to guide your thinking:

What does the the goal encompass in the way of attitudes, skills, behaviors, etc.?

Why is it important?

How would you know if you've been successful?

B. IMPLEMENTATION

GENERAL GOAL:

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GOAL: IMPLICATIONS FOR.....

Camper recruitment and admissibility.

Personnel selection.

Training of personnel (e.g., director, bunk-counselor, sports counselor)

Work with the camp's board.

Work with parents.

Day-to-day, or week to week bunk-life and/or other routine aspects of camp-life.

Special events/programs

Programming for Tishah b'Av or the Fourth of July

CIJE/JCCA SEMINAR ON GOALS

GUIDE QUESTIONS FOR INSTITUTION-BASED DISCUSSIONS

1. What are the formal Jewish goals of your camp (as described in brochures, speeches, etc.)?

2. What are the de facto goals of your camp? Put differently, what would a sensitive observer who knew nothing concerning the camp's avowed, or formal, goals conclude concerning the camp's central Jewish goals after hanging around the camp for a summer?

3. Negatively, positively or otherwise, what do you think are the major effects of the camp on the Jewish life and outlook of staff and campers? How do you know?

4. What kind of procedure or instrument would enable you to get better data concerning #3?

5. If you had to settle on three major goals around which to organize the Jewish dimension of camp-life, which would they be?

JCCA/CIJE SEMINAR ON GOALS

WHAT WOULD IT MEAN TO TO BE GUIDED BY ONE OF THESE THREE GOALS?

Love of Israel. If, for example, the goal is "love of Israel", it might be worth asking such questions as the following: What does it mean "to love Israel"? How is such love expressed? What behaviors or sentiments are inconsistent with such love? By virtue of what is Israel worthy of our love? What would successful camp-outcomes look like?

Love of text-study. If our goal is "love of text-study", what might this mean? What kinds of texts do we have in mind? What kind of text study would we want to encourage - and why? What attitudes and skills would we hope to encourage? What would successful camp-outcomes look like?

A sense of membership in a pluralistic family. According to some, the aim of community-based (as opposed to, say, denominationally-based) Jewish education is to nurture in Jewish students the sense that they are all part of the same family. The educational challenge is to create the sense of family; to educate the young towards an understanding of the various issues that divide and unite different members of this family (yesteryear and today); and to nurture the disposition to be respectful of positions and views that depart from one's own. Relevant questions include: who counts as a member of the family? who is excluded from the family? what attitudes should be encouraged towards those who disagree with our views?

ORIGINS, CHARACTER AND IMPACT OF JCCA CAMPING RETREAT

November 1995

In November 1995 CIJE ran a retreat for the professional leadership of several JCC summer camps on the question of Jewish educational goals for these camps. This report summarizes the background to the retreat, what happened at the retreat, and possibilities for follow-up.

Background. One of the participants in the CIJE Goals Seminar in Jerusalem in July 1994 was Jay Roth, the Executive Director of Milwaukee's Jewish Community Center. Excited by what he learned and eager to enhance the Jewish dimension of JCC programming, Roth brought some of his lay leadership and professional staff to a series of Goals Seminars run by CIJE for Milwaukee-area institutions in the spring of 1995. Towards the end of that series Roth approached CIJE with the suggestion that it work intensively with Milwaukee's JCC camp on a Goals Agenda; his thought was that this could serve as one of CIJE's Pilot Projects. As a result of the conversations with Roth, some preliminary activities were scheduled for January and February 1996.

But Roth did not keep his excitement to himself. In his conversations with the JCCA leadership, which shares his strong interest in strengthening the Jewish dimension of JCC programming, Roth's positive experience with CIJE led him to encourage the JCCA to sponsor a Goals Seminar organized around the needs of select JCC overnight camps from around the country. Roth's conversations with the JCCA in turn gave rise to conversations between the JCCA and CIJE around the possibility of such a seminar. Believing that JCC camps represent an important and interesting potential player in the field of Jewish education, CIJE was extremely interested in exploring the possibilities. In the end it was decided that a two-day seminar would take place at the tail-end of the JCCA's annual meeting, to be held in Washington in early November.

Planning for the retreat began with CIJE proposing some ideas that seemed promising; these ideas were then reviewed by the JCCA leadership, after which a final program was developed. The program that was agreed on was organized around a number of desired outcomes. These included: a deeper appreciation among the participants for the ways in which having determinate and compelling goals can guide educational practice; 2)

greater self-consciousness concerning the kinds of goals associated with the participants' camps and the ways these goals have and have not been reflected in practice; 3) an understanding of what might be involved in approaching the realization of a goal strategically in a camp setting; and 4) an interest in making more progress on a goals-agenda beyond the retreat itself, along with some thoughts about how to go about this.

The retreat, scheduled for November 8 and 9, the invited participants included institutional teams associated with five JCC camps. In most cases, camp directors were accompanied by the JCC executive director and by the agency's Judaic educator. Participating institutions included the JCC's of Atlanta, Milwaukee, and St. Louis, and Pittsburgh, along with the leadership of New Jersey's Y Camp. Also participating were five staff members and consultants associated with the JCCA and four CIJE staff members. All in all, there were approximately 23 participants.

The program itself included a short frontal presentation concerning the importance of vision and goals for Jewish education, but it was otherwise highly participatory. It also featured a structured opportunity for participants to scan their institutions with attention to their difficulties and dilemmas in the Judaic realm, as well as an opportunity to experiment with what might be involved in systematically trying to use the camp setting as a vehicle of realizing a particular goal. These activities generated some exceptionally interesting discussions concerning what are - and what are not - appropriate Jewish goals for a JCC camp serving a very diverse set of constituencies. Indeed, so very interesting were these discussions that it was decided mid-stream to let the participants continue these discussions at the price of omitting a planned session organized around the question "Are Community Goals for Jewish Education Possible?"

Towards the end of the retreat, institutional teams met by themselves around questions designed to stimulate honest reflection and deliberation concerning their own camps. These questions focused on a number of themes, including the following: the official Jewish goals of their camps; the goals implicit in their actual practices; the outcomes of the camp-experience undergone by campers; the two goals which, on reflection, seemed to them the most important.

A final session, organized around the question, "Where do we go from here?" elicited a strong interest on the part of the participants to go further with this process. Many of them feel pressure to develop a stronger Jewish presence in their camps, and many of them genuinely want to move in this direction. But there is considerable uncertainty among them concerning what an appropriate mission is for a non-denominational JCC camp. A hope was expressed by some that future deliberations would focus on this question, and that perhaps a mission statement could be developed that would offer JCC camps guidance in this important area.

Follow-up to the retreat. In preparing for it, CIJE had viewed the retreat not as the beginning of a long-term working relationship with the JCC camps but as an opportunity to raise the consciousness of the participants concerning the need to wrestle with questions of Jewish content. However, the interest shown by many of the participants in going further with this process, combined with our own assessment that this is an important piece of the Jewish education puzzle, has led CIJE to think seriously about follow-up activities that would prove fruitful.

In addition to Pekarsky's projected work on a goals-agenda with the Milwaukee JCC camp, the following possibilities are under consideration:

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3. A seminar or retreat on the model of the seminar held in Washington, but in this case aimed at the leadership of camps not represented at the first retreat.

To: Daniel Pekarsky
From: Daniel Pekarsky

Date:10-19-95
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From: Daniel Pekarsky at 608-233-4044
To: Daniel Pekarsky at 262-9074

10-19-95 09:20 am
002 of 007

MEMO TO: Barry Holtz
FROM: DP
RE: JCC Retreat

This document is built around the earlier JCC-document that I developed in response to Lenny Rubin's request for information concerning what we had in mind. I have listed a group of desirable outcomes, as well as a number of possible activities (from among which we may want to choose).

I am assuming that this document will be the basis for our Friday conversation - and that tomorrow will focus exclusively on the Wexner program.

Talk to you soon.

P.S. The Rosenak piece should have arrived yesterday (via Fed Express); if you have a chance, it might be useful for you to scan it before our Friday talk.

PURPOSES OF THE JCC RETREAT

The retreat for selected JCCs scheduled for this fall is designed to enable the participants to focus their energies on the underlying goals that should inform their efforts at Jewish education in camp- and other settings. Through camps and activities they sponsor, JCCs are perhaps the most important community organ of informal Jewish education; and since there is substantial evidence that informal education may be a powerful educational resource, it becomes critically important to reflect more carefully than we usually have the time to do about the educational purposes now being served and those that might be served by these institutions. Getting clarity concerning fundamental educational goals will be invaluable for a number of reasons: it will provide criteria for deciding on the form and content of activities; it will give direction to in-service training; and it will make it possible to evaluate the success of various programs. The question of educational goals is rendered more complex, but no less important, by virtue of the fact that JCCs are communal institutions that serve an ideologically and otherwise very diverse clientele.

Guided by the conviction that clarity concerning fundamental purposes has a significant impact on effectiveness, the retreat will create contexts and activities that will encourage thoughtful reflection and honest dialogue concerning such questions as the following:

1. what educational goals have JCCs traditionally been associated with, how - if at all - have these goals been reflected in practice, and with what outcomes?
2. On careful reflection, are these traditional goals clear, compelling, and sufficient? Is it possible to articulate clearer and more compelling goals for an era in which there is anxiety concerning Jewish continuity and for an institution that is committed to serving the whole community?
3. What would be involved in a fully serious effort to attain goals that we have deemed of central importance?
4. On returning to our institutions and constituencies, how might we effectively engage our boards and our staffs in addressing the questions the retreat has considered and in making real progress on this front?

The retreat assumes that participants already take seriously the Jewish mission of JCC camps and other JCC-sponsored activities. By offering a chance to deliberate reflectively concerning questions of goals, it will try to put in your hands insights and tools that will prove invaluable in your efforts to carry out this mission in an ever more meaningful way that is consistent with your character as a community-wide institution.

DESIRABLE OUTCOMES

1. A new or deeper appreciation for the educational value of having determinate and compelling goals to guide the efforts of the camps.
2. Each team is substantially clearer concerning "the state of the art" in their own camps and those of their colleagues. They are more aware of the kinds of goals that have been associated with these camps (both in rhetoric and in practice), and they have a deeper understanding of the ways these goals have - and have not - been adequately reflected in practice.
3. Participants have a deeper understanding of what is involved in approaching the realization of a goal in a systematic, strategic way.
4. Participants leave the seminar with some new ideas concerning the kinds of goals that might animate their camps and with the realization that this matter requires more thought and study.
5. Participants leave the seminar with the desire to make progress on a goals-agenda and with some concrete, if rudimentary, ideas concerning what issues to tackle (e.g., engaging their boards in addressing the issue of goals; studying the state of goals in the life of the camp; educating the camp-staff) and how to begin approaching them.

SOME ELEMENTS OF THE RETREAT

1. A text study session (possibly led by Yekhiel Poupko) that focuses on what it means to be members of a community -- or on what are the essential virtues and capacities that make communal life possible.
2. A session that allows folks to share what have been their central educational purposes and how they are expressed in the life of their camps.
3. A session focused on the Rosenak piece: a summary of the argument and a discussion of its implications for a summer camp: that is, what would be entailed by a commitment to take these ideas seriously in a camp that features substantial Jewish diversity and that claims to represent the community as a whole?
4. An exercise designed to identify gaps between goals and implementation -- that is, designed to highlight domains in which goals are poorly related to or reflected in educational practice.
5. An implementation exercise: what would it mean to be systematic, without being heavy-handed, in trying to implement a

From: Daniel Pekarsky at 608-233-4044
To: Daniel Pekarsky at 262-9074

10-19-95 09:22 am
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particular goal? Conceivably, this could be combined with the Rosenak discussion (#3).

6. A "Where do we go from here?" session, organized around question #4 (see p. 1 above).

MEMO TO: Barry Holtz
FROM: DP
RE: JCC program

I haven't prepared as much as I would have hoped for, but perhaps what I jotted down below will be enough to move our conversation going. If I recall it correctly, my assignment, based on our last conversation, was to draft a tentative sequence of activities for the day. Before doing so, I want to take note of two other things that we decided in that conversation. 1) we added an additional outcome that had been explicitly stated in the sketch I had previously sent you: "Participants have had a chance to reflect on their own views concerning the aims of Jewish education in the JCC camp setting, as well as an opportunity to discuss these views with others." 2) At some point (prior to the meeting scheduled for Nov.1, you were going to check out some of our thoughts for the program with Lenny Rubin and Mark Cherendorff (sp??).

In drafting an agenda for the retreat, I am assuming that we have available to us from 2 to 5:30 on Wednesday afternoon, and from 9 to 2 pm, including lunch, on Thursday. We agreed - on reflection, I think wisely - to end with lunch; so, realistically, we have from 9 to, about 1:15 on Thursday.

FIRST DRAFT OF PROGRAM

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON

INTRODUCTION TO THE DAY (30 min.)

Participants introduce themselves, and we briefly discuss what we hope to accomplish and the structure of the seminar. Conceivably, in introducing themselves, participants will be asked to identify a significant Jewish educational goal that they believe needs to be central to their efforts.

THE IMPORTANCE OF VISION AND GOALS (30 min.)

In this session, we discuss the critical role that vision and goals play in giving direction to education, in making possible evaluation, etc. Relevant references to literature in general education will be made.

A SCAN OF PRACTICE USING A GOALS-LENS: AN EXERCISE (60 min.)

It will take about 10 to 15 minutes to explain the exercise. The exercise offers 5 general statements, each identifying a different way in which goals may be imperfectly formulated or related to practice. Participants are asked to fill in examples from out of their own experiences in Jewish camps.

It will take about 10 to 15 minutes to explain the exercise.

My intent would be to give illustrations of each of the points from out of the world of general education.

The exercise itself will have two components: a) 15 minutes of quiet reflection, jotting down individual responses; b) discussion in the large group, designed to look at and analyze the examples they offer.

IMPLEMENTATION EXERCISE (in small groups): WHAT WOULD IT MEAN TO APPROACH A GOAL STRATEGICALLY? (1 hour)

Using a pre-identified goal, participants are asked to develop a comprehensive, strategic plan for approaching the implementation of the goal in the life of their camps. Conceivably, each small group would be given a different goal - but not necessarily. They would be asked to consider such matters as implications for staff-selection, for in-service training, for the organization of camp-life, for programming, for work with parents, etc.

After half an hour or so in small groups, the groups share what they have come up with, and discuss the challenges of implementation. (NOTE: If this is too much for Day 1, perhaps the analysis of the exercise could wait for the beginning of Day 2.

THURSDAY

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF ROSENAK'S PAPER (90 minutes)

The challenge is to understand and evaluate his ideas and to begin to consider their possible implications for a JCC camp.

BREAK (20 min.)

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS (based on institutional teams) (45 min.)

Broken down into institutional teams, participants are asked to spend 45 minutes discussing their own situation in relation to goals -- both actual and ideal. Some structured questions may be helpful in guiding the small groups. Conceivably, each group will be asked to come back to the big group with an answer to a question that asks them to identify a success and a failure in relation to goals; or else to come back to the group with some general statement about what they decided or had trouble deciding in their small groups.

LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION (based on small group exercise) (45 minutes)

WRAP-UP, WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE (45 MINUTES)

LUNCH

① wrap-up — where might we
go from here?

② ~~Just to~~ Nothing on
how we arrived at
shared goals?

To: Daniel Pekarsky

Date: 10-11-95

From: [REDACTED]

Page 001 of 005

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'D' followed by a cursive 'C' and 'K'. A long, straight horizontal line is drawn across the signature, extending from the left side of the 'D' to the right edge of the page.

From: [redacted] at [redacted] 608-233-4044
To: Daniel Pekarsky at [redacted] 262-9074

10-11-95 10:49 pm
002 of 005

MEMO TO: Barry Holtz
FROM: DP
RE: JCC Retreat

This document is built around the earlier JCC-document that I developed in response to Lenny Rubin's request for information concerning what we had in mind. I have listed a group of desirable outcomes, as well as a number of possible activities (from among which we may want to choose).

I am assuming that this document will be the basis for our Friday conversation - and that tomorrow will focus exclusively on the Wexner program.

Talk to you soon.

P.S. The Rosenak piece should have arrived yesterday (via Fed Express); if you have a chance, it might be useful for you to scan it before our Friday talk.

PURPOSES OF THE JCC RETREAT

The retreat for selected JCCs scheduled for this fall is designed to enable the participants to focus their energies on the underlying goals that should inform their efforts at Jewish education in camp- and other settings. Through camps and activities they sponsor, JCCs are perhaps the most important community organ of informal Jewish education; and since there is substantial evidence that informal education may be a powerful educational resource, it becomes critically important to reflect more carefully than we usually have the time to do about the educational purposes now being served and those that might be served by these institutions. Getting clarity concerning fundamental educational goals will be invaluable for a number of reasons: it will provide criteria for deciding on the form and content of activities; it will give direction to in-service training; and it will make it possible to evaluate the success of various programs. The question of educational goals is rendered more complex, but no less important, by virtue of the fact that JCCs are communal institutions that serve an ideologically and otherwise very diverse clientele.

Guided by the conviction that clarity concerning fundamental purposes has a significant impact on effectiveness, the retreat will create contexts and activities that will encourage thoughtful reflection and honest dialogue concerning such questions as the following:

1. what educational goals have JCCs traditionally been associated with, how - if at all - have these goals been reflected in practice, and with what outcomes?
2. On careful reflection, are these traditional goals clear, compelling, and sufficient? Is it possible to articulate clearer and more compelling goals for an era in which there is anxiety concerning Jewish continuity and for an institution that is committed to serving the whole community?
3. What would be involved in a fully serious effort to attain goals that we have deemed of central importance?
4. On returning to our institutions and constituencies, how might we effectively engage our boards and our staffs in addressing the questions the retreat has considered and in making real progress on this front?

