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

Series F: CIJE Accrual, 1981-2011, undated.
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Box	Folder
75	4

Goals Project. JCC work, 1996.

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From: Dan Pekarsky
To: Dorph, Holtz, Goldring, Marom
Date: Tuesday, March 12, 1996 12:16 pm
Subject: Harvard Sunday night

The problem, you may recall, is that we've worked with some of the Milwaukee folks before on questions concerning goals, and that some of them have done the Goals Exercise we've been planning on doing Sunday night. Here are my thoughts about how to proceed.

1. Given that a central purpose of the Sunday night program is to break the ice, to allow people to meet and shmooz, it's a mistake to separate out the Milwaukee folks from the rest of the group.

2. The "Introductory Exercise on Goals" (which identifies several ways in which an institution can fall short of being vision-driven, and invites them to offer examples of each from out of their own experience) continues to strike me as a good idea. The problem, as you'll recall, is that the Milwaukee participants have already done this exercise. #3 speaks to this problem.

3. Actually, the "Introductory Exercise on Goals" has two very different components: one of them, the one described in #2, asks for examples of the ways in which institutions fall short of being guided by clear and compelling goals. THIS is the part that we've asked people to do in the past. The other part of the exercise, WHICH WE'VE NOT ASKED THEM TO DO IN THE PAST, invites participants to identify POSITIVE examples -- that is, examples that illustrate practices that ARE meaningfully informed by goals.

What we could, therefore, do is to invite anybody who has done the left-hand column in the past (the negative examples) to do the right-hand column for Sunday evening's exercise. This might solve our problem! It would allow the Milwaukee folks to do something new, while also giving them something to contribute in the small group discussions.

4. Another possibility would be to give the Milwaukee-ans a different exercise altogether, one designed to focus their attention on larger questions of vision. The exercise would be organized around the following two questions:

a. "When the leaders of my community said that Jewish education must be a priority because it is a condition of Jewish continuity, the child asked: 'But why is Jewish continuity so important?'" What answer to this question would the child acquire as a result of attending the educational institution of your dreams?

b. Suppose that your educational efforts are successful beyond your wildest dreams, what would the graduates be like? What beliefs, what activities, what commitments would characterize them?

These questions are designed to get the participants actively thinking about the question of vision. They will provide a backdrop for our efforts over the next few days to consider the visions of some very different thinkers (Brinker, Twersky).

5. ON BALANCE, my inclination is to ride with the suggestion expressed in #3. Though I'm a bit worried about giving them too much to do, I'm also inclined to ask all of the breakout groups to give thought to question 4a.(above) and to bring back to the larger group what they came up with. This would enable them to begin thinking about the question of vision in more personal terms.

Gail and I will be talking again on Friday. Please email your thoughts to the two of us as we prepare to finalize. Thanks.

{ (1) share examples - spokespersons - - }
{ (2) Most significant issues }
write down !!

1 1/2 hrs { 25
 { 10
 { 30

Purposes
1) Main pts 11: what vision is !!
2)

20 minutes !!

**Council for Initiatives
in
Jewish Education**

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To: Daniel Pekarsky

From: Robin Mencher

Organization: Ed. Policy Studies

Phone Number:

Phone Number: 212-532-2360

Fax Number:

Fax Number: 212-532-2646

COMMENTS:

Dear Gail, Danny, Ellen, Barry:

The following is a summary of the Monday sessions on "From Vision to Practice" with suggestions for group activities in both. Please feel free to make suggestions on e-mail, and to prepare sheets for groups on the basis of my formulations or your own reformulations:

SESSION #1:

a) Danny Pekaraky introduces Daniel Marom

b) Presentation of from vision to practice in general (5 - 10 minutes):

- Where does vision, as we have defined it, come from?...Often from conceptions of child development, of subject matter, of "what works" pedagogically...We would add another source: the community which education serves...Great periods in educational history expressed by a dynamism in the development of, debate around and experimentation with educational ideas which emerge in the community - eg. Mussar, early Zionism, etc.

