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**The National Jewish High School
Leadership Seminar**



*Jewish Spirituality and
Secondary Education Conference*

March 8 – 9, 1998

Cambridge, MA



The Council for Initiatives
in Jewish Education (CIJE)

The National Jewish High School Leadership Seminar —————

The National Jewish High School Leadership Seminar emerged out of conversations between Rabbi Daniel Lehmann (now of the New Jewish High School of Greater Boston) and The Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education (CIJE). An initial conference, organized by CIJE, was held in February 1997, and attended by the leaders of a number of Jewish high schools in the United States. This conference was designed to identify critical issues concerning the distinctive mission, challenges, and identity of Jewish high schools. At its conclusion, participants expressed a desire to create a regular forum for the exploration of some of "the big questions" that bear on the work of their schools.

In response, The National Jewish High School Leadership Seminar was developed as a forum for the lay and professional leadership of Jewish high schools to come together regularly for systematic examination of basic questions concerning the role of their institutions in Jewish life and their educational mission. Sponsored by CIJE with the additional support of an anonymous donor, the ongoing seminar will focus on pertinent issues and challenges for Jewish high schools in North America through two or three two-day seminars annually.

Coordinators

Rabbi Daniel Lehmann is the founding Headmaster of The New Jewish High School of Greater Boston. Formerly, he was the Upper School Principal at the Beth Tfiloh Community School in Pikesville, MD. A graduate of Yeshiva University and its Rabbinical School, Rabbi Lehmann has previously served as the Director of the KIRUV, The College Outreach Program of Yeshiva University, and Assistant Rabbi of the Beth Tfiloh Congregation. During the 1993-94 academic year, Rabbi Lehmann was the Wexner Heritage Foundation Fellow at the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership where he studied with Rabbi Irving Greenberg, taught lay and professional leaders of the New York Federation, and developed CLAL's first College Student Leadership Conference. He is the editor of *Visions and Voices*, a collection of contemporary commentaries on the Hastarot, and has published articles in *Shm'a* and *Religious Education*. Rabbi Lehmann has lectured and led workshops in a variety of settings throughout the country and has been an active participant in scholarly programs sponsored by the Institute for Christian and Jewish Studies. He was a participant in the Goals Seminar sponsored by The Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education. A resident of Newton, Massachusetts, he is married to Dr. Lisa Soleymani Lehmann and is the proud father of three children, Hillel, Eliyahu, and Shira.

Coordinators

Dr. Daniel Pekarsky is a Professor, and former Chairperson, in the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His scholarly work and teaching focus on the ethics of educational policies and practices, on the education of character, and on Jewish education. He is a recipient of the university's Distinguished Teaching Award and the author of many articles dealing with educational issues.

After a childhood that included 5 years in Jerusalem shortly after the founding of the State of Israel, in 1968 Dr. Pekarsky completed a Bachelor of Arts degree at Brandeis University, with a Major in Sociology. He went on to earn a Ph.D. in Education, with a specialization in philosophy, at Harvard University in 1976.

Dr. Pekarsky's involvement in Jewish education has been extensive and varied. In addition to directing two congregational educational programs, he has had sustained experiences teaching young children, adolescents, and adults in Jewish educational settings. In 1987-1988 he served as a Visiting Professor on the faculty of the Melton Center for Jewish Education at the Hebrew University. In 1990 he took a leave-of-absence from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in order to direct the Cleveland Fellows Program. This Master's level graduate program in Jewish education was an outgrowth of the work of Cleveland's Commission on Jewish Continuity and has been an integral part of Cleveland's efforts to address personnel needs in Jewish education. Currently, he serves as a consultant to the Council on Initiatives in Jewish Education.

Faculty

Dr. Arthur Green is the Philip W. Lown Professor of Jewish Thought at Brandeis University. He is both a historian of Jewish religion and a theologian; his work seeks to form a bridge between these two distinct fields of endeavor. He also serves as Director of the International Centre for Ethics, Justice and Public Life at Brandeis University.