The retreat assumes that participants already take seriously the Jewish mission of JCC camps and other JCC-sponsored activities. By offering a chance to deliberate reflectively concerning questions of goals, it will try to put in your hands insights and tools that will prove invaluable in your efforts to carry out this mission in an ever more meaningful way that is consistent with your character as a community-wide institution.

DESIRABLE OUTCOMES

1. A new or deeper appreciation for the educational value of having determinate and compelling goals to guide the efforts of the camps.
2. Each team is substantially clearer concerning "the state of the art" in their own camps and those of their colleagues. They are more aware of the kinds of goals that have been associated with these camps (both in rhetoric and in practice), and they have a deeper understanding of the ways these goals have - and have not - been adequately reflected in practice.
3. Participants have a deeper understanding of what is involved in approaching the realization of a goal in a systematic, strategic way.
4. Participants leave the seminar with some new ideas concerning the kinds of goals that might animate their camps and with the realization that this matter requires more thought and study.
5. Participants leave the seminar with the desire to make progress on a goals-agenda and with some concrete, if rudimentary, ideas concerning what issues to tackle (e.g., engaging their boards in addressing the issue of goals; studying the state of goals in the life of the camp; educating the camp-staff) and how to begin approaching them.

SOME ELEMENTS OF THE RETREAT

- No*
1. A text study session (possibly led by Yekhiel Poupko) that focuses on what it means to be members of a community -- or on what are the essential virtues and capacities that make communal life possible.
 2. A session that allows folks to share what have been their central educational purposes and how they are expressed in the life of their camps.
 3. A session focused on the Rosenak piece: a summary of the argument and a discussion of its implications for a summer camp: that is, what would be entailed by a commitment to take these ideas seriously in a camp that features substantial Jewish diversity and that claims to represent the community as a whole?
Read over night
 4. An exercise designed to identify gaps between goals and implementation -- that is, designed to highlight domains in which goals are poorly related to or reflected in educational practice.
 5. An implementation exercise: what would it mean to be systematic, without being heavy-handed, in trying to implement a
- Yes*

From: [redacted] at [redacted] 608-233-4044
To: Daniel Pekarsky at [redacted] 262-9074

10-11-95 10:51 pm
005 of 005

particular goal? Conceivably, this could be combined with the Rosenak discussion (#3).

6. A "Where do we go from here?" session, organized around question #4 (see p. 1 above).

from: *Cindy Chazan*

Post-it* Fax Note	7671	Date	7-24-95	# of pages	5
To	Michael Brooks	From	Cindy Chazan		
Co./Dept.		Co.	JFGH		
Phone #		Phone #	203-232-4483		
Fax #	313-769-1934	Fax #	203-232-5221		

4. Towards an Ideology of Jewish Education in Jewish Community Centers

by Yehiel Poupko
 Director, Department of Judaica,
 Jewish Community Centers of Chicago

"It is the purpose of the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago to enhance and perpetuate the Jewish people and the Jewish tradition." With these words, Jerry Witkovsky assumed the position of general director of the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago in 1979. This simply stated vision marked a break with the past and set a new course for the future. However, as with all general statements, it demanded specificity for purposes of application in the real life work of the JCC. Furthermore, it raised a set of critical questions. Whose Judaism would the JCC perpetuate? Which of a variety of competing Jewish ideologies would inform the JCC's Jewish work? What would be the sources of authority for such Jewish educational work; what texts, which rabbis, which theologians, and which historical and contemporary experiences?

From the very start, these questions assumed ultimate importance. The charge to enhance and perpetuate the Jewish people and the Jewish tradition meant that the JCC had to do something far more comprehensive and difficult than to merely intensify the depth and variety of its existing Jewish programs and services. The process of offering more programs of Jewish content and deepening the Jewish content of existing services had been under way for some time within the JCC as a response to the realities in the community. In this sense, the JCC's participation in the renaissance of American Jewish life, stimulated by the Six Day War, was in the best tradition of American Jewish and American democratic institutions. Change came from the streets, from the grassroots; from the bottom up, rather than from the top down. American Jews wanted programs and services with more Jewish content so that they could give wider expression to their Jewishness. In response to this demand, the JCC offered more Jewish cultural events: films, speakers, book fairs, artistic offerings, community-wide celebrations and support of certain features of Jewish religious life. For example, JCCs became more actively involved in the celebration of Hanukkah and Purim through carnivals and festivals, and in the teaching of Passover through pre-Passover model seders. All of this was good, important, sacred in fact - and it still is. It fulfills the fundamental definition of Jewish education as a lifelong process by which Jews receive the Jewish past and interpret it in the present. The authority for what has just been described is, of course, the Jewish people, their needs and their desires. The market demands, the provider responds; the consumer wants, the business delivers. But it is, and emphatically so, not enough.

Transfers

It is not enough because these cultural activities are expressions of Jewish collective, ethnic consciousness. Those of us who shaped this era of Jewish communal work and mass public Jewish education, were exhilarated by it. Having been raised in the quiescent American Jewish communities of the forties, fifties and early sixties, we were convinced that these expressions of ethnic consciousness in the Jewish and American public arenas would soon evolve into personal religious commitment. We felt and we hoped and we came to believe that attachment to the external public features of Jewish cultural and communal activity would soon be integrated into private, personal life as it should be lived in a Jewish home. But in the seventies and eighties we saw a radical increase in mixed marriage rates, even as programs of this nature continued to flourish. We now know that behaviors emerging from a sense of ethnicity do not contribute to the successful transmission of Jewish civilization and Judaism from one generation to the next. Successful transmission of Jewishness from one generation to another requires more than institutional programs and services; it requires integration in the daily life of individuals and families. There is, and there must be, far more to Jewish education.

From public to personal life

However, if the charge of the JCC is to enhance and perpetuate the Jewish people and the Jewish tradition, the questions must be asked, "For which elements of the Jewish past shall JCC take responsibility? Which elements of the received Jewish past does it want to see practiced and taught in the present so that they are perpetuated in the future?" The answers ought to be relatively easy to find. The Orthodox have an answer. It is described in prayer books, in the Torah, and in the Code of Jewish Law, the *Shulchan Aruch*. The Reform have an answer. It is found in the Central Conference of American Rabbis' Torah, and in such writings as *Gates of Mitzvah* and *Gates of the House*. The Conservative have an answer. It is found in the prayer book *Sim Shalom* and in such writings as *Emet V'Emunah*. Yet as Steven Cohen has taught us, at best, 12 - 15% of American Jews ask the questions that these books answer. Only a small percentage of American Jews ask, "What does God, as His will is expressed in the Torah, expect of me and of my life?"

✓

The Jewish Community Center's Jewish ideology emerges from a different question. This question, which will serve as the basis and source of authority for the JCC's Jewish educational work, must meet several criteria. First, it must be accountable to the received Jewish past as expressed in the Torah and its classic commentaries. Without accountability to the text, without grounding in the Torah, there is no Judaism, no effective Jewish civilization, and there is no transmission of Jewishness from generation to generation. Second, the foundation question must move JCC work from describing "what a Jew is" to presenting "what a Jew ought to be." "What a Jew is" gives birth to programs and services; "what a Jew ought to be" gives birth to experiences. Programs describe what a person wants; experiences describe who a person is. A program is a discreet product or service that is purchased; an experience is an expression of self.

THA
* ||

* !

The commonplaces of JCC life that we have all come to know create both the opportunity and responsibility to ask this foundation question. They include: the autonomy of the individual, the tolerance and acceptance of diversity and pluralism,

(If only this could come true in our community!) (not only for JCC but for Fed as well)

the need and obligation for participatory decision making, and the balancing of the individual and the group. These commonplaces are found in most successful American institutions, but they were unthinkable in Jewish institutions at any other time in Jewish history. The fact that these fundamentals of American society have informed and shaped the character of the Jewish Community Center makes the JCC a unique Jewish establishment. But while these features are critical to the culture of the JCC, they do not constitute Jewish education. The challenge before the JCC is to use these assets to make Jewish education more possible and even more effective.

The criteria and commonplaces described above set the stage for the presentation of the foundation question. The question on which the ideology of the Jewish Community Centers of Chicago is: "What do Jewish people do?" If the questions for the content Jew are always "What does God ask of me on Shabbat? What does the Torah demand of me on Yom Kippur? What does the Talmud expect my seder to look like? What does the code of Jewish law expect of me at life cycle moments?" then the questions that JCC work is based on are "What do Jews do on Passover? What do Jews do on Shabbat? What do Jews do at birth and at death? What do Jews do with the reality of the return to Jewish power in the Land of Israel?" In this sense, Jewishness become very much like a poem. We may not be able to define it in the abstract, but we know it when we see it. What do Jewish people do at critical life cycle moments, at specific daily, weekly, monthly and yearly calendrical moments? What do Jewish people do in interpersonal relations, in their family life, in American society? What do Jewish people do in relation to the State of Israel, in participation with the whole Jewish people?

To ask, "What do Jews do?" is to relive an authentic and classic Jewish question. Systematic Jewish theology was import into the Jewish tradition in order to explain Judaism to outsiders, or to those Jews who are thinking of becoming outsiders. Classically, Jewish ideas emerge out of Jewish stories and Jewish behaviors.

The combination of the Jewish identity and American personality of the JCC sets the stage for creative tension. There is an interplay between what the Jewish consumer wants and how the American consumer can be transformed as a Jew.

What does the consumer wish to purchase and what can the Jew come to practice and believe? The Jew can only come to practice and believe if he or she first purchases. If all he or she does is purchase, then transformation has not taken place. The purchased program must evolve into the lived experience. Only then does the consumer become a Jewish practitioner and only then can there be transmission to the next generation. As discussed earlier, one does not transmit programs and services to the next generation, rather one transmits the experiences that shape the self.

Addressing the question of "What do Jews do?" leads to another question: "What is the profile of a successfully educated Jewish person or Jewish family after they have purchased and become part of a series of JCC programs, services and experiences over a period of time?" The development of that profile begins with what do Jews do:

*Study-
Pt.
who
was
aw*

*"Growth
Dewey*

AHA!

Handwritten scribbles and arrows at the bottom of the page.

- on Shabbat?
- on Passover?
- on Rosh Hashana?
- on Yom Kippur
- on Succot?
- on Shavuot?
- on Purim?
- on Hanukkah?
- on Holocaust Memorial Day?
- on Israel Independence Day?
- at birth?
- at puberty?
- at marriage?
- at divorce?
- at death?
- in childhood?
- in the teenage years?
- in young adulthood?
- in early marriage?
- in a young family?
- in a family?
- in old age?

This is but the beginning. These are questions to which we can all subscribe because we know what a successfully educated Jew looks like. In between these two questions, "What do Jews do?" and "What is the successful Jewish profile?" lies the great opportunity and asset of JCC. Simply stated, it is the mantra of the work of Jewish Community Centers of Chicago. We weave Jewish life into general life. The greatest asset of all JCCs is that we sell general products that people need - such as camping, early childhood services, day care, fitness, and the list goes on - and into these general life activities we weave Jewish life. When we answer the question of what Jews do and how we weave Jewish life into general life, we respond to the question of the profile of a successfully educated Jewish person.

It must be said that JCC cannot support the response to these questions by itself. The American Jewish consumer, as well as collective Jewish wisdom, have developed a division of labor over the past several decades. The response to these questions lies in deep and intimate partnership with the synagogue, the rabbinate, and many other institutions. This is reflected in the rather interesting document attached as an appendix to this article. This document is the product of a history, too long and complicated to detail here. It represents Chicago JCC's definition of what Jewish life ought to be and what the JCC ought to support.

A kind of passive blasphemy has been committed in this paper: Jewish life, Jewish education and Judaism have been discussed without reference to a text. There can be no Jewish thought without reference to a text. A classic text is needed to

Weave Jewish life into general life



support an ideology of Jewish education that emerges neither out of abstract principles nor out of classic religious authority systems, but rather from the details and behaviors of daily life. A text from the *Midrash* is helpful.

Rabbi Huna and Rabbi Jeremiah, quoting Rabbi Hiyya Bar Abba commented on the verse in which it is written, "Your fathers . . . have forsaken Me (God) and have not kept My Torah" (Jer. 16:11). God declares, "If only they (Israel) had kept My Torah! Would that they had abandoned Me and kept My Torah! For if they had abandoned Me and kept My Torah its light and force would have returned them to Me.

Pesikta de'Rab Kahana 15:5

This Midrash is grounded in an important and famous incident in the Torah. At Sinai, in response to God, Israel declared, "*Na'aseh v'nishma*, we will do and obey." Thus, at the very first moment when the Covenant is contracted, what God seeks and what Israel provides is *na'aseh*, doing. It is through the doing that one fulfills the Covenant and is known as a Jew.

This is one of several possible classical sources that supports the foundation question of JCC's Jewish educational work. We know the answer to the question, "What do Jews do?" It is the JCC's task to actively answer that question by asking the question, "What is the profile of a successfully educated Jewish individual/family?" These questions must be answered in the lives of the JCC's consumers so that they emerge from their experience with the JCC manifesting something more than the memories of ethnic associations and episodic programs, demonstrating in their lives and in their homes the behaviors by which Jews are known. If only Jews are helped to understand that if they abandon Me and keep My Torah they will indeed return.

and
community

Draft: June 29, 1995.

COMMENTS INVITED

BEST PRACTICE IN JEWISH EDUCATION: JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTERS

by Steven M. Cohen and Barry W. Holtz*

Sponsors:

Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education

and

The Jewish Community Centers Association

*Names ordered alphabetically.

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INTRODUCTION

Do JCCs Jewishly Educate?

Do Jewish Community Centers engage in Jewish education? If so, how do they educate? What are the signs of an educationally effective JCC, and what are the key ingredients in making good Jewish education possible in a JCC?

These are some of the central questions we address in this investigation. They are raised at a time when the organized Jewish community, perhaps more concerned about its prospects for creative survival than ever before, has placed renewed emphasis upon Jewish education in its many forms. At the same time, the Jewish Community Center movement has undertaken a variety of steps -- some dating back to years before the recent wave of concern for Jewish continuity -- to expand the scope and heighten the quality of Jewish education in JCCs.

As two researchers whose professional and personal lives have been close to the practice and study of Jewish education in conventional settings, we came to this study with a great degree of skepticism. Not only did we wonder whether serious Jewish education was taking place anywhere in the Center movement. Our doubts ran deeper: we questioned whether it was even possible for a JCC to engage in serious or effective Jewish education.

For, as even champions of Jewish education in the Center movement readily concede, JCCs face a daunting number of obstacles if they are to be taken seriously as a "player" in the world of Jewish education in North America. At its heart, the typical JCC is a market-driven, service-oriented, recreational facility. For decades, Jews have come to Centers for specific services that are only tangentially related to Jewish education, as it has been traditionally understood. Moreover, Jewish education in the JCC context is not a "money-maker," at least in the short-term. The historic mission and design of the JCC, then, certainly militates against a strong commitment to conventional Jewish education.

Moreover, the JCC suffers from other limitations as a Jewish educational institution. Putting matters most simply, it is not a synagogue. For the most part, Jews do not come to Centers to pray; they do not celebrate their most momentous life cycle events in the Center context; they do not participate in a "Holy Community" (to translate the term classically appended to the names of synagogues); and they do not expect to be confronted with a particular religious ideology. In short, the secular nature and ideology of the Center limits its ability to Jewishly engage its clientele in certain ways (although, as we shall see, the same features facilitate its educational outreach in other ways).

If the recreational and secular character of the JCC impede its educational potential, so too does the character of the staff. From executive directors to line workers, JCC professional staff have historically been selected for skills other than their proficiency in or dedication to Judaism. For the most part, JCC professionals have not been extraordinarily well-educated Judaically, nor are they particularly imbued with a professional or personal commitment to enhancing the Jewish commitment of their clientele, except, perhaps, as an indirect consequence of involvement in one or another JCC activities. In addition, it could be argued that aspects of their professional ethic as social workers can be seen as running contrary to their serving as Jewish educators. Social workers are inclined to accept the validity of their client's legitimate values and beliefs; educators -- especially religious educators -- generally see themselves in the business of challenging, if not changing, fundamental values and beliefs.

Our investigation did not set out to determine the extent of Jewish education in the entire JCC field. Rather, we sought out examples of excellence in Jewish education. In the course of our investigation, we came to learn of numerous examples of good Jewish education taking place within the confines of Jewish Community Centers throughout North America. Thus, at least a piece of our initial skepticism was allayed: in theory, JCCs can be effective instruments of some forms of Jewish education. In reality, without looking very hard, we found several examples of what may be called "best practices" in Jewish education in JCCs.

The Best Practices Project

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."¹

Accordingly, the Best Practices Project of the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education (CIJE) documents exemplary models of Jewish education, in the hope that doing so will help improve the quality of Jewish education. Up to this point, the Project has published volumes in two of the areas it has identified for intensive examination: the supplementary school, and early childhood Jewish education programs. This volume on Jewish Education in

¹Commission on Jewish Education in North America, *A Time to Act* (University Press of America, 1991), p. 69.

Jewish Community Centers, then, is the third in the series.

What do we mean by "best practice"? One recent book about this concept in the world of education states that it is a phrase borrowed

from the professions of medicine and law, where "good practice" or "best practice" are everyday phrases used to describe solid, reputable, state-of-the-art work in a field. If a doctor, for example, does not follow contemporary standards and a case turns out badly, peers may criticize his decisions and treatments by saying something like, "that was simply not best practice."