- While the challenges of contemporary Jewish education abound, and education is expected to address them, there has been little debate in the community around the question of what vision for Jewish education should be...The Mandel Institute's Educated Jew project was an attempt to get the discussion going again, to infuse new visions before the community for consideration in determining educational practice...The scholars, the project, the emphasis on translation = from vision to practice...

- We'd like to provide an opportunity to look at what it means to move from vision to practice by exploring one of the conceptions developed in the educated Jew project = Brinker; later in the week we will have the privilege of learning with Twersky too; qualifications, limitations, aims, challenge of ennobling, relevance to supplementary school, invitations for questions and discussion...

c) Presentation of Brinker and his ideas (20 - 30 minutes including study of text and questions/discussion):

- background on Brinker: his scholarship...his educational experience...his role as a voice for a community in Israel...University of Chicago...provocative style...challenge to the diaspora...secular does not equal atheist but starting point of peoplehood, no preclusion of religious faith or practice, fits CJF report findings on Jewish self-definition of majority of American Jews...Brinker draws on a tradition of secular Maskilic Hebrew authors from the turn of the century and extrapolates their ideas into the present...

- Brinker's starting point is Jewish "peoplehood," Jewish identity = belonging to a "family," the reality of Jewish society is its own raison d'etre...This point elaborated with reference to the strikingly obvious, but very challenging assumption of the Hebrew authors

that one can both sustain freedom of one's own thought and remain Jewish...see appendix #1 for text to be studied together in order to elaborate this point...

- What is the role of education in the life of the Jewish people defined this way? Not to convince individual Jew to belong on the basis of identification with particular beliefs, but rather a) familiarization with the family, its history and development until now, its cultural treasures, its debates and decisions about what to do and where to go at critical junctures, especially at the present..b) Invitation to participate in the taking of responsibility for Jewish society in the present and in the future...adds up to informed and open ended socialization, social tour guiding, presenting the natural fact of being born into a Jewish community into a challenge, inviting individual to bring best talents and knowledge (Jewish and general) to bear on the welfare and development of the community...

- What is at stake here? Allegiance is to the community...No codified canon of texts and beliefs...The complex and exciting living present as a more compelling topic than the harmonized apologetically presented past...The need to present the Jewish past as a series of debates, as based on pluralism...The need to present a wide range of voices on the Jewish present...Jewish heritage as an expression of human creativity, not truth per se...Jewish education as a focus for general education...No demands, guilt trips, coercions, just empathetic presentations, and invitations to belong...Challenge to diaspora in that general community is so visible and powerful...Challenge of facism emerging from this approach in Israel...

- questions, clarifications, discussions...till point of translation (level two):

d) Small group exercises in personal vision in response to Brinker's conception - led by Ellen Goldring - (till end of session): Here are my suggestions:

Points to make in the introduction of the exercise:

- A basic assumption is that educator must believe in a vision in order to implement it, otherwise no go...

- Brinker's vision calls into question basic assumptions about Jewish existence, identity, and education, and as such can serve as a useful resource in helping us consider explicitly some of our own assumptions...

- This is an exercise in making some aspects of our own personal vision explicit by voicing responses to some of Brinker's assumptions:

Suggestion for exercise:

Jot down and/or discuss among small groups of five your response to any or a number of the following:

- X - **Being Jewish is not about accepting this or that theological or philosophical assumption:**
- X - **One can take any stance in relation to Jewish religion and tradition and remain a strongly committed Jew.**
- **The Jewish present and future is a more compelling focus for Jewish identity than the Jewish past.**
- **Basing Jewish education in America on the principle of peoplehood will not succeed because the prospect of American peoplehood is equally or more attractive.**
- **The Jewish heritage ought not to be presented as a harmonious teaching but rather as a series of debates in which different voices were expressed and in which both bad and good choices were made...**
- X - **Jewish education ought to make an open invitation to explore many ways of taking responsibility for Jewish society rather than present demands to behave in specific way from generation to generation...**
- **Rather than separating Jewish and general culture, general culture should be used as a means for understanding, critiquing and enriching Jewish culture, and Jewish culture should be taught as a regular and normal example of human culture which is no more or less unique than any other.**
- X - **The Bible, Jewish law, and Jewish calendar should be taught as beautiful expressions of Jewish creativity and moral conscience, but not necessarily as models for behavior.**

(If these are unacceptable, or if you have other ideas about how to go about creating personal vision through a response to Brinker and you want my input into alternative formulations, please let me know. My major point here is that it is better to ask "how do you respond to Brinker on point X?" than to ask "what, in your opinion, should be the basis of Jewish identity today?)

