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

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

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Goals Project. Philosophy.

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FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL SHEET

TO: Dan Pekarsky	FROM: Rachel Grashow
COMPANY: Mandel Institute	DATE: 08/04/98
FAX NUMBER: 011-972-2-588-2283	TOTAL NO. OF PAGES INCLUDING COVER: 1
RE: Guiding Principles@Staff Retreat	CC:

URGENT     FOR REVIEW     PLEASE COMMENT     PLEASE REPLY     PLEASE RECYCLE

NOTES/COMMENTS:

Dan:

For tomorrow's staff retreat, the Guiding Principles Discussion will be taking place at approximately 10:00 am New York Time. The number for Union Theological Seminary is 212-662-7100. I will call tomorrow morning between eight and nine if there are any changes to be discussed, such as a different phone number or time. I will be in the CIJE office from 7:00 am until 7:30, in case you need to fax a response. Otherwise, we will hear from you tomorrow.

Thanks,

Rachel

212-280-  
1348

Edna  
H. 691 3569

Cover letter

① Heschel

②

summary

2 appendices — DP  
changes

2nd Phil.

③

Heschel-material

what the person should live?

CORE THEMES IN CIJE'S APPROACH TO EDUCATION

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

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

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

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

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

Powerful Jewish learning enlarges and deepens the learners' understanding and appreciation of their experience as Jews, American citizens, and members of the human community in ~~settings that range from the family, Jewish communal settings, the work-place, and nature.~~ Jewish learning should interpret, strengthen, and deepen our ~~understanding of ourselves~~ as morally challenged to respond to the human needs and the suffering found within Jewish and the broader human community.

Builds on experience

Changes our exp. of life

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

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

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

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

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

**Powerful learning is interactive.** Powerful learning results from the dynamic interaction between the sensibilities, concerns, interpretive schemes, and skills of the learner and the features of the encountered situation, be this situation a text, a task, or a social setting. A central challenge of educator is to structure the form, content, and social context of learning in a way that renders this interaction a source of growth for the learner; meeting this challenge requires careful planning based on an in-depth understanding both of the subject-matter and of the learner in his or her many dimensions.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

These ideas are to be found in classical Jewish texts like

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

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TO: CIJE STAFF  
 FROM: DP  
 RE: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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

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

*Review*  
*MT/HT*

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

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

I had a chance to touch base with all but Susan individually and to listen, along with other CIJE staff, to comments in the group. Overall, I think the professors seemed very high on this document, with favorable comments made both about substance and formulation. Equally important, a number of comments were made that may be helpful to us as we refine the document. Some of these comments are summarized below:

- a. Missing from the document, for more than one person, were references to action (ma'aseh); this point was also raised by E.

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

*To  
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text.*

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

*Nutzi 5515*

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

*America  
& world  
citizens*

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

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

f. The reference to "powerful Jewish ideas" in the document led to an effort to articulate some of these ideas. Here is the initial response that came back from members of the group:

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

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

iii. Monotheism

iv. Tshuvah.

v. Shabbat.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES -- AN ALTERNATE APPROACH**

The extant approach to the Guiding Principles is in a significant sense very organic; as an example, individual principles make reference to aims as well as to beliefs about process. An alternate approach might more sharply distinguish between the aims and the process of education; and it might also include a section on necessary conditions. Schematically, such an approach might look like this:

### **EDUCATIONAL AIMS**

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

**Diversity of visions.** While vision is essential, the rich diversity of Jewish life renders it undesirable and impossible to identify any single vision that will meet the needs of varied sub-groups. A challenge for all educating communities, and for those who would help them, is the development of a vision that expresses its Jewish outlook.

**Shared elements.** While committed to diversity, CIJE is committed to certain trans-ideological educational aims, aims which, though differently interpreted, must be a part of any adequate guiding vision. These elements include:

- a. Jewish education must strive to give learners the skills that will empower them to take responsibility for their own learning, and to nurture their desire to engage in life-long learning.
- b. Jewish learning should enrich the lives of students in ways that will influence their activities and the quality of their experience in day-to-day life.
- c. Jewish education should strive to initiate the learner into a life-long conversation with the texts, debates, and

ideas that are at the heart of Jewish civilization.

d. Jewish education should nurture in learners a deep understanding of the ethical imperatives at the heart of Judaism, as well as the impulse and the disposition to strive for social justice and to reduce human suffering

e. Jewish education should strive to nurture in the learner respect for individuals and groups that embody other visions of Jewish life, especially in the face of genuine disagreements.

## THE PROCESS OF EDUCATION

a. Powerful learning is experiential. It is responsive to the background of experience and beliefs that the learner brings to the learning-situation, and it includes opportunities for "informal education" in a variety of contexts.

b. The process of learning should at one and the same time be intrinsically rewarding and contribute to the learner's growth as an experiencing and acting Jewish human being.

c. Powerful learning is interactive. Powerful learning results from the dynamic interaction between the sensibilities, concerns, interpretive schemes, and skills of the learner and the features of the encountered situation, be this situation a text, a task, or a social situation. A central challenge of educator is to structure the form, content, and social context of learning in a way that renders this interaction a source of growth for the learner; meeting this challenge requires careful planning based on an in-depth understanding both of the subject-matter and of the learner in his or her many dimensions.