... [I]f educators are people who take ideas seriously, who believe in inquiry, and who subscribe to the possibility of human progress, then our professional language must label and respect practice which is at the leading edge of the field.²

We need to be cautious about what we mean by the word "best" in the phrase "best practice." The literature in education points out that seeking perfection will be of little use as we try to improve actual work in the field. In an enterprise as complex and multifaceted as education, these writers argue, we should be looking to discover "good" not ideal practice.³

"Good" educational practice is what we seek to identify for Jewish education, models of the best available practice in any given domain. In some cases, best available practice will come very close to "best imaginable practice;" at other times the gap between the best we currently have and the best we think we could attain may be far greater. But, in all areas, this project aims to document the "success stories" of contemporary Jewish education.

Main Purposes and Intended Audience

This particular study has a number of goals. We wanted, first of all, to document and analyze elements of Jewish educational excellence in JCCs. In what areas do we find Jewish

²Steven Zemelman, Harvey Daniels, Arthur Hyde, *Best Practice* (Heinemann, 1993), pp. Vii-viii.

³See, for example, Sara Lawrence Lightfoot, *The Good High School* (Basic Books, 1983).

educational excellence? Who are the "students" and who or what are the "teachers" and what is being taught? Where are the particular educational strengths and weaknesses of JCCs, especially within the educationally superior Centers?

But beyond describing areas of Jewish educational excellence -- a concern that has been addressed in a number of previous publications -- we also seek to understand what goes in to making an educationally successful Center. Earlier studies⁴ have pointed to the director, the board, the Jewish educator, the staff, the institutional environment, and other elements of success in JCC Jewish education. We sought a deeper understanding of these elements than has been presented in earlier writings.

Beyond these issues, we seek to take the discussion of Jewish education in the Center world to a deeper level and ask probing questions of this endeavor. Insofar as is possible, how can we describe the educational and Jewish philosophy of the Center movement? How do elements of these approaches facilitate or inhibit achieving Jewish educational goals? Most pointedly, what will Centers need to do to take their recent venture into Jewish education to the next level and, perhaps, begin to make both a lasting and widespread impact on the Jewish lives of their members and, indeed, the larger Jewish communities in which the Centers are situated?

As should be obvious by this point, our ambitions for this document extend beyond the world of analysis to the world of real practice. Quite simply, we hope that our study -- even if only in a small way -- will promote better practice in this important area of Jewish education. Ideally, JCCs which are currently less advanced in this domain will be inspired to change their practice and advance their commitment to Jewish education.

We hope that this report will be read carefully by key personnel in the JCC movement. We believe it will be useful to Board members, executive directors, department heads, Jewish educational personnel, and all those who work professionally for their JCCs. If this document truly succeeds, it will help provoke renewed and deeper thinking on the part of even the most expert and thoughtful practitioners and policy-makers in the Center movement.

To no small extent, this report is also directed to policy-makers, Jewish educators, and others outside the center movement who may be unaware of the significant recent developments in JCC Jewish education. Since the early 1980's, the JCC movement has effected enormous changes in the ways that Centers view their role as Jewish educational

⁴See, for example, Barry Chazan and Steven M. Cohen, *Assessing the Jewish Educational Effectiveness of Jewish Community Centers-- The 1994 Survey* (New York: JCCA, 1995). Also Barry Chazan and Mark Charendoff, *Jewish Education and the Jewish Community Center* (Jerusalem: JCCA, 1994).

institutions. We believe that this report will help lend recognition to a significant process of development and re- conceptualization among JCCs. As we have come to learn through the course of our research, JCCs ought to be taken more seriously as a locus of Jewish education -- certainly possibilities exist, even if they have not always been actualized. The recognition of these successful endeavors by established Jewish educators can only help advance the agenda to which they are committed, namely, the expansion of Jewish educational opportunities to a wider Jewish population.

Finally, the developments within JCCs charted in this volume are part of larger effort to shape a Jewish education appropriate for modern, American society. The experience of the JCCs relates to domains of Jewish education beyond the Center world, and, to the extent that this is so, we believe that this report can help bring those insights to a wider public.

Method

We began our research by consulting with several experts (both individually and as a group) to discuss the issue of best practice in Jewish education in the world of the Jewish Community Center. Based on those consultations, along with our reading of the literature published in recent years about this topic, we chose an initial group of a dozen JCCs that are reputed to be among the best in the field.

Our expert consultants helped us winnow that list down to comport with our constraints of time and resources. We sought diversity with respect to several characteristics: geography, size of community and Center, structure (i.e., a metropolitan system as well as local units), and personnel (i.e., status of Jewish educator). Eventually, we chose six sites to study in depth:

The Jewish Community Centers of Chicago
The JCC on the Palisades, Tenafly, New Jersey
The Memphis JCC
The Jewish Community Centers Association of St Louis
The JCC of the Greater St. Paul Area
The YM&YMHA of Suffolk in Commack, New York (Long Island)

We wish to underscore that these six particular Centers are not the only examples of best practice in this arena. We chose them because they represent the best Centers from our

point of view, but do not exhaust them. Taken together, they constitute a diverse group along the lines stated above. We specifically excluded some Centers with a deserved reputation for excellence in part because they are so unusual that other Centers might regard them as "sui generis."

Beyond the six sites for in-depth investigation, our expert consultants helped us choose a group of "stand-alone" programs operating within other Jewish Community Centers. These specific programs are among many around the continent which offer examples of excellence in particular domains of JCC activity. This group consists of the following:

- The 92nd Street Y (New York)
- The Atlanta JCC
- The JCC of the Upper West Side (New York)
- The Metrowest JCC (New Jersey)
- [cleveland?]

The JCC serves many purposes and plays many roles. It is at once an institution which is social, recreational, communal, and educational. Exemplary practices surely exist in important JCC domains such as services to the elderly, physical education, budget and fundraising, staff training, health programs, among many others. Our concern, however, is with the JCC as a Jewish educational institution, and it is in this realm that we sought to document best practices.

With this said, we define the concept of "Jewish education" quite broadly. Education includes schoolrooms and classes, to be sure, but education takes place in many different ways -- in the gym, in the art gallery, in early childhood and family programs as well as by way of the very ambiance of an institution, the decorations on its walls, and the music one hears in its corridors.

The notion that education is broad-based and multi-dimensional, that it goes beyond schooling (formal education), is an idea explored with great depth and insight by the great historian of American education Lawrence Cremin, for many years the President of Teachers College at Columbia University. Cremin's definition of education certainly deals with schools, but it also includes "the multiplicity of individuals and institutions that educate-- parents, peers, siblings, and friends, as well as families, churches, synagogues, libraries, museums, summer camps, benevolent societies, agricultural fairs, settlement houses. . . ."⁵

⁵Lawrence Cremin, *Traditions of American Education* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), p. 136.

Perhaps no institution in Jewish life today reflects the notion of an "ecology"⁶ of diverse educational opportunities better than does the JCC. And there are few institutions that have so much potential to educate. As we shall see, how well it manages this potential and these opportunities is the great challenge facing Jewish education in the Jewish Community Center.

The mode of work in this study was qualitative, but the study is not "ethnographic" in the way that term is conventionally used in social research.⁷ Ethnographic methods would have given us a rich description of the JCCs. Such an approach would be ideal in studying the social framework, power structures, activities, and educational processes of the Centers. Inevitably, true ethnographies demand a lengthy period of "participant observation" in which the researcher becomes a virtual member of the society or institution which is being investigated. Such a study of a JCC would be extremely useful, but our time and resource limitations did not permit it. Accordingly, we had little contact with the day to day users of the JCCs, nor did we meet with local rabbis or federation officials. In other words, neither did we extensively observe JCCs in action nor did we interview key people outside the system.

Our goal was to learn as much as we could from insiders about how these particular JCCs -- recognized as "best practice sites" by some experts in the field -- did their educational work. To assist us in this work we used criteria developed by a recent national JCC task force on Jewish education, the "COMJEE II" report, described later in this essay.

After selecting the six sites, we informed them of their selection and asked their permission to pursue the project (all agreed). We asked them to send us a host of documentation including catalogues, reports, minutes of board meetings, and publicity materials.

The two of us conducted our first site visit (at the JCC of the Palisades) jointly to learn how we might conduct the interviews and to allow for mutual self-reflection and analysis. Another researcher, Julie Tammivaara then joined Steven Cohen in the visit to Suffolk; afterwards, Tamivaara visited Memphis, Holtz went to St. Louis, and Cohen visited Chicago and St. Paul.

In each Center we asked the director to arrange interviews with the Jewish educator, assistant directors, department heads, and, where possible, board members and other staff. In all instances we met with the Jewish educator and, most often, with the pre-school director. Aside from certain key professionals, whom we felt we had to meet, we gave the executive

⁶Lawrence Cremin, *Public Education* (New York: Basic Books, 1976).

⁷See, for example, H. Russell Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994)

director a considerable amount of flexibility in choosing those aspects of his or her Center that were deemed most outstanding. This was, after all, not an evaluation study, but an attempt to highlight the best in each site and we believed that the executive director was the person most likely to have the best information about the success stories within his or her institution.

In each Center, then, we followed the following steps:

- 1) We examined the literature produced by the Center. (We had received quite a bit in advance and more when we got there.)
- 2) We interviewed the executive director.
- 3) We interviewed the Jewish education staff, in particular the senior educator.
- 4) We interviewed those division heads that the director felt were involved in areas significantly related to Jewish programming.
- 5) We interviewed some significant lay leaders. The lay leaders were interviewed in a group; with the professionals the interviews were one on one.
- 6) We closely examined the building, looking for visible evidence of Jewish education in action.

We spent from one to three days in each Center. We prepared separate reports on each of our visits. People spoke to us in confidence and, for that reason, throughout this report we provide few specific names. In addition, we conducted phone and face to face interviews with key figures from the "stand-alone" programs.

In the course of our work, we came to realize that we could not adequately address an important research issue: exploring the *processes of change* in these JCCs, namely, how these best practice places (and others as well) came to emerge as arenas of Jewish educational excellence. We offer a few speculative inferences toward the end of this report on the sorts of conditions that promote the growth of Jewish educational commitment in a JCC, but we can say little about why seemingly similar Centers vary so widely in their involvement in serious Jewish education. That topic remains for another piece of research.

We want to say a word about three possible distortions that may have affected the results of this report. First, a geographic bias may obtain in the selection of the sites. We tried to get a mix of various locations, but the fact that both researchers reside on the East coast certainly influenced the choice of sites.

Second, the JCCA experts may have introduced a selection bias, as they freely admitted. The JCCA professional staff are well-traveled and have developed a good understanding of the field. Nonetheless, their expertise and awareness may be influenced by factors other than the inherent excellence of one or another Center. As a result, we may have overlooked

Centers that would have served as better exemplars of good Jewish education than the six we selected.

Finally, the report itself was surely influenced by the background and professional orientation of the two researchers. Although both of us have had experience in various forms of Jewish education, neither of us is a qualified Center professional. We believe that the study has been enriched by the fact that one of us is a professor of Jewish education who has focused primarily on formal (school) settings and that the other is a professor of sociology who has studied a variety of Jewish communities and populations. However, we may bring biases to our work of which we are unaware. These biases may have influenced our perceptions of the Centers and programs that we studied as well as the inferences drawn from our observations.

Background and Issues

The Jewish Community Center movement has had a long and complex relationship to the question of its role as an educating institution. Originally created as a social and intellectual meeting place for Jews in the mid-19th century, Centers came to play an important role in the "settlement" and integration of the huge waves of immigrants that came to American shores in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.⁸ As Jews became well integrated in American society by the post World War II period, the settlement role diminished (although we have recently seen its re-emergence in the settlement of Russian immigrants), and Centers began to function much more in their social and recreational roles. In time, they moved out to the suburbs -- often in beautiful new facilities -- following the migration of their upwardly and outwardly mobile constituents.

The question of a specifically Jewish mission for the JCC has been debated back and forth throughout the entire history of the Center movement. Even in the earliest days of Centers, significant voices within the Center movement advocated for more Jewish content and education. Figures such as Louis Marshall, Mordecai Kaplan and Horace Kallen represented with great power the potential of a primarily Jewish focus for the Center.

However, as Oscar Janowsky, in his ground-breaking survey of JCCs published in 1948,

⁸The best history of the early years of Jewish Community Centers is a recent doctoral dissertation by David Kaufman entitled "*Shul with a Pool*" (Brandeis University, 1994). It is currently being prepared for publication in book form.

pointed out, "practice fell short of precept in this regard."⁹ In describing settlements during the early part of the century, he wrote, "when allowances are made for. . . necessary concessions, and for lip-service to the positive views of [some], the Jewish settlements remained throughout this period lukewarm, if not hostile to Jewish emphasis."¹⁰ He quotes Boris Bogen in 1916 who concluded that many Jewish settlements were still emphasizing the non-sectarian, rather than the Jewish aspects of their mission. In a remarkable aside Janowsky adds, "The experience of the present Survey would lead one to believe that this was an understatement, and as an understatement it describes adequately the present situation in most Jewish settlements."¹¹ Even when one includes the JCC itself, not just the Jewish settlement house, Janowsky states: "In the main, while there has been great emphasis upon the Jewish center as a unifying agency, the cleavage of previous decades has remained: some have envisaged a distinctively Jewish purpose for the Jewish center, while others have leaned toward non-sectarianism."¹²

In the years following the Janowsky report, many of the same tensions about the issue of the Center's Jewish mission remained. But as Jews became more at home in America -- both more integrated and more assimilated -- the Center began to re-evaluate its role and purpose. This process culminated in the JWB's Commission on Maximizing Jewish Educational Effectiveness of Jewish Community Centers (COMJEE) that began deliberations in 1982 and published its report in 1984.¹³ In a clear and direct fashion, the report argued for the centrality of Jewish education to the mission of JCCs and asserted the unique role that Centers can play in lifelong Jewish learning.

A small number of Jewish Community Centers had placed Jewish education on their agenda several years before the COMJEE report (in fact, informants at most of our six sites claimed that they had done so in the 1970's). With that said, the Commission's work certainly galvanized the Center movement and represented a dramatic shift in the priorities and mission of Jewish Community Centers across North America. Despite earlier efforts to improve the Jewish educational mission of Centers, "what we are now witnessing is different in depth and intensity than anything that has preceded it. More resources, effort, support and passion have been injected into the Jewish focus of centers than ever before."¹⁴ Recent

⁹Oscar I. Janowsky, *The JWB Survey* (New York: Dial Press, 1948), p.237.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 242.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., p. 244.

¹³In JCC circles COMJEE is often called "the Mandel Commission" after its lay chair, Morton L. Mandel.

research has documented the expansion of Jewish educational programs in the Centers, consistent with the COMJEE recommendations.¹⁵

The potential role of JCCs as places for Jewish education was given further impetus by the new concerns in the Jewish community at large about intermarriage, assimilation and the future of the Jews as a viable and dynamic community in North America. The 1990 National Jewish Population Survey¹⁶ and the report of the Commission on Jewish Education in North America¹⁷ raised serious questions and challenges about Jewish education and Jewish "continuity."

In May of 1995, the JCCA released a follow-up report to the original COMJEE. This second effort, "COMJEE II: The Task Force on Reinforcing the Effectiveness of Jewish Education in JCCs," delineated fourteen specific recommendations to help move the educational mission of JCCs forward. In an introductory section of this report, entitled "Maximizing Jewish Educational Potential," COMJEE II outlined a set of outcomes for a Center which "seeks to reach its potential as an institution of creative Jewish continuity"--including items such as "have an ambiance that is warm, embracing and visibly Jewish," "make budgetary provision for Jewish educational experimentation and innovation," and, engage "Jewish educators as part of its staff."

These 18 paragraphs of descriptive outcomes helped form a set of criteria for our research in evaluating best practice in JCCs. Although no single Center has all 18 factors in place, the good Centers that we studied (and, undoubtedly, others like them) scored well in a number of these measures and showed a commitment toward improving precisely in these domains.

In essence, the description of the the Jewishly effective JCC boils down to three words starting with the letter "P": Personnel, Program, and Philosophy. We examine each in turn.

¹⁴Barry Chazan and Richard Juran, "What We Know About Jewish Education in Jewish Community Centers," in *What We Know About Jewish Education*, edited by Stuart L. Kelman (Los Angeles: Torah Aura, 1992), p. 171.

¹⁵*Assessing The Jewish Educational Effectiveness of Jewish Community Centers.*

¹⁶Barry Kosmin and others, *Highlights of the National Jewish Population Survey* (New York: CJF, 1991).

¹⁷ *A Time to Act.*

PERSONNEL

Committed and Knowledgeable People, Both Lay and Professional

We found that Jewish educational excellence begins with a committed leadership, coupled with a committed and knowledgeable staff. The key components here (in relative order of importance) are:

- the executive director;
- the board;
- the professional Jewish educator; and
- the staff, particularly those who serve in explicitly educational capacities.

With the appropriate lay and professional players in place, a Jewish educational commitment and program will follow. With serious gaps at any of these levels, what passes for a Jewish educational program will, despite some appearances to the contrary, lack the depth, seriousness, and passion necessary for a Jewishly effective educational environment.