Educated at Brandeis and at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, Dr. Green studied with such important teachers as Alexander Altmann, Nahum N. Glatzer, and Abraham Joshua Heschel, of blessed memory. He has taught Jewish mysticism, Hasidism, and theology to several generations of students at the University of Pennsylvania, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (where he served as both Dean and President) and now at Brandeis University. He has also taught and lectured widely throughout the Jewish community of North America as well as in Israel, where he visits frequently. He was the founder of Havurat Shalom in Somerville, Massachusetts, and remains a leading independent figure in the Havurah or Jewish renewal movement.

Dr. Green is the author of several books. Best-known among these are Tormented Master: A Life of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav and Seek My Face, Speak My Name: A Contemporary Jewish Theology, where he turns to the mystical tradition as a key source for a religious language that will speak to the many spiritual seekers in our generation. His most recent scholarly work, entitled Keter: The Crown of God in Early Jewish Mysticism is published by Princeton University Press. His translation and contemporary comment on Hasidic teachings will appear in Honest Talk: The Sefat Emet of R. Judah Leib of Ger, forthcoming from the Jewish Publication Society.

Faculty

Dr. Joseph Reimer is Associate Professor and former Director of the Hornstein Program in Jewish Communal Service at Brandeis University. His areas of expertise are Jewish family life and Jewish education.

Trained at Harvard University as a developmental psychologist, Dr. Reimer's initial research was in the area of adolescent moral development. Since coming to Brandeis, he has focused his research attention on two areas: Jewish family education and the synagogue as a context for Jewish education. He has completed a book entitled Succeeding at Jewish Education, which won the National Jewish book award for Jewish Education in 1997.

Dr. Reimer has served as a staff member for the Commission on Jewish Education in North America. He is a board member of The Covenant Foundation and the Rashi School and Co-Director of the Faculty Task Force on Jewish Education at Brandeis. He lives in Brookline with his wife, Gail Twersky Reimer, and two daughters, Tamara and Ziva.

Faculty

Dr. Bernard Steinberg is the Executive Director of Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel.

Formerly from Cleveland, he was instrumental in the design and teaching of Jewish leadership programs based on Jewish texts for professional and lay leaders, and in the utilization of Israel as an educational resource. He taught at Case-Western Reserve University and the Cleveland College of Jewish Studies where he served as Professor of Jewish Philosophy and Director of Professional Education.

Subsequently, he became the founding Director of Judaica at the JCC of Cleveland, which under his leadership included a Retreat Institute, Community Youth Resource Office, and the Nesiya Seminars in Israel.

Dr. Steinberg lived and worked in Israel for 13 years, during which time he was Director of the Wesleyan University Israel Program, was a founding Fellow of the Shalom Hartman Institute, and was a faculty member of the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies and the Hebrew University School of Overseas Students.

He has lectured and taught on a wide variety of Jewish topics throughout the United States, Russia, and Israel, and has served on the faculty of the Wexner Heritage Foundation for the last ten years.

Dr. Steinberg earned a B.A. from Wesleyan University, an M.A. in Contemporary Jewish Thought from Brandeis University, and a Ph.D. in Jewish Philosophy from the Hebrew University.

The Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education (CIJE)

Created in 1990 by the Commission on Jewish Education in North America, CIJE is an independent national organization whose mission is to help transform North American Jewish life through Jewish education. We promote educational excellence by developing:

Lay and professional leadership

Strategies for change

Innovative ideas

Models of success

CIJE is committed to placing powerful Jewish ideas at the heart of our work; to bringing the best of general education to the field of Jewish education; to using rigorous research and evaluation to inform decision-making; and to working with a range of institutions, foundations, and denominations to make outstanding Jewish education a communal priority—and reality.

OVERVIEW OF "SPIRITUALITY AND EDUCATION CONFERENCE"

SUNDAY

SESSION 1 (9:30 - 11:15) INTRODUCTORY SESSION: CONCEPTS, ISSUES, QUESTIONS

Led by: Daniel Lehmann

Introductory: Based on our discussions, this session should include (not necessarily in this order):

1. The conception of this group and the need for it.
2. Our objectives for the seminar.

In addition to discussing what we're hoping they'll get out of dealing with the particular subject of this seminar, it may be important to stress that because of our interest in establishing this group as an ongoing body, one of our aims is to develop a sense of community (serious and also personally rewarding) that will sustain further work together.