Conclusion: Selected reports from individuals to plenum on the different responses to Brinker, on the experience of making vision explicit, on the principaling issues raised by the demand for shared vision in a school.

SESSION 2: SMALL GROUP EXERCISES IN TRANSLATION

a) Introduction to translation (10-15 minutes):

- Vision is not meant to be academic study, but rather to have a bearing on educational practice. The assumption here is that clarity of ideas can facilitate effective educational practice...Cp. the fine distinctions of a doctor...Being able to say what the school is not trying to achieve (David Cohen)! How much more in the case of supplementary school education where there is less time and less room to experiment...
- What is at stake in ignoring vision is that implicit vision reigns, making for a cacophonous program, or one whose contradictions are self-defeating, or one which does not make its impact as effectively as it might...
- The challenge is to translate ideas from the world of ideas to the world of educational practice: policy, pedagogy, curriculum, setting, culture, evaluation, etc.
- Translation is a special kind of activity, not like factoring out in mathematics, but rather drawing from ideas to create and craft practice. It is the heart of vision-drivenness: Cp. Steiner teacher's meetings...
- A demonstration of a translation of Brinker - the teaching of history: core curriculum; syllabus based on critical junctures; tied with texts from Jewish thought expressing alternative responses to critical junctures; pedagogical presentation from a position of empathy; the use of primary sources, live testimonies, trips, simulations and debates, flow into the present; the emphasis on the last 100 years; tie-in of Jewish and General history; etc.
- We would like to attempt some "translation exercises" with reference to Brinker's ideas in small groups of five...(reminder of the task of ennobling, especially after there was a chance to express personal vision).

b) Translation exercises (half an hour):

- Each two or three groups will be given a written suggestion for a translation exercise, including additional suggested questions which you may want to look at while engaged in the exercise (I have purposely put alot of questions so that you can choose from among them). A rep from each group will be asked to report to plenum in a half an hour:

EXERCISE #1: Brinker has emphasized that Jewish identification and belonging ought to be based not on allegiance to thoughts but on a feeling like that of belonging to a family and on a sense of participating in a diverse, exciting, society which has challenges of its own. Suggest a number of informal activities which could be designed within and across grades in a school based on Brinker's vision which might enable the student body to undergo these experiences?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER: Can these experiences be ordered in a particular way so as to achieve the said experiences over time, with an incremental and exponential growth in impact? Which kind of experiences should not take place in the school so as to achieve the feeling of belonging to the larger Jewish family/society? What kind of formal learning activities might be linked to these informal activities in order to strengthen the effect and make it more explicit? Are these activities feasible? What is the difference between those for lower grades and those for higher grades? What kind of pedagogy needs to be implemented in order to successfully implement these activities so that they do indeed lead to the said experiences? What kind of pedagogy should be avoided so as to refrain from not achieving them? How could one communicate the need for and capacity to implement this kind of pedagogy to teachers in the school? How could these activities be explained to parents and trustees? How would it be possible to determine whether or not the suggested experiences did indeed generate the said feelings among the students?