The Executive Director

The people most responsible for defining the school's vision and articulating the ideological stance are the principals. ... They are the voice ... of the institution. ... The literature on effective schools tends to agree on at least one point -- that an essential ingredient of good schools is strong, consistent, and inspired leadership. The tone and culture of schools is said to be defined by the vision and purposeful action of the principal.¹⁸

As researchers have found in a variety of domains -- in education, in business, and in government, to name just three -- the role of the top professional is central in making any system work well. So too in Jewish Community Centers, the executive director is clearly the key player in creating a best practice site for Jewish education.

In addition to the diffuse task of projecting a Jewish educational vision and commitment

¹⁸Lightfoot, p. 323.

that permeates the agency, we can identify three key responsibilities successfully undertaken by executive directors of educationally effective JCCs. These include:

- 1) Bolster the Board's commitment to the Center's Jewish educational mission.
- 2) Advocate the creation of the Jewish educator line and extend personal and concrete support to his/her functioning.
- 3) Assure that the staff grows in terms of Jewish knowledge and commitment.

The particular ways in which the executive manages and achieves these goals differs from place to place and from person to person. There is, in other words, no single "correct" way to lead a Jewish Community Center toward greater quality in its Jewish educational program. But no matter how the executive expresses his or her leadership, and no matter what kind of personality and background the executive brings to the position, certain dimensions of the job seem to be constant across all sites.

The executives we studied were all imbued with the importance of the Jewish mission of their Center and Centers in general. In some cases, these directors have been well known for years as advocates -- sometimes in print -- for the Jewish mission of Jewish Community Centers. They have a vision about what they want to accomplish and can articulate that vision to their staff and their members. In some cases the executive has a well worked out theory -- one might even say a philosophy -- for Jewish education in the JCC. In other cases, the executive director works instinctively and relies on the wisdom of other staff members, most importantly the Jewish educator, to provide the theory. But without a firm belief in the Jewish educational mission of JCCs, it is unlikely that anything significant in Jewish education could happen in a Center, no matter what other factors were in place, even a committed lay leadership and staff.

(Although, by intent our research excluded JCCs that under-achieve in terms of Jewish education, we heard stories of directors in such places with a weak commitment to their own Jewish involvement and, commensurately, a weak commitment to Jewish education in their Centers. We were told that some of these directors are quite capable of presenting a compelling case for their Center's investment in Jewish education, one that might well convince all but the most sophisticated observer. In reality, though, their Centers do, in fact, maintain little of true depth or substance in the sphere of Jewish education.)

Flowing from this personal and professional commitment, what we call the "successful" executive director advocates for the creation of a Jewish educator position at the Center. As

we shall see below, the educator position is probably the single most important "proximate cause" in bringing about advances in Jewish education in a JCC. Part of what the director must do is create that position. He or she must believe in the importance of the job, understand the function of the position, and advocate for it within his or her staff and board. Directors spoke of how they re-arranged budgets or raised additional funds in order to pay for the position, for example, by raising endowments specifically for that position.

The next step is to find the right kind of person for the job. Having a clear understanding the nature of the Jewish educator role and the possibilities for the Center at that point in time is crucial in making correct decisions in hiring. In all the places we visited, we were impressed with the apparent suitability of the particular educator with the particular environment. Someone (the director?) made sure there was a good fit between the educator and the needs and culture of their particular Center at that point in its development as a Jewish educational institution. As we will point out later, there are a variety of legitimate models for the the Jewish educator role in Centers. Accordingly, the executive needs to have the right concept to match both his or her Center and the person hired for the position.

Once the slot has been filled, the "good" director helps integrate the Jewish educator into the life of the Center in supportive and significant ways. The educator must be supervised appropriately and positioned well both in the Center and in the community. To some extent, executives decide how much authority and influence -- both formal and interpersonal -- the educator will exercise.

In Centers that we studied, executives provided helpful, supportive supervision. In some Centers, the executives shared access to the Board with the educator. As a result, the executive helped position the educator to interact well with Board members, such as by creating study opportunities at Board meetings or at Board members' homes. Generally, such executives helped the educator develop his or her own relationship with Board members. Rather than viewing this access to the board as a threat to their own leadership, these executives encouraged such encounters.

Good executives attend well to a variety of time management issues. Those most committed to the Jewish education agenda assure opportunities for staff to study Judaica with the educator during work time. As one Center executive put it, "If it doesn't take place during work time, it can't work and it can't send the message you want to send."

In addition, the use of time is critical to the life of the educator. In some cases (though not all), Center executives in these sites conceptualized the time demands on the educator in a manner different from that of other staff. For example, some educators were encouraged to pursue their own personal study and preparation as an integral part of their work day, even though they were not being "productive" as a administrator, programmer, or classroom teacher

during those hours. Almost all the educators identified a need for time for their own continuing Jewish study. The Center environment is an activist one and unlike a university or school, it is not particularly attuned to the need for preparation time. They felt that such time for reflection and learning was especially important if job is to serve as teacher or resident scholar at the JCC.

Next, many of the Center directors at the sites we visited made Jewish commitment a specific, stated requirement in hiring new staff and in promoting veterans. In some places, the Jewish contribution to the Center was part of each staff member's regular evaluation and a clearly stated criterion for promotion. One director reported that over the years staff had left his Center because they felt that they could not conform to that standard, and the director was pleased that they had left.

Executives in "good" Centers work to enhance the Jewish knowledge and commitment among the staff. They assured opportunities for staff study by way of study groups or sessions with the Jewish educator. Sometimes they encouraged their staff to enroll in existing curricular programs such as the Melton Mini- School or Derekh Torah; in other places this Jewish study revolved around specific situations that Center staff might encounter in their work and the Jewish responses to such situations. For example, some Centers schedule regular sessions on topics such as death and suffering ("why bad things happen to good people"), abortion or alcohol and drug abuse, so that staff members will come to appreciate a Jewish perspective on these matters. In many places, the director personally attends these study sessions, further indicating their importance in the culture of the JCC.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of the executive's commitment to enhancing the Jewish knowledge and commitment of the staff has been the staff trip to Israel. These trips can have a profound, personal impact on both Jewish and non-Jewish staff members, and they can also generate programming ideas like participating in a Macabiah program, creating displays of Israeli art, or sponsoring trips to Israel for Center members. During the course of our interviews, several staff members reported how they (or their colleagues) underwent a significant turn toward a Jewish educational commitment after a JCC-sponsored trip to Israel. Executives whom we interviewed spoke of their on-going efforts to subsidize and organize staff trips to Israel, a budgetary item that can readily be dropped in hard times.

Some Centers have instituted a self-evaluation in which the executive (often using the Jewish educator as a content resource person) embarks on a critical and ongoing examination of the Jewish content, and potential for Jewish content, in all programs, activities, and departments of the Centers. This analysis prompts a search for changes to improve the Jewish program in these domains. For example, the residential camping program at one Center went through such an evaluation and its internal report (quoted below) urged the hiring of

a person on staff with a strong Jewish background (Rabbinical student or person getting a masters in Jewish Studies), who could be a source of Jewish programming and Jewish knowledge and who could also serve in some other capacity at camp. Besides a functioning staff member, few, if any Jewish resources are available at Camp. . . Resource books, tapes and videos would be valuable for staff. . .

The recommendations of this report were already well on the way toward implementation (beginning with the hiring of the Judaica resource person) when we visited.

In addition to assuring the enhancement of the staff's Jewish knowledge and commitment, the executives in these sites worked to assure a Board committed to the Jewish education agenda. One technique for doing so emphasizes building and attending to long-term relationships with individuals. In addition, some executives encourage Jewish study by the Board members, either at the formal meetings or by creating other contexts. We learned about examples of Jewish study evenings designed primarily for the Board members, or classes exclusively for Board members conducted by the Jewish educator, or, of course, the Israel trip for the Board. In one place the Board trip served as the launch for the entire Jewish educational rethinking of the Center.

The executive who is deeply committed in his or her own Jewish life serves as a powerful role model for Board members. The director need not be Jewishly knowledgeable at an advanced level. Those who are not advanced demonstrated their personal commitment to Jewish learning by hiring a Jewishly learned educator and by visibly participating in staff programs. Of course, in the small number of cases where the executive was learned, the impact on Board members could be even more powerful. As one such executive put it, "I'm their rabbi," particularly for Jews who are not comfortable with "shul" rabbis. One director said that he sees his own role as challenging the laity toward adopting more Jewishness in their lives. He feels that he can do that in ways that rabbis cannot since he comes unburdened with the "philosophical agenda" that a rabbi might have.

Finally, in addition to their other functions within the JCC itself, Center executives have an "external" role to play as well. It is the director who must manage relations with local synagogues, Jewish schools, Federation, and other relevant institutions. These relationships have become thicker -- and in some cases more complex -- as Centers have taken on more responsibility for Jewish education.

The Board

A Jewishly committed executive cannot go very far in instituting Jewish educational excellence without the acquiescence, if not the full support, of the Board. The Board plays several crucial roles:

- 1) It hires (and fires) the executive.
- 2) Its level of commitment to the Jewish educational agenda influences numerous decisions large and small, affecting the whole tenor of the agency.
- 3) It exerts ultimate authority over the budget affecting such decisions as whether to employ a professional Jewish educator, how much to invest in Jewish educational programming, how much to charge the clients for those services, and all sorts of other decisions.
- 4) Individual Board members can become the enthusiastic sponsors of specific Jewish programs, facilitating them through their credibility, insights, and financial support.

Prior to undertaking our research, we had suspected that the Board members in educationally effective Center would contain a core group with extraordinary personal commitment to Jewish life. Instead -- and, perhaps paradoxically, we found this circumstance impressive -- Board members were typical at lay leadership in Jewish communal life. They are Conservative and Reform synagogue members, who send their children to religious schools, and support the Federation campaign. But they are not distinguished by high levels of personal Jewish involvement in the home or synagogue or with a great degree of prior Jewish learning. The very ordinariness of these Board members' Jewish involvement and learning testifies to the strength of their Centers' commitment to Jewish education) and to the leadership of the executive who has nurtured Boards that support their Centers' Jewish mission.

Indeed, with respect to the Jewish education agenda, some Board members were simply non-obstructionist; insofar as support for Jewish education did not compete with needed resources, they would offer no objection. At the other extreme, we met leaders who were insistent upon the Jewish education mission as essential to Center and to their own ongoing participation. When pushed, not a few of these said they would drop off the Board in the unlikely eventuality that their Center abandoned its commitment to Jewish education.

The latter were the sort of Board members who were open to personal learning and participation in Jewish education. They were either genuinely interested, or saw such participation as vital to their successful "career" as a Jewish leader in the Center and community. We sensed that the Jewishly involved Board members over-estimate the extent of support for their position on their own Boards. This observation is consistent with the possibility that the impact of committed key Board members bring to the Jewish educational endeavor, such that on the Center as whole may extend far beyond their small numbers.

Effective support for the Jewish educational mission can be maintained by the perpetuation of an inner leadership group (albeit an influential and respected minority) that is willing to defend that mission in hard times, and broaden it in good times.

In that regard, one significant activity that we saw in more than one place were leadership development projects to socialize new Board members to the Jewish mission. One site, for instance, conducts a special 3-4 session program (for 40 people) to move new leadership toward support for the Jewish mission of the Center.

For the most part, Board members seem to stay out of day to day management of Jewish educational programming. Rather, they allow for the professional autonomy of the educator or Jewishly committed director.

We tried to determine how the Board came to adopt a strong commitment to Jewish education. Beyond the influence of the executive director (the single most important factor), we identified the following alternative factors:

1) two national "leadership development" programs (the Wexner Heritage Program and CLAL) entailing study of Judaica with highly proficient teachers;

2) Board trips to Israel, where specific teachers and programs (Melton Centre of the Hebrew University, Melitz, the JCCA Israel Office) seemed to have left strong, positive memories; and

3) the original COMJEE process, entailing the report and its dissemination during the 1980's by way of personal visits of the national JCCA staff and lay leaders, and through the Biennial Conference of the JCCA.

Boards viewed the executive as the key to implementing their vision. Some Boards came to the Jewish mission and then went out to hire the right executive to realize their dream; in other cases the director was already in place and he or she (often inspired by the original COMJEE report or some personal experience) moved the Board along this path.

The Jewish Educator

The COMJEE II report highlights the Jewish education specialist as the central figure in improving a Center's educational program. Our research confirms the importance of the Jewish educator in a variety of roles in Jewish Community Centers. These include a combination of the following:

1) Programmer -- the specialist plans and administers a variety of educational activities, be it in a specific department or throughout the Center.

2) Resource -- he or she serves to provide Jewish educational advice and materials, generally to other department heads, and particularly to the pre-school and camp.

3) Advocate -- the educator explicitly lobbies for change among staff and lay leaders, trying to raise the Jewish profile of the agency.

4) Teacher -- the educator conducts classes personally, generally with a heavy emphasis on staff and Board development (rather than for the members at large).

5) Scholar -- the educator devotes considerable time to study and, sometimes, to writing, and assumes a more respected and influential role within the agency as a result.

WHICH ROLE IS BEST? The recency of this position (Jewish educator within the JCC) may explain why JCCs have individually adopted diverse definitions of the job. In any one place, the responsibilities draw upon some, but not all of the roles outlined above. Most often, the educator serves as programmer, resource and advocate. In one instance, the educator does everything but programming. In another case, the educator serves only as a "scholar-in-residence" and occasional resource person, but with no formal administrative or line responsibility whatever; at his Center, an education specialist handles adult programming. Currently, JCCs have numerous ways of structuring this position and may make their decisions based upon their needs, their current personnel, and the candidates available to fill the position.

The COMJEE II report picks up on the plurality of job definitions by differentiating two main types of educators-- "Advanced Jewish Educators and Jewish Programming Specialists."¹⁹ As noted, we saw both "types"-- but even within the types we find significant differences in job definition, as well as previous training and experience.

The main distinction within the Advanced Jewish Educators group was between those with significant administrative responsibilities and those who were essentially "scholars in residence." The educator's administrative duties may include both "educational" tasks such as planning the adult education program and signing up the teachers, and more mundane activities such as serving on general committees and handling other day to day business matters of the Center.

Each job description bears distinctive advantages. The scholar in residence is freed from the daily administrative issues of the JCC and is able to concentrate much more on study, preparation, and teaching. The central task, as one such person puts it, is "to push for Jewish content" in the JCC program. Locating a scholar in residence at the JCC is especially

¹⁹COMJEE II, p. 18-19.

advantageous to the wider Jewish community. The Center tends to be centrally located and accessible, in both geographic and philosophical terms. Its neutral trans-denominational character allows for the right kind of base for such a scholar. The very existence of these scholar-in-residence positions attracts unusual, interesting and serious individuals into the Center field.

Nonetheless, most of our informants were dubious about the value of the the scholar in residence position per se. Obviously, it is something of a luxury for a Center to have a staff member with no administrative tasks, but this issue was not the one most commonly raised in our discussions. Instead, many felt that limiting the educator's role to serving as a free-floating scholar also limited the person's ability to make a wide-ranging impact on the Center. It is precisely through the administrative programming decisions, the policy- and program-oriented interaction with many departments, the educational planning meetings -- that educators have a chance to influence policy throughout the JCC.

BUILDING TRUST, INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CENTER: The Jewish educator serves important roles both inside and outside the Center's walls. Within the Center itself, as noted, the educator may serve as direct teacher of staff and lay people. Indeed, the educator may be a kind of quasi rabbi for lay leadership and professional staff of the JCC. The job embraces a very important "outside" dimension as well: like the executive director, the educator must develop relationships with local rabbis, federation professionals, and others in the community.

In both domains -- within the Center and in relation to outside agencies and people -- one recurrent theme we discerned was the need for the educator to develop a sense of trust in those with whom he or she interacted. Particularly given the JCC tradition and culture, staff members who came into the work under the "old" model of the JCC as recreational and social center might wonder, as one staff member put it, "Who is this guy and what does he want from me?" One of the educators, for example, remarked that he needed a good deal of time to show the key professionals and lay leaders that he was worthy of their trust, and that he was not out to make them "religious." What is complicated, of course, is that the educator does, indeed, have an educational mission, and though the suspicions of the staff may be overblown, educators do want to influence and change the people with whom they interact.

The issue of trust is related to the educators' needs to build relations around the Center by personal connections and relationships with the entire staff. Educators in the best practice sites try to find a variety of ways of meeting with the various staff members -- in some cases through being a teacher and in other cases by developing informal friendships with a whole range of staff members. In one of the Centers that we studied, for example, the Jewish

educator makes a point of taking a regular turn at the "information and welcome" desk at the front door of the Center. He also goes out to lunch on a monthly basis with a number of staff members including those seemingly remote from his work, such as the maintenance director of the Center. In these ways he gets to know many people around the JCC -- both staff and members -- and is able to develop real relationships that help him do his job more effectively.

Trust plays an important role in the educators' relationships with the "outside" community as well. Clearly the most complicated of these relationships is with the local rabbis. These relationships become more complicated still when the Jewish educator at the Center is a rabbi, as was true in three of the sites that we studied. Local rabbis worry about the Center becoming a competing Jewish institution, "a pool with a shul," as the old saying (quoted to us by more than one Center professional) has it. **[?add the discussion from Boston book]** To avoid conflicts with rabbis, Center educators refrain from performing ritual functions, and channel their JCC "students" toward various synagogues for life cycle events and conversions to Judaism. One educator (a rabbi) who has become particularly close with members of his Center's Board told us that he is scrupulous in not performing weddings, funerals, and other rites of passage, even for Board members who find he is the one rabbi to whom they feel close.