3. An overview of the seminar with attention to its major elements and the rationale for them. This should include a) a rationale encountering different conceptions of spirituality (and why these, rather than others); b) rationale for journaling.
4. Reference to - and rationale for - post-seminar assignment
5. The scheduling change -- and the reasons for it.
6. Introduce Chava (along with encouragement to come to her, you, or me with problems).

Main part of session:

1. Introduction of the participants via the question: "Please introduce yourself, letting others know your institutional affiliation, and then briefly articulate one or two issues relating to spirituality that are on your mind or on the minds of other segments of your school-community.
2. One person from each institution (ideally pre-designated) should be invited to speak to the following question: "How, if at all, does spirituality fit into your school's mission, and in what ways and contexts does this spiritual dimension get expressed in the life of the school?"

End of session: "Is there anything - question, issue, insight - worth taking note of that emerges from what we've heard going around the room?"

SESSION 2: ENCOUNTERING A POWERFUL CONCEPTION OF SPIRITUALITY

11:30 - 1

BERNIE STEINBERG

SESSION 3: FURTHER DEVELOPING/REACTION TO CONCEPTION #1, 1:45 PM TO 3 PM

After Bernie's initial work with the group (until 2:15), participants will have the opportunity to: a) to write in their journals for 20 minutes, b) followed by small group discussions (4 folks per group, with instructions to self-select and to make effort to get into groups with folks they don't know) based on the journaling.

The organizing questions for the journaling and discussion are:

1. How do you personally react to this conception of spirituality?
2. How congenial would spirituality in this sense be to the different segments of your school-community?
3. To what extent (and where) is spirituality in this sense to be found in your school?

BREAK FROM 3 - 4:30

SESSION 4: SPIRITUALITY AND ADOLESCENCE, 4:30 - 6:15 (REIMER)

SESSION 5: LISTENING TO VOICES OF RECENT GRADUATES

A. These graduates will have read the Art Green piece entitled "Spirituality" and will have seen the pre-seminar exercise. D.L. will have met with them before the seminar and invited them to speak on the following questions:

1. In what ways did your high school promote your spiritual growth?
2. In what ways did it fail to nurture your spiritual growth?
3. What recommendations would you make to your school, were it to seek your input about improvement in this area?

B. After having a chance to gather some hors d'oeuvres, participants will (no later than 6:55) break into two groups, each with some of these students in order to listen to these students and to ask them questions. **DP/DL or other staff should facilitate these discussions.**

DINNER (7:30 - 8:30)

INFORMAL SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY (8:30 - 9:45)

A. Before breaking into small groups, participants are asked to spend five minutes **briefly** describing (in their journals) a spiritual experience they've had. They should also jot down a few words about whether they think it would be good for their schools to encourage such experiences -- and how these school would need to be different in order to do this.

B. Participants are then broken into random groups of no more than 4. Again, they should be encouraged to gather with people they have not yet gotten to know well.

C. In the small groups, they should share the experiences they've described (with the understanding that anyone who's uncomfortable doing so, should not).

D. Finally, they should share the texts they've brought with one another, explaining why they find them meaningful.

E. They should conclude by briefly discussing if/how this activity has helped them think about spirituality and the mission of their schools.

MONDAY

BREAKFAST (8 - 8:30)

REVIEW OF YESTERDAY'S PROCEEDINGS (LED BY DP) 8:30 - 9 AM

**ENCOUNTERING A SECOND POWERFUL CONCEPTION OF SPIRITUALITY
9 - 11:30 (With brief break/ at 10:30 perhaps)**

ART GREEN

After Art's initial work with the group, the last 45 minutes or so should be spent addressing the same set of questions that were addressed in the last part of Bern Steinberg's session with the group, along with the same small group processing activity in mixed sub-groups.