EXERCISE #2: Brinker assumes that it is necessary for the student to encounter a diverse range of Jews in one's every day life in order to experience the reality and attraction of Jewish society. Suppose a group of trustees has decided to open a new Brinker school and has asked you to suggest a recruitment and admissions policy for both student population and the hiring of staff. Put together a series of policy recommendations in light of this request:

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER: What is the portrait of the ideal student population of this school? What kinds of diversity ought to be sought and in which proportion would it be wise to accept each kind of constituency within the Jewish community? Have you defined diversity in terms of economic standing as well? How could such a diverse population be recruited? What could one suggest if it turned out that no orthodox Jew was willing to send their children to this school? Who would not be recruited or accepted to the school? How should one present and justify this portrait to parents inquiring about the student population of the school or in the school brochure? How should one present and justify this portrait to the students of the school? What is the portrait of the ideal teaching staff for this school?

yes

~~What kinds of diversity ought to be sought and in which proportion would it be wise to accept each kind of constituency within the Jewish community? Is the diversity defined in terms of religious affiliations or teaching styles or some other criteria? Could a non-Jew be hired to teach Judaica? Does this approach demand team teaching or alternative teachings of similar subject matter? If so, what kinds of team teaching would be necessary and how would teachers be trained to apply them in the classroom? How could one evaluate that the diversity of the teaching staff would indeed lead to a perception of the plurality of the Jewish people on the part of the students and to a more exciting curriculum. How should one present and justify this portrait to parents inquiring about the teaching staff of the school or in the school brochure? How should one present and justify this portrait to the students of the school? What kind of teaching would justify a teacher being fired from the school? Is this a policy which is feasible for implementation?~~

yes

EXERCISE #3: A group of parents has petitioned the Brinker school to include prayer in its curriculum, arguing, that it is important for Jewish students to learn about Jewish culture through the actual experience of praying. In order to respond, you must develop a series of possible responses for consideration and decision on the part of your teaching staff and board. What could be some of the possible responses which you would suggest for consideration:

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER: Does Brinker's vision have room for learning about "the family" through practices? How does prayer differ from collecting money for charity or helping the aged or seeing a film? If there is no room for practices in Brinker's vision, how can the rationale for this be formulated and presented to the parents? If so, what kind of experience of prayer would be appropriate to this vision? Should one consider the possibility of providing this experience to younger students and then studying it critically once they get older? Who would design this experience and what would be the guidelines given for this design? Would participation in this experience be made compulsory? How would it have to be implemented? How could one determine if it had both provided an authentic and profound understanding of an aspect of Jewish culture without posing this aspect as a normative standard for students?

EXERCISE #4: A experimental school based on Brinker's vision has succeeded beyond expectation. The demand for enrollment is great and enough money has been collected in order to build a setting for a full-fledged primary, middle and high school campus. You have been given the assignment working with the architect in order to develop a physical conception of this campus in light of the culture which it would be designed to home. What is your first take on this in preparation for the first meeting with the architect?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER: Where would the setting ideally reside in the larger map of an American city? What kind of public spaces would be necessary in order to create a family feeling? Would the setting need to include spaces for extra-curricular activities? If so, what kinds? Would these include activities for adults? Would there be a kitchen and lunchroom in the school? What would they look like? Where would the principle's office, reside, with reference to other rooms in the school? What kind of teacher's room would be appropriate? What kind of special rooms would be necessary for this building? What would be the ideal design of each classroom? How could this design enhance the feeling of serious study within "the family"?

INTRODUCTORY EXERCISE ON GOALS

Our seminar is concerned with the place of goals in Jewish education, and reality as we know it is a good place starting point. From out of your own experience with Jewish educating institutions, jot down concrete examples of the general statements concerning goals summarized below. If no example comes to mind for a particular category, leave the space blank.

<p>Educational practices and activities are not tied to articulated educational goals --- or else the goals are so vague as to give no direction at all.</p>	<p>The educating institution has identified clear educational goals that are associated with particular activities</p>
<p>Although the institution is identified with certain stated goals, there is no careful effort to realize this goal. Even a casual observer would realize that what is being done in the name of the goal is highly unlikely to achieve the result.</p>	<p>The institution's seriousness about realizing certain goals is revealed in its activities and/or organization.</p>
<p>The institution is associated with a particular goal, but many of the key stakeholders, including educators, are not personally identified with the goal.</p>	<p>There is an educational goal which the key stakeholders genuinely and powerfully believes in.</p>
<p>There is a clear goal, but whether and how its attainment will contribute to the life of the student is not clear.</p>	<p>There is a goal, and it is clear to the educator how its attainment will enrich the student's life.</p>

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.