Despite their self-imposed constraints, it is also clear that rabbis working in Jewish Community Centers come to play a kind of rabbinic role. Although one such educator reported that he very rarely is asked for halakhic rulings (questions of Jewish law and ritual), it is clear from our observations that he is asked to be an authoritative teacher and a repository of information and ideas about Judaism. He is often asked to address Judaism's relevance to contemporary situations. In that he quite closely resembles his rabbinic peers in other JCCs. If more rabbis begin to enter the field -- something implied in the recommendations of COMJEE II -- this issue will need to be addressed even more directly.

PLURALIST ORTHODOX RABBIS: We were struck (and surprised) by the fact that all three of the Center educators in our study who were themselves rabbis were Orthodox; and a fourth educator was a JTS-educated wife of a Conservative rabbi. At the other sites, we also noted a preponderance of Orthodox or traditional Conservative personnel. In other words, in denominational terms, the leading educational professionals are (as a group) far more traditionally situated than their clients. To be clear, these educators were extraordinarily pluralist in their professional outlook, a rare feature among younger Orthodox rabbis today.

Nevertheless, the traditional bent of the Center movement's leading educators demands note, if not explanation. Perhaps it derives from the needs and opportunities of educators who are personally pluralist and Orthodox. The Center movement may be one of the few places

(campus Hillels may be another) where the pluralist-Orthodox rabbi can function as a Jewish educator to a multi-denominational Jewish population.

We suspect that in the near future a certain type of Orthodox job applicant will continue to seek out emerging positions in the Center movement Jewish education around the country. Possibly, Center boards or directors may find Orthodox personnel more credible than those of the more liberal denominations. In addition, graduates of the Conservative and Reform seminaries may face better job prospects in their movements (as pulpit rabbis or day school principals), giving them less incentive to seek work within the Center movement.

A satisfactory and compelling explanation for this phenomenon certainly eludes us, but it is noteworthy, nonetheless. We wonder whether this trend will continue as the Center movement begins to recruit more actively from the rabbinic training institutions.

Rabbinic training was not the only preparatory path for the educators in our survey. There was a wide range of models including educator and social worker. In some ways the training of the educators was related to the nature of their jobs.

Staff Development: Deepening Knowledge and Commitment

All JCCs encounter difficulties in recruiting and retaining ideal staff members. The key issue is not merely budgetary constraints. Rather, it is in finding and developing staff who will meet the new and expanded set of criteria that flow from a commitment to Jewish education. When hiring group workers or teachers, a Center dedicated to programmatic excellence alone -- without a specific commitment to Jewish education -- need concern itself only with such concerns as group skills, or pedagogic abilities. Only a minimal level of Jewish commitment (and even less Jewish knowledge) will generally suffice for most of the professional line positions in such a Center. In fact, some Centers regularly turn to non-Jews to serve as pre-school teachers, youth workers, camp counselors, and related personnel; and, by definition, non-Jews, at least initially, lack both Jewish commitment and Jewish knowledge.

However, the pool of available, skilled candidates for professional line positions shrinks considerably once Jewish commitment becomes a desideratum, if not a pre-requisite, for hiring. Moreover, one can assume that the vast majority of current Center staffers at this level lack the extent of Jewish learning desirable to satisfactorily address the Jewish educational mission. Under these circumstances, Centers committed to a Jewish education agenda have no choice but to institute vigorous, comprehensive and effective programs of staff development with the twin goals of enhancing Jewish commitment and deepening Jewish

knowledge.

In the places that we studied, we saw staff involved in a variety of study opportunities to increase their own Jewish knowledge. These programs included staff classes on a monthly basis and staff classes every week. The program of study, more often than not, was based around one of the two major adult study curricula currently in use in JCC adult education, the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School or Derekh Torah. Both of these programs provide a structured curriculum in "basic Jewish literacy" and are not specifically "job-related." In other words, the idea here is to improve the Jewish knowledge of the staff irrespective of its immediate relationship to the staff member's work.

These Centers believe that improving the Jewish knowledge of the staff will ultimately lead to improvements in the JCC program. A more knowledgeable staff is more likely to introduce innovations on their own or be inspired to ask the Center Jewish educator for help in implementing new ideas. Hence staff members from a wide range of departments attend. Both Jewish and non-Jewish staff participate.

Ideally, participation in some of these programs comes to be seen as a matter of professional recognition. One Center we visited is about to launch a Derekh Torah course for its staff. This new class will require staff members to apply and be accepted, and it involves a considerable amount of commitment in coming to the sessions, and preparing for classes. Nonetheless, when announced there was already a considerable amount of interest.

It seems likely that the enthusiasm expressed emanates from a combination of a number of factors that may be instructive: the respect the staff holds for the Center's Jewish educator (who will teach the class), the fact that the executive director supports the course and views Jewish learning as a desideratum in his staff, and the fact that the course is considered part of one's work and takes place during working hours.

Another Center has made Jewish study mandatory for its pre-school teachers, all of whom are studying Jewish texts for two hours a week. One key ingredient here: the teachers are paid for their time learning. The executive director made it a priority to raise the additional funds necessary (many thousands of dollars), to keep the entire system's teachers on salary while in the classroom.

Directors and educators at the more educationally effective Centers viewed staff development and enrichment as a long process taking place over several years. At one point we felt as if we were talking to field generals in a military campaign as they spoke about how they, in effect, captured or converted one department after another to the cause of Jewish education. They reported both major and minor victories. A major victory might entail replacing a Jewishly weak with a Jewishly committed department head, either by way of change in personnel or the result of nurturing a growing commitment to Jewish life through

classes, personal relationships, and a trip to Israel. A minor victory would entail small gains in strengthening Jewish commitment and content in a particular staff member and his or her program. In all instances, directors and educators had made penetrating assessments of the extent to which each key staff member was committed to the Jewish education agenda.

(Upon speaking with the staff members, we were also impressed with the seeming accuracy of these assessments.)

While the techniques may differ from one Center to another, the Jewish enrichment of the staff occupies (or should occupy) a central place in the process of turning Centers into Jewishly effective educational institutions.

THE PROGRAM

Jewish Community Centers are complex and wide-ranging institutions, offering a variety of programs. Of course, virtually any JCC program has potential as a Jewish educational venue, given the right blend of support, knowledge, creativity, skill, and time. No JCC that we saw taps the Jewish educational possibilities in all areas and certainly some programs have more obvious potential for Jewish education than others. For example, the Physical Education program does lend itself to some features of Jewish education (e.g., through posters of Jewish athletes, scenes of Israel; a Jewish sports heroes hall of fame; Hebrew signage). But, no one would argue that it is as centrally related to the Jewish education mission as, say, early childhood education or classes for adults.

Focusing on the prime areas for Jewish education, we identified five distinct areas where one could say that Jewish education was an explicit part of the program. They are roughly definable in terms of the age of their principal target populations: early childhood education, summer camps, teen programs, adult education (with several varieties), and senior adult programming.

Of all the features of Jewish educational success in JCCs, programming may constitute the one area where the most has been published. Thus, we have no intent here of describing specific programs in great detail. Rather we seek to provide a synthetic overview of some of the principles which seem to guide the most educationally effective programs of their type.

Some of these principles cut across the board and are worthy of mention at the outset:

- 1) The program is directed by an educationally oriented department head who is personally committed to the Jewish education agenda.
- 2) The Center's Jewish education specialist and the department head maintain a good working relationship, such that the specialist can exert significant influence over the program content and the training of the staff.
- 3) The staff is recruited, trained, supervised, and developed in line with the goal of securing enhanced Jewish commitment and greater Jewish knowledge.
- 4) The department head has developed, adopted, and transmitted to the staff a detailed "curriculum" containing the Jewish educational objectives of the program.
- 5) The program succeeds in "general" terms. That is, clients are attracted to the school, camp, etc. because it is a good school, camp, or whatever. In this context, they find the distinctive Jewish content acceptable, if not attractive.
- 6) The program opens up possibilities for Jewish growth, leading clients to opportunities for more intensive Jewish living or learning, be it at home, in the JCC, or in

other settings (synagogue, school, Israel, etc.).

7) The program capitalizes upon and addresses the clients' need for community and recreation; in other words, it uses all of the special educational tools peculiar to informal education, even within more traditional Jewish educational programs at the Center.

8) The program's director establishes and makes frequent use of open channels of communication with the learners and their families so as to learn of any difficulties and immediately take corrective action.

Throughout our discussions of the five major areas of Jewish educational programming, we will see many of these eight points emerge. Our primary goal in these discussions below is to try to understand just how and why certain programs stand out above the others in the Center movement.

Early Childhood Education

Recent research has amply demonstrated what Jewish educators have known instinctively: parents of young Jewish children constitute an ideal target group for educational intervention²⁰. Accordingly, early childhood Jewish education is certainly an area with great potential for Jewish Community Centers. In fact, as some of the Center professionals who spoke with us argued, the pre-school children and their parents comprise the number one target group for JCC educational efforts.

All of the Centers that we studied have preschool programs, some of which are quite extensive. These schools appear to excel in their general, non-Jewish, programs, a fact that makes them attractive to a wide range of parents -- both those seeking excellent early childhood education and those whose emphasis is on the Jewish dimension of the school. The ability to draw families into a Jewish program through Early Childhood Jewish Education is one of the most obvious and important "gateway" possibilities that JCCs can offer. Some JCCs that we observed have begun to place an emphasis on the Jewish aspects of their pre-schools precisely because of the potential for the schools to have an impact both on children at an early age, and even more importantly on parents and families. Most of the Jewish family education programs that we saw in JCCs are related to the early childhood programs in

²⁰Susan Wall, *Parents of Preschoolers: Their Jewish Identities and Implications for Jewish Education* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1994.)

Centers.

The preschool rooms are decorated with Hebrew letters, holiday materials, pictures of Israel and ritual objects. In general, the annual Jewish holidays, Shabbat and some Hebrew language form the basis of the preschool Judaic curriculum.

Moreover, consistent with the observations made earlier in this report, the better pre-school directors take pains to Jewishly educate and motivate their staffs. For the most part, these efforts are tailored to the individual teacher. After all, some are non-Jewish, some are only marginally Jewish, and a few come from very strong Jewish backgrounds; moreover, newcomers to the profession need more intensive work than veterans of 10 or 20 years. The diversity of background and experience among pre-school teachers with respect to Jewish education presents a serious obstacle to "wholesale" staff development; nevertheless, we are certain that there is a possible market for some uniform in-service training in Jewish education.

Another difficulty is presented by the extent to which non-Jews permeate the JCC pre-school system. Depending on the location there was a fairly extensive number of non-Jewish youngsters, though the claim was made that their presence does not impede Jewish educational mission. It was hard for us to judge whether this claim is true. The staff could contain high proportions (as much as a third) of non-Jews as well, who, understandably, lack familiarity with Jewish holidays and customs -- as do, for that matter, a large fraction of the Jewish staff members.

Despite their avowed (and apparently genuine) interest in reaching parents, most pre-school directors with whom we spoke described very modest success in this area, commensurate with their primary emphasis upon providing the children with a top-flight education. Schools seem to have only sporadic contact with most parents with respect to Jewish subject matter. They offer regular workshops (with modest turn-outs), and provide a stream of attractive materials that are sent home with the children (usually focusing upon the upcoming Jewish holidays). On a more positive note, we did hear of occasions (perhaps quite frequent) where parents would turn to pre-school directors or teachers (and other JCC staff) as Jewish resources for home activities and for direction in the community. Our sense is that for the most part, JCCs are just beginning to grapple with the complexity of providing an intensive Jewish pre-school education for toddlers (is that even possible?), while, at the same time trying to influence the Jewish homes in which they are being reared.

In this type of study, we are unable to judge the "organic" impact on families of children coming home with songs, lessons in holidays, and with materials for use in the home. We suspect that this may have the effect of leading parents toward adopting a more positive stance toward Judaism, but we doubt that the effect will be more than passing if it is not

supported by activities for families initiated by the early childhood programs themselves.

Despite the focus on the holidays, most of the Centers did not have an articulated curriculum nor did they seem driven by a clear vision of outcomes, in terms of the knowledge, values, and the affective dimensions of being Jewish that they wanted to communicate. In addition, most of the programs did not appear to feel comfortable in advocating continuing Jewish education as a goal for their "graduates." This last point was not universally true and may be changing. So we saw, for instance, a Jewish education fair that sought to present the various future day school and synagogue school options for the preschool parents.

A notable exception to what we have mentioned above is found in one Center which operates what may be seen as a model program for JCCs in this area. The Early Childhood Program at the Metrowest JCC (New Jersey) is directed by a skilled and learned Jewish educator who works closely with a highly motivated, stable teaching staff. Pedagogically the teachers present outstanding child-oriented approaches to young children in which general and Jewish studies are blended and integrated in creative and organic ways.

The teachers do not all come in with strong Judaica backgrounds, but the director manages to devote a considerable amount of time working one on one with the staff to help them prepare lessons which are rich in Judaic content. The success of the program is dependent on three interrelated factors: the teachers are skilled early childhood educators, the director herself is deeply committed to the Jewish mission of the program and has a very strong Jewish background which enables her to deepen the Judaic dimension of the program; the program is *structured* in such a way as to free up the director's time for close, educational supervision of the teachers, rather than the more typical situation in which early childhood director's are almost entirely engaged by administrative management issues. In our view this program offers an image of the potential as yet untapped in most JCCs; seeing it in place leads to the conclusion that other Centers could move in similar directions, given the right leadership, vision and commitment.

Summer Camps -- Day and Overnight

For a half century and more, summer camps sponsored by synagogue movements, Zionist youth movements, and Yiddishist associations have served as Jewish educational instruments to tens of thousands of youngsters. Although no definitive studies have successfully measured the impact of these camps, anecdotal and impressionistic accounts of

these camps' "alumni" suggest that they indeed played a significant role in shaping the Jewish identity of many of their former campers and counselors.

In contrast with these ideologically sponsored camps, the JCC camps have historically adopted a less pronounced Jewish profile, in part because they have catered to a Jewishly and denominationally diverse clientele. Today, almost all Centers of reasonable size sponsor day camps during the summer; in addition, JCCs sponsor 22 residential (or "overnight") camps. The increasing emphasis on the Jewish educational agenda has begun to affect the camps, but, from what we can tell, the impact has been generally less pronounced than on other areas (such as early childhood education and formal adult education). In fact, when casually asked to mention areas of Jewish educational excellence in their Centers, hardly any directors volunteered their camps.

The problem with instituting a significant Jewish educational commitment in the camps does not derive exclusively from the multi-denominational client base, or the lack of identification with a specific Jewish ideology. (Although, truth be told, these circumstances are indeed impediments to developing a clear Jewish educational mission for the camps.)

Rather, the camps have lacked serious Jewish educational supervision by a full-time Jewish educator (recall that Jewish educators have only recently emerged in the Center world). Moreover, if year-round Center programs (such as the pre-school) encounter difficulties in recruiting, training, supervising, and retaining staff with a modicum of Jewish commitment and knowledge, the camps, especially the day camps, are in an even more tenuous position. Their staff consists of low-paid, local teen-agers with high rates of turnover, making them hard to train. As with pre-schools, JCC camps must often turn to non-Jews for a source of staff.

One of the cardinal principles in informal education, particularly with teen-agers, is that one wants the staff to serve as admirable and accessible role models. Non-Jews as counselors simply cannot fulfill that function, and non-committed Jewish counselors may be even worse.

These difficulties notwithstanding, some JCC camps are managing to make significant progress in boosting the Jewish educational content to their camp experience. Most conduct pre-Shabbat programs, teach Hebrew songs, and provide what may be called Israeli or Hebrew "decoration" to the program (e.g., Hebrew bunk names or sports teams). One camp devotes different weeks to different Jewish ethical themes (e.g., kindness to animals) that have universal appeal and that can be transmitted easily by non-Jewish staff or Judaically ignorant Jewish staff. Some regularly sponsor a group of Israeli counselors.

One Center we visited had engaged in a thorough and highly critical evaluation of its camp's Jewish content and personnel and had begun to take steps in line with the report's recommendations, such as by hiring a professional Jewish educator to supervise the Judaic

program.

Clearly much remains to be done in this area. Camps need to think through and institute a Jewish educational curriculum. They need to plan and budget for Jewish educational training of the staff. These and other steps will require a personnel pattern resembling that of the Center as a whole: a director (in this case, of the camp) who is committed to introducing Jewish educational content; a professional Jewish educator who is given the backing and support necessary to institute change; and a staff that is ready to accept training and supervision designed to enhance their Jewish commitment, Jewish knowledge, and the skills needed to transmit both to their campers.

Teen Programs

Through the 1960's (or thereabouts), urban JCCs served as major centers of Jewish teenagers' social lives. Many of today's JCC lay leaders got their start in Jewish life "hanging out" at the JCCs of their youth. Today, most directors with whom we spoke pointed to relatively weak services to Jewish teens, a circumstance all the more disappointing precisely because we were speaking with representatives of those Centers noted for achievement in Jewish education.

Although the Center likes to see it itself as the surrogate for the largely defunct Jewish urban neighborhood, it does not seem to function in such a fashion for most suburban Jewish teen-agers. Our disappointment at finding little to report in the area of teen-age activities was exacerbated by the potential that we see in Centers the potential to compete with the youth "mall culture" that is so prevalent in American suburbs.

Since the staff for this population tends to be young and transient themselves, executives reported difficulty in retaining staff in this area and finding personnel with sufficient Jewish knowledge to upgrade the quality of program. At the same time, few, if any, of the Center Jewish educators that we met currently were focusing their limited energies in this domain.