BREAK

ON TAKING AN AIM SERIOUSLY (DP) 11:45 - 12:30

LUNCH 12:30 - 1:15

TRANSLATING A CONCEPTION OF SPIRITUALITY INTO EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE 1:15 - 3:15 PM (DP will give instructions)

A. The Plan is to break into a total of four groups (two around each thinker), again through a self-selection process (or counting them off, for a change of pace).

B. Below is the question the groups will be given:

Imagine that your institution has adopted as a guiding ideal a commitment to meaningfully introduce its students to the conception of spirituality described by Bernie Steinberg OR Art Green, and that you have been appointed to translate this commitment into practice.

What implications would the adoption of this guiding ideal have for your school?

A. Free-associate.

B. Think through the implications for several, if not all, of the following areas:

1. Hiring policies
2. Admissions policies
3. Pedagogy/curriculum in science classes
4. Pedagogy/curriculum in Bible
5. Tfillot
6. Athletics
7. The work of the guidance counselor
8. Other

C. On the sheets of a flip-chart summarize your group's decisions.

In this session, we should allow 15 minutes to introduce the session and to break everybody into groups. They should then have an hour to work together. This should be followed by 45 minutes in which we debrief the activity. This should include: a) a chance to hear what each group did, making use of the flip charts; b) a chance to hear what was difficult, interesting, etc. about the assignment.

**REFLECTING ON THE ENCOUNTERED CONCEPTIONS OF SPIRITUALITY
3:30 - 4:15**

Led by DL

In this session, participants are broken into 3 School-alike groups (one Solomon Schechter and two community groups). They are asked to reflect on the following questions:

1. Which, if either, of the conceptions of spirituality we've been considering (or which elements of these conceptions) speak to the mission and reality of institutions like your own?
2. Are there significantly different conceptions of spirituality that we should be considering that are to be found in institutions like your own and other contemporary educating institutions?
3. What next steps suggest themselves at the local level for addressing the place of spirituality in the life of your schools?

CONCLUDING SESSION (LED BY DL/DP) 4:15 - 5 pm.

1. Fill out seminar evaluations.
2. Reflections on the seminar -- DL/DP and the group: an opp to share strengths, weaknesses and suggestions.
3. Building on what they've written in the evaluation-form, future topics for this group to consider; also, thinking about time-of-year for next gathering.
4. Hand out a post-seminar assignment with the understanding that it will be part of the subject-matter for our next seminar.

The Post-seminar assignment will invite participants to do one or more of the following (or something else that emerges as important in our discussions):

1. Hold a meeting with your staff organized around the question of the school's spiritual mission.
2. Hold a meeting with your Board organized around the question of the school's spiritual mission.
3. Do one or more focus-groups (with students, or with teachers, or with parents) about the place -- ideal and actual -- about spirituality in relation to your school.

If possible, write up what you did and what emerged from the activities you engage in a form that will be shareable with other members of our group.

SESSION #1:

Origins, Conception of this group, the need for it

Overview of the seminar and its objectives -- the personal and the professional. Why we think it's useful to encounter conceptions of spirituality -- why these conceptions; opportunity to relate to our institutions. May feel at end of seminar that we want to keep working with this general subject.

One of aims: spirituality and education; another developing a sense of community -- serious but personally rewarding -- that will sustain further work

The place of journaling in the seminar.

Follow-up assignment -- rationale

Other folks who couldn't be there.

Reason for scheduling change.

Questions for this session:

1. Introduce yourself and your institution -- along with significant issue/question - personal and/or professional relating to spirituality.
2. One person from each school offers short account of his/her school, along with a response to the spirituality question on the assignment.

CONCLUDING QUESTION: IS THERE ANYTHING WORTH TAKING NOTE OF IN WHAT WE'VE HEARD?

LAST PART OF BERNIE STEINBERG'S SESSION

1. How do you personally react to this conception of spirituality?
2. How congenial would this conception of spirituality be to the different segments of your school-community?
3. To what extent does spirituality in this sense live in your school?

JOURNAL, FOLLOWED BY SMALL GROUPS (4), SELF-SELECT INTO MIXED GROUPS MADE UP OF PEOPLE YOU DON'T KNOW.