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

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

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and  
practices.

## **CONDITIONS OF QUALITY JEWISH EDUCATION**

1. Leadership, lay and professional....
  2. Evaluation.....
  3. A guiding vision [though this repeats first section]
- etc.

## CORE THEMES IN CIJE'S APPROACH TO EDUCATION

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

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

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

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

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These ideas are to be found in classical Jewish texts like

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

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

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

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

## CIJE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

**Vision at the heart.** At its best, an educating institution is informed by a powerful vision of the nature and purposes of education, a vision that identifies the essential characteristics that will be found in the ideal graduate. This vision energizes the participants, provides a basis for evaluation and deliberation, and is discernable in the institution's practices, policies, and organization.

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

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

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

**Learning is not one but many.** Thoughtful encounters with Jewish texts, alone, in chevruta, or under the guidance of a teacher, especially encounters that render the student comfortable in the world of these texts, have been and should remain central to Jewish education. Also central, and often a rich complement to text-based learning, are other forms of learning. Prominent among these are immersion-experiences in Jewishly significant cultural and geographical settings, accompanied by opportunities to learn about these settings and to reflect on one's experience in these settings; and opportunities to grow that arise out of projects that require the student to plan, implement, and learn from an effort to change the world for the better in some way.

**Learning is active and interactive.** Learning does not consist in passively absorbing ideas and beliefs propounded by books and teachers. Learning is interactive: it is a conversation between the ideas and questions that emerge from a teacher, text, conversation-partner, or situation, and the beliefs, categories, concerns, and ways of thinking of the student.



15 East 26th Street, New York, NY 10010-1579

FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL SHEET

TO: Dan Petersky		FROM: Jessica Holstein	
Ellen Goldring		DATE: 5/22/98	
Elie Holzer		FAX NUMBER: 212-532-2646	
		PHONE NUMBER: 212-532-2360	
RE: Staff retreat materials		TOTAL NO. OF PAGES INCLUDING COVER: 4	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> URGENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FOR REVIEW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PLEASE REPLY	

NOTES/COMMENTS:

Karen Bath asks that you look over the attached materials on the <sup>1999</sup> workplan ahead of the discussions on Tuesday at the staff retreat.

\* Please call me to confirm receipt of this fax.

Thanks.  
Jessica

## 1998 Workplan

### JEWEL

- JEWEL planning
- TEI
- Professors
- Forum
- Rabbinic Conference
- High School leaders

### CFWW

- CFWW Planning
- Torah Umesorah
- She'arim
- JTS

### R & D

- Indicators
- Economics of Jewish Education
- Early Childhood
- Synagogue Change

### Administration

- External communication
- Internal communication
- Fundraising
- Board and Chairman's Council

## 1999 draft 18 month Workplan

### JEWEL

Pilot – Professional  
Pilot – Lay  
Planning Part II  
TEI Cohort III  
Professors  
Forum?  
Rabbinic conference  
High school leaders?

### CFWW

Start-up of Network  
Conference  
1 – 2 Pilots (JCCA?)

### R & D

Indicators  
Economics

### Field Sites

Synagogue Change  
Early Childhood

### Administration

Internal communication  
External communication  
Fundraising  
Board & Chairman's Council

### Publications

- Policy brief on Professional Development
- Beit Rabban Case
- Rabbinic Education?

## STAFF RETREAT AGENDA

### Day 1 – Tuesday, May 26, 1998

- Discussion of 1999 workplan
  - o Strawman
  - o insides of each project
  - o staffing
  
- Evening – Barbeque, Guiding Principles/School of Thought

### Day 2 – Wednesday, May 27, 1998

- Support staff and office infrastructure (with Susan Cane)

# FAX TRANSMISSION

**CIJE**

15 EAST 26 STREET, SUITE 1817  
NEW YORK, NY 10010  
(212) 532-2360, Ext. 17  
FAX: (212) 532-2646

**To:** Daniel Pekarsky

**Date:** May 21, 1998

**Fax #:** 608-262-9074

**Pages:** 3, including this cover sheet.

**From:** Nessa Rapoport

**Subject:** Principles

**COMMENTS:**

Hope it helps.

Nessa

## Guiding Principles 5/21/98

### Background:

CIJE works in 4 areas:

Lay and professional leadership  
Strategies for change  
Innovative ideas  
Models of success

### Future strategic areas:

Developing leaders  
Consulting  
Research and development

### Working principles:

For the Jewish community's educating institutions to flourish, they require:

- Strong, able leadership.
- Genuine lay and professional partnership.
- An outside change agent to offer perspective and expertise.
- A powerful vision, rooted in Jewish ideas, of who the ideal graduate of the educational experience is; and of what he or she should know and be able to do. The vision should permeate the DNA of the institution, so that it is operationalized in all aspects of its daily life and practice.
- A commitment to placing Jewish knowledge, ideas and sources at the center of the institution's vision and practice.