Aside from staffing issues there are some other factors that may account for the lack of programming for teens. The geographical dispersal of teenagers in suburban Centers has undoubtedly taken its toll on teen participation, making it unlikely that many 14-16 year olds will casually gravitate to the JCCs as their urbanized parents did. Moreover, synagogue youth movements can more readily appeal to the idealism of youth by lending religious purpose to their participation. A recent review article on informal Jewish education of teenagers concludes:

Some youth directors reported significant competition from synagogue youth groups.

Synagogues have several advantages. They draw upon friendship networks established during elementary school years and they are familiar ground to the teens.

It is important for successful youth programs to espouse an ideology that expresses a certain amount of idealism. Such idealism calls upon the young person to give up some of his or her own needs to serve some nobler cause. For this idealism to be placed in the service of Jewish identity, it should relate to the Jewish people or religion.²¹

The classic recreational orientation of JCCs make it difficult for them to project a transcendent purpose for these kinds of programs. However, we recall that one Center (and we are sure that there are others), managed to recruit large numbers of teens for a variety of community service projects such as assisting the elderly or improving the environment.

Whether Centers will turn their attention to youth programming depends on several considerations. One possibility is that the very newness of the Jewish educator position implies that Center educators simply have not yet gotten around to addressing the youth area. In due course, as other more immediate and tractable goals are achieved, they will come to focus upon teen programming. The other possibility is that, given all the difficulties outlined above, the teen area represents an unproductive place for Centers and their Jewish educators to invest their energies. If so, then teens -- those Jews at the age when people typically shape their adult identities and make fateful life decisions -- may continue to fall outside the purview of the JCCs.

Given the legitimate concern about Jewish youth generally voiced among lay leaders and parents, we imagine that this area is one that needs more planning and thought by the Center movement.

Adult Education

In the six Centers that we examined closely, the most developed area of Jewish programming was in the area of adult education. The programs took a variety of forms:

- 1) Holiday workshops (usually connected with the pre-school, as noted earlier), and

²¹H.A. Alexander and Ian Russ, "What We Know About... Youth Programming" in *What We Know About Jewish Education*.

other forms of Jewish Family Education.

- 2) Libraries: books, videos, magazines.
- 3) Cultural events (Israel fair, book fair, film festival, musical presentations, theater, exhibits).
- 4) Lectures.
- 5) Courses, a special sub-set of which consists of two structured programs for teaching basic Judaism.

Taken together, these programs lend a significantly different atmosphere to the JCC than in the time when Janowsky reached his down-beat conclusions. They even represent considerable progress over the pre-COMJEE I period.

To be sure, each form of adult education programming represents a distinctive attempt to engage Jewish adults in a particular fashion. Some of them merit special comment.

The field of Jewish family education (JFE) first began to emerge during the 1980's. One point of genesis for the field was with conventional Jewish educators who felt frustrated at attempts to educate children who returned to homes that did not or could not support the lessons being taught in the classroom. Moreover, parents seemed interested in learning what their children learned and in spending time with their children in a context that combined recreation with education. Today, both JCCs and synagogues sponsor various forms of Jewish family education.

As currently constituted, JFE revolves around the children in school, be it the toddlers in the JCC pre-schools or the grade school children in the day schools and supplementary schools. As a result, a large fraction of those attending JCC holiday workshops are the pre-school youngsters and their parents (community-wide events, such as Purim carnivals have wider appeal). Perhaps this is as it should be or must be. Yet Centers would do well to examine whether they can appeal to families outside of this life stage.

A more significant shortcoming of the JCC-sponsored JFE lies in its lack of continuity, that is, ongoing contact with the Jewish educator. This circumstance stands in contrast to classes where a teacher builds a relationship with the adult students (see below), as well as to similar programs conducted in a synagogue setting, where the rabbi may know the family for many years. JFE at JCCs offers a lower probability that a Jewish educator will use the opportunity to establish or enlarge an ongoing relationship with the families in attendance. These comments simply serve to point to a broader concern for the next stage of development in Center-sponsored Jewish education. That is, JCCs will need to think of ways to build and nurture long-term educational relationships with their members.

The expansion of JCC libraries and the numerous major cultural events highlight the Centers' significant role as purveyors and sponsors of Jewish culture. JCCs appear to be uniquely equipped (in their size, space, ambiance) to take the lead in housing, exhibiting, and merchandising Jewish culture. If American Jews support and consume a distinctive culture, they probably do it more through the JCCs than through any other sort of institution. In our thinking, this is a major responsibility, one that merits greater reflection on the part of the Center movement. For if JCCs are responsible for purveying Jewish culture, they ought to start thinking about what may be called "cultural policies and planning." Just which sorts of culture should they purvey, and why?

The Jewish book fairs that take place annually (in November) throughout North America represent but one example where some reflection and reasoning may be called for. Despite their massive size and huge sale, the Jewish educational side of the book fairs appears to be underutilized. In particular, the fairs define "Jewish books" quite broadly: as long as the author is Jewish the book can be included. JCCs also sponsor film festivals, art exhibits, as well as music and dance concerts. Many of these programs are Israeli-oriented. Does that make them Jewish? Is sculpture with no obvious Jewish themes by an Israeli artist "Jewish?" Should it be exhibited in a JCC with limited exhibit space? What constitutes a "Jewish" film, theater production, dance performance, or work of art? We believe that these and related questions need reflective attention.

The single lecture, or lecture series, are among the most popular vehicles. They usually aim at drawing large audiences and usually involve well-known figures from the Jewish or general community speaking on issues relevant to Jewish concerns. At times this had to do with contemporary political issues (often with an Israel focus). Their virtue is that they serve social as well as educational purposes, bringing together a large number of people who renew their ties to one another. Their shortcomings are also well understood by Center educators. Lectures tend to have limited appeal to parents of school-age children and (generally) to young single adults, two groups that ought to be the prime targets of Jewish educational outreach efforts. Secondly, lectures are, by definition, one-shot affairs, providing no opportunity for sustained growth, and building relationships. All of which is not to say that lectures should be abandoned. Rather, it is to say that lectures -- with all the glitz and showmanship that may accompany them -- are no substitute for genuine Jewish education such as what presumably takes place in ongoing classes.

The classes offered in JCCs, generally focus on classic Jewish themes, topics or texts. They are taught by the Center's own Jewish educator, local rabbis, or local teachers. In

general, they aim at beginners or inexperienced learners. Classroom texts are English translations and the topics appeal to a less knowledgeable clientele. This policy is in keeping with the Center's oft-stated mission of being a gateway for a more advanced Judaism, rather than providing that itself. Nonetheless there were exceptions.

In one Center, for example, students could enroll for a weekly, year-long Talmud class taught by a leading academic scholar in the field. This JCC had the advantage of being located in an area with many intellectual resources available, and the Center served a population that could provide the kind of students appropriate for such a course. Nonetheless, this is not a case of merely responding to the clientele's needs. Offering an advanced Talmud class is precisely the kind of program that attracts a more Jewishly committed membership to the Center. Although the class may enroll relatively small numbers of students, its very presence helps shape, sustain, and strengthen the institutional image that this Center cares about Jewish education, and is able to appeal to the cognoscenti as well as the novices.

The Jewish education program coordinator in this particular JCC believes that the key is having the funding to pay top-notch teachers enough to lead such courses. Thus the Center has created individual endowment funds to pay for these classes. Indeed, this JCC aims at raising funds for many small endowments (in the \$5000- \$10,000 range). The executive believes that focusing only on large endowments is a mistake. By looking for small endowments as well, the Center is able to fund a variety of courses and lecture series devoted to its Jewish educational mission.

TWO "TURN-KEY" ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS: As mentioned above, across Jewish Community Centers the two most popular programs for intensive adult Jewish learning are the Melton Mini-School and Derekh Torah. Although the programs have certain similarities, some Centers offer both programs. In such places, Derekh Torah is usually seen as the more basic program; its graduates are steered toward the Melton Mini-School as the next step in Jewish study.

Derekh Torah was created by Rabbi Rachel Cowan around ten years ago at Congregation Ansche Chesed in New York, and then moved to the 92nd Street Y. The program emerged out of Cowan's work with mixed faith couples, some of whom were already married, and others of whom were considering conversion and marriage without conversion. The program sought to introduce non-Jews to the basics of Judaism in a serious and intellectually stimulating fashion. The Jewish partners, in cases where this applied, were also encouraged (or required) to attend. Often these Jews partners were ignorant or estranged from Judaism.

As the program evolved, the fundamental orientation toward non- Jews or interfaith

couples remained in place; but, it grew to include Jews simply seeking knowledge about Judaism, not only those in an interfaith relationship. Typically, people apply to the program and are interviewed by the teacher in advance. In one locale that we visited, several students were newcomers to the community. Derekh Torah seemed to be an access point into a social network for (mostly single) Jews. Central to the program is its social dimension. Classes meet in the homes of the instructors or student homes and are bracketed by informal meeting time.

Derekh Torah is not a conversion class per se, though in some places rabbis use it for that purpose. The curriculum is a set of topics that are covered in the weekly meetings over an academic year. The instructor has considerable latitude in adapting the curriculum to his or her own interests or abilities, as well as to the interests of the class.

The concept of the Melton Mini-School was invented by a lay leader, Florence Melton of Columbus, Ohio. There was a need, in her view, for a program of learning that would address the basic "Jewish literacy" needs of adults in a serious and intensive way. Melton believed that such adults would be hesitant to attend classes in synagogues, even where they were members, because they would not wish to display their ignorance. The JCC was a more neutral area and would be an ideal setting for such programs. Today the program functions in over 20 sites around the country, mostly in Jewish Community Centers.

The Melton Centre of The Hebrew University developed a curriculum for a two-year course of study with weekly meetings, with each built around certain key topics and themes. Anecdotal reports indicate that the program clearly appears to be successful -- both in terms of the quality of learning that takes place and the satisfaction of the students in the course. In fact, in some places, students have asked to continue beyond the two years of the curriculum.

Like Derekh Torah the Melton Mini-School relies on good teachers for its success. According to one Center educator, the teacher must have an "interactive" approach and avoid "rabbinic sermon-making."

The Melton Mini-School requires a two-year commitment on the part of the student; Derekh Torah one year. The Melton Mini-School seems to be less oriented toward the interfaith couple. Both programs have also been flexible enough to be used in ways different from the original design. For example, both Derekh Torah and the Melton Mini-School curriculum have been used for staff classes in JCCs.

The popularity of these two programs in the JCC world says something about the conditions and culture of Jewish education in the Center movement. Both programs provide an introduction to Judaism. To varying extents, the programs can appeal to members of interfaith couples. Both emphasize a social, community-building approach, and both are intent upon utilizing dynamic teachers who are non-judgmental, engaging, enthusiastic, and

open. In other words, good educators with what social workers might call excellent group work skills. Last, both programs come with a ready-made curriculum (the Melton Mini-School being more detailed), relieving the Center educator of that burden. Clearly, the Derekh Torah and Melton Mini-School programs are highly compatible with the needs of JCCs and those of their members.

Senior Adults

Professionals who work closely with senior adults report that they are keen consumers of Jewish educational and cultural services. Understandably, the seniors are the most ethnically committed and least intermarried population group in the Centers. They are chronologically closer to the European experience and Yiddish culture.

As a result, Jewish cultural programming are part and parcel of the social and recreational services offered this group. The professionals who work with them find the experience Jewishly rewarding and challenging. On the other hand, executive directors were not particularly focused upon this group as a target of Jewish educational services. In effect, they were saying that this is one group where expanding Jewish education is not of the highest priority.

Ambiance

The educational programs noted above occur in a certain place (generally the JCC building). Quite obviously, the appearance, physical characteristics, and all that which constitutes the ambiance of the building serve to influence the conduct of the programs and to send messages even to those members who never directly participate in those programs.

Any institution that educates does so in a variety of interrelated ways. Some of those ways are through the overt curriculum of books, lessons and planned activities. But often just as powerful are elements of the so-called "hidden curriculum"-- the personal style and behavior of teachers and staff, and the nonverbal clues of atmosphere, physical plant and an institution's projected image. This latter dimension we will characterize as "ambiance."

Center educators have developed an interesting theory about the importance of ambiance. In their mind, ambiance subtly influences the large mass of people not intensively

involved in the Center's study programs who pass through the JCCs doors. The concept of the Center as a Jewish neighborhood will influence these members. How is that message conveyed?

A specifically Jewish ambiance is effected in a variety of ways by the different Centers. The lobbies in these buildings were recognizably Jewish environments -- we saw in a number of the places Hebrew signs prominently displayed. Typically the signs on office doors ("Administrative center", "Senior Services", or "Physical Education Department") gave the title in both English and Hebrew.

Lobbies allowed for displays around upcoming events in the Center's schedule. In the JCCs we looked at the Jewish calendar was also highlighted through these displays. Pictures or exhibits relating to upcoming Jewish holidays were a regular feature in these JCCs.

In a dramatic fashion, one Center has a set of large, almost life-sized, dolls, a "family" that has been placed in the lobby of the JCC. (In fact, they've even been named-- "the Rosens"-- and everyone refers to them by name!) The dolls are set up in various ways to reflect some kind of Jewish idea or upcoming Jewish holiday: the family is sitting around the Passover Seder, or they're dressed up for Purim, etc. This display has now become a focal point in the lobby, and in a humorous sort of way, they express the underlying Jewish values of the Jewish Community Center.

Another typical aspect of ambiance in the places we studied was having a centrally located kosher cafe. The cafe can also become the locus for other kinds of informal social programming. One Center is in the process of setting up a sound system which would pump Jewish music into the halls. Most have gift shops. A few have established Halls of Fame or other exhibits to honor Jewish sports heroes. Many sprinkle posters of Israel or other Jewish themes throughout the building.

The program catalogues produced by some Centers include Hebrew translations for the various activities and divisions of the Center were also printed. The prominence given to the Jewish educational activities and the separate flyers produced for those activities also sends a message to the potential consumer about the importance of these aspect of the JCCs total program.

TOWARD AN EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY FOR THE JCC MOVEMENT

Points of Consensus and Unresolved Questions

As mentioned previously in this report, no single coherent philosophy of Jewish education characterizes the entire Center field. Nonetheless, we find elements of such a philosophy. It is a kind of "theory-in-use"²² that informs the work of the staff and the perspectives of the lay leadership that we observed.

JUDAISM IS FUN: First, Jewish education in the JCC world takes place in an environment which is informal, relaxed and recreational. Members feel good about their JCCs. Centers seem less fraught with the kind of ideological and emotional weightiness present in other Jewish institutions, such as synagogues, day schools, or Federations. Associating Judaism with fun may help attract people to the Jewish Community Centers and potentially toward Judaism as well. Yet, at the same time, such an attitude undercuts the more serious aspects of being Jewish -- those very dimensions that may bring people to Jewish exploration: a sense of belonging to something larger and more profound than oneself, a belief system, a set of answers to the deepest questions of personal meaning in life. If Judaism is only fun, then why should one sacrifice time, energy, emotion and resources for it?²³

While Centers beckon to people with the notion that Judaism is fun and enjoyable (the not-so-subliminal message found in the JCC publicity literature), Center educators often speak about the need to promulgate the idea that Judaism is "serious." Still, an institution in which one can swim in a beautiful pool, take Yoga and dance classes, sing in a chorus, hear noted Jewish authors or scholars lecture, study in a Melton Mini-School or Derekh Torah class every week and to which you can send your children to summer camp is a powerful and attractive place.

INTRODUCTORY JUDAISM: Second, beyond the idea that Judaism can be fun, JCCs have built their education around a particular focus - - introductory Judaism. Most Centers that we observed paid little attention to the advanced aspects of being Jewish.

²²Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schon *Theory in Practice* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1974).

²³For more on this, see Barry W. Holtz, *Why Be Jewish* (American Jewish Committee, 1993).

Accordingly, JCCs appeal to the most tentative or ambivalent Jews (or seekers and newcomers). Unlike synagogues, JCCs pose no ideological barriers, religious demands, or expectations of liturgical competence that may inhibit newcomers from crossing the threshold. On the other hand, Centers fail to provide the positive side of ideology and expectations.

THE JCC AS GATEWAY: Consistent with their emphasis on introductory Judaism, Center professionals see their Centers as serving as gateways to other Jewish institutions such as synagogues and day schools. The gateway notion sometimes is expressed in the idea that a person might "Jewishly outgrow" a JCC and graduate to a synagogue or day school community.

THE NEW JEWISH NEIGHBORHOOD: Jewish Community Centers are seen as surrogate Jewish neighborhoods. One JCC educator pointed out that especially in suburbia, where a centralized physical neighborhood is hard to define, the JCC can act as a replacement for the "main street" that no longer exists. In that sense the Center becomes a positive alternative to the shopping mall, the suburban pseudo- neighborhood that social scientists have been exploring in recent years. The Center offers a contrast with the pure consumerism of the mall by having its own attractive, air-conditioned indoor space -- with a food concession (kosher in this case!), healthy activities, and opportunities for social and intellectual interaction in a safe environment.

The Center offers a chance to entice people into a setting in which Jewish cultural and educational activities can take place. Some of those activities may be what educational philosophers would call "accidental" learning -- such as seeing the lobby displays and signs on the wall as one heads toward the health club. But there is chance that accidental learning will lead toward something more deliberate as well.

ACCESS TO KEY POPULATION GROUPS: One particular strength of Centers is to capitalize on the attachment of certain population groups to the JCC for specific services. In particular, the JCC may become a gateway into other aspects of Jewish life for pre-school parents. One Center has made this group an explicit target for educational intervention. Several of its staff noted that a couple with two children could potentially remain attached to the Center for 10-12 years. Some Centers have begun to emphasize family and parent education program precisely for this age group.