.....

- e. Tfillot
- f. The work of the guidance counselor
- g. Athletics
- h. Other

ON FLIP CHART, DESCRIBE YOUR SCHOOL UNDER EACH CATEGORY, AND THE HANG ON WALLS FOR ALL OF US TO SEE.

15 MINUTES DESCRIPTION/BREAK UP.

1 HOUR

45 MINUTES TO DE-BRIEF THE ACTIVITY, BEGINNING WITH LOOKING AT EACH GROUP'S FLIP-CHARTS -- PLUS EACH GROUP'S EXPLANATIONS AND DIFFICULTIES.

REFLECTING ON THE ENCOUNTERED CONCEPTIONS OF SPIRITUALITY:
PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL. School-alike groups -- 3 groups.

Lehmann

1. Are there alternative significant conceptions of spirituality to be found in institutions like your own and other contemporary Jewish educating institutions which we should be considering?
2. Which, if either, conception (or elements of these conceptions) speaks to the mission and reality of institutions like your own?
3. What next steps suggest themselves at the local level for addressing the place of spirituality in the life of your school?

CONCLUDING SESSION

lehmann pekarsky

1. Do seminar evaluations
2. Reflections on the seminar -- Lehmann/Pekarsky plus group.
3. Future topics for this group to consider/when to meet.
4. Post-Seminar Assignment: Interview your staff and kids concerning spirituality. A staff-meeting organized around issue of spirituality!! Critique your own mission-statement and/or

educational practice in light of concerns raised here.

Hold meetings with your board and/or teachers around question of spirituality in life of your school PLUS BRING TO NEXT MEETING.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES SESSION

In what ways did your school promote your spiritual growth? In what ways did it fail to nurture your spiritual growth? What recommendations would you make to your school in this area?

BREAK INTO GROUPS (TWO) RANDOMLY.

INFORMAL SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

1. Spend five minutes describing a spiritual experience that you've had. Include a few words about whether you think such experiences should be encouraged by your school -- and what they would need to do to encourage them.
2. Share your experiences with other members of your sub-group.
3. Share your texts with one another, trying to explain why you find them meaningful.

POST-ART GREEN: Same questions as after the Bernie-session??

TRANSLATING A CONCEPTION OF SPIRITUALITY INTO EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

Pedagogy of the session:

Break into two groups attached to each thinker -- no more than five per group. HOW DO WE DO THIS??

Imagine that your institution has adopted Green's/Steinberg's conception of spirituality as a guiding ideal and that you are serious about making this ideal come alive across the life of your school. Imagine further that you have been appointed to translate this commitment into practice.

What implications would the adoption of this guiding ideal have for:

- a. Hiring policies.
- b. Admissions policies
- c. the pedagogy and the curriculum in science classes.
- d. The pedagogy and the curriculum in the study of Bible

SOME SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE JEWISH SPIRITUALITY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION CONFERENCE

You are encouraged to initiate an appropriate follow-up activity to our recent conference. One or more activities like the following might be appropriate.

- 1) With the help of colleagues, develop and implement a plan for carefully observing how spirituality fits (or doesn't fit) into your school right now. What messages concerning spirituality are implicit in the science curriculum, in Jewish Studies, in religious services, in the organization of the school-day, in our hiring-practices, etc.?
- 2) Create comfortable contexts and simple exercises that would allow you to hear from your various constituencies—students, teachers, and parents—about how spirituality does and does not fit into their lives and aspirations. Conceivably, an exercise like the one we did on Sunday evening of our conference would prove useful.
- 3) How do teachers, students, and/or parents perceive the place—actual and ideal—of spirituality in the life of your school?

In order to avoid loss of focus, you might want to consider the possibility of anchoring the activity you undertake in some conception of what spirituality is. Art Green's brief piece entitled "Spirituality" (enclosed) might prove helpful.

If you do undertake an appropriate activity relating to spirituality and secondary education, it would be wonderful if you could write up those findings that don't violate any expectations of confidentiality so that they can be shared with the rest of our group.