### How we work:

- We place Jewish ideas and questions at the center of how we think and work.
- We use rigorous data-gathering and evaluation as a basis for our decisions.
- We work in interdisciplinary and interdenominational teams.
- We are committed to a reflective culture for our staff and participating organizations.
- We place an emphasis on the creation of pilots and model programs to test our ideas in the real world.
- We have an approach to teaching and learning that includes: mentoring, guided practice, field work, a commitment to lifelong learning as a value, the integration of Jewish texts and sources with practice and experience in real-life settings,
- We believe educational change is complex and can only happen over time ("one-shot workshops do not make change").

- We emphasize excellence in personnel.
- We link educational institutions to the communities in which they work.
- We link: teaching and learning; vision/goals; leadership; educational change, all suffused with Jewish content.

What characterizes outstanding Jewish education:

- A commitment to lifelong learning.
- A serious engagement with Jewish sources.
- A dedication to the necessary relationship between Jewish sources, personal meaning, and application to the Jewish people today.
- An understanding of who the learner is and the particular stage he/she is at.

See also point 6 under "How we work."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TO: CIJE STAFF  
FROM: DP  
RE: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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

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

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

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

I had a chance to touch base with all but Susan individually and to listen, along with other CIJE staff, to comments in the group. Overall, I think the professors seemed very high on this document, with favorable comments made both about substance and formulation. Equally important, a number of comments were made that may be helpful to us as we refine the document. Some of these comments are summarized below:

- a. Missing from the document, for more than one person, were references to action (ma'aseh!); this point was also raised by E.

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

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

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

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

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

f. The reference to "powerful Jewish ideas" in the document led to an effort to articulate some of these ideas. Here is the initial response that came back from members of the group:

- i. Human beings are created in the image of God.
- ii. "...because we were strangers in the land of Egypt."
- iii. Monotheism
- iv. Tshuvah.

v. Shabbat.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## CIJE'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

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

**Vision at the heart.** The soul of an educating institution is a guiding vision that identifies in a compelling way its paramount aspirations. An adequate guiding vision points to the attitudes, knowledge-base, dispositions, and skills desired in the graduate. Such a vision energizes the participants, and it provides a basis for decision-making and evaluation. A vision is a **guiding** vision only to the extent that it permeates the entirety of an institution's life, from hiring practices, to architecture, to daily learning experiences, to budgetary decisions.

**Learning -- both the means and the end of education.** In an adequate educating institution the activity of learning is so organized that it meaningfully contributes to the achievement of reasonable educational purposes and is at the same time intrinsically rewarding. These educational purposes include nurturing the learner's disposition to engage in the activity of learning regularly and enthusiastically, an outcome that is readily achievable if his or her encounters with learning are intrinsically rewarding.

**Powerful learning is experiential.** It is responsive to the students' experience of life -- to their concerns, understandings, and beliefs. At its best, learning enlarges and deepens their understanding of their experience, and it is often generated, enriched, and tested by experiences and activities out in the world. While such experiences and activities should not be viewed as an alternative to classroom learning and active engagement with powerful texts, they have the potential to stimulate, deepen, and complement classroom-learning.

**Education is about the making of meaning.** Human beings have a more or less conscious need to clarify and deepen the meaning of their experience and their lives. Education is rewarding when the learner is engaged in trying to make sense of an intriguing but perplexing text, question or situation; and it is exhilarating when such efforts culminate in insights that make sense of such a text or situation or enrich the meaningfulness of the learner's lived experience; and it is empowering when it culminates in the acquisition of skills and abilities that enable the learner to render more meaningful new texts and situations.

**Powerful learning is interactive.** Powerful learning is interactive. It results from the dynamic interaction between the sensibilities, concerns, interpretive schemes, and skills of the learner and the features of the encountered situation, be this situation a text, a task, or a social situation. Educators are

responsible for encouraging this kind of interaction, rather than turning the learner into passive receptacles.

Powerful learning is also interactive in another sense. Integral to it, and a major source of the insights and excitement it generates, is unscripted give-and-take between teacher and student and between students. Such give-and-take contributes mightily to the intellectual, social, and spiritual rewards of learning.

**Educating institutions are learning communities.** Educating institutions are to be understood not as shells in which teaching and learning go on but as **learning communities**. They are learning communities in that all of their members -- young and old, teachers and students -- view themselves as learners; in that the activity of learning together is a socially and spiritually rewarding activity which binds the participants to one another; in that the educators are committed to the kind of reflective practice and evaluation that eventuates in professional growth and in more thoughtfully designed norms, policies, and practices.

**Centrality of Jewish texts and ideas.** At the heart of Jewish life are powerful ideas, ideas that are richly embedded in our textual tradition. Jewish human beings should have the opportunity to be deepened and to grow through meaningful encounters and struggles with the powerful questions, stories, images, perspectives and ideas that abound in their textual tradition; and they have the right to acquire the skills and dispositions that will empower and dispose them to engage in a life-long conversation with the texts, thinkers, and ideas that make up this tradition. Corresponding to this right is the responsibility of the Jewish community and its educators to introduce students to this tradition in meaningful ways.

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