(QUALIFIED) RESPECT FOR THE SYNAGOGUE: Despite the suspicions voiced by some in the synagogue world, we saw a genuine respect for synagogue Judaism and what

synagogue involvement can mean. Executives and Jewish educators volunteered that they understood that their members' Jewish lives would be incomplete without synagogues. A few volunteered that their success can in part be measured by the speed and extent to which their members join and become involved in congregations.

Accordingly, so as to avoid intruding on the synagogues' domain, Centers established clearly defined articulated boundaries . All the Centers we studied prohibit religious services and other functions (such as weddings, bar mitzvahs, etc.) from being conducted at their sites.²⁴ In one community the Center refrains from sponsoring an adult education institute so as not to compete with the institute sponsored by local rabbis.

Moreover, JCCs seek out the involvement of local rabbis and synagogue lay leaders both for intrinsic and for political reasons. Centers often invite rabbis to teach adults at the Center. Rabbis view this as an opportunity to teach a wider public than at their own institution and even perhaps to attract membership to the synagogue. (On the other hand, one Center professional we interviewed resisted using rabbis as teachers because "they don't listen" and like to preach rather than interact with the students.)

One Center we observed -- conscious of tension with local rabbis -- executed an "end run:" it recruited leading lay people from local synagogues to serve on the Center Board. Eventually, several of these leaders served as Presidents and in other key Center positions.

One positive sign of relationship is found in one community in which some of the local rabbis use the Center's Derekh Torah adult learning program in lieu of running their own conversion to Judaism courses.

ISRAEL AS A SPECIAL JCC OPPORTUNITY: Finally, the whole issue of Israel and its connection to JCCs goes beyond cultural programming. The JCC movement may yet develop a distinctive role in connecting American Jews to Israel. In some communities, for example, the JCC is the central agency for the community youth trip to Israel and houses the official Israel emissary (shaliah) to the community. The trans-denominational character of the JCC may be particularly helpful in addressing the issue of Israel.

How Much "Interventionism" -- If Any?

²⁴The only exception that we know of is the 92nd Street Y in New York City which runs High Holiday services on its premises. However, this appears to be a long-standing tradition that has been accepted by the local rabbis for many years.

Beyond the points of consensus described briefly above, we uncovered a key point of disagreement among what might be called leading theoreticians of the Center movement. Simplifying greatly, they differed with respect to the extent to which JCCs ought to be proactive, explicitly change-oriented, and overtly interventionist with respect to the Jewish lives of their members and clients.

Jewish Community Centers, partially because of their history and partially because of the social work training of most of their staff, have taken what we are calling a "non-interventionist" stance vis a vis their participants. This might be expressed in such comment as, "We don't get too involved in people's lives" -- or certainly in their religious lives.

One model -- the least interventionist -- sees the JCC as the Jewish neighborhood, whose purpose is to pump Jewish oxygen into those who come there. The JCC "is a new neighborhood of Jewish life." The total ambiance -- including the physical features of the building, the concentration of familiar Jewish faces, the explicitly educational programs, and more -- combine to exert a powerful pro-Jewish message. Attempts to explicitly push the member or client in one Jewish direction or another may only backfire and serve to raise the ideological threshold that brings so many ambivalent Jews into the Center in the first place.

A second model is somewhat more pro-active. This view maintains that the job of Centers is to put Judaism in front of people, so that they see it is not silly or infantile. Instead they should come to understand that Judaism is serious and has something important to say to contemporary life. Aside from doing that job as best as possible, the educator has no role in pushing any particular perspective -- people need to make their own choices of what to do with what they've learned. In other words the Center cannot advocate particular choices with respect to religious belief, observance or lifestyle.

As one educator stated, "My assignment is to put Judaism out on the table and from there, people should make their own decisions about what it would take to put this into their own lives." Another educator remarked that his approach was to tell his students at the JCC, "I don't know what kind of Jew you should be -- it only has to be serious." He believes that his job is not to be "apologetic" for Judaism, but to argue for its seriousness in the Center and in people's lives. One executive saw four Jewish goals for the Center: seeing ongoing regular study of Jewish texts built into people's lives; developing in people a sense of Jewish curiosity; creating an environment where people can develop their own views on Jewish subjects; and using an interactive method in study and learning.

The third model is more religiously engaging, challenging and interactive. This model in effect authorizes Center staff to become involved in the lives of the people and try to lead them toward certain directions in their life. Like the second model, this model emphasizes Jewish learning, but in this case, the purpose of the JCC is seen explicitly as leading people to

deeper Jewish commitment.

This model views the non-interventionist approach as ultimately inadequate if Centers are going to play any significant role in the "continuity" of the North American community. It is hard to justify or operationalize any Jewish educational system based on a non-interventionist model. After all, Jewish education is all about changing people, not just informing them about Judaism.

How the Center movement tackles these issues over the next few years is an important challenge and one that has not yet been seriously addressed in the Center movement. The question that remains is how much can the Center be an advocate for personal change and development while taking a non-interventionist stance? And is it possible to advocate for a serious Jewish commitment while avoiding the ideological issues, such as those raised by the religious denominations?

Does the "Gateway" Really Function?

We are clear that the Center-as-gateway to other Jewish institutions is a prominent part of the Center's rhetoric, especially among the directors and educators, but we question how true is this principle in reality. We repeatedly asked pre-school directors if they advocate day school education for their little graduates, even if only gently. They typically responded that they would inform parents about local day schools if that is what the parents wanted for their children.

To serve as a gateway, one must engage, at least to some degree in a kind of overt intervention in people's lives. One must advocate for people to join synagogues, or to send their children to day schools. Yet, the unstated Center educational philosophy limits the extent of such intervention. Most Center professionals we interviewed resist the adoption of an explicit change-oriented agenda. Like any good social worker, Center staff members (including the Jewish educators) are committed to accepting the client where he or she is. And they are careful to avoid religion or religiously divisive issues, perhaps because these staff members tend not to be ideologically oriented in general.

Is Jewish Education in the Center "Religious" or "Secular"?

The issues raised above touch upon a more fundamental question about the role of the

Center as a Jewish educational institution: Is Jewish Education in the Center "Religious" or "Secular"? As long as Centers dealt only with social, recreational, and some cultural activities, this question was essentially moot. The Centers represented a secular, or at least a non-denominational, approach to being Jewish. But with the Center's engagement with Jewish education, the question of the religious character of that education is hard to avoid.

Most Jewish education in North America is specifically religious in nature, even when it takes place outside of the synagogue. For example, even boys in so-called "community" day schools (i.e. those with no particular religious affiliation) are required to wear kippot during text study. These non-denominational schools still conduct religious services, often daily. Most Jewish summer camps sponsor prayer services as well. Perhaps the only exception to the generalization that all American Jewish education for children is religious is to be found in some youth groups and, at one time, Yiddishist summer camps.

Where does the Jewish Community Center stand in this regard? The answer is not terribly clear. Is the Center an alternative purveyor of Jewish religious education, specializing in areas where all denominations can agree? Or are Centers re-casting the religious tradition in secular or cultural terms in much the same way as many Israelis "observe" many Jewish holidays and customs?

In some ways, Centers are similar to community day schools in their attitudes, with most of the Jewish educators in JCCs viewing themselves as religious educators who happen to be working (and pleased to be working) in a multi- or non-denominational setting. These educators are the ones who might test the Center's Jewish educational success by the extent to which members become active in synagogue (i.e., religious) communities.

By way of contrast, some Center professionals view the JCC as an essential institution, even after it may have ushered some people into the synagogue. According to this view, JCCs fulfill roles that other institutions simply cannot. These might include providing Jewish arts festivals, adult learning centers, and early childhood programs. These days, perhaps owing to the dormant tensions with synagogues, few leading professionals are prepared to articulate an alternative model that sees Center participation as a Jewish end and not a gateway to a bigger and better (religious) Jewish involvement elsewhere. This view would constitute a truly secular ideology for the JCC.

Perhaps this latter position is simply foreign to North American thinking, but certainly one finds versions of a secular Jewish ideology both in Israel (for obvious reasons) and in Latin America. Indeed, in Latin America the Jewish Community Center is a powerful secular institution in the community, more powerful in many ways than the synagogue. The closest approximation to this view to date is Barry Chazan's notion of the JCC as "a new neighborhood of Jewish life."²⁵ He talks about "pumping Jewish oxygen into that

neighborhood," but he focuses primarily on the forms of Jewish education typical of the Center (i.e. informal versus classroom education) rather than the goals and outcomes of such an education.

Is a secular Jewish education feasible or even desirable in the Diaspora? Should the JCC position itself as the locus for secular Judaism, an explicit alternative to synagogue/religious Judaism? Is a fourth major Jewish denomination emerging around the JCCs, one consonant with the individualism, personalism, and voluntarism of American Jewry? These questions have not been addressed seriously in recent times, and in light of the Center movement's bid to become a major player in the world of Jewish education, they merit renewed attention.²⁶

Tension with the Synagogues

The emergence of the Jewish mission of the Center in the past 15 years has, for its positive dimensions, also created a certain level of de-stabilization and conflict about the specific roles of various institutions in the community. In particular, rabbis and synagogues tend to feel some degree of tension with Centers, and are especially wary of the Centers' move into Jewish education.

Even back in 1948, the Janowsky report discussed the tension between these two institutions.²⁷ In some ways the situation has been exacerbated by the move of JCCs into a Jewish educational role. All the JCC Jewish educators -- and especially those who are rabbis -- reported that relations between the local synagogue rabbis and the JCC educator required a good deal of work. With respect to relations with area synagogues and rabbis, one Center educator reported "a truce" and not much more than that.

In some cases, building trust between the rabbi and the JCC educator through personal contact led to greater connection between the two institutions. We certainly saw some positive examples of JCCs connecting to local community institutions. One community, for instance, now holds a "Jewish education fair" in which the parents of JCC pre-school children get to meet representatives from the various day and synagogue schools in the area. Another Center

²⁵See his article "A Late December Day in the JCC," in *Jewish Education and the Jewish Community Center*.

²⁶Of course earlier in this century there were such secular models (such as Yiddishist, cultural education) available in North America.

²⁷Janowsky, pp. 317-324.

sponsored a JCC "Walk through Jerusalem" exhibit that had the full support of all the local synagogues and rabbis. The synagogues appeared as co-sponsors of the event and helped promote the exhibit in their bulletins and through rabbinic sermons or announcements. Still another, in its seasonal catalogue, features local synagogues' adult education.

In some cases, we saw possibilities for considerably more connection and interaction among institutions that is just now being realized. For example, the potential of the JCC early childhood program as a "feeder" for local day schools or supplementary schools has only begun to be explored. Connections between the Center and day schools, even when they are in close proximity, could be greatly improved.

Clearly, Center directors and educators understand that they need to manage their relations with local rabbis and synagogues. Some do so in order to minimize the nuisance the rabbis could cause, and others operate out of a genuine respect for the importance of rabbis, synagogues, and religious Judaism more broadly.

One interesting example of a Center's relationship with local synagogues was found in the catalogue of the JCC of the Upper West Side in New York. This JCC sees itself, in the words of its executive, as "a neutral broker for the community." Hence, the catalogue lists virtually *all* the Jewish study options available in the community, irrespective of the denominational affiliation of the institutions. Hence people receiving the JCC catalogue are also obtaining information about the variety of synagogue offerings in the neighborhood.

In addition, the catalogue has a section called "Opportunities to Volunteer" in which programs offered by a variety of institutions-- synagogues and independent, non-Jewish agencies-- are listed for those who wish to volunteer their time. As the executive pointed out, many people wish offer their time, but need a central clearinghouse which lists the soup kitchens, homeless shelters, school literacy programs, services to the elderly, etc. from amongst which individuals can choose. Even though the catalogue lists non-Jewish agencies as well, the fact that the listing appears in a JCC publications helps people feel that their volunteering experience is connected to their identity as Jews. Moreover, the JCC uses these listings as a kind of outreach to individuals in the community and the people that contact them become part of the Center's own data base.

Another example of positive synagogue-JCC relations is to be found in the retreat center housed at the Cleveland JCC. [paragraph on the cleveland jcc will go here.]

Conditions Conducive to Success

Directors of Centers with a reputation for success in Jewish education tend to believe that any Center can adopt and, in time, successfully execute a policy of commitment to Jewish

education. At the other extreme, directors who at least privately concede that their Centers fall short in this area argue that other Centers command resources that are not universally available. Is success in Jewish education possible everywhere? Or are certain ingredients essential -- and lacking -- in certain communities?

In point of fact, the truth lies somewhere between these two starkly framed alternatives. Centers vary widely in the underlying conditions that are conducive to the Jewish educational agenda. That which is possible or even likely in one place may be simply unachievable elsewhere. However, all Centers possess some of the resources to allow for a level of Jewish educational commitment commensurate with the available resources. We saw examples of Jewish educational success in Centers located in communities that lack many of the conditions often associated with achievement in the realm of Jewish education.

What are those conditions?

These include:

- 1) being located in a strong Jewish community;
- 2) having a long-standing, secure executive;
- 3) having reasonable financial security;
- 4) being part of a supportive federation or having the key lay leaders on the JCC board that help its relationship with the local federation; and
- 5) large size.

To elaborate, Jewish communities differ markedly in size, recency of migration, and rates of affiliation. Communities with large numbers of recently arrived Jews rarely experience high rates of affiliation. Moreover, communities with high rates of affiliation in one type of institution, generally experience high rates in others as well. We were struck with how many of the Centers we visited are located in relatively stronger Jewish communities.

We were also struck by the long tenure of the executive in these places. Most had been in the same job 15 years or more. Somehow, we surmise, their longevity may provide them with the political capital and credibility to undertake a serious commitment to Jewish education. After all, as we noted earlier, investment in Jewish education demands up-front costs and produces little tangible returns, at least financially, and at least in the short run. The executive who has pushed for Jewish education, especially in the late 1970's and early 1980's is one who felt secure enough in his or her position to advocate a policy direction that was, at least then, innovative and that is always difficult to justify in terms of the financial bottom line.

(To be sure, as these executives noted, only a Center committed to higher values is apt to engender the type of involvement and allegiance from major supporters necessary to sustain

and expand the Center's operations. In other words, what may seem costly in the short run, may be fiscally prudent in the long term.)

A parallel argument may be made for the contribution that financial stability makes to launching and sustaining a Jewish educational agenda. In our travels we sensed that none of the Centers we visited were awash with all the funds they could use; but we did sense a feeling of fiscal confidence. News of cutbacks in allocations from federation or United Way campaigns did not seem to provoke the kind of anxiety we might have expected in a financially more tenuous agency. Directors with whom we met conveyed the sense that they were successful fund raisers and budget managers who could raise reasonable sums for needed sustenance or expansion of the Jewish educational program.

A related issue is the relative prominence and influence of lay leadership. JCC Board members and the directors in the sites we visited generally projected great satisfaction with the extent to which they are able to elicit the support of the Federation. In fact, it seemed to us that most were claiming that JCC Board members were, in their locale, more prestigious, influential and sought-after than the counterparts in Federation life. We need not accept these statements fully at face value to conclude that JCCs certainly perceive themselves as favorably situated vis a vis Federations specifically and the local Jewish institutional complex generally.

Finally, larger Centers manage to invest more heavily in Jewish education. Sheer size means that the start-up funds necessary for personnel or program are relatively easy to locate.

All five indicators, in one way or another, point to institutional strength. In short, stronger JCCs (however measured) seem more able and ready to invest in a policy of effective Jewish education.

CONCLUSIONS

Significant Achievements, But Major Challenges Remain

We come away from our study of Jewish educational excellence in Jewish Community Centers with contradictory reactions: we are both impressed and chastened. We are impressed with the sheer extent of investment in Jewish educational programming, and we are impressed with the possibilities for serious education in the JCC context. As we noted early on in this report, we embarked upon this study somewhat skeptical about whether good Jewish education could even take place at a JCC. After seeing so many places with examples of educational excellence, we are convinced that such education is possible.

At the same time we are indeed chastened by the sheer enormity of the task of trying to change the JCC institutional culture and to re-direct the thinking of the staff. We met with some extremely impressive executive directors, all of whom expressed a deep commitment to the Jewish educational mission. All had been in their positions for many years, in some cases as much as two decades or more. Yet none could be fully satisfied with the current state of Jewish education in their respective Centers. By comparing across Centers we learned that areas of excellence were distinctive to just a few Centers. One may excel in strategic thinking or staff development. Another may sponsor an extraordinary adult education program. Another may be justifiably proud of its pre-school. Everywhere we saw signs of progress, both in the recent past and anticipated in the near-future. But nowhere could we point to an entire institution with all its components producing at peak, or near-peak educational capacity.

To elaborate, for all the talent, commitment, and progress we encountered, we were left wondering about how great the impact of these improved efforts were on the Center as a whole. How many people had actually been touched by these programs. In a Center of ten or eleven thousand members, how many people, what percentage of the membership, had actually been affected? One Center executive told us, for example, that he believed around 1500 people a year participated in some form of Jewish educational program. Is that a large number or a small one? It depends a good deal of the particular observer's own point of view. At around 10% of his membership population, it may seem small (especially since it includes people who are both studying every week in a class and those that appear once a year). Of course, some may view these percentage as a tremendous success, given the history of Jewish Community Centers and the attitude about the JCCs mission that many members may hold.

And, numbers alone may not be that significant. As one Center educator told us, "There is a need to build cells, small groups, of meeting 15-25 people, rather than big lectures." He thinks the small intimate groups are the way to engage people with Judaism. "If we get hung on big numbers, we'll get killed." He thinks there are other ways to effect large numbers of people, but he doesn't think energy should be invested in programming for large numbers of people.

To what extent can Centers realistically aspire to significantly influence large numbers of people? From a cost-benefit perspective, is it, in fact wiser, to target small groups rather than design programs to touch large numbers of Jews? These issues -- as well as the questions raised earlier about intervention, the secular or religious nature of the Center, the gateway function, and other such matters -- are among those that need to be addressed as the Center movement graduates to a more sophisticated approach to Jewish education.

From Programs to Education, From Tactics to Strategies

The Center movement clearly has made great strides in the realm of Jewish education. At the level of individual agencies, recent studies have documented steady increases in Jewish educational programming and Jewish educational personnel. Anecdotal evidence points to expanded efforts to hire and train Jewishly committed and knowledgeable staff members. On the national level, several tools have been brought to bear to change the place of Jewish education in the Center movement. Commissions, reports, conferences, consultants, publications, awards, and promotions have sent the message to lay and professional leaders in the JCC world that commitment to Jewish education is now essential to success in the Center movement.

After ten to fifteen years of incremental activity in this area, it is time for individual Centers and the JCC movement on a continental basis to begin to ask some hard questions about mission and purpose, and about the allocation of scarce resources. In our view, Centers have forged ahead and developed what may be called the tactics of Jewish education in the JCC, but have paid scant attention to larger strategic issues. At various points throughout this report, we have posed isolated questions for further consideration. Here we wish to bring them together to constitute an agenda for further reflection and deliberation by key JCC policy makers, both lay and professional.

Our list of the most important strategic questions consist of the following:

- 1) Who is the constituency for JCC educational efforts? Is it the entire local Jewish community, or just the members or clients of JCC services?
- 2) Within that constituency, which groups are the most worthy targets of Jewish

educational efforts? Who is most likely to combine the following characteristics: they are accessible to the JCC; they are amenable to Jewish growth; and they are under- developed in terms of their Jewish knowledge and commitment?

3) What ought to be the Jewish identity and knowledge requirements for hiring and retaining staff? Should different standards apply for staff in different departments or at different levels of authority?

4) What are sorts of Judaic demands of the staff are legitimate, which are most effective, and which are most useful?

5) To what extent may (and should) a JCC and its staff "intervene" in the Jewish lives of their constituencies? How aggressive in promoting Jewish involvement can they be? And how aggressive should they be?

6) What type of Judaism is the JCC working to "market." Is it "introduction to Jewish religion -- you pick the denomination" or is it a nascent and emerging form of American secular Judaism?

Undoubtedly other important questions have been raised in this report. We cannot be sure if our observations and inferences were, in all instances, accurate and precise. However, we have greater confidence in the challenges we advanced and the questions we raised. We hope and trust that opinion molders and other leaders within the JCC movement will be moved to take some of these challenges seriously and deliberate carefully on the questions we have raised, both immediately above and throughout the report.

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As author and editor, Dr. Holtz's books include: *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts* (Simon and Schuster, 1984), *Finding Our Way: Jewish Texts and the Lives We Lead Today* (Schocken Books, 1990), and, most recently, *The Schocken Guide to Jewish Books* (1992). His first book (written with Arthur Green), *Your Word is Fire: The Hasidic Masters on Contemplative Prayer*, has recently been reprinted in a revised edition by Jewish Lights Press.

JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER OF MILWAUKEE

MEMORANDUM

March 13, 1995

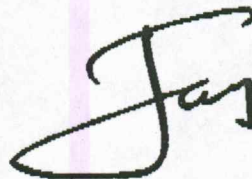
TO: Daniel Pekarsky

FROM: Jay Roth

Post-It® Fax Note	7671	Date	3/17	# of pages	4
To	Danny Pekarsky		From	Jay Roth	
Co./Dept.			Co.		
Phone #			Phone #		
Fax #	008-262-9074		Fax #		

1. I thought you might like to see my rough minutes of the session with Isa and Yehiel.
2. Your next session, April 6, will be my last, as I will be leaving for Israel on April 23, 1995. If you want to get together prior to that meeting to discuss the JCC in relation to the goals project, that would be great. Or if you want to come in on another day, that would also be fine. But please let me know as soon as possible - and who should be there in addition to myself. Is it the full JCC contingent? I'll wait to hear from you.

JRR/jm
Enc.



**SUMMARY
MEETING - JCC EXECUTIVES
Phoenix, Arizona**

**Session defining the JCC role in Jewish continuity - Part I
What is an Ideology? - How do we get one? - What will it do for us?**

A. Presenter: Dr. Isa Aron, Ph. D. - Professor of Education - HUC

Isa indicated an ideology contains the following three components:

- a. A statement of how the values, goals and norms of an institution are connected.
- b. In that process an institution can select certain values; i.e. a hierarchy of values that can be established.
- c. An ideology contains concrete actions based on those values and goals.

She compared this and contrasted it to "philosophy", which is a set of abstract ideas.

Goals are a statement of what we want to accomplish and should be based upon our values. Values at the JCC include such areas as strengthening Jewish identity, etc. The Center needs to clearly state what it's values and goals are and make sure that the goals reflect the values of the institution. Goals can often be in conflict and that needs to be addressed. An example of a conflict is the goal of being an advocate of the well being of families and yet, because we also teach Jewish rituals, we close on certain holidays, thus negatively impacting on families with day care needs.

It is important to develop an institutional ideology which is shared by all. That includes staff, members of the agency and the board. One way to do this is through a process called a limiting assumptions exercise. The goal would be to develop a task force that represents a broad spectrum of the community and to identify all of the values that are represented in the Center. We need to define all of the assumptions that people make about Judaism within the JCC and then probe for the values behind it. It is based upon those values that we build the ideology. A list of some of those assumptions could include the following:

- 1. Jews of all denominations are welcome.
- 2. The Center is too Jewish.
- 3. The Center is too kosher.
- 4. The Center is not kosher enough.
- 5. The Center is or can be all things for all people.
- 6. The Center serves the Jewish community.

In developing an ideology, there is also the risk that some people will not like it and will not participate. The history of the JCC has been that the ideology of a JCC is to have no ideology; i.e. it is open to all and everybody can come. In developing one, we may be attracting certain

Need for ideology - risks/benefits

populations and turning others off. The flip side to that, however, is whether or not you can become a major player in the area of Jewish education and Jewish continuity without developing a specific ideology.

B. Presenter Yehiel Poupko - Defining the JCC's Role in Jewish Continuity

1. Yehiel presented the perspective that the Center needs to be concerned not with the 6-7% of the population in Day School or the 12-13% of Jewish people who are traditional Jews. Rather we need to be concerned with another large population who are, as he calls them, "episodic Jews" - 30-40% of all Jewish families for whom the taste of Judaism is the JCC.

2. The great strength of the Center is that it weaves Jewish life into general life. Our other great strength is that we are quality and excellence driven, in good part because we are more subject to the economic vagaries of the market.

3. Because of this factor, we cannot become too Jewish or it will violate this weaving and turn people away.

4. Yehiel again came back to his concept of "Just Jewish Enough", "JJE", and the need to be careful how we calibrate the "JJE" in our institutions or we will lose people. But he also emphasized that "JJE" is a statement of beginnings, not ends.

5. His opinion is that the days of the JCC ideology being no ideology are over.

6. Should a hallmark or outcome of JCC participation be joining a synagogue? He believes yes.

7. Without ideology we will always wind up dealing with a lot of periphery issues like opening on Shabbat or dealing with Kashrut, and they can consume you.

8. The role of a family worker is not to do a Shabbat dinner, etc., but to determine how we get into the heart and guts of a family and change the way they feel with Jewish life and Jewish continuity.

9. Commitment and belief are key to staff who work in Early Childhood or Camp or anywhere within the JCC. It is important to have a staff with Jewish knowledge. But it is equally important, if not more so, for staff to have a belief that Judaism is important and that it should guide Jewish life. The Executive needs to be a passionate Jew, so that he can lead and express that passion in a clear way. This led to a lot of discussion on a lot of different perspectives around the table. Ultimately, the question is whether we can teach families if we only have people with knowledge, but not people who observe or themselves believe in it.

10. We don't need to be overly concerned about the orthodox community. If the key issue for the JCC is Jewish continuity, then we need to do Jewish triage. The orthodox may be the least of our concerns because they are going to remain committed to Judaism regardless of what

*Ground
of
deliberations*

Don't focus on "orthodox"

the JCC does. In the traditional Center perspective, we are there to provide service for all those in need. But if we are promoting continuity then we have to run some risks. An example of this is to open a Sunday school for non affiliated Jews or do Shabbat programming or High Holiday services or other things. If our goal is Jewish continuity, then that is the role the Center has to move into despite the political price that it will pay in the process.

11. The goal is to build community.

12. The staff need to be role models! If not, they are part of the problem as opposed to being part of the solution.

13. Outcomes were discussed extensively. Barry Chazan expressed concern about outcomes and ideology, which means excluding people. He indicated that one of the strengths of the JCC is to allow people to search for their Jewishness and is based upon a belief in human beings. We are going to risk taking that venue for searching away from a large segment of the population. In a sense we are creating an exclusive as opposed to inclusive agency environment. Isa Aron pointed out that outcomes in the Center field, and may be in Jewish life in general, is simply that "more space in your brain is taken up with Jewish things". This is to be contrasted to a hierarchy of things or an incremental structure or pattern of learning and growth.

14. Everybody believed that it is important to create experiences that make people want to be Jewish. To do so, do you need staff to serve as role models so that you get people to buy into it?

Strategic decisions
Dangers/advantages of non-ideology/ideology
- open
- vacuous
Directed-exclusion

Who's our client?
What's our goal?

Who's your client!

teashvat
kipot
shabbat

Ideology - vision
→ Basis for decisions
vs "Feel good" - "politics"

Possible Goals for JCC Camps

Pluralism / Commitment

Shared memories

Israel

Shared rituals

Jewish Learning

Responsible for one another.

Common Language

Shabbat

Good deeds / מצוות

Organizing questions for Clarification of Goals

- 1) What is the unique mission of JCC Camps?
- 2) What should members of the Jewish community share?

We are the community that

Sketch of 2 Sessions

Session I:

- 1) Study
- 2) Power of Goals
- 3) Current reality:
 - a) "Gaps" Exercise
 - b) Questions re: Camp
- 4) Goals-deliberation via
Guide-Questions

Session 2:

- 1) Study
- 2) Review/clarify
- 3) Implementation-issues
- 4) Follow-up

MEMO TO: Barry Holtz
FROM: DP
RE: JCC program

I haven't prepared as much as I would have hoped for, but perhaps what I jotted dot down below will be enough to move our conversation going. If I recall it correctly, my assignment, based on our last conversation, was to draft a tentative sequence of activities for the day. Before doing so, I want to take note of two other things that we decided in that conversation. 1) we added an additional outcome that had been explicitly stated in the sketch I had previously sent you: "Participants have had a chance to reflect on their own views concerning the aims of Jewish education in the JCC camp setting, as well as an opportunity to discuss these views with others." 2) At some point (prior to the meeting scheduled for Nov.1, you were going to check out some of our thoughts for the program with Lenny Rubin and Mark Cherendorff (sp??)).

In drafting an agenda for the retreat, I am assuming that we have available to us from 2 to 5:30 on Wednesday afternoon, and from 9 to 2 pm, including lunch, on Thursday. We agreed - on reflection, I think wisely - to end with lunch; so, realistically, we have from 9 to, about 1:15 on Thursday.

FIRST DRAFT OF PROGRAM

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON

INTRODUCTION TO THE DAY (30 min.)

Participants introduce themselves, and we briefly discuss what we hope to accomplish and the structure of the seminar. Conceivably, in introducing themselves, participants will be asked to identify a significant Jewish educational goal that they believe needs to be central to their efforts.

THE IMPORTANCE OF VISION AND GOALS (30 min.)

In this session, we discuss the critical role that vision and goals play in giving direction to education, in making possible evaluation, etc. Relevant references to literature in general education will be made.

A SCAN OF PRACTICE USING A GOALS-LENS: AN EXERCISE (60 min.)

It will take about 10 to 15 minutes to explain the exercise. The exercise offers 5 general statements, each identifying a different way in which goals may be imperfectly formulated or related to practice. Participants are asked to fill in examples from out of their own experiences in Jewish camps.

It will take about 10 to 15 minutes to explain the exercise.

My intent would be to give illustrations of each of the points from out of the world of general education.

The exercise itself will have two components: a) 15 minutes of quiet reflection, jotting down individual responses; b) discussion in the large group, designed to look at and analyze the examples they offer.

IMPLEMENTATION EXERCISE (in small groups): WHAT WOULD IT MEAN TO APPROACH A GOAL STRATEGICALLY? (1 hour)

Using a pre-identified goal, participants are asked to develop a comprehensive, strategic plan for approaching the implementation of the goal in the life of their camps. Conceivably, each small group would be given a different goal - but not necessarily. They would be asked to consider such matters as implications for staff-selection, for in-service training, for the organization of camp-life, for programming, for work with parents, etc.

After half an hour or so in small groups, the groups share what they have come up with, and discuss the challenges of implementation. (NOTE: If this is too much for Day 1, perhaps the analysis of the exercise could wait for the beginning of Day 2.

THURSDAY

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF ROSENAK'S PAPER (90 minutes)

The challenge is to understand and evaluate his ideas and to begin to consider their possible implications for a JCC camp.

BREAK (20 min.)

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS (based on institutional teams) (45 min.)

Broken down into institutional teams, participants are asked to spend 45 minutes discussing their own situation in relation to goals -- both actual and ideal. Some structured questions may be helpful in guiding the small groups. Conceivably, each group will be asked to come back to the big group with an answer to a question that asks them to identify a success and a failure in relation to goals; or else to come back to the group with some general statement about what they decided or had trouble deciding in their small groups.

LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION (based on small group exercise) (45 minutes)

WRAP-UP, WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE (45 MINUTES)

LUNCH

DEFINING FEATURES OF VISION-DRIVEN INSTITUTIONS

1. There is a clear, shared, and compelling vision of the kind of individual and community toward which one believes one should educate.
2. Anchored in this vision are clear educational goals which guide the enterprise.
3. Curriculum, pedagogy, physical organization, social organization, ethos all in various ways reflect the goals and the vision that the institution is committed to. The vision suffuses the life of the institution.
4. The educators are whole-heartedly identified with the vision and goals the institution represents; they embody it in their own lives and it guides their efforts at education.
5. Because the vision is genuinely compelling to the key stakeholders, because they genuinely care about its actualization, gaps between the vision and actual outcomes are deeply troubling and serious efforts are made to close these gaps.

JCCA/CIJE SEMINAR ON GOALS

WHAT WOULD IT MEAN TO TO BE GUIDED BY ONE OF THESE GOALS?

Love of Israel. If, for example, the goal is "love of Israel", it might be worth asking such questions as the following: What does it mean "to love Israel"? How is such love expressed? What behaviors or sentiments are inconsistent with such love? By virtue of what is Israel worthy of our love? What would successful camp-outcomes look like?

Jewish study. What is an appropriate goal in this domain for a JCC camp -- and why? What kind of study is appropriate? What attitudes, understandings, and skills should be nurtured? What would successful camp-outcomes look like?

A sense of membership in a pluralistic family. According to some, the aim of community-based (as opposed to, say, denominationally-based) Jewish education is to nurture in Jewish students the sense that, though our ways of life and beliefs may differ significantly, we are all part of the same family. The educational challenge is to create the sense of family; to educate the young towards an understanding of the various issues that divide and unite different members of this family (yesteryear and today); and to nurture the disposition to be respectful of positions and views that depart from one's own. Relevant questions might include: who counts as a member of the family? who is excluded from the family? what attitudes should be encouraged towards those we disagree with about important matters? what attitudes should be encouraged towards members of the family who are disrespectful of us? etc.

Shabbat. What is an appropriate goal or set of goals for a JCC camp in this domain? What attitudes, understandings, appreciations, behaviors, skills, and/or desires should be encouraged? Be specific enough to give guidance in educational planning.

CIJE/JCCA SEMINAR ON GOALS OF JCC CAMPS
November 1995

GUIDE QUESTIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION EXERCISE

A. INTERPRETING THE GOAL

Try to get as clear as you can concerning the nature of the goal that you are charged with advancing. Here are some general questions to guide your thinking:

What does the the goal encompass in the way of attitudes, skills, behaviors, etc.?

Why is it important?

How would you know if you've been successful?

B. IMPLEMENTATION

GENERAL GOAL:

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GOAL: IMPLICATIONS FOR.....

Camper recruitment and admissibility.

Personnel selection.

Training of personnel (e.g., director, bunk-counselor, sports counselor)

Work with the camp's board.

Work with parents.

Day-to-day, or week to week bunk-life and/or other routine aspects of camp-life.

Special events/programs

Programming for Tishah b'Av or the Fourth of July

Some shared Questions

- ① Drama.
- ② A day of staff-training
- ③ Bed-time ritual
- ④ Sports

MEMO TO: Barry Holtz
FROM: DP
RE:JCC Retreat

This document is built around the earlier JCC-document that I developed in response to Lenny Rubin's request for information concerning what we had in mind. I have listed a group of desirable outcomes, as well as a number of possible activities (from among which we may want to choose).

I am assuming that this document will be the basis for our Friday conversation - and that tomorrow will focus exclusively on the Wexner program.

Talk to you soon.

P.S. The Rosenak piece should have arrived yesterday (via Fed Express); if you have a chance, it might be useful for you to scan it before our Friday